



Hungary-Serbia
IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme

The Programme is co-financed by the
European Union



HUNGARY - SERBIA

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EXAMPLES OF GOOD COOPERATION

within the framework of the Hungary - Serbia
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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
HUNGARY



Република Србија
Влада
Канцеларија за европске интеграције
Republic of Serbia
Government
Serbian European Integration Office

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INTRODUCTION

This publication was conceived with the aim of presenting in one place examples of good cooperation between project partner organisations which implemented the projects within the Hungary-Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme in the period from 2007 to 2013. The projects were implemented on the territory of border region between Hungary and Serbia, within the financial framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance of the European Union.

During the three open Calls for Proposals, 639 project proposals were submitted. In total, 204 cross-border projects were financially supported. All projects are presented in the separate Project Catalogue, which is in English, Hungarian and Serbian.

It is indisputable that all 204 projects achieved praise-worthy results through good cooperation with their (cross-border) partners. Due to space constraints the exemplary cooperation of only a tenth of the total number of all completed projects is described in this publication.

The contribution of the Programme to the wide spectrum of human activities and interactions can be seen already from the descriptions of all projects in the Project Catalogue: infrastructural projects, environment, tourism and economic development, sport, culture and arts, to name but a few. Results, such as kilometres of built or reconstructed roads and bicycle paths, renovated and equipped buildings, laboratories, sport venues and parks, pieces of upgraded equipment and similar represent visible results - the immediate impact of which can be easily measured.

Equally important are the less-tangible, but often longer-lasting results. The contribution of the Programme to the creation and strengthening of permanent cooperation among organisations, institutions and people from Hungary and Serbia are not so readily observable and easily measurable, but are indisputable. In an attempt to present both the palpable, but also less-tangible results of the Programme, this publication brings you testimonials from 42 people who live in the border-region of Hungary and Serbia. As you, the reader, will find out when reading their testimonials, the two common traits they share are that they live in the border-region and they have experienced the effects and benefits of the Programme in their everyday lives. Parts of their testimonials are included in this publication as a way of honouring their experiences, but also the work of all the project partners and Programme bodies in the past 7 to 8 years.

The results and the positive effects were achieved thanks to the well-planned and coordinated joint work of numerous institutions from Hungary and Serbia. Most importantly, the smooth implementation of the Programme and the achievement of its planned aims and results would not have been possible without the strong commitment, continuous support, timely reactions and hard work of all the institutions from Hungary, Serbia and the European Commission, as well as the Programme bodies and authorities responsible for the implementation of the Hungary-Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

¹ Please note that the names of some interviewees were omitted due to safety concerns or because they are minors.

TRAFFIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT

The construction of new and the reconstruction of old border crossings as well as the construction and reconstruction of lead up roads to the border-crossing points contributed not only to strengthening physical links between the two sides of the border, but also to substantially decreasing the isolation of the settlements in the border region. Simultaneously with improving the traffic infrastructure, the projects focused on transport route planning and public transport harmonisation between settlements on two sides of the border.

Lead Beneficiary: National Infrastructure Development Ltd.

Project partners: City of Subotica, Municipalities of Homokhát Small Regional Developmental Association

Project total budget 1,387,726.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 1,179,567.10 €

Project start date 01 06 2010 | **Project end date** 30 11 2011

Construction of the road connecting Ásothalom and Bački Vinogradi, planning of necessary infrastructure

The tangible result of this project is the 1.5 km of new road on each side of the border, physically connecting Ásothalom in Hungary and Bački Vinogradi in Serbia, which was built jointly by the City of Subotica and National Infrastructure Developing Private Company Limited. Furthermore, the project saw the planning of a cycling path of about 25 km on both sides of the border together with an environmental impact study. The most important cornerstone is the new integrated border crossing between Hungary and Serbia, Ásothalom–Bački Vinogradi, which officially opened on 16 May 2013.

The project solved a major problem faced by people living in the border areas in both countries who had to travel a long way to reach the Rösztke-Horgoš crossing and had to endure hours of waiting to cross in the

summer months. The mobility of the local population as well as the availability of services provided in the cross-border region have both improved. The project played a role in stimulating the formation of cross-border business and economic relations, created new business opportunities and brought about an increase in the number of cultural, tourism and educational events.





Ms. Edit László from Bački Vinogradi says that project directly and indirectly contributed to the name of her home town being known far and wide. For her personally, the project has a double positive impact. On one hand, as a person who quite often crosses the border it is good to know that "I have the ability to avoid larger crowds at the Horgoš border crossing", she said. On the other hand, her family lives on a small parcel located along the newly built road. The road is now paved, and public lighting has been installed, so it is much more pleasant for daily use – not only for travellers passing through, but also for the residents. She observes that the partial urbanisation of villages certainly contributes to everyday life being of a higher quality. For example, along the road, stalls selling produce were spontaneously erected, and passengers who are passing through can stop and buy local agricultural products of good quality. This is an additional source of income

for the inhabitants. She is positive that there is also, as-yet undiscovered economic potential – for example tourism, which could be developed.

Mr. Kószó Miklós from Hungary believes that the new road very much contributes to the two countries being better connected, which also leads to economic development and the growth of cross-border tourism. The opening of the border enabled a great number of travelers to cross the border at different crossings, thus decreasing traffic jams. He says that crossing the border is much shorter compared to before opening of this border crossing. For him, a resident of the region, it is easier to cross the border, and on time, as there are no bottlenecks during the summer holidays. It greatly contributes to families living on both sides of the border seeing each other more often. Aside from strengthening family ties, the border crossing helps family livelihoods. As he explained, many families have land that they cultivate on both sides of the border and crossing the border is now so much faster. He noted that the number of bilateral cultural events has also increased. Regional cooperation has become much more efficient and effective in the areas of culture, economy, public water management, energy, crop production and animal husbandry, to name but a few.

The most important
cornerstone:
the new integrated
border-crossing

Elaboration of a detailed feasibility study concerning Szeged-Röszke-Horgos-Subotica-Csikéria-Bácsalmás-Baja railway line

TEN-T corridors touch both Hungary and Serbia, but there is a zone of approximately 400 km between Budapest and Belgrade, where railway traffic moving from west to east must go through one of the two capitals. In the middle of this zone – meaning the shortest route – direct railway transport is currently not possible, so reaching towns that are connected by rail is time consuming. The lack of a railway line intersecting the region is a problem not only from the point of view of passenger transport but also from that of freight transport.

The Szeged-Röszke-Horgoš-Subotica-Csikéria-Bácsalmás-Baja transversal line would provide an overland connection between the

two largest ports of the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea, as part of the trunk line between Rijeka and Constanta. This would allow freight transport between the two ports to be moved off overburdened roads. The project saw the elaboration of a feasibility study on the back of which the partnership can continue the planning process and prepare the construction of this new railway.

*Distances cannot
be abolished
completely, but
can be shortened*

Mr. István Káldi from Hungary thinks that improving the development of transport links between the two countries is an outstanding venture. At the beginning of the 20th century, Szeged was one of the most important railway junctions in the Great Plains region, but also the entire Carpathian Basin. The Orient Express to Vienna provided direct links with Paris, Timisoara, Bucharest, and Constantinople. The former Great Hungarian Plain-Fiume (Rijeka) Railway connected the East and the West, and through Oradea, Szeged, Subotica and Baja, crops from Transylvania and the Great Plains were sent to the port of Fiume. With the storms of the 20th century, these links were broken, but they should be rebuilt.

Mr. Bálint Juhász from Serbia thinks that this project is of special importance for every citizen in the region, in terms of increasing mobility and connectivity in the region, which in turn has a direct impact on boosting the economic competitiveness of the border region and on good relations between neighbours. First of all, the construction of the Szeged-Röszke-Horgoš-Subotica-Csikéria-Bácsalmás-Baja railway line would connect the two biggest cities in the region: Subotica and Szeged. This will also facilitate railway connections with smaller towns in the border region. From an economic point of view, the possibility of connecting the port on Danube near Baja with the industrial zone in Subotica, or the railway junction in Szeged, the River Tisa and the port in Senta, is not trivial. This railway connection has the potential to increase employment, and strengthen economic competitiveness and social cohesion in the region.

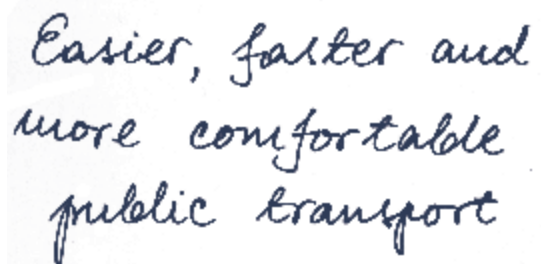


Development of an integrated public transport system in the Subotica – Szeged region

Subotica and Szeged are closely linked in many respects. Commuting between the two cities is an everyday and natural occurrence for many of the people living and working in cross-border area. This project introduced an integrated public transport system in the Subotica–Szeged region, making travel between the cities easier, faster and more comfortable.

The cross-border project partnership's new transport network is supported by an electronic management, planning and information platform. The new integrated transport system comprises interlinked public transport lines (both rail and bus), an integrated electronic fare and ticketing system and real-time electronic information for passengers. The schedules of the different public transport operators in the

cross-border region were coordinated in order to make transfers between different means of transport as seamless and as easy as possible. As a demonstration of the cross-border electronic platform established by this excellent project, an integrated electronic ticketing solution was introduced in Subotica in November 2012. The project has increased mobility and networking across the entire region.



Easier, faster and more comfortable public transport

Mr. Andor Vukelić from Serbia says that the project is very important, since the system defines and records useful information, such as ticket sales, vehicle tracking, the number of passengers in the bus etc. With this information, the bus companies can easily reorganise and keep track of any segment in real-time, whether in terms of commercial bus lines, ticket sales, bus passenger numbers, vehicle breakdowns and so on. The system is fantastic, precisely because of the “real time” information. He explains that the new system of fleet management is beneficial both for the company and for travellers. On the one hand, the company can quickly and in real time react to any problem. On the other, passengers are satisfied which is the most important thing. The new system has shown itself to be very useful for citizens, because now they are informed about the expected arrival time of the bus at a specific stop in Subotica thanks to the electronic information panels that have been installed. They are also able to track the estimated arrival time

on their mobile phones, and e-cards facilitate entry into the bus and simplify travel in all segments. The electronic ticket system facilitates faster and more comfortable travel. All a citizen needs to have is an “electronic wallet”, and then they are able to buy tickets without any contact with the driver.

Mr. Attila Gajda, a teacher from Szeged, adds that the project has great importance for him because he holds dual citizenship and lives near the border. He has family, friends and business partners living on both sides of the border, and thus has first-hand experience that projects like this greatly contribute to increasing people’s mobility. He also points out that he travels a great deal between Szeged and Subotica for business and sometimes uses public transport. He is of the opinion that many people travel regularly and face problems of lost time and a lack of available information, so this innovation may prove beneficial for them.



ENVIRONMENT

The shared ecological heritage and waterways of border regions require sharing responsibility for their protection and maintenance. In this field, a number of projects were implemented with a view to supporting environmental improvements, such as animal health monitoring and a series of smaller water management activities in the border region.

Lead Beneficiary: Directorate for Environmental Protection and Water Management of Lower Tisza District

Project partners: Public Water Management Company “Vode Vojvodine”, University of Novi Sad Faculty of Technical Sciences, Centre for Hydrotechnics and Geodesy

Project total budget 660,805.82 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 561,684.95 €

Project start date 01 08 2010 | **Project end date** 31 01 2012

Tisza River Modelling on the common interest section of Hungary and Serbia and developing of the measuring equipment

Sándor Petőfi, the great Hungarian poet of the Tisza, celebrates the divine river's metamorphoses in one of his poems, bringing to life images of how the river can rush through the plains and breach the dikes. Less poetically, and in real life, this phenomenon is only known too well by the people living in the areas along the river. Mapping our waters is a vital activity as the consequences of river floods are often devastating. And, as waters do not know borders, the cross-border project partnership joined forces to develop a modelling background for the Tisza River so the authorities can take the most effective measures both in Hungary and Serbia to prevent flooding.



This project resulted in the harmonisation of river modelling on both sides of the border, which has contributed positively to flood prevention measures, making them more effective. Upgraded equipment and the wealth of new information, such as predicted water height and assessment of the risk of the breach of the dikes, have also helped decision-makers plan water management activities in both Hungary and Serbia.

Harmonized river modelling

Ms. Aleksandra Lukić, said that the project is of high importance for the region, but also for her personally as she owns a house on the banks of the Tisa River in Bečej, Serbia. She explains that she feels much safer after the introduction of the system as it ensures that the flood wave is monitored, measured, regulated and controlled. She underscored that it is crucial that Hungary and Serbia cooperate in this area because the two countries are connected by the same river.

Mr. Lábdy Jenő from Hungary adds that the Tisza is the main watercourse of the region and most of the inhabitants live on its flood plain. Dealing with the flood risk is one of the most important matters. A lot of effort is needed to maintain the protection system. Considering the last few big

floods, experts are trying to find new scientific methods to assist defence activities. He is also of the opinion that cooperation between the two countries had always been very strong in terms of water management. Experts recognised a long time ago that “water knows no borders”, and from a technical point of view, really there are no borders; it is impossible to conduct effective measurements without cooperation. Yet, it has been found that the main obstacle standing in the way of effective cooperation is usually a lack of money. He emphasised that close and efficient cooperation financed through this project has achieved the result which was not achieved in the last 60 years of bilateral cooperation.



Effectiveness of flood prevention measures

Lead Beneficiary: University of Szeged

Project partners: University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Science, Centre for Spatial Information of Vojvodina Province-CSIVP,
University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Science

Project total budget 507,630.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 431,485.50 €

Project start date 15 01 2012 | **Project end date** 14 01 2014

MEasurement, monitoring, management and Risk assessment of inland EXcess WATER in South-East Hungary and North Serbia (Using remotely sensed data and spatial data infrastructure)

Inland excess water is a serious hazard and a yearly problem faced by Hungary, particularly in Csongrád County, and by Serbia, especially the northern province of Vojvodina. The project investigated the formation of the different types of inland excess water and monitored conditions of seepage of groundwater using acoustic sensors to monitor the well system. The project devised and tested a novel methodology for mapping field inundations based on remotely collected data and developed an Internet-based monitoring system, which can support the management of inland excess water. Finally, the project saw the setting up of an

excess water risk model which can predict the formation of inland excess water and enable the authorities and the population to take preventative action and effective operative measures.

The enormous quantity of data, information and knowledge accumulated through this project may lead to a long-term solution for the yearly-recurring problem. This project is the perfect example of a beneficial and important scientific cross-border relationship with a view to strengthening environmental and economic sustainability in a large area.

According to Dr. Zsuzsanna Ladányi from Hungary, inland excess water is one of the most important environmental hazards in the Southern Carpathian Basin. She lives in Csongrád County and experiences the consequences of the water inundations on agriculture. She says that the results of the project very much contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon, and in turn play a role in improving management of the problem. The new monitoring possibilities and the technologies applied brought new results for the scientific community as well. She also adds that inhabitants also played their role in this in project. The public questionnaire revealed the level of knowledge and the attitude of the inhabitants about inland excess water inundations.



of surface water, a piezometric network for monitoring groundwater levels had been established but degraded to a great extent over the past decade due to a lack of proper maintenance. He adds that as both a farmer and hydro-engineer, he has witnessed the problems that arise: the flooding of agricultural land, making spring planting impossible, the destruction of winter crops and the flooding of residential and other buildings in the marshes. Measurement of the height of the groundwater is essential for the formation and optimisation of the drainage system, which can reduce the amount of damage to the agricultural production and building facilities. In his opinion, cooperation between the two countries on such projects is necessary since hydrological and meteorological phenomena know no political boundaries, concluding that “we have the same problems no matter which side of the border we live on, and for these problems we need to find joint solutions”.



Mr. Géza Varga from Serbia says that Vojvodina, due to its geographical characteristics, has always been at risk of flooding from major rivers and inland waters. In terms of the regulation

Long-term solution
to the inland
excess water

Implementation of nature conservation rescue centre and animal health monitoring system with cross-border cooperation

This project aimed to establish standardised monitoring of water habitats and shared national and international databases. More efficient monitoring and conservation of animals has been achieved through cooperation between institutions located across the border, particularly zoos. By getting people involved, by providing them with proper and comprehensive information about protected animals and how to treat sick animals, a wonderful form of cooperation in the region has been achieved. The crowning achievement of this project was the joint monitoring system developed and coordinated by Kiskunság National Park Directorate and Palić Zoo.

Szeged Zoo and Palić Zoo also developed a rescue centre for birds, and built a repatriation aviary. The project partners carried out regular rescue operations, continuously operating quarantine facilities. Injured animals were transported to Szeged Zoo and Palić Zoo for further treatment. The regular, weekly monitoring of the waterfowls in 16 areas – 15 still-water wetlands and one section of the River Danube – was initiated as part of the project. This project serves as an example of cross-border cooperation founded on care for nature – wild birds in this instance – in the Serbian-Hungarian border region.

Ms. Dóra Salkovics, from Szeged Zoo, reminds us that animals do not stop at the border. The territories of Hungary and Serbia are in the same geographical area and share the same climate. Joint work during rescue interventions is more effective and efficient. Over the years, Szeged Zoo and Palić Zoo have been cooperating – and still do so today – voluntarily without state support. Szeged Zoo and Palić Zoo believe that zoos have to take as much responsibility in nature conservation as they can. Rescue work and taking care of the animals in the cross-border region are also the responsibility of the public. She adds that transferring knowledge and educating people increases their awareness of and sensibility to nature. They become more ready to protect their environment. Moreover, she notes that people come to realisation that it is important not only to protect the nature, but also to work with nature in order to provide a living sustainable habitat for our children to enjoy.

Standard
monitoring of
water - wetland
habitats



Mr. Kristijan Ovari, from Palić Zoo, underscores that wild animals in their migration from Africa to Norway know no borders, and many of them get injured or become ill on the way. Rescue centres are very important for monitoring potential diseases during migration, particularly to identify and prevent outbreaks of zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animals to humans). Moreover, rescue centres are important for rehabilitation and repatriation projects, as well as for ex situ breeding of animals. He also points out that Palić Zoo now accepts more than 300 different animals annually, whereas, before the implementation of the project, they had only been able to accept about 150 animals. In the last ten years the zoo has rehabilitated over 2,000 animals, of which over 1,200 were rehabilitated since the implementation of Animal Health project.



Lead Beneficiary: Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection

Project partners: European Affairs Fund of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Local Government of Baja, City of Sombor

Project total budget 390,349.90 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 331,797.42 €

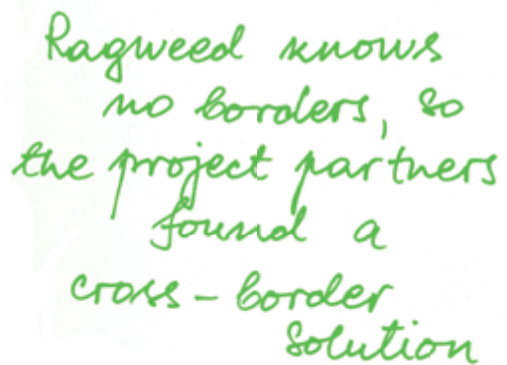
Project start date 01 10 2011 | **Project end date** 30 09 2013

Support to Allergen-Free Environment

Ragweed (ambrosia) allergy is a widespread condition which affects and incapacitates a large number of people. The seasonal increase in the concentration of ragweed is a huge problem in both southern Hungary and northern Serbia. Ragweed knows no borders, so the project partners joined forces to try and find a cross-border solution to the problem affecting the local population – and the project aims were achieved. The project partners improved the environmental conditions in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and in Bács-Kiskun County (Baja) by taking measures to prevent the further expansion of ragweed.

Furthermore, moves towards establishing an allergen-free region took the form of activities such as the mechanical and chemical treatment of ragweed, the

measurement of concentration of pollen and programmes to raise awareness among the target groups and to inform and educate the communities on both sides of the border about the negative effects of ragweed. This excellent example of a cross-border partnership was highly effective and the ragweed pollen count actually decreased, particularly in Sombor, Serbia, where the after-project count was 50% lower than prior to the commencement of the project.



Ragweed knows no borders, so the project partners found a cross-border solution

Dr. Jelena Karher from Sombor says that the project was also important for her personally because she is allergic to ragweed. She added that according to the latest unofficial data, 10% of Hungarian citizens have ragweed allergy and that this percentage had been rising, but that she was not aware of the figures for Serbia. Although at the time of the interview she did not have reliable information on whether the number of people with ragweed allergy had decreased, she said that she would be able to assess the situation after the current season. She categorically believes that it is important for Hungary and Serbia to continue with a similar or

the very same project because Hungary has more experience and better regulations for removing ragweed which are strictly implemented.

Ms. Zsófia Gelley from Hungary adds that she thinks that there are more and more people in Hungary who have ragweed allergy. She also says that this and similar projects between Hungary and Serbia are highly important for two main reasons: there are many problems that cannot be stopped by borders and good relationships in the neighbourhood are of crucial importance for the well-being of all citizens living in both Hungary and Serbia.



Lead Beneficiary: Public Water Management Company "Vode Vojvodine" Novi Sad

Project partners: Lower Tisza District Water Directorate, European Affairs Fund - AP Vojvodina

Project total budget 598,624.60 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 508,830.91 €

Project start date 01 02 2013 | **Project end date** 31 07 2014

Environmentally friendly water management in plain areas

The River Jegrička and the Kurca stream are continually affected by pollutants coming from human settlements and agricultural land. Low water flow rates and decreased water quality were recorded in both. With this in mind, this cross-border project aimed to improve water management cooperation and monitoring in AP Vojvodina and Csongrád County. The project partners were successful in improving the watercourse of these two bodies of water in the cross-border region by dredging and removing sludge and excess vegetation from the riverbed. They also developed a joint monitoring and analysis system in order to help prevent flooding in the cross-border region.

The activities conducted as part of this project have ultimately played a great role in preserving the biodiversity and improving the water quality of the River Jegrička and

the Kurca Stream. The project partners also created a shared database and a software and website solution for exchanging experiences and facilitating future cooperation. The joint work of the two cross-border organisations has brought direct benefit to farmers and the local populations as precise and timely information about potential flood risks is now available to them and the authorities.



Ms. Željka Bobić from Serbia says that the project managed to preserve and improve one natural resource that is of high importance for the region. The watercourse and river banks of the River Jegrička were cleaned, and this created better conditions for the development of flora and fauna within this nature park. For her, personally, as someone who loves nature and hiking, this created an opportunity to promote this nature park and its activities: hiking on the river banks, boating or bird watching. All this could contribute to the touristic development of the region. She added that all the actions taken, as well as constant monitoring of the watercourse and water level, will facilitate flood prevention. Hungary has the same problems as Serbia does with river watercourses. Collaboration with Hungary enables data and information exchange, which is important for the success of flood prevention measures. Help and advice from someone with similar experiences are always welcome.

Mr. Balogh Gábor, a farmer from Hungary, says that the water quality and also the reservoir capacity of the Kurca Stream improved thanks to the dredging. He said that his crops are safer from flooding. He added that in the last year, after the dredging was complete, when the excess inland water occurred, water flowed down much faster and there was no lasting high water level in this section of the Kurca Stream. This means that its capacity is adequate, so the unnecessary and harmful waters could be drained from his crop-fields in much shorter time. In the period of excess inland water, he explained, the faster outflow facilitates lower water levels (in the canals), which contributes to the faster drainage of the fields. During the irrigation season, a larger storage capacity in the channel bed is now available due to the development of the right bank of the stream. He explained that water for irrigation purpose can come from the river with the use of pumps. The larger storage capacity and the shorter charging time of the channel make agricultural irrigation significantly easier.

A joint monitoring
analysis system –
to prevent flooding in
the border region and
to preserve biodiversity

SOCIAL INCLUSION:

Women, Ethnic Minorities, People
with Disabilities, Youth and Aging Population
and Rural Population

Projects focused on strongly upholding one of the horizontal principles of the programme: social sustainability. Strengthening social inclusion and civil society organisations in the border region. Integration and active participation of women, youth, elderly, disadvantaged children and adults, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and the rural population in communities and society

Lead Beneficiary: Guarantee Fund of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

Project partners: Gender Equality Institute, Jobseekers Association in Bács-Kiskun County

Project total budget 81,035.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 68,879.75 €

Project start date 01 03 2013 | **Project end date** 28 02 2014

Business linkages among women living in rural areas

Women living in rural areas face numerous obstacles which force them to assume underprivileged positions within communities and which restrict their opportunities to develop fully, particularly in economics and entrepreneurship. This cross-border project aimed to empower rural women entrepreneurs and sole-proprietors economically and to enhance business opportunities for unemployed rural women from both countries by bringing them together despite the border that separates them. The project partners organised training courses and powerful and frequent cooperation events, and also set up web portals. The rural women who attended these courses and events acquired new skills, developed their businesses, exchanged ideas and experiences, and established and maintained business networks.

As a result of this cross-border project women living in the rural cross-border area have learnt how to diversify and promote their products and services, how to create new jobs, further helping the rural economy, and how to effectively use and maintain the established network of rural women entrepreneurs. Ultimately, the resourceful and hard-working women involved have become more economically independent and have improved their own lives and the lives of their families and communities thanks to this fantastic project.



Ms. Dakó Gabriella says that the project was very important for the region she lives in, because lot of women are living in farms or small villages. They are open and motivated to doing something else other than just the very typical work in the fields in the Hungarian Great Plain. Rural women would like to earn money for their families in order to contribute to the family budget. She adds that the different cultures of these two countries and sharing experiences among rural women on both sides of the border are very important and can help rural women a lot. "We can learn from each other and get new ideas on how to be successful business women", she concluded.

Ms. Blaženka Beronja from Serbia says that this project pointed out the advantages of the natural resources that are abundant in this rural area, as well as possible solutions for advancing the economic and social development of the whole region through collaboration,

networking and exchanging experiences. Her participation in the trainings and networking meetings also enabled her personal affirmation, institutional positioning and finding her way more easily in the new, rural surrounding after she moved out the city. She pointed out that she had never had her own business before as she had mostly been working for employers. After the training, she started her own business: an agricultural household where she is developing agro tourism and keeping goats and producing limited quantities of goat's cheese. She accepted more innovative ways of management and a specific way of organising her business, and achieved close collaboration with women from the local community. She concludes that it is very important that the collaboration between these two countries continues. The basis for good relations in the future is exchanging experiences and presentations of good practices, narrowing language barriers and creating a nice neighbourly atmosphere.

Economic empowerment
and cooperation among
rural women
+ entrepreneurs
enhancement of business
opportunities of unemployed
rural women

Toward Equal Opportunities for Children in Sport

This project focused on children from disadvantaged families as well as children with impaired hearing who have a desire to play tennis. The two tennis clubs gave these primary school pupils the chance to participate in tennis training and competitions while also allowing them to spend time and make new friends with their peers from the neighbouring country. At the very beginning of the project, tennis coaches and other stakeholders in the cross-border region received training to prepare them for work with children with special needs and uphold the principles of inclusiveness and equal opportunities in sport.

At the end of the project, the children, regardless of their health status, received equal coaching in tennis and were able to

continue playing the sport. The programme was spread throughout the cross-border region and the children and tennis coaches discovered that everyone can overcome the odds and achieve excellent results. A joint tennis competition for the Hungarian and Serbian children involved in the project was the final achievement of the project partners' collaboration, which also saw coaches share experiences and coaching methods and the children have fun and all of them feel like part of the community.

*the greatest result
were the
enthusiastic
smiles
on the children's
faces*

A girl who took part in tennis school says that she is pleased that she took advantage of the TECOS project because there was no opportunity for children to learn tennis free of charge, and therefore, if it were not for this project, she would never have the chance to play tennis. She has gained a lot of experience of other cultures and cities, and made a lot of new friends. She learned a great deal about tennis from the other children who participated in the project.

A girl from Serbia who also participated in the project, adds that the project has been very important because she got to meet other players and made new friendships that still last to this day, plus she learned many new things about tennis. She thinks it is very important that children of all ages participate more in such projects between Serbia and Hungary since they are neighbours and they must use every opportunity to get to know each other better and play sport with their peers, and in the end also learn from one another.



Lead Beneficiary: University of Szeged

Project partner: University of Novi Sad, Teachers' Training Faculty in Hungarian

Project total budget 209,747.60 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 178,285.46 €

Project start date 01 05 2013 | **Project end date** 31 07 2014

Educational Cooperation for Disadvantaged Children and Adults

This project tackled a very serious problem in the border region – disadvantaged children living in poverty. These children often fail to finish school and as a result have very limited employment opportunities. This is a vicious circle, with the next generation destined to fall into the same trap. The project saw research and social mapping carried out and an education programme was conducted to promote the social and educational integration of disadvantaged children and children from the Roma community. The project also aimed to educate adults working with these children and set up a mentoring programme.

As part of the project, a team of Hungarian and Serbian experts created training programmes for pre-service teachers, i.e. students training to become teachers. These programmes saw 15 students from

Hungary and 15 students from Serbia mentor 45 disadvantaged and Roma pupils in each country, guiding and assisting them in their education. The training programmes also prepared the pre-service teachers for working with disadvantaged adults. Furthermore, the mentoring process and training materials were regularly analysed and this enabled the preparation of a multiplication and sustainability study and strategy.

*"Do you want to
be my
playmate?"*

*Inclusive
education*



Ms. Greta Bašić Palković, who was a student participating in the mentorship programme and who worked with Roma children, says that during her 10 months of working in a primary school in Horgoš, she had the opportunity to experience changes in the behaviour of disadvantaged pupils, as well as the success of the mentoring work, care and education, which has left a deep impression on her. As one of the student-mentors, she travelled to Horgoš two to three times a week and followed an all-day long school programme. She was in charge of

monitoring the school work and behaviour of three first-grade pupils. These pupils were part of an inclusive schooling curriculum. The aim of the mentors was to help the teachers and the pupils. She thinks that projects like this are extremely important. Mentoring work is invaluable for disadvantaged kids, she says. She also claims that her experience during the Mentoring Programme had an impact on everyone – the students, mentors, as well as the school teachers in the primary school in Horgoš.

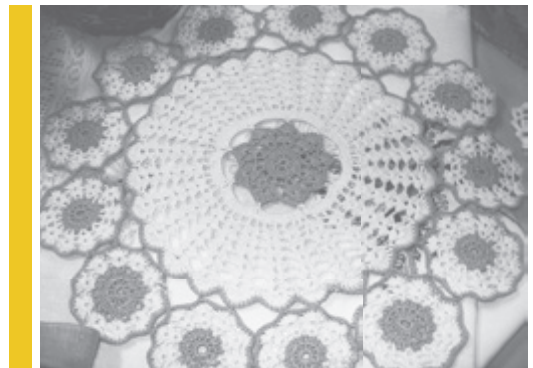
A 16-year-old boy from Hungary, a mentee, says that the programme has been very important for him – he got a lot of help with his studies, and managed to achieve better grades. He noted that he was able to learn the curricula much easier than just by himself. He also adds that he has a lot of good memories from working with the mentors, some of whom he considers true friends. He describes the relationship with them as good, adding that they helped him a lot, and if he had any questions he could always turn to them. He pointed out that it was a relationship of mutual trust, as he says, “We could help each other mutually, we could count on each other.” Also, besides learning, the mentors organised very good programmes that mentees enjoyed a lot. He says that he would gladly recommend the programme to his peers who need mentoring assistance.

From Pannonian Intercultural Heritage Preservation Towards Improved Social Care

The preservation and promotion of the shared cultural heritage of the region by means of nurturing inter-ethnic and inter-generational dialogue and cooperation was the primary goal of this project. Extending existing practices across the border and creating synergy not only between people of different ethnic origins but also different age groups was accomplished by holding workshops for high school students where they learned about traditional handicrafts from the older population. The elderly took great pleasure in handing down old handicraft traditions to the younger generation.

As part of the project, a regional research venture was undertaken to find out the level of knowledge held by the targeted groups about traditional handicrafts of the region.

This was followed by the renovation and furnishing of two facilities for the handicraft workshops, one in Subotica and one in Baja. The tangible result of this project was hugely successful cross-border exhibitions of the handicrafts made by the young people and the publication of a bilingual booklet on regional handicrafts. Most importantly, this project enhanced inter-ethnic and inter-generational respect, tolerance and understanding.



Young people learning from the elderly about traditional handicrafts

Ms. Agneš Merković, a 65-year-old retiree from Bajmok, Serbia, says that she learned many new skills from this unique opportunity to try out some old crafts, such as painting on silk, on glass or, for example, a knitting technique called “makrame”. She learnt how to prepare wool and afterwards made a beautiful bag, and she knitted pot holders and made many corn decorations. She said it was a great pleasure to make something on her own, or give something she made with her own hands as a gift. She also adds that projects like this are connecting people as “only when we are together can we see that there are no big differences between us, the people on the two sides of the border.” She also had the opportunity to spend time with young people. As she was learning from others, she was also able to transfer some knowledge and skills. For example, she prepared homemade biscuits in a traditional way and revealed the secrets of the process to others. She concludes that she has wonderful memories of the time spent there and regrets that it did not last longer.

Ms. Erzsébet Bánné Kiss, from Hungary, explains that all programmes that foster cooperation among nations should be encouraged, as they represent a cohesive force. She also gained craft skills, learnt how to paint and some other techniques. She feels that she has been enriched spiritually and professionally, and would like to thank the elderly people in Subotica, the staff at the Gerontology Centre, and the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme. She often talks about the project to her peers and colleagues. In her opinion, it is very important that Hungary and Serbia cooperate on similar projects in the future. Dialogue is virtually essential for understanding other nations and cultures, for mutual understanding, mobility between nations and promoting the flow of international culture. So for her, the project represented an important meeting of two cultures and traditions with the aim of preserving their self-awareness. She says that she is glad that she had the opportunity to meet elderly people from both sides of the border and hear their life experiences and see how intertwined the lives within a community are.



Lead Beneficiary: Association of village caretakers between Duna and Tisza

Project partners: Local Community of Horgoš, Local government of Öttömös, Local Community of Male Pijace

Project total budget 81,231.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 69,046.35 €

Project start date 01 09 2010 | **Project end date** 31 08 2011

Village caretaking without borders

The implementation and adoption of the village caretaking service in Vojvodina, Serbia, was the main goal of this project and achieved through intense workshops on village caretaking, professional study trips as well as trainings for caretakers and volunteers. The main goal of one of the study trips was to learn about the village caretaking service in Hungary, while the purpose of the other was to get to know the cultural community and civil society organisations in Vojvodina. The project partners also organised village caretaking trainings for caretakers and volunteers and facilitated the exchange of experiences between village caretakers from Bács-Kiskun and Csongrád County with prospective village caretakers in the North Bačka region in Vojvodina.

The main achievement of this cross-border project was without a doubt the fact that the local communities of Horgoš, Male Pijace and Öttömös partnered with the Association of Village Caretakers devised and initiated an outstanding cross-border village caretaking service in Vojvodina with the ultimate socially-responsible aim of decreasing isolation of the population, especially elderly people in rural areas.



Mr. Bozóki Imre, a village caretaker from Hungary, says that in Hungary the first village caretaking and homestead caretaking services started more than 25 years ago. Today, there are more than 1,300 services in operation in small villages and homesteads in the 19 counties of Hungary. He also adds that in both countries the state of the social security system justifies the need to have a village caretaking service and, as the Hungarian example shows, there is a genuine chance that more and more services could start it in Serbia. The guiding principle of village caretakers is to reduce the disadvantage faced by those living in homesteads and small villages and to make the everyday life of these people better. It was also a great pleasure for him and his colleagues from Hungary to be able to strengthen the

Village caretaking
raises the quality
of life of the
community

already existing outstanding relationship with the Association of Village Caretakers between Duna and Tisza and our twin villages Horgoš and Kispiac (Male Pijace). He hopes that the service they started will continue to help those in need.

Ms. Erzsébet Zsidai, a village caretaker from Serbia, explains that knowledge and experience transfers from Hungary in the field of social protection are very important for Serbia. Hungary is already part of the EU and already has an adequately established system of social care. By taking experiences from their organisations and institutions and by tailoring them to the specific conditions in Serbia, she says “we are building an adequate social care system.” She finds this way of full care for the old and sick, especially in the mountain region, where it is necessary. She explains that the geronto-caretaker does the housework inside, while village caretaker takes care of the things that have to be done outside the home. Mali Iđoš municipality has already been promoted as an example of a local self-government that finds an appropriate way to help its old and sick inhabitants.

CULTURE, HERITAGE and TOURISM

Joint planning and activities by educational, research, tourist and cultural institutions with a view to creating a shared educational and cultural space in the Hungarian and Serbian border area. Management of shared cultural heritage in order to improve cultural values and traditions and to develop tourism. Development of cross-border thematic tourist routes based on preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

Lead Beneficiary: Municipality of Szeged County Rank City

Project partner: City of Subotica

Project total budget 344,787.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 293,068.95 €

Project start date 01 01 2013 | **Project end date** 30 04 2014

Jewels at the turn of the century – thematic roving of the world of Art Nouveau

Szeged, Subotica and Senta share a common heritage and have strong historical ties. An important aspect of this connection is the Art Nouveau Architecture which has seen years of neglect and a lack of promotion. This cross-border project concentrated on the highly significant Art Nouveau architectural heritage of the three cities and took measures to preserve and promote these architectural jewels far and wide.

Within this project, the cross-border project partners completed preservation and renovation work on some of these buildings, such as the Synagogue in Subotica and the Gróf Palace in Szeged. Promotional activities were carried out and the final result of the project is a well-organised thematic route called “The Jewels of Art Nouveau”, which

attracts a great many tourists. This project also saw the creation of a trilingual mobile phone application and website, as well as the publication of a book about the Art Nouveau architecture of Szeged, Subotica and Senta to complement the thematic route. This project has had a positive impact on tourism in the cross-border region.



Ms. Szilvia Ács, Head of the Tourist Office of Szeged, says that it is important that the built heritage of Szeged is made familiar to both the citizens of the city as well as visitors to the city. The project presents the Art Nouveau buildings of the city using different marketing tools. This has resulted in the expansion of the tourist offer in Szeged, and the thematic walks offer great opportunities for both independent travellers and for organised sightseeing tours.

Popular tourist route:
Art Nouveau
architectural
jewels

Dr. Olga Ninkov, a historian of art at the City Museum in Subotica, says that she gave lectures (one in Szeged and one in Subotica)



with projections of photographs concerning Art Nouveau in Subotica and that she wrote a review for the book about Ferencz Rail. She is sure that the project contributed to increased interest among citizens for Art Nouveau in general. The residents' reactions were excellent given the need for useful tourist information. World Art Nouveau Day is now being organised annually, which gives her the opportunity to meet with inhabitants and see their reactions and find out what their needs are.

Museum pass

Lead Beneficiary: DKMT Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregional Development Agency – Nonprofit Public Benefit Limited

Project partner: City Museum of Novi Sad

Project total budget 214,190.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 182,061.50 €

Project start date 01 01 2012 | **Project end date** 30 06 2013

Museum pass

The partners identified that main problem affecting tourism in the region is the lack of easily available information about tourist attractions for both inhabitants of the region and international visitors. This meant a low number of visitors who often only spent a short time in the region and missed out on visiting many great sites. This, in turn, meant those operating in the tourism sector did not generate enough income. As the region boasts rich cultural and natural assets, historic settlements and preserved traditional customs, the project partners wanted to turn this trend around and give the region a competitive edge.

This project aimed and managed to link the two sides of the border, which share many cultural similarities, with thematic tourist routes. The project partners established cooperation between museums on both sides of the border, creating a network of 53 museums and a Museum Pass. An

informative brochure and website in five languages has attracted tourists who are also able to use the newly-installed touch-screen info terminals in the museums. This project has directly benefited tourism in the region and has fostered cross-border tolerance and multiculturalism.



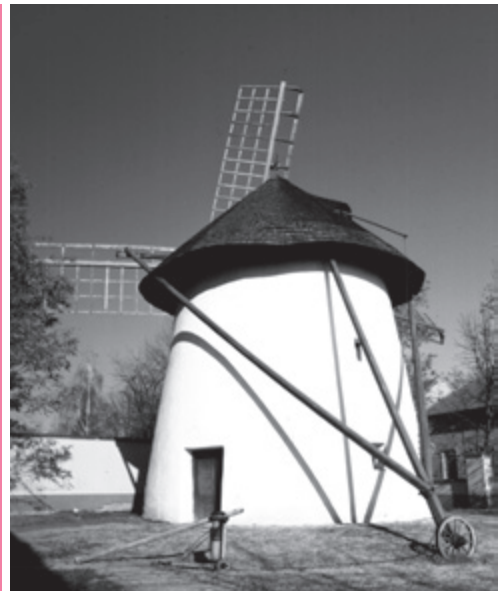


Ms. Beáta Domonkos from Hungary says that the Museum Pass project has increased interest in museums and similar facilities in the region. Inhabitants of the Hungarian-Serbian border region should know each other's history, culture and traditions better and they can do this by being familiar with what museums and other institutions are offering on the other side of the border. Apart from an increased number of visitors to museums and similar organisations involved in the Museum Pass Network and a general increase in the number of domestic and foreign tourists interested in culture and

Established a network of 53 museums in Hungary and Serbia

museums, the inhabitants of the Hungarian-Serbian border region have become more responsive and willing to become more familiar with each other's cultural life and traditions.

Mr. Attila Hornok from Serbia further explains that it is particularly interesting to note that due to the information terminals, visitors to one museum are becoming aware of the existence of other museums in neighbouring towns, on both sides of the border, and are directly informed of the possibility of extending their travels to other cultural places in the region. From conversations with many people from the beginning of the project it was found that it would be a good idea to improve some segments of the project in order to entice younger people to visit the museums. First and foremost, suggestions relate to the introduction of an electronic ticket or an e-Passport, which would work using a QR code, thus freeing tourists from having to wear paper museum passes.



Lead Beneficiary: Vári Szabó István Vocational Secondary and Training School of Bács-Kiskun County Council

Project partners: Secondary Economic School in Sombor, Júlia Bányai Commercial and Catering Secondary Technical School

Project total budget 453,079.47 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 385,117.55 €

Project start date 01 08 2010 | **Project end date** 31 01 2012

Joint Hungarian-Serbian gastronomic cross-border training programme

The aim of this project was to educate current and future chefs and waiters about the shared, traditional and local gastronomic values of the Hungarian-Serbian border area and to train them in the use of modern cooking equipment. Firstly, the project partners organised six workshops in order to elaborate the training materials. Then, three training sessions

were held to prepare the trainers for the student exchange programmes and to test-run the training materials which included a bilingual dictionary of food and drink of the border region, courses in Serbian and Hungarian cuisine and 21st century cooking technology.

The training restaurant and the Serbian-Hungarian gastronomic demonstration room were renovated and equipped. Three 5-day long student exchange programmes in Sombor, Baja and Kiskunhalas were held. The gastronomic values of the region were presented at several festivals where visitors could taste the traditional dishes prepared by the students. In addition, an adult training programme for chefs and waiters was held in Kiskunhalas. This project was so successful that the project partners agreed to continue their cooperation after the closure of the project.



Ms. Terezija Nedeljkov, a teacher from Sombor, says that going to Hungary for training was especially exciting for the students, since for the majority of them it was their first time going abroad. They directly participated in the preparation and serving of Serbian and Hungarian specialties in the school in Sombor and in further training in two partner schools in Hungary, she said, adding that all of this was completely new to them. They visited traditional restaurants in the region, and the atmosphere was especially cheerful during the excursion to Rastina where they prepared fish stew made “à la Sombor” and “à la Baja” on a farm with fish ponds. Based on the questionnaires, which the students completed after every training session, it is evident that the students were delighted to participate in this project and they proposed more encounters of a similar nature in the future.

Ms. Andrea Dobosné Csordás from Hungary adds that people from Serbia and Hungary can learn many things from each other – that they have common roots, but over time different national customs formed in the communities, which are also worth getting acquainted with. According to her, the most important cornerstones of the project were the skill of learning from each other, the exercise of tolerance and the knowledge learned about the region’s gastronomic culture.



Common knowledge
about the traditional
gastronomic values
of
the Hungarian - Serbian
border region

Cultural travels in the region of Szeged and Subotica

CULTRAIL was a series of cultural and multimedia events which aimed to strengthen the cultural identity of the twin cities of Subotica and Szeged and to develop neighbourly connections between the people living in the border area through literature. This project built upon the common historical, cultural and economic traditions of the region within the framework theme of travelling by train.

The project partners organised a number of literature readings and festivals which took place in the train stations in Szeged and Subotica. The art relic rail coach (Sínbusz, Šinobus) still running between the two cities, was turned into a festival location featuring Serbian and Hungarian writers. A literature quiz was held for high school students in Vojvodina and Szeged to introduce them to the world of local

literature and literature of the people across the border. In addition to this, the project partners organised conferences on the works of the Subotica-born writers Danilo Kiš and Géza Csáth. The closing event of this project, which successfully brought the people of the border region together through common literature and art, was a photo exhibition in Subotica City Library.

Ms. Gyöngyi Mikola from Hungary says that the Sínbusz Festival was a great opportunity not only for professionals but also for the younger generations, secondary school students and university students, to become familiar with the contemporary culture and the rich shared cultural traditions of the region. It was a cheerful and enjoyable excursion which ought to decrease fears of the borders. The readings, concerts and theatre plays were extremely popular. The train was full, but the other events in the two cities received great attention as

well. New friendships were formed and the connections between Serbian and Hungarian professionals strengthened as well. One of the main advantages of the project was that it connected older and younger generations of artists and other cultural experts. Furthermore, there were a great many press releases about the project, not only in the regional media, but also on important, online cultural portals, because young journalists travelled with the group and they also very much enjoyed the journey. The project provided the participations with new inspiration, and Ms. Mikola has also written several articles and essays on the festival and similar topics.



Mr. Dragan Rokvić from Serbia adds that Šinobus Festival is also known as a “culture smuggling festival”, which means that its main message is that the border is not and cannot be a place of separation, but something that will disappear as part of future European integration processes. Šinobus (an old silver

train from German reparation) is a symbol of long history of travel between the two cities. Besides Šinobus, a journey by bus between Palić-Hajdukovo-Bački vinogradi-Horgoš-Kamaraš that stopped at all the train stations on the way was organised. Old, abandoned waiting rooms were used as a place for artistic performances. The aim was to connect travelling through space with travelling through time, so we evoked memories of eminent writers like Kosztolányi, Kiš. He added that the programmes attracted many eminent writers like Ottó Tolnai, Dragan Velikić, Boško Krstić, István Beszédes, Dejan Matić, Abora Virág, Goran Rem, Marjan Čakanović, Slobodan Bubnjević, Ottó Kiss, Jelena Anđelovski, Jovica Aćin and Dejan Čančarević, as well as musicians like Miroslav Jovančić and Árpád Bakos among many others. The fact that more than one hundred participants, most of them young people, participated in the project through different forms of cultural activities, is a wonderful thing and the main benefit of this project. The participants had the opportunity to learn a lot about shared cultures and history of Subotica and Szeged.

*Novel methods of
the literature
and art education
of the youth*

Lead Beneficiary: Kosztolányi Dezső Theatre

Project partner: MASZK Centre for Hungarian Alternative Theatres Association

Project total budget 99,915.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 84,927.75 €

Project start date 01 09 2011 | **Project end date** 28 02 2013

Joint theatre performance: comprehensive and coherent focus on people living in the border region

This project's keyword was fear. Everything we fear characterises us, characterises our society, our connections, our apathy and our battles. This project focused on the differences in the lives, ways of thinking and the fears of the two settlements covered by the project, Subotica and Szeged. The project partners, theatre companies from both sides of the border, wanted to put on a stage performance conveying the shared problems and situations while at the same time indicating the common cultural values and traditions shared by the different nationalities.

The project partners conducted a survey to identify the major issues, and the actors and theatre professionals from both sides of the border created two plays which

were performed in both cities and at several important theatre festivals. The performances were a huge success and encouraged people to think about the issues presented. This project promoted cultural interaction between different peoples and provided a space for the population to think about all points of connection between, both positive and negative ones.



Mr. István Seres, an actor from Hungary, says that for him this was an outstanding opportunity, adding that the participants shared their cultural heritage, their roots, interests and visions and tried to learn a lot from one another. The main result of the project is the increased sensitivity of society, their changed mind set and the way they think about the art and fear in general, plus getting them accustomed to the idea of accepting diversity. The participants also tried to stress the common Eastern European origin, or more precisely, experiences. In the theatre, the audience was left speechless, and for the artists the opinion of the viewer is much more important than that of the mass media. He also adds that the partner from Serbia was flexible and dynamic, and that he feels that both theatres have fully reached their goals with this project.

The very
expressive
tools of the
theatre



Ms. Szofi Szerda from Serbia says that for her as a citizen of this region it is very important to teach people about tolerance, and to make them want to know more about each other. She thinks there are still too many stereotypes prevalent among the people on both sides of the border, and this project helped in a way to change this a little bit. She explained that it was a good training, and a good working process for the actors, also, because they left the theatre, went out and conducted interviews. They talked to the people, to their audience, which, in fact, is not the traditional way of creating a play. She thinks that a valuable piece of art (theatre play, movies, paintings, photos, etc.) needs to react to everyday life, to the world we live in. These plays did that, she said.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION and HEALTH

Projects aiming to support the development of applied science, including the promotion and popularisation of science, as well as applied research, in the border region.
Projects which promote healthy lifestyles.

Lead Beneficiary: Ministry of Interior, Republic of Serbia, Criminal Investigation Police Department,
National Forensic Centre, Regional Forensic Division in Novi Sad

Project partner: Hungarian Institute for Forensic Sciences

Project total budget 461,748.50 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 392,486.22 €

Project start date 01 03 2013 | **Project end date** 31 08 2014

Novi Sad – Szeged cross-border cooperation in development of harmonized methods and production of common database for the analysis of designer drugs

The main objective of this project was to improve the capacity of both the police forensic laboratories and criminal investigation officers in the chemical analysis of drugs in the border area, in order to combat illicit drug trafficking and organised crime. In recent years, in addition to the “classic” drugs such as heroin, cocaine, MDMA and cannabis, numerous new synthetic compounds have appeared on the black market. The majority of these new designer drugs are not under local and international control even though they can be more dangerous. This posed a challenge for law enforcement agencies which need state-of-the-art equipment to identify and combat new drugs.

This project led to the purchase of instruments and reference materials which facilitated the creation of training for laboratory staff and the development of new designer drug analytical procedures. Another direct benefit of this project was the improvement of the existing analytical drug database in Hungary and the creation of a new database at the Novi Sad laboratory, the first of its kind in Serbia. Criminal investigation officers were also equipped with and trained in the use of spot tests. This project built on the already established collaboration between the Ministries of Interior in both countries and has contributed to the prevention of organised crime and the creation of a safer border area.

Prevention of organized
crime:
identification and
analysis of the new
synthetic designer
drugs

People interviewed in Serbia say that the implementation of this project significantly increased the capacities of the Serbian Ministry of Interior in the fight against organised crime and illicit drug trafficking. It has also facilitated the more efficient enforcement of criminal proceedings before the courts in the territory in which the project was implemented as well as throughout all of Serbia. They explain that one of the many results of the work is a joint database of new designer drug that simplifies complex analyses as well as monitoring of current trends in dispersion of drugs. This database is a permanent result of great importance for both sides participating in the project. They underscore that the cooperation between project partners was at a very high level in terms of exchange of mutual ideas and solutions. This is especially important for forensic experts who must closely cooperate on identifying new designer drugs that are very challenging to analyse. Also, at the training in the use of spot tests, Serbian criminal investigation officers had the opportunity to exchange experiences with colleagues from Hungary.

Dr. Márta Juhász, a forensic chemist from Hungary, says that during the last few years the palette of illicit drugs has significantly changed worldwide, resulting in the spreading of new designer drugs. The improved equipment and the new methods developed increase the number and quality of material evidence, allowing for more successful investigation and prosecution. The equipping of the forensic regional laboratory in Szeged and also in Novi Sad, the chemical database of newly appearing designer drugs created in Novi Sad and the improved existing database in Szeged were significant project results. She notes that the number of seizures of the illegal drugs in the region along the borderline of Hungary and Serbia seems to have decreased. She, however, cautions that it would be difficult to find a correlation between spot test application and drugs trafficking. She explains that illicit drug trafficking is a very complex phenomenon that makes conclusions uncertain, but that the project may have significantly contributed to the recorded decrease in seized illegal drugs.

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Lead Beneficiary: Homokhát Microregion Multi-Purpose Association Integrated Social and Child Welfare Centre

Project partner: Exspecto Foundation of Mental Hygiene

Project total budget 63,600.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 54,060.00 €

Project start date 01 11 2011 | **Project end date** 31 10 2012

Drugs do not know borders

Border regions have always been at risk of higher levels of drug use due to weak connections and a lack of coordinated policies and actions of all the authorities and organisations in bordering countries. In the Hungary-Serbia border area, the border protection forces and police, while having contact with their colleagues on the other side of the border, do not collaborate closely with the other country's municipal institutions and drug prevention NGOs. The objective of the project was to harmonise drug prevention programmes on both sides of the border, facilitate the exchange of experiences and translate this knowledge into practice – all in order to reduce drug use in the region by providing adequate information to the target groups about drug addiction, help and treatment, and innovative and effective approaches to prevent drug abuse.

The project partners organised a large number of well-designed and targeted events and activities. Fourteen workshops on the dangers of drugs where experts and ex-addicts shared their experiences were held for children and nine groups of Homokhát Subregion high school students visited a drug exhibition in Subotica. Hungarian drug prevention experts visited institutions in Subotica and defined long-term cooperation strategies, and Hungarian and Serbian students attended Exspecto Foundation of Mental Hygiene workshops and an exhibition. Subotica's main square hosted an event on International Day against Drug Abuse and city was the venue for workshops attended by more than 120 school children. A survey was conducted looking into drug consumption habits, attitudes and knowledge and a border-area study was compiled in three languages.



A girl from Ásotthalom, says that drug abuse is not common in Ásotthalom and never has been, but she wanted to know what was going on in the world. When she was asked to participate, she immediately said yes. For her, the lectures about drug use were the most important. It was strange to get to know the life story of some ex-drug users, directly from them themselves; about how psychoactive substances took over his or her life with them being completely unaware of it.

Drug prevention
programmes
harmonised
on both sides of
the border

Ms. Violeta Vrcelj Odri from Serbia believes that exchanging experiences with experts from the region, dealing with the same or similar issues, is of huge importance for professional development and for raising the level of services. As a pedagogue working with kindergarten teachers, she has experienced on multiple occasions that professional tours give a person invaluable stimulus to rethink one's own practices in a critical way. Experiences gained in conversations with experts and direct insight into the way institutions function are, in her opinion, crucial for initiating changes. "This is exactly what the DRUGS project offered the experts", she says.



Lead Beneficiary: University of Sciences Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences

Project partners: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Biological Research Centre

Project total budget 178,364.00 € | **Project EU funding (IPA)** 151,609.40 €

Project start date 01 09 2013 | **Project end date** 28 02 2015

Cross-border cooperation in development of a novel herbal drug targeting *Helicobacter pylori*

Helicobacter pylori bacterium is the cause of more than 90% of duodenal and 80% of gastric ulcers, and the major risk factor for gastric cancer and primary gastric lymphoma. Gastric cancer is the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in the world. The antibiotic therapy currently available for treating *H. pylori* infection comes with multiple disadvantages meaning the development of a new, more efficient antimicrobial therapeutic agent is a necessity. The project partners, the University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Biological Research Centre, developed a joint initiative to bring Serbian and Hungarian researchers together with the aim of developing a new, natural-product-based formulation.

Over eighteen months, this project saw a number of essential oils isolated and chemically characterised. The in vitro and in vivo antimicrobial activity of these oils was tested in order to create an optimal formulation with the least adverse effects. The partner institutions benefitted from the results of this outstanding project, since their research capacities were improved and new links were established. These links facilitated the integration of both institutions into the European Research Area, making them more competitive in applications for various national and EU-funded projects. The main output of the project was a new, patented drug formulation – the first step towards mass production and application in the treatment of *H. pylori* infected patients in the border region and worldwide. In the

future, pharmaceutical SMEs may also profit from the possibility of mass producing and distributing a new product thanks to this project.



*Mr. Dejan Orčić, Ph. D., from the University of Novi Sad explains that it is well known that a large percentage of the population (about 50% in this region) is infected with *H. pylori*, the bacterium responsible for the great majority of gastric and duodenal ulcers. This significantly affects the quality of life of infected people (including several members of his family), and can also lead to more severe diseases – gastric carcinoma and gastric lymphoma. As a part of this project, they developed a formulation based on a mixture of essential oils in an optimal ratio, which shows high anti-bacterial activity towards *H. pylori* (stronger than pure oils and some commercial preparations). This project brought together two groups by using complementary approaches. The Novi Sad group specialises in isolation of natural products, chemical characterisation and *in vitro* and *ex vivo* bioactivity evaluation, while the group from Szeged has extensive experience in animal testing and *Helicobacter* studies. Thus, he says,*

*it was only natural for the two groups to combine their strengths and expertise, and the cooperation turned out to be very productive – the results were above expectations. So far, the formulation has been tested both *in vitro*, on cultured bacteria, and *in vivo*, using mice as the model system. *In vivo* tests showed total eradication of *H. pylori*, without observable toxicity against the host. They are currently planning to move the investigations to the next level – clinical studies on humans.*

*Ms. Krisztina Buzás, from the Biological Research Centre, Institute of Biochemistry, Tumour Immunology and Pharmacology Research Group, further adds that the Serbian and Hungarian teams implemented a really successful cooperation and established close ties between the two institutions participating in the project, as well as the two countries. The HELICO project resulted in the formation of a new, respectable network of scientists. Also, it increased the confidence of partner countries in the EU, resulting in new opportunities for social and economic development. She underlined that the percentage of women participants on the Hungarian side was 75%, mainly mothers with children under the age of 10. She also highlights the complementary approach in the cooperation. As a result, the partners have already tested *in vivo* experimental models and completed a patent application. She also says that although the experimental systems showed really promising results, at this moment the formulation is a long way away from human application. She adds that further experiments and involvement of a pharmaceutical company will be necessary in the future.*



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