



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY



Interreg 
SLOVENIA – HUNGARY
European Union | European Regional Development Fund



EVALUATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG V–A SLOVENIA– HUNGARY 2014–2020

IMPACT EVALUATION I

FINAL REPORT

LJUBLJANA, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

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Project: Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary

Contract number: 16/2019

Project number: 182

Keywords: Interreg V-A | Cross border cooperation | Evaluation | Tourism | Cultural heritage | Natural heritage | Institutional capacity | Governance | Slovenia | Hungary

Date: 13 February 2020

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority
AB	Audit Body
AF	Application Form
CA	Certifying Authority
CP SI–HU	Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary 2014–2020
eMS	electronic Monitoring System
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FLC	First Level Control
HU	Hungary
IP	Investment Priority
JS	Joint Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NA	National Authority
PA	Priority Axis
RA	Regional Authority
PP	Project Partner
SI	Slovenia
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference

SUMMARY

The summary of the report refers to the Impact I evaluation of the implementation of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary 2014–2020 (CP SI-HU).

The overall objective of the programme is for the area to become attractive for living, working, investing and undertaking through better capitalising on the existing natural and cultural assets in tourism, catalysing the development of the whole region on the one hand and jointly addressing common problems which call for common solutions on cross-border level on the other. The CP SI-HU contributes to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through preservation of natural and cultural heritage, tourism development and bilateral cooperation.

The evaluation of the impact of the CP SI-HU is based on evaluation questions prepared by the Contracting Authority.

The main evaluation results are briefly presented below, while an in-depth analysis is available in the evaluation report.

PROGRAMME PROGRESS

The CP SI-HU defined nine specific output indicators for two Investment Priorities (six indicators) and Technical Assistance (three indicators). An overview of all planned values, which take into consideration the planned achievements of 24 approved projects, shows, that all respective target values for 2023 will be reached. It is even expected that the values of all output indicators will be greatly exceeded. The programme also achieved all target values for the 2018 milestone of the performance framework. According to the presented data, target values of all milestones will be reached, proving that the programme does not face any major difficulties that would hinder the implementation of projects and the achievement of their target values. The programme will therefore not be subject to financial corrections, i.e. a decommitment by the European Commission. What is more, the programme is well on track in terms of the result indicators, as the target value for the year 2023 was already reached in 2018 for one result indicator, and the second is not far from its target value.

APPROVED PROJECTS

The analysis of approved projects has revealed that the projects and partners among the regions of the programme are diverse and well-balanced in terms of geographical distribution. The division between the two participating countries shows a perfect balance of lead partners (12 from each) and project partners (46 from each). In total, 87 institutions are involved in the CP SI-HU programme. Most of them are from the Slovenian region of Pomurska (31 institutions), followed by the Hungarian counties of Zala (21) and Vas (20), and the Slovenian region of Podravska (10). Most (77 %) of the institutions are involved in one project, while the number of partners in one project ranges between two and nine. As many as 66 % of partners are public entities and 34 % private, both evenly balanced between the two countries. There is a significant difference between the distribution of institutions by type for LPs and PPs as education/training centres and schools, while business support organisations participate only as PP. The data indicate the dominance of

interest groups, including NGOs and local public authorities, as LPs and as PPs. Generally, the partnerships are solid and the quality of cooperation among partners is assessed as good, while the language remains the greatest barrier for better and stronger cross-border cooperation. The selected target groups are adequate, but in the next financial period more attention should be given to the exact definition of target groups (such as the general public), their involvement and measurement tools. Furthermore, a clear distinction should be made between “informing” target groups about the project and “involving” target groups in project activities.

PROGRAMME IMPACT

In its current phase, the evaluation of the programme impact is hindered by the fact that the majority of the projects are still in the implementation phase (and some are yet to be contracted). A more coherent impact evaluation will be performed within the following (Impact II) evaluation.

In PA 1PA 1, the majority of activities focused on new tourism products, as well as networking and promotion of the region. The building infrastructure is not the main activity of the projects; they are mainly (in terms of the amount of activities and results) directed towards educating local tourism service providers and establishing connections and networks among various stakeholders. Such activities notably raised the awareness among the service providers regarding the specific needs of tourists/visitors to the area. Besides sustainable tourism product development, the projects included networking, workshops and trainings that will have synergic effects, especially in the sense of cross-border cooperation. The projects brought changes on the local level. The local communities’ awareness about the opportunities offered by the region has increased. As a result, local residents welcome tourists and know how to advise and direct them towards different sights of interest. Also, additional investments were made that were not financed by the programme. The cross-border area is still poorly connected (particularly as regards public transport) and the tourism potential of the area, especially outside the large tourist centres (spa tourism as an example), is still underutilised.

PA 2 projects generally focused on networking, cooperation and connecting of the institutions and organisations in the whole cross-border area. This could be achieved by exchanging experience, organising workshops, preparing databases and promotion. All these efforts have improved conditions for greater future cooperation in the cross-border region. The main impact that can be directly attributed to the programme is the stakeholders’ perception that it is necessary to establish connections and cooperation with partners across the border in order to develop the region as a whole. This was clearly identified in surveys and interviews and is a good basis for future projects and activities. Another important impact is the increased capacity of the stakeholders and target groups involved, which was achieved through workshops, sharing of good practices, study visits and exchange of employees in the field of economic development of the area.

In order to achieve a greater and more lasting impact in the future, the next CP should more effectively built by fostering the achievement of projects already implemented. This can be done

via strategic cross-border project(s), capitalisation projects, linking of similar projects that are implemented at the same time and a small project fund.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The current socio-economic development impacts the programme area and programme objectives in a positive manner. The economic development has been very favourable in the programme area since the beginning of the programme period in 2014. It will have a positive impact on the programme area and can support the achievement of the programme objectives. Tourism turnover, for example, increased significantly in the four eligible areas of the programme and can contribute to the achievement of the set target objective of PA 1 (increase in tourist overnight stays). Apart from the demographic issues, social development is also positive with decreasing unemployment, increasing activity rate and higher net earnings of the employees. Territorial imbalances in this respect, however, have remained and rural areas are lagging behind the industrial and administrative centres. Rural areas (municipalities of these areas) participating in the programme are much less active than the industrial and administrative centres.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The implementation system for the Communication Strategy of the CP SI-HU is well-established and is effectively involving programme partners at the programme level (the JS) and in the two Member States. Coordination among the JS employees who perform communication activities is sufficient and takes place on a daily basis. The partners involved consider the necessary information exchange as sufficient. Satisfactory communication activities of the programme are following the phases of communication as distinguished in the Communication Strategy and progressing appropriately in the light of achieving indicators. Programme communication has covered all the envisaged communication activities and employed the entire range of communication tools, with the programme website serving as the central source of information and the hub of all communication activities. There are no reliable first-hand data available regarding the perception of the CP SI-HU within the target groups and the general public. Beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and target groups find the programme useful and that it addresses the relevant needs of the programme area.

POVZETEK

Povzetek poročila se nanaša na Vrednotenje vpliva I Programa sodelovanja Interreg V–A Slovenija–Madžarska za programsko obdobje 2014–2020 (v nadaljevanju PS SI–HU).

Splošni cilj programa je, da programsko območje postane privlačno za življenje, delo, naložbe, za podjetništvo z boljšim izkoriščanjem obstoječih naravnih in kulturnih vrednot v turizmu in tako spodbuja razvoj celotne regije ter vzajemno obravnava in rešuje tiste skupne probleme, ki zahtevajo skupne rešitve na ravni čezmejnega sodelovanja. PS SI–HU z ohranjanjem naravne in kulturne dediščine, razvoja turizma in čezmejnem sodelovanjem, prispeva k pametni, trajnostni in vključujoči rasti.

Vrednotenje vpliva PS SI–HU temelji na specifičnih evalvacijskih vprašanjih, ki jih je pripravil naročnik.

V nadaljevanju so na kratko predstavljeni ključni rezultati vrednotenja, medtem ko so poglobljene analize na voljo v samem poročilu vrednotenja.

NAPREDEK PROGRAMA

PS SI–HU opredeljuje 9 kazalnikov neposrednega učinka. Šest za dve prednostni naložbi in tri za tehnično pomoč. Pregled načrtovanih vrednosti, ki upoštevajo ciljne vrednosti 24 potrjenih projektov, izkazuje, da bodo vse ciljne vrednosti za leto 2023 dosežene. Pričakuje se celo, da bodo vrednosti vseh kazalnikov neposrednega učinka močno presežene. Program dosega tudi vse ciljne vrednosti okvira uspešnosti za leto 2018. Glede na razpoložljive podatke bodo tako doseženi vsi mejniki, kar dokazuje, da se program ne sooča z večmi težavami, ki bi vplivale na izvedbo projektov in njihovih dosežkov. Posledično program ne bo podvržen korekcijam (t.i. prenehanje obveznosti) s strani Evropske komisije. Program je tudi na dobri poti k doseganju kazalnikov rezultata. Za enega je bila ciljna vrednost za leto 2023 dosežena že v letu 2018, medtem ko vrednost drugega ni daleč od načrtovane ciljne vrednosti.

ODOBRENI PROJEKTI

Analiza odobrenih projektov kaže raznoliko in dobro uravnoteženo geografsko razporeditev projektov in projektnih partnerjev po regijah. Razporeditev med sodelujočima državama kaže popolno ravnovesje tako vodilnih (12 iz vsake države) kot projektnih partnerjev (46 iz vsake). V PS SI–HU je vključenih 87 institucij. Večina jih prihaja iz Pomurske statistične regije (31 institucij), ki ji sledita Madžarska Železna županija (21) in županija Zala (20), ter Podravska statistična regija (10). Večina (77 %) institucij sodeluje v enem projektu, kjer se število partnerjev v projektu giba v razponu med dva in devet. 66 % partnerjev predstavljajo javne institucije, 34% pa zasebne in so enakomerno razporejene med vključenima državama. Opaziti je razliko med razporeditvijo institucij glede na tip (VP ali PP). Izobraževalne ustanove ter organizacije za podporo podjetjem sodelujejo zgolj kot partnerji. Podatki kažejo, da tako med vodilnimi partnerji, kot tudi projektnimi partnerji prevladujejo lokalne uprave (občine) ter interesne skupine in neprofitne organizacije in združenja (vključno z NVO). Na splošno so partnerstva opredeljena kot stabilna in kvaliteta sodelovanja med posameznimi partnerji kot dobra, medtem ko jezik ostaja največja ovira za še

boljše in močnejše čezmejno sodelovanje. Izbrane ciljne skupine so ustrezne, vendar je potrebno v prihodnjem programskem obdobju več pozornosti nameniti njihovi natančnejši opredelitvi (zlasti na primer ciljna skupina splošne javnosti). Več pozornosti je potrebno nameniti tudi načinu njihove vključenosti v projekt ter načinom merjenja (štetja). Poleg tega je v prihodnje potrebno določiti tudi jasno razlikovanje med »obveščanjem« ciljnih skupin o projektu ter »vključevanjem« ciljnih skupin v projektne aktivnosti.

VPLIV PROGRAMA

V trenutni fazi vrednotenja je zmožnost vrednotenja vpliva programa omejena zaradi dejstva, da je večina projektov še vedno v fazi izvajanja, z nekaterimi projekti pa bodo pogodbe šele podpisane. Celostno vrednotenje vpliva programa bo izvedeno v okviru naslednjega vrednotenja (Vrednotenje vpliva II).

V okviru 1. prednostne osi je bila večina projektnih aktivnosti usmerjena v razvoj novih turističnih produktov, mreženje ter promocijo območja. Gradnja nove infrastrukture ne predstavlja prevladujoče aktivnosti projektov ampak so večinoma (po številu aktivnosti in rezultatov) usmerjeni k izobraževanju lokalnih turističnih ponudnikov in vzpostavitvi povezav ter mrež med različnimi deležniki. Tovrstne aktivnosti pomembno prispevajo k ozaveščanju ponudnikov turističnih storitev o potrebah turistov/gostov na območju. Projekti so poleg razvoja trajnostnih turističnih produktov vključevali tudi mreženje ponudnikov, izvedbo delavnic ter treningov, ki bodo imeli sinergijski učinek zlasti v smislu čezmejnega sodelovanja. Projekti so prinesli spremembe na lokalni ravni. V lokalnem okolju se je dvignila zavest o možnostih, ki jih ponuja regija. Posledično lokalno prebivalstvo bolje sprejema turiste in jim lahko bolje svetuje ter jih usmerja k različnim znamenitostim območja. Kot posledica projektov, so bile izvedene tudi dodatne naložbe, ki niso bile financirane s strani programa. Čezmejno območje je še vedno slabo povezano (zlasti na področju javnega prevoza) in turistični potencial območja, zlasti izven večjih turističnih centrov (na primer zdravilišča), je še vedno premalo izkoriščen.

Projekti 2. prednostne osi so se pretežno osredotočili na mreženje, sodelovanje in povezovanje med institucijami in organizacijami na celotnem čezmejnem območju. To se je naslavljal z izmenjavo izkušenj, delavnicami, pripravo skupnih podatkovnih baz ter promocijo. Tovrstne aktivnosti vodijo v boljše čezmejno sodelovanje v prihodnje. Glavni vpliv, ki ga lahko neposredno pripišemo programu, je večje zavedanje deležnikov, da je za razvoj programskega območja kot celote ključno vzpostaviti povezave in sodelovanje s partnerji na drugi strani meje. To je bilo jasno zaznati v izvedenih anketah in intervjujih in predstavlja dobro osnovo za prihodnje projekte in njihove aktivnosti. Drug pomemben vpliv je povečana zmogljivost vključenih deležnikov in ciljnih skupin, kar je bilo doseženo z delavnicami, izmenjavami dobrih praks, študijskimi obiski in izmenjavo zaposlenih na področju gospodarskega razvoja programskega območja.

Da bi v prihodnjem programskem obdobju dosegli še večji in trajnejši vpliv, bi moral prihodnji program bolj učinkovito graditi na dosežkih že izvedenih projektov. To se lahko doseže z opredelitvijo strateških razvojnih čezmejnih projektov, skladom za male projekte, kapitalizacijo že izvedenih projektov in povezovanjem sorodnih projektov, ki se izvajajo istočasno.

SOCIOEKONOMSKA ANALIZA

Trenuten socioekonomski razvoj ima pozitiven vpliv na programsko območje in cilje PS SI–HU. Gospodarski razvoj celotnega programskega območja je bil od leta 2014 dalje, torej od začetka programskega obdobja, ugoden. Prihodek s strani turizma se je znatno povečal, kar sledi doseganju kazalnika rezultata prve prednostne osi (povečanje nočitev na programskem območju). Z izjemo demografskih trendov je družben razvoj pozitiven saj se je na celotnem programskem območju zmanjšala nezaposlenost, povečala stopnja aktivnosti in neto zaslužki zaposlenih. Kljub temu so neravnovesja med razvitostjo posameznih regij ostala in podeželska območja še vedno zaostajajo za industrijskimi in administrativnimi središči. Zainteresiranost občin iz podeželja za sodelovanje v programu je precej nižja od tistih iz industrijskih ali upravnih središč.

KOMUNIKACIJSKA STRATEGIJA

Sistem izvajanja komunikacijske strategije PS SI–HU je dobro uveljavljen in učinkovito vključuje vse partnerje na programskem nivoju (Skupni sekretariat) in v obeh državah članicah. Koordinacija med zaposlenimi v Skupnem sekretariatu, ki izvajajo komunikacijske aktivnosti poteka redno in utečeno. Programski partnerji ocenjujejo izmenjavo informacij kot zadostno. Komunikacijske dejavnosti programa zgledno sledijo fazam komunikacije, ki so opredeljene v komunikacijski strategiji in v luči doseganja kazalnikov ustrezno napredujejo. Komunikacijske aktivnosti programa zajemajo vsa predvidena komunikacijska orodja pri čemer je spletna stran programa prepoznana kot glavni vir informacij in vozlišče komunikacijskih aktivnosti. Neposrednih zanesljivih podatkov, ki bi govorili o dojetanju programa s strani ciljnih skupin in splošne javnosti, ni na voljo. Upravičenci ter ciljne skupine prepoznavajo uporabno vrednost programa in menijo, da ustrezno naslavlja potrebe programskega območja.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

Az összefoglaló az Interreg V-A Szlovénia-Magyarország 2014-2020 Együttműködési Program (CP SI-HU) megvalósításának „Hatásértékelés I” elemére vonatkozik.

A program átfogó célja, hogy a térség olyan területté váljon, amely vonzó élőhelyet, munkahelyet, befektetési lehetőséget biztosít úgy, hogy a helyi természeti és kulturális értékekre épít a turizmusban, ezen keresztül katalizálva a teljes térség fejlődését, másrészt pedig megcélozza a közös határtérségi problémák megoldását határon átnyúló szinten. A CP SI-HU program hozzájárul az intelligens, fenntartható és inkluzív növekedéshez a természeti és kulturális örökség megőrzése, a turizmus fejlesztése és a bilaterális kapcsolatok révén.

A CP SI-HU hatásértékelése a Szerződő Hatóság által összeállított értékelési kérdések alapján készült.

Az értékelés fő eredményeinek rövid bemutatása az alábbiakban történik, míg a részletes elemzés az értékelési jelentésben található.

PROGRAM ELŐREHALADÁSA

A CP SI-HU kilenc specifikus output indikátort definiált a két beruházási prioritáshoz (6 indikátor), illetve a Technikai Segítségnyújtáshoz kapcsolódóan (3 indikátor). A tervezett értékek áttekintése, amely figyelembe veszi a 24 jóváhagyott projekt által tervezett eredményeket, azt mutatja, hogy az összes célértéket 2023-ra el fogják érni. Sőt az várható, hogy az összes output indikátor értékeit túl fogják teljesíteni. A program elérte a teljesítménykeret 2018 évre vonatkozó célértékeit is. A bemutatott adatok alapján az összes mérföldkövet célértéke elérésre került, ami jelzi, hogy a program nem néz szembe olyan főbb nehézségekkel, amelyek a projektek megvalósítását és azok eredményeinek elérését akadályozzák. Ennélfogva a programot pénzügyi korrekció, i.e az Európai Bizottság kötelezettségvállalásának visszavonása, sem fogja érinteni. Sőt a program jó úton halad az eredményindikátorok tekintetében is, mivel az egyik 2023-ra vonatkozó indikátor értékét már 2018-ban elérték, és a másik értéke sincs már messze a célértéktől.

JÓVÁHAGYOTT PROJEKTEK

A jóváhagyott projektek elemzése a projektek és partnerek diverzifikált és jól kiegyensúlyozott földrajzi megoszlását mutatja a programterület régiói között. A két ország közötti megosztás egyensúlyt mutat a vezető partnerek (12 mindkét országból) és a projekt partnerek (46 mindkét országból) tekintetében. Összesen 87 intézmény került bevonásra a CP SI-HU programba. A legtöbb a szlovén Pomurska régióban található (31 intézmény), amelyek a magyar Zala (21) és Vas (20) megye követ, illetve a szlovén Podravska régió (10). A legtöbb intézmény (77 %) csak egy projektben vesz részt, miközben a partnerek száma egy projektben belül kettő és kilenc között változik. A partnerek 66 %-a közintézmény, 34 %-a magánjellegű szervezet, és a két ország közötti megoszlásuk egyforma. Jelentős különbség van az intézmények megoszlásában típusok szerint a vezető és a résztvevő partnerek tekintetében, mivel oktatási/képzési központok és iskolák, illetve üzleti támogató szervezetek csak, mint résztvevő partnerként vesznek részt. Az adatok az érdekképviselői szervek dominanciáját mutatják, beleértve az NGO-kat és a helyi

hatóságokat (önkormányzatok), akár vezető, akár résztvevő partnerként. Általában a partneri viszony szilárd és a partnerek közötti együttműködés minősége jónak értékelhető, miközben a nyelv az egyik fő korlátja a jobb és erősebb határon átnyúló együttműködésnek. A kiválasztott célcsoportok megfelelőek, de a következő pénzügyi periódusban több figyelmet kell szentelni a célcsoportok pontosabb meghatározásának (mint pl. a közvélemény), a részvételüknek és a mérésüknek. Világosan meg kell határozni, hogy mi a különbség a célcsoportok "informálása" és a projekt tevékenységekbe történő "bevonása" között.

PROGRAM HATÁSOK

Az értékelés jelenlegi fázisában a program értékelését hátráltatta az a tény, hogy a projektek többsége még a megvalósítási fázisában van (és néhányra még csak most kötik a szerződést). Koherensebb hatásértékelést a következő értékeléskor (Hatásértékelés II) lehet elvégezni.

A PA 1 komponens keretében a tevékenységek többsége új turisztikai termékre, hálózatépítésre és a régió promóciójára fókuszál. Az infrastruktúra építése nem domináns a projekteknél és azok főként (tevékenységek és eredmények tekintetében) a helyi turisztikai szolgáltatók képzésére, illetve az érintettek közötti kapcsolatok kialakítására és a hálózatépítésre irányulnak.

Ezek a tevékenységek felhívták a szolgáltatók figyelmét a területre érkező turisták/látogatók speciális igényeire. A fenntartható turisztikai termék-fejlesztések mellett a projektek magukban foglaltak hálózatépítést, workshopokat és tréningeket, ami szinergia hatásokkal jár, különösen a határon átnyúló együttműködést illetően. A projektek helyi szinten hoztak változásokat. A helyi közösségek részéről növekedett a figyelem a régió által nyújtott lehetőségek irányába. Ennek eredményeképp a helyi lakosok turistákat fogadnak és tudják, hogyan adjanak nekik tanácsot, illetve irányítsák őket a különböző érdeklődési pontok felé. Kiegészítő beruházásokra is sor került, amelyeket nem a Program finanszírozott. A határmenti terület összekapcsolása még elmaradott (különösen a közösségi közlekedést illetően) és a terület turisztikai potenciálja, különösen a nagy turisztikai centrumokon (pl. gyógyfürdők) kívül meg alulhasznosított.

A PA 2 projektjei általában a hálózatépítésre, együttműködésre és intézmények és szervezetek közötti kapcsolatokra fókuszáltak a teljes határmenti területen, amit a tapasztalatok cseréjével, workshopokkal, adatbázisok készítésével és promócióval érték el. Mindez hozzájárult a feltételek javításához, hogy a jövőben még több határon átnyúló együttműködés jöjjön létre. A legjelentősebb hatás, ami a programnak tulajdonítható, az a felismerés az érintettek oldaláról, hogy szükséges a kapcsolatok kialakítása és az együttműködés a határon túli partnerekkel annak érdekében, hogy a teljes régiót fejleszteni lehessen. A felmérésekben és interjúk során mindez világosan azonosítható volt és ez jó alapot képez a jövőbeni projektek és tevékenységek számára.

További fontos hatás a bevont érintettek és célcsoportok kapacitásainak növekedése, amit a workshopok, jó gyakorlatok cseréje, tanulmányutak és a gazdaságfejlesztés területén történt munkavállalók cseréje révén értek el.

Annak érdekében, hogy még nagyobb és tartósabb hatást érjenek el a jövőben, a következő CP-nek hatékonyabban kell építenie a már megvalósított projektek eredményeinek erősítésére. Ez

megvalósítható stratégiai határon átnyúló projektek révén, projektek kapitalizációjával, egy időben megvalósítandó hasonló jellegű projektek összekötésével és kis projektalap bevonásával.

TÁRSADALMI-GAZDASÁGI ÁTTEKINTÉS

A jelenlegi társadalmi-gazdasági helyzet pozitív hatást gyakorol a programterületre és a program céljaira. A gazdasági fejlődés nagyon kedvező a programterületen 2014 óta, amikor a programperiódus kezdődött. A program területét pozitívan érinti és támogatja a program céljainak elérését. A turisztikai forgalom pl. jelentősen növekedett a program négy jogosult területén, ami hozzájárulhat az 1. Prioritási Tengely kijelölt céljának az eléréséhez (vendégéjszakák számának növekedése). Eltekintve a demográfiai kérdésektől, a társadalmi fejlődés szintén pozitív beleértve a csökkenő munkanélküliséget, növekvő aktivitási rátát, illetve az alkalmazottak és munkások magasabb nettó keresetét. Területi egyenlőtlenségek ebben a tekintetben azonban fennmaradtak, és a vidéki területek elmaradnak az ipari és adminisztratív központoktól. A vidéki területek aktivitása (területek önkormányzatai) a programban való részvételt illetően sokkal alacsonyabb, mint az ipari és adminisztratív központoké.

KOMMUNIKÁCIÓS STRATÉGIA

A CP SI-HU kommunikációs stratégiájának megvalósítási rendszere jól van kialakítva és hatékonyan vonja be a program-partnereket programszinten (Közös Titkárság) és a két tagországban. A Közös Titkárság kommunikációs tevékenységbe bevont alkalmazottai között meglévő koordináció megfelelő és napi szinten történik. Az érintett partnerek a szükséges információcserét elegendőnek tartják. Kielégítő kommunikációs tevékenységek kapcsolódnak a kommunikációs fázisokhoz a kommunikációs stratégiában történt elkülönítés szerint és megfelelően haladnak előre az indikátorok elérésének fényében.

A program kommunikációja lefedi az összes előre tervezett kommunikációs tevékenységet és a kommunikációs eszközök széles körét alkalmazta, amelyek közül a Program weboldala a program fő információs forrása és az összes kommunikációs tevékenységek központja. Nincs megbízható, első kézből származó információ arra vonatkozólag, hogyan tekintenek a célcsoportok és a közvélemény a CP SI-HU programra. A kedvezményezettek, nem-kedvezményezettek és a célcsoportok a programot hasznosnak találják, és úgy vélik, hogy az a programterület releváns igényeit célozza.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy of the Republic of Slovenia carried out a tender for the evaluation of the impact of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary 2014–2020 (CP SI-HU), which was published on the web portal eNaročanje on 13 February 2019 (tender number: JN000785/2019).

Based on the bid No. 411/2019, the tender was awarded to ZaVita, d.o.o. in cooperation with subcontractor Raskó BCA-Consulting Ltd.

1.1 SUBJECT, PURPOSE, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The subject of the Evaluation Report is an evaluation of the impact of the CP SI-HU.

The purpose of the evaluation is for an independent external evaluator to evaluate the impact of the programme on the programme area.

The objectives of the evaluation of the impact of the programme according to the Terms of Reference are to:

- assess the impact of both priority axes,
- review the achievement of the indicators (by the cut-off date of 31 December 2019),
- review and analyse target groups, indicative activities, and the structure of beneficiaries,
- valuate the guiding principles and horizontal principles,
- carry out a socio-economic overview of the programme area with a SWOT analysis,
- evaluate the differences between the achieved results of the programme and the planned values,
- evaluate the contribution to the EU 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,
- evaluate the Communication Strategy according to the planned objectives.

The aim of the evaluation is therefore to provide the Contracting Authority with relevant, credible and applicable information. Based on different data sources and their triangulation, the Evaluation Team formed conclusions and recommendations for further improvement of programme implementation as well as other solutions and suggestions to enhance the impact of the programme in the current and in the following programme period.

The evaluation was carried out according to the Evaluation Plan of the CP SI-HU and pursuant to Articles 54 and 56 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, which define general evaluation provisions and evaluations during the programming period.

2 METHODOLOGY

Impact I evaluation of the CP SI-HU is based on evaluation questions prepared by the Contracting Authority, which have been published in the Terms of Reference (ToR). This includes evaluation questions that refer to the evaluation of the programme (procedures, tools, communication, etc.), of programme beneficiaries (analysis of approved projects), and of the impact of approved projects. In the course of elaborating and implementing the methodological approach, the Evaluation Team followed established methodological approaches and guidelines for evaluating the European Cohesion Policy measures (Result-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System and OECD DAC Evaluation Network¹).

Within the Inception Report, a set of evaluation methods was presented to the Contracting Authority. The methods and approaches described below were adapted to the objective factors such as availability of contact persons, acquisition of data, etc. The methods used were harmonised at meetings and through correspondence with the Contracting Authority.

ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA (LITERATURE OVERVIEW)

The documentation provided directly by the Contracting Authority (CP SI-HU, Communication Strategy, annual reports, Implementation Manual, Evaluation Plan with previous evaluations, programme forms, tools, etc.) served as primary data sources, along with other relevant data (e.g. legal framework, including EU regulations) obtained by the Evaluation Team.

STATISTICAL DATA

The relevant, publicly available statistical data were obtained in order to support the evaluation, notably the socio-economic analysis.

INTERVIEWS WITH PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

In order to gain a complete insight into the implementation of the programme from the managing and implementing structures, in-depth interviews were conducted with the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority.

The purpose of the interviews was to clarify individual phases of programme implementation and identify possible bottlenecks or practices that may hinder programme implementation.

E-SURVEY FOR PROGRAMME STRUCTURES

In order to gain an overview of the *modus operandi* of the functioning and cooperation among the programme structures involved in the implementation of the CP SI-HU, the Evaluation Team conducted an e-survey and disseminated it among the programme structures (with the exception of JS and MA) and the members of the Monitoring Committee.

The e-survey was disseminated on 4 October 2019 and indicated a deadline of 11 October. Due to a poor response rate, the Evaluation Team and the JS agreed to send a reminder on 14 October 2019 and extended the deadline to 21 October. By the deadline (and closure of the e-survey),

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

three programme structures did not fill out the questionnaire (HU FLC, AA and AB). In addition, only one member of the MC filled out the questionnaire.

The e-survey was conducted using 1ka, a free online survey tool.

INTERVIEWS WITH LEAD AND SELECTED PROJECT PARTNERS

In order to understand the programme implementation, its performance and impact of the project activities, the Evaluation Team performed interviews with lead partners of the projects implemented within the CP SI-HU.

As the impact of the programme is the main focus of the Evaluation Report, the interviews in this phase (Impact I) were performed only with the lead partners of the projects that are already finished or are in the last third of their implementation. According to the data provided by the JS, there are 13 such projects:

- Guide2Visit
- ESCAPE
- IronCurtainCycling
- e-documenta Pannonica
- E-ECONOMY
- HORSE BASED TOURISM - HBT
- Back in the day
- Folk Music Heritage
- GardEN
- Green Exercise
- GO IN NATURE
- Right Profession II
- MURA RABA TOUR

In addition, interviews were performed with selected project partners. These partners (institutions) were selected based on their involvement in the programme (i.e. participation in several projects) and field of work.

A list of interviews performed is available in Annex I of this report.

E-SURVEY FOR PROJECT TARGET GROUPS

In order to measure the impact of the project activities and to obtain feedback from the addressed target groups, a short e-survey was conducted. The e-survey focused on the means of involvement in the projects, and the quality and relevance of the activities they have participated in.

The e-survey was disseminated on 4 October 2019 and indicated a deadline of 11 October. It was disseminated by the JS, using all available communication tools (newsletter, web site and Facebook page). In addition, a customised e-mail was sent by the JS to the lead partners of all approved projects, along with a special emphasis that it should be further disseminated to the project target groups. In order to obtain the highest possible number of respondents, the

Evaluation Team and the JS agreed to send a reminder on 15 October 2019 and to extend the deadline to 17 October.

The questionnaire was available in both national languages (Slovenian and Hungarian). By the deadline, 148 respondents completed the e-survey, among which 60 (41 %) completed the Hungarian version, and 88 (59 %) the Slovenian one. The structure of respondents is indicated in the table 1.

Table 1: Structure of respondents in the e-survey for target groups

TARGET GROUP	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS*	SHARE (%)
Business support organisation	8	5 %
Enterprise, excluding SME	29	20 %
SME	25	17 %
Education/training centre and school	5	3 %
Higher education and research	1	1 %
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	6	4 %
Local public authority (municipality)	11	7 %
Regional public authority	5	3 %
National public authority	2	1 %
Sectoral agency	1	1 %
Interest groups including NGOs	13	9 %
General public (local residents, tourists, guests, etc.)	20	14 %
International organisation	1	1 %
Other	20	14 %
TOTAL	147	100 %

* Total number of valid respondents. Since no question was marked as obligatory, the number of responses to a specific question may be different.

Source: e-survey for target groups, ZaVita, November 2019

The e-survey was conducted using 1ka, a free online survey tool.

INTERVIEWS WITH NON-BENEFICIARIES

To obtain opinions from the relevant authorities, institutions or individuals of the programme area regarding the impact of the project, the socio-economic situation and consequently the needs of the area, interviews with non-beneficiaries were performed. The topics discussed mainly focused on the impact of the performed projects, acceptance of the programme and the needs of the programme area.

For the Impact I evaluation report, the interview was performed with Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia. Apart from this interview, there were many informal discussions with other colleagues that are experts on relevant fields, institutions, lead partners from projects financed from other programmes, etc.

MEETINGS WITH THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

To carry out a high-quality evaluation, continuous cooperation with the Contracting Authority was crucial. During the evaluation, several meetings, telephone conferences, e-meetings, and consultations were held with representatives of the JS and the Managing Authority (MA) in Maribor in order to clarify certain issues.

We find that the key players in the evaluation process (the JS in particular) are aware of the importance of the evaluation. They gave special priority to the cooperation with the Evaluation Team and were very responsive and proactive in providing the necessary information and data. Consequently, the evaluation results are concrete and substantiated.

TRIANGULATION

By combining the different methods described above, the Evaluation Team gained a better understanding and a comprehensive insight into the subject of the evaluation. Based on the findings obtained by employing various methods, the evaluation subject was highlighted from different angles. This allowed the Evaluation Team to provide the Contracting Authority with relevant and applicable recommendations, notably for the implementation of the following cross-border cooperation programme.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In order to present the geographic dispersion of the approved projects, partners and density of project activities, maps were prepared using the QGIS tool.

2.1 EVALUATION TIMELINE

The evaluation process focused on the evaluation of programme Impact I was carried out according to the time dynamic presented in the table 2. Key milestones (marked bold) were summarised from the indications in the ToR and the Inception Report.

Table 2: Evaluation timeline

PERIOD	ACTIVITY
18 April 2019	Contract signing
17 June 2019	Introductory meeting with the Contracting Authority
2 July 2019	Initiation of evaluation (collection of primary data – programme documents and evaluation guidelines) and preparation of the Inception report
8 July 2019	Submission of the Draft Inception report
July 2019	Coordination with the Contracting Authority on the Inception report
12 July 2019	Submission of Final Inception report
July, August 2019	Primary data analysis and preparation of the final questions for surveys and interviews
14 September 2019	Attendance of the evaluators on the programme “EC Day” event
6 September 2019	Interview with JS and MA in Maribor
4 - 17 October 2019	Dissemination of the e-survey for project target groups
4 – 21 October 2019	Dissemination of the e-survey for programme structures
16 September 2019 – 14 October 2019	On-site interviews with lead partners and non-beneficiaries
9 December 2019	Submission of preliminary evaluation results to the Contracting Authority for coordination
6 th January 2020	Deadline to receive the final (financial) data for evaluation from the Contracting Authority
15 January 2020	Submission of the Draft Evaluation Report
30 January 2020	Deadline to receive the comments from the Contracting Authority on the Draft Evaluation Report

PERIOD	ACTIVITY
8 days after receiving the comments	Coordination with the Contracting Authority on the received comments and preparation of the Final Evaluation Report
	Submission of the Final Evaluation Report
To be decided	Presentation of the final evaluation report at the Monitoring Committee

2.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

The Evaluation Team would like to point out that the e-survey for target groups should be considered with a certain degree of restraint. We can only assume that the lead partners of approved projects disseminated the e-survey to all representatives of their target groups and that the respondents actually were the target groups since we have reason to believe that some of them were project partners themselves.

As the majority of the projects are still in the phase of implementation (and some are yet to be contracted), Impact I evaluation of the PC SI-HU is limited. A more coherent impact evaluation will be performed within the Impact II evaluation.

3 PROGRESS ON PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the programme's progress in achieving specific objectives, focusing on the programme performance framework and its milestones for 2018, as well as programme-specific result indicators. A more detailed overview and analysis of the projects (i.e. structure of beneficiaries, target groups and indicative activities) is presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

The CP SI-HU has set itself an overall objective that the programme area should become an attractive area for living, working, investing and undertaking through better capitalising on the existing natural and cultural assets in tourism, catalysing the development of the whole region on the one hand and jointly addressing those common problems which call for common solutions at CBC level on the other.

To achieve this objective, it defined two priority axes for co-financed projects:

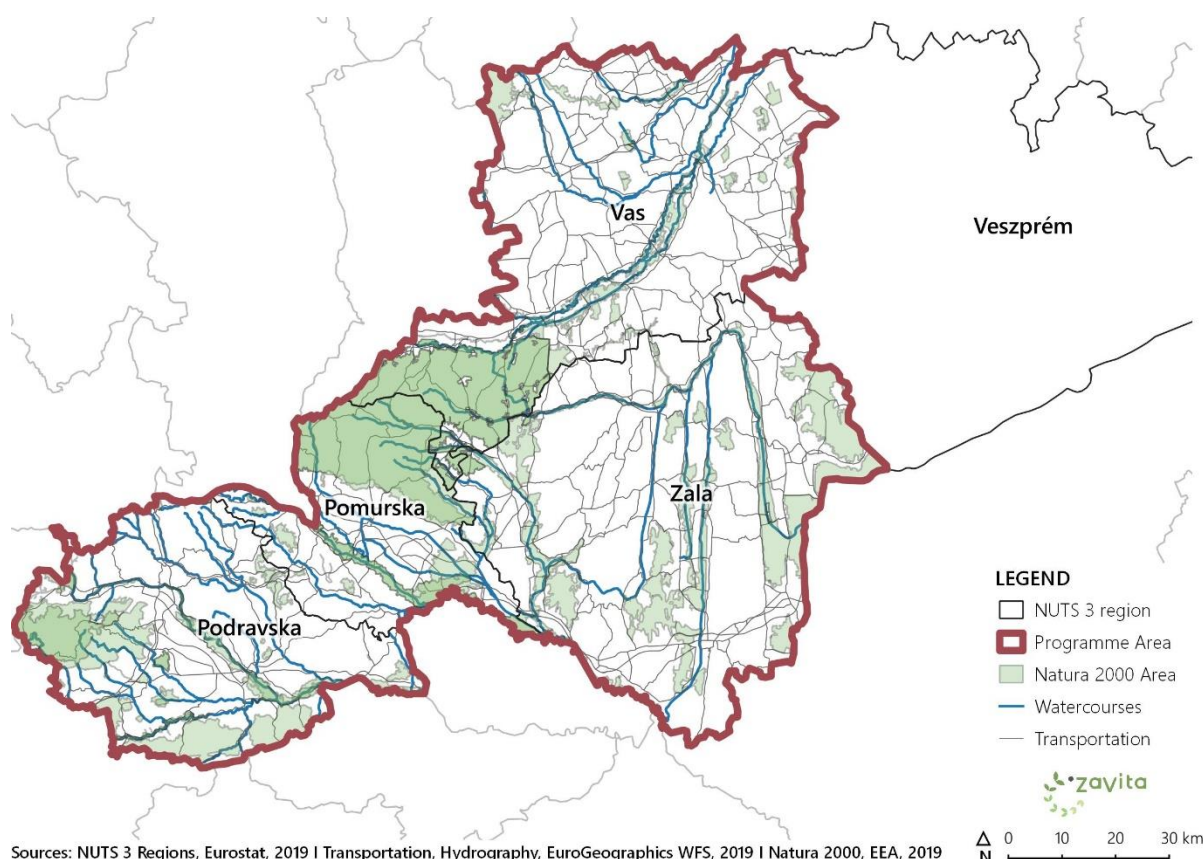
- (1) ATTRACTIVE REGION (Corresponding to the EC Investment Priority 6c) – to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area and to valorise it through development of sustainable tourism, with a strong focus on the less developed areas in terms of tourism (rural, remote areas)
- (2) COOPERATIVE REGION (Corresponding to the EC Investment Priority 11b) – to increase the availability and effectiveness of public services necessary for a better governance on cross-border level, and to support the cooperation between organisations and institutions responsible for mutually important areas in order to enhance cross-border governance.

The eligible area of the CP SI-HU (as indicated on the figure 1) covers a total of four regions and counties: Podravska and Pomurska regions in Slovenia, as well as Vas and Zala counties in Hungary.

The programme area covers 10,658 km² in total, of which two thirds of the area represent the Hungarian, and one third the Slovenian border region. The region is divided by a national border of 102 km in total length. The region occupies the north-eastern part of Slovenia and the south-western extremity of Hungary.

The population of the programme area is slightly less than one million inhabitants, 55 % of them living in Hungary and 45 % in Slovenia.

Figure 1: CP SI-HU Programme Area



Sources: NUTS 3 Regions, Eurostat, 2019 | Transportation, Hydrography, EuroGeographics WFS, 2019 | Natura 2000, EEA, 2019

Source: ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

The program allocated funds for the years 2014-2020 by PA, as shown in the table 3 (technical assistance is not taken into account):

Table 3: Allocation of funds and number of project proposals per PA

PRIORITY AXIS	FUNDS (EUR)	SHARE (%)	NUMBER OF PROJECT PROPOSALS	SHARE (%)
PA 1 – ATTRACTIVE REGION	10,000,000	75.22	109	65.66
PA 2 – COOPERATIVE REGION	3,295,015	24.78	57	34.34
TOTAL	13,295,015.00	100	166	100

Source: Programme website, November 2019

The program operates on the basis of the Open Call system. During its 6 submission deadlines 166 project proposals were received.

As the table 3 shows, interest in PA 2 exceeded (in terms of percentage) the money distributed, while funding for PA 2 amounted to 24.78 %, the percentage of applications submitted was 34.34 %.

However, the projects of PA 1 have much higher budgets (as indicated in the call documentation up to 2,000,000.00 EUR), then the projects of PA 2 (up to 350,000.00 EUR). As a result, the programme structures invested more effort in promoting PA 2, notably before the 6th call.

PA 2 However, after interviews and online surveys, we noticed that partners (especially municipalities) find it easier to identify with tourism-related projects that also enable investments

in infrastructure. In the context of the socioeconomic analysis we analysed areas of cooperation at the institutional level (especially at the local level) and identified thematic fields where they should be enhanced. In our opinion, PA 2 funding for institutional cooperation should be increased.

Within the six deadlines for the submission of project applications, 24 projects were approved. Within each PA, common and programme-specific output indicators were defined for each IP. The values achieved are aggregated values of outputs of approved projects, as indicated by the programme and project intervention logic. This is also reflected in the application form, which creates a clear and direct linkage with project and programme outputs.

The table 4 presents the programme's progress towards the achievement of the target values of programme output indicators for each IP. For each indicator, two values are presented. One is marked "S" and represents the generated values of all approved projects, which contribute to the respective indicator. Thus, they indicate the targeted values of what the projects intend (and are obliged) to perform, but have not necessarily achieved yet. The second set of values, marked "F", shows only the achieved values of the already concluded projects. When the figure is zero, it means that no project that contributes to this indicator has been finished.

The table 4 takes into account the planned values of output indicators of the four projects that were approved within the sixth deadline for the submission of project proposals, although at the time of submitting this report, the contracts with the lead partners of the approved projects were not signed yet.

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators by investment priority

PROJECTS: S – SELECTED F – FULLY IMPLEMENTED	ID	INDICATOR	UNIT	TARGET VALUE (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE						% OF TARGET VALUE
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
IP 6c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage											
S	CO009	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions (EU)	Visits/Year	10.000	0	0	3,000	28,225	44,325	46,325	463.25 %
F					0	0	0	24	498	19,307	193.07 %
S	6c.2	Number of people participating in interpretation and educational events related to the cultural and natural heritage (P)	Number	2,000	0	0	0	3,991	4,261	4,261	213.05 %
F					0	0	0	0	868	3,373	186.65 %
S	6c.3	Number of joint cross-border touristic products / services newly developed (P)	Number	12	0	0	8	75	95	96	800 %
F					0	0	0	2	10	54	450 %
S	6c.4	Length of cycle tracks and footpaths	Km	8	0	0	0	368.44	368.44	368.44	4,605.50 %
F					0	0	0	0	0	0.92	11.50 %
IP 11b: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions											
S	11.1	Number of institutions/organizations involved in cross-border initiatives	Number	100	0	0	0	259	273	455	455 %
F					0	0	0	248	337	396	396 %
S	11.2	Number of joint professional agreements and protocols	Number	20	0	0	0	13	16	23	115 %
F					0	0	0	0	4	16	80 %
PA 3: Technical Assistance											
S	3.1	Number of successfully implemented projects	Number	36	0	0	38	41	42	42	116.67 %
F					0	0	0	0	0	6	71.43 %
S	3.2	Number of programme events	Number	14	0	0	14	14	14	14	100 %
F					0	0	0	6	8	10	71.43 %
S	3.3	Full time equivalent positions financed by the Technical Assistance for the implementation of the Cooperation Programme	Number	9	0	0	3.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	84.44 %
F					0	0	0	6.01	8.01	8.01	89.00 %

Source: Data, acquired by the JS and elaborated by ZaVita d.o.o., January 2020

The CP SI-HU defined nine specific output indicators for two Investment Priorities (six indicators) and Technical Assistance (three indicators). An overview of all planned values, which take into consideration the planned achievements of 24 approved projects, shows that all respective target values for 2023 will be reached. It is even expected that the values of all output indicators will be greatly exceeded.

Such an overview of programme output indicators represents a useful tool for monitoring programme progress and identifying areas of support where the generation of future projects can be stimulated. The JS has already used this approach before the deadline of the last (sixth) submission of project proposals and informed (via the website and workshops) potential applicants about the missing values of some indicators, thus demonstrating what kind of projects the programme would like to support.

The table 5 shows the programme progress in achieving the target values of the performance framework, focusing on indicating the reached values of a milestone for 2018. According to the presented data obtained from the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for the year 2018, all milestone values as defined in the performance framework were reached. This proves that the programme is performing well and has no major difficulties that would hinder the implementation of projects and their achievements. Consequently, the programme will not be subject to financial corrections, i.e. a decommitment by the European Commission. According to the defined activities and target values of the approved projects and the established structures, it is expected that the final target values for the year 2023 will also be reached.

Table 5: Programme achievement within the performance framework

PA	INDICATOR TYPE	ID	INDICATOR	UNIT	FINAL TARGET (2023)	MILESTONE (2018)	ACHIEVED VALUE IN 2018	% OF MILESTONE VALUE
1	Financial	P1.1	Amount of certified expenditure for PA 1	EUR	11,764,705.89	600,000.00	3,868,442.81	644.74 %
	Output	CO009	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Visits/Year	10,000	800	12,653	1,581.63 %
2	Financial	P2.1	Amount of certified expenditure for PA 2	EUR	3,876,488.24	465,755.10	502,279.34	107.84 %
	Output	11.1	Number of institutions/organizations involved in cross-border cooperation	Number	100	12	337	2,808.33 %
	Output	11.2	Number of joint professional agreements and protocols	Number	20	3	4	133.33 %

Source: Data, acquired by the JS and elaborated by ZaVita d.o.o., January 2020

The table 6 represents the values of programme-specific result indicators, which had to be reported in 2018. As shown, the programme is well on track also regarding the result indicators where by the target value for the year 2023 was already reached for one result indicator in 2018, and the second is not far from its target value.

Table 6: Programme result indicators

ID	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT UNIT	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET VALUE (2023)	INTERIM VALUE (YEAR)	TREND (▲/●/▼)
1.1	Number of overnight stays in the programme area	Number	5,269,268 (2014)	5,532,728	6,601,261 (2018)	▲
2.1	The level of cross-border cooperation at institutional level in the programme area	Scale	3.05 (2015)	3.66	3.58 (2018)	▲

Source: CP SI-HU Annual Implementation Report 2018

As regards financial realization on the cut-off date of 31 December 2019, the programme has (after the approval of the four projects within the sixth deadline) allocated all available programme funds. This means that the programme is well on track for heaving good financial realisation after the implementation of all 24 approved projects. By the end of the year 2019, the programme reimbursed (paid out to) the beneficiaries a total sum of EUR 6,151,007.28 (TA included) which represents 41.57 % of all allocated and available funds.

Table 7: Programme financial realisation

PA	AVAILABLE FUNDS (AS STATED IN THE CP SI-HU)	ALLOCATED FUNDS	SHARE OF AVAILABLE FUNDS	PAYED FUNDS	SHARE OF ALLOCATED FUNDS
PA 1	10,000,000.00 EUR	10,000,000.00 EUR	100 %	4,860,262.90 EUR	48.60 %
PA 2	3,295,015.00 EUR	3,295,015.00 EUR	100 %	865,579.58 EUR	26.27 %
TA	1,500,00.00 EUR	1,500,00.00 EUR	100 %	425,164.80 EUR	28.34 %
TOTAL	14,795,015.00 EUR	14,795,015.00 EUR	100 %	6,151,007.28 EUR	41.57 %

Source: Data acquired from the JS, indicating the cut-off date 31 December 2019

3.1 EVALUATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

The horizontal principles are included in the projects of the CP SI-HU pursuant the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) of the EC. The programme defined three horizontal principles to which the approved projects have to contribute: sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination of and equality between men and women.

In the application form, the beneficiaries had to indicate their contribution to the horizontal principles and justify their choice. Looking at the approved projects, almost all indicated that they have a positive contribution to all horizontal principles, although they can choose to indicate the contribution as negative, neutral or positive.

The evaluation of horizontal principles is based on critical assessments of the performed project activities. The input for the assessments includes interviews performed with lead partners of

selected projects (see Chapter 2 for further methodological clarification). Based on the assessment of projects, the Evaluation Team did not identify a case where the performed activities would have a negative impact on any of the horizontal principles. It is not realistic, however, for all projects to have a positive contribution to all horizontal principles. To identify a project as having a positive contribution would mean that a specific (tailored) activity was performed or implemented (targeting specific field or target group). Thus, in this chapter we highlight only activities linked to specific horizontal principles that we consider as having a positive impact.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development, which comprises overlapping social, environmental and economic activities, has the broadest definition, and thus many activities that contribute to sustainable development can be identified.

Examples of project activities that can be directly linked to positive contribution towards sustainable development include:

- arrangement of the area so that it enables exploring and experiencing nature (GO IN NATURE),
- development of green tourism products promoting sustainable mobility and enabling tourists to experience the area (IronCourtainCycling, Guide2Visit),
- creating opportunities for and enabling the development of new potential service providers that can develop green business solutions that serve visitors to the area (ECONOMY).

In addition to the activities stated above, we can indicate the activities that are contributing to sustainable development indirectly, such as communication with local population, raising awareness among visitors (responsible tourism), educational activities, exchange of knowledge, etc.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

When project partners were asked to indicate how their project contributed specifically to equal opportunity and non-discrimination, the predominant reply was that the project partnership was functioning in a constructive and non-discriminative atmosphere and that equal opportunities and non-discrimination were fully respected during any type of selection procedure (e.g. employment, procurements, etc.). In addition, target groups, which were invited to participate in the project, were widely addressed and no one was discriminated. Such activities are to be indicated as a neutral rather than a positive contribution.

However, in addition to the above, some activities were performed that can be considered as having a positive contribution to the horizontal policy of equal opportunity and non-discrimination:

- adapted measures for enabling the experiencing of the tourism offer for physically impaired persons (virtual walkthrough, access infrastructure, adaptive lights, etc.) (ESCAPE),
- employment of individuals from vulnerable groups with the project (i.e. the disabled, the Romani, who face greater employment-related difficulties, etc.) (MURA RABA TOUR),
- adapted accommodation bungalows for children with special needs (HORSE BASED TOURISM – HBT).

EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Similarly to the horizontal policy of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, the majority of partners stated that all policies and approaches linked to the equality between men and women were and are respected. They stated that men and women were treated equally in all project activities, regardless of the type of the project activity, and that this applies also to all selection procedures (e.g. employment, procurement, etc.).

Nevertheless, one specific example was identified that can be considered to have contributed positively to the equality between men and women or address gender equality – namely a historical overview of the marginalisation of women as carriers of knowledge through the role of Christianity and the history of witchcraft (ESCAPE).

Other examples stated by the lead partners are mainly connected to increasing the number of women in project management and the fact that the majority of staff that form project partnerships are women.

CONCLUSIONS

Horizontal principles lack proper definition, notably in the project assessment phase. The criteria for assessment project contribution are weak.

RECOMMENDATIONS

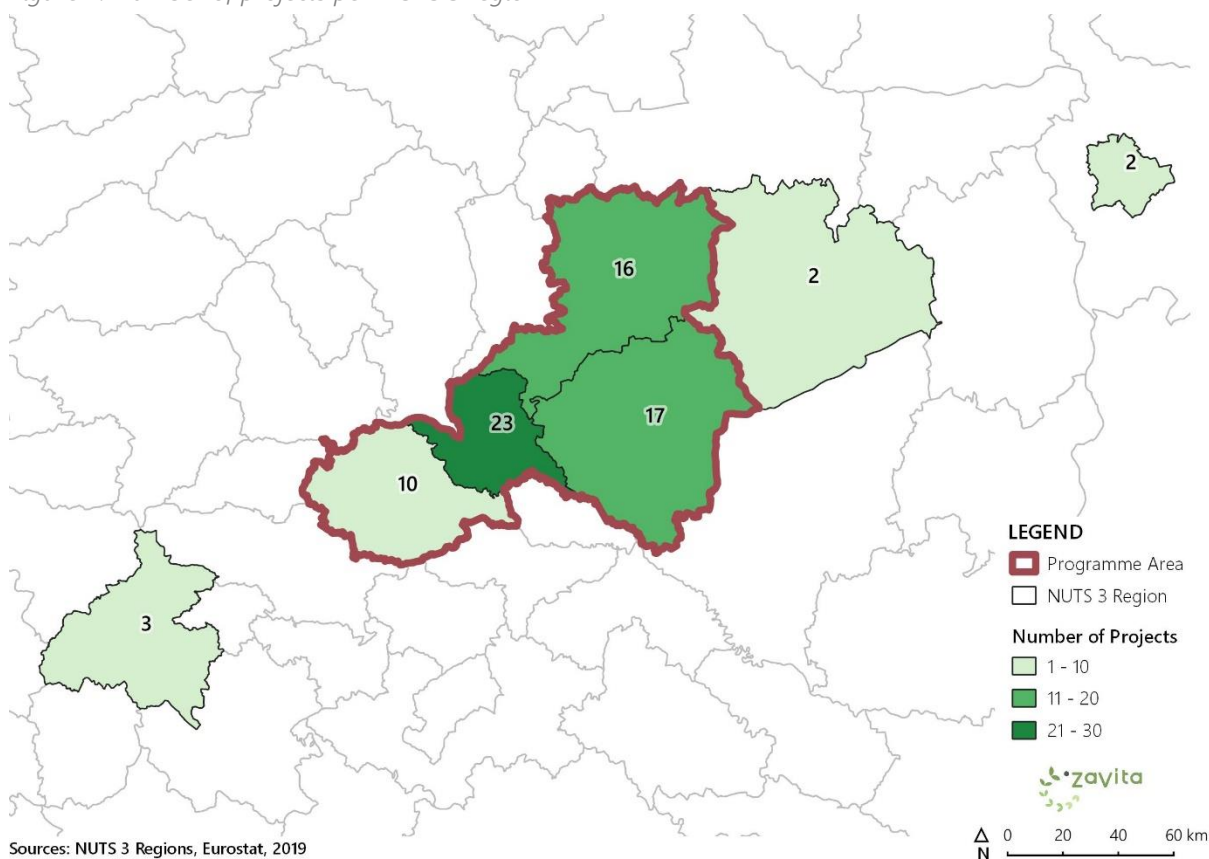
In future, a description should be included in the application form about how the horizontal activities will be implemented. This content should not be graded with points but taken into consideration as a condition for project approval. This would result in more realistic descriptions and adequate assessment if the proposed activities really do have a positive or just neutral contribution to a specific horizontal principle.

4 ANALYSIS OF APPROVED PROJECTS

The analysis of approved projects examines in-depth the main characteristics of the implemented projects. First, it focuses on the structure of the beneficiaries, namely their territorial distribution and their type. Target groups represent a connection between the project activities/deliverables and their end users. Therefore, the structure of the target groups and their acceptance of the performed project activities is discussed. The implemented projects have foreseen and carried out different activities in order to address common and programme-specific output indicators. However, the activities can be reasonably merged in a few types and fields, which can serve as a basis for the evaluation of impact.

The figure 2 indicates the involvement of NUTS 3 regions of the programme area and wider in the programme. It shows the total number of projects in which the beneficiaries of specific region are involved in.

Figure 2: Number of projects per NUTS 3 region



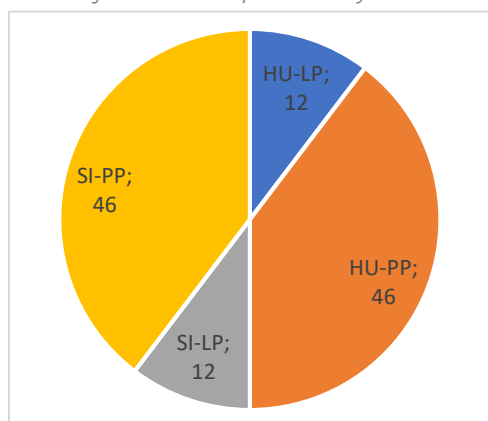
Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

As seen from the map, the Slovenian region of Pomurska is involved in almost all (23 out of 24) projects of the CP SI-HU. Pomurska is followed by the Hungarian regions of Zala (involved in 71 % of all projects) and Vas (participating in 67 % of all projects).

4.1 STRUCTURE OF BENEFICIARIES

The partnership analysis is based on the data provided by the JS and involves 24 projects approved within the six deadlines for the submission of applications. By the time of the submission of this report, 20 projects were contracted, while four are expected to be contracted.

Figure 3: Number of Lead Partners and Project Partners per country

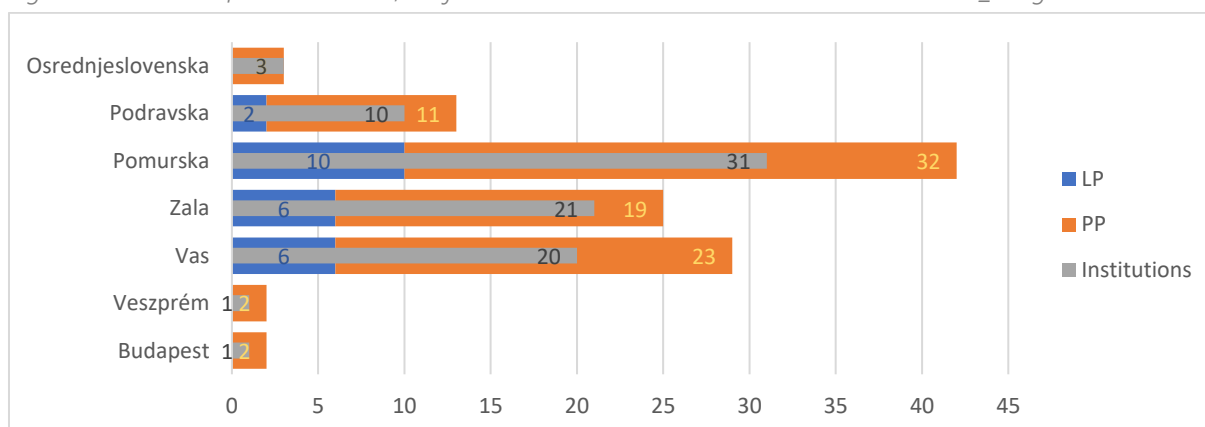


Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

These projects involve 116 partners, 24 of them are LPs and 92 of them are PPs. Representation of partners between the countries is well-balanced (58 from Hungary and 58 from Slovenia). As some of the institutions participate in more than one project, there are some differences when considering only institutions. If we exclude duplicated partners, 87 institutions are involved in the CP SI-HU programme in total, of which there is one institution (44 out of 87) from Slovenia more than from Hungary (43 out of 87). The majority of partners or institutions (partner institution involved in one or more projects, therefore counted only once) involved in the CP SI-HU projects originates from the programme area, i.e. from the Pomurska region (42 partners/31 institutions), Vas (29/20), Zala (25/21), and Podravska (13/10) NUTS 3 regions.

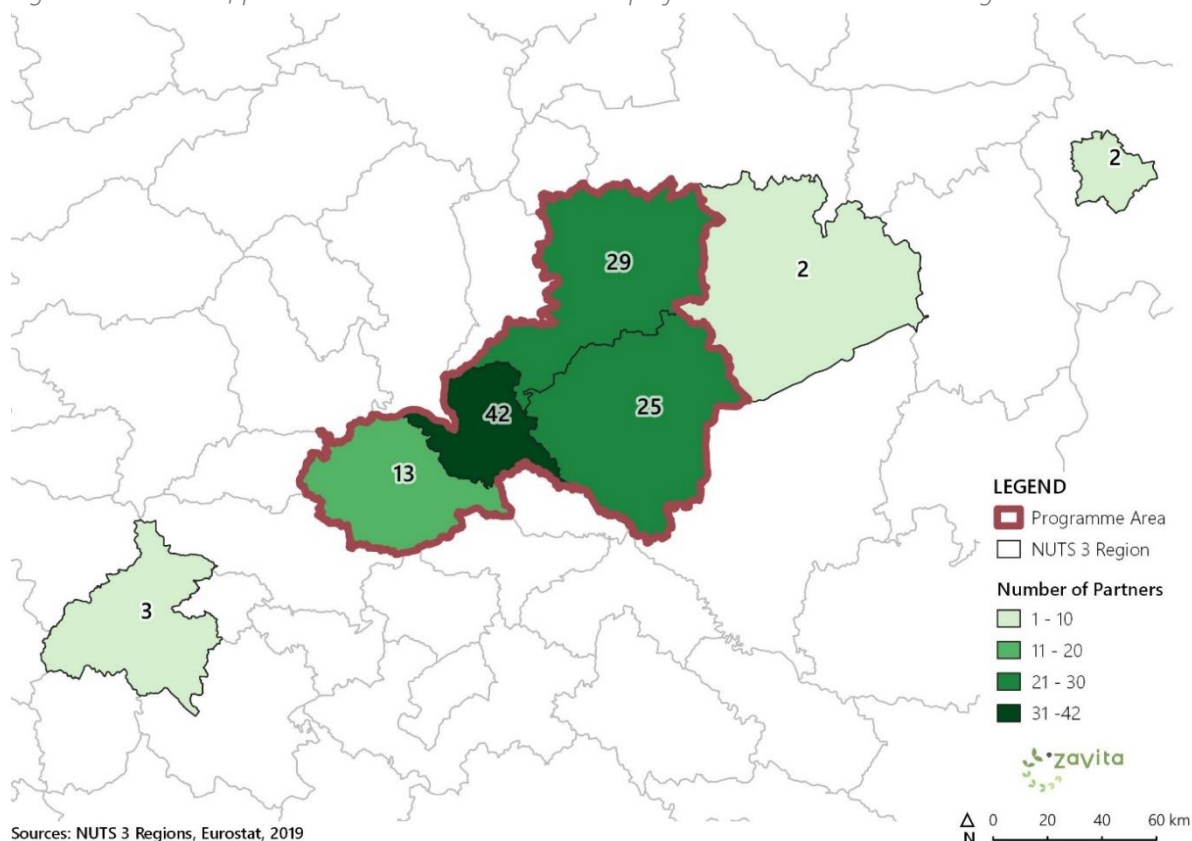
Three of the represented NUTS 3 regions are outside the programme area – Osrednjeslovenska with three partners/institutions, Budapest and Veszprém regions with two partners (one institution) each. In the regions of Pomurska, Vas and Zala, which are on the border between Slovenia and Hungary, the participation of partners and institutions is the strongest, and fades away with distance.

Figure 4: Number of Lead Partners, Project Partners and institutions in individual NUTS_3 regions



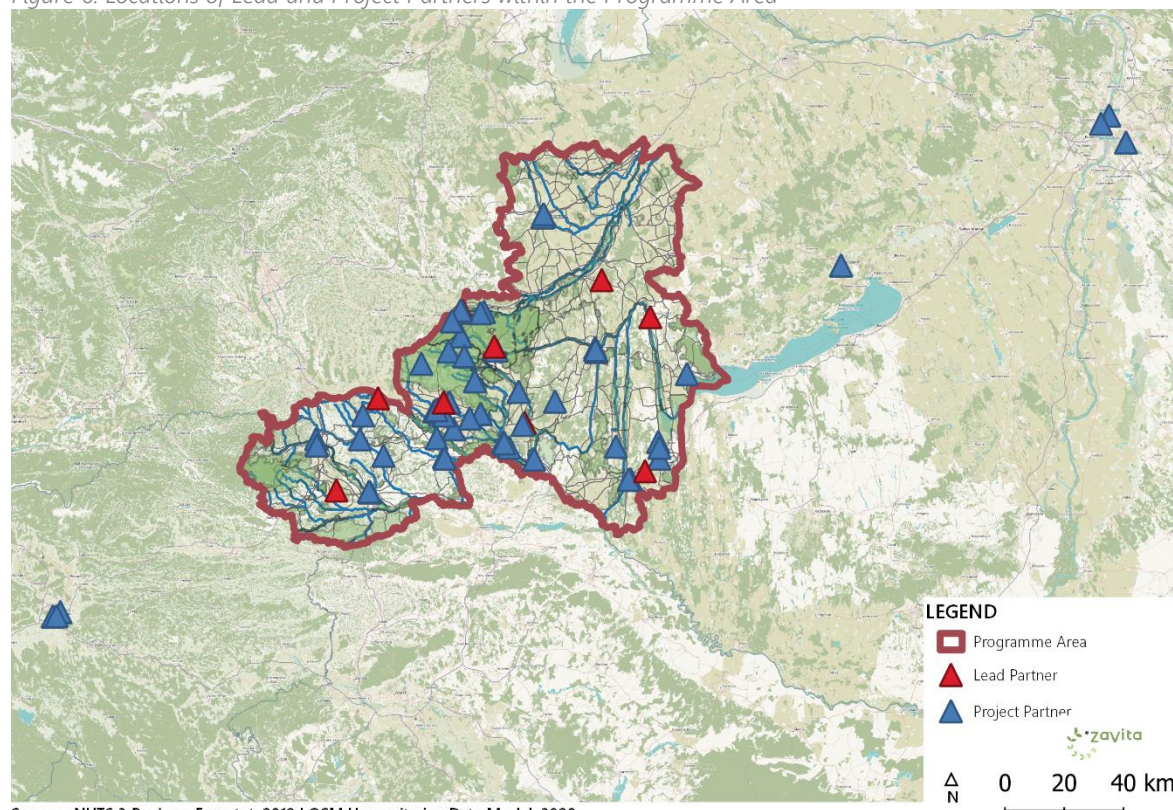
Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Figure 5: Number of partners involved in the CP SI–HU projects in individual NUTS 3 regions



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

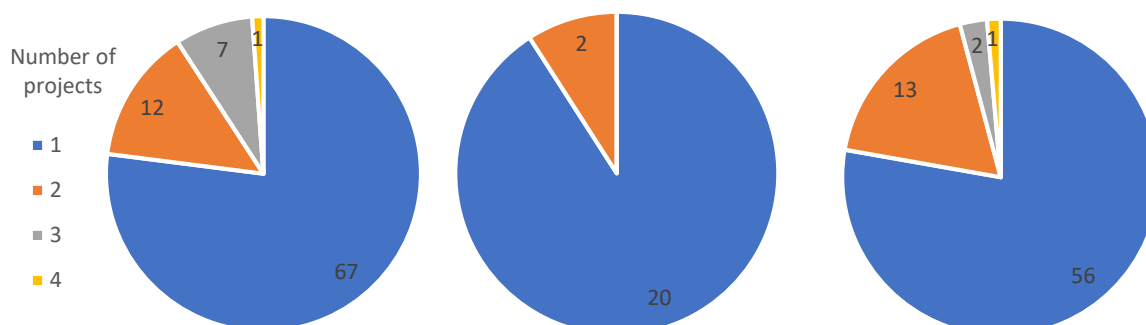
Figure 6: Locations of Lead and Project Partners within the Programme Area



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Most (77 %) of the institutions are involved in one project. Only one institution is involved in four projects. Institutions which are involved as LPs (22) mostly lead one project (20), but there are two (one from Slovenia – the Pomurska region, and one from Hungary – Vas county) that lead two projects each. The situation is similar at the PP level – most institutions (78 %) are involved only in one project.

Figure 7: Number of institutions involved in one or more projects (1–4) – all institutions (left), Lead Partner institutions (middle) and Project Partner institutions (right)



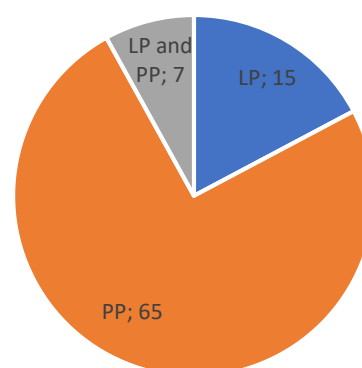
Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Fifteen institutions are involved in projects only as LPs, 65 only as PPs, and seven as both LPs and PPs.

The number of partners in one project ranges between two and nine. Most projects have five partners, followed by four and two partners. The most numerous partnership has nine partners, which originate from all four programme regions.

The number of regions (NUTS 3) involved in one project is a bit lower than the number of partners, and ranges between two and five. Most projects involve two or four regions. Five regions are involved in two projects.

Figure 8: Number of institutions involved in projects as Lead Partner, Project Partner, and Lead and Project Partner



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Figure 9: Number of projects regarding the number of partners (2–9)

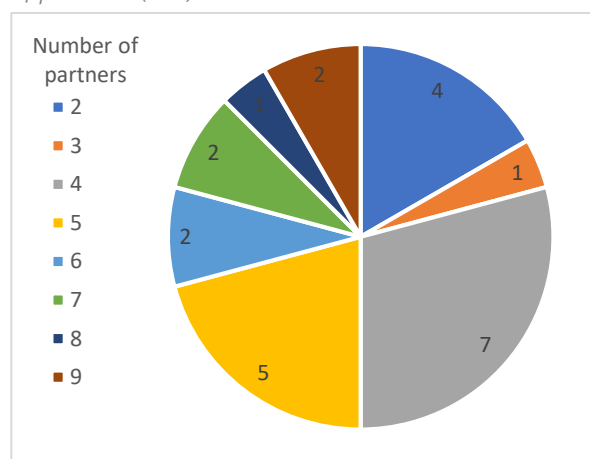
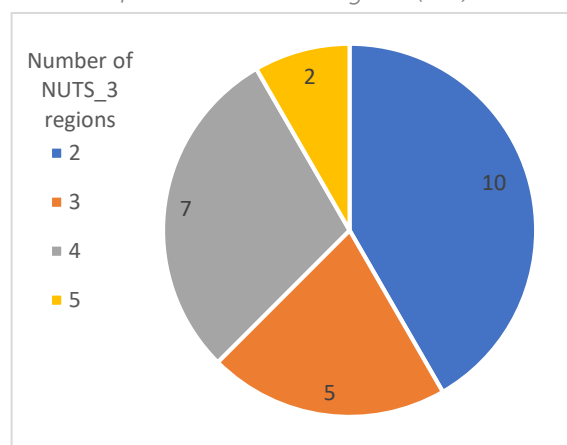


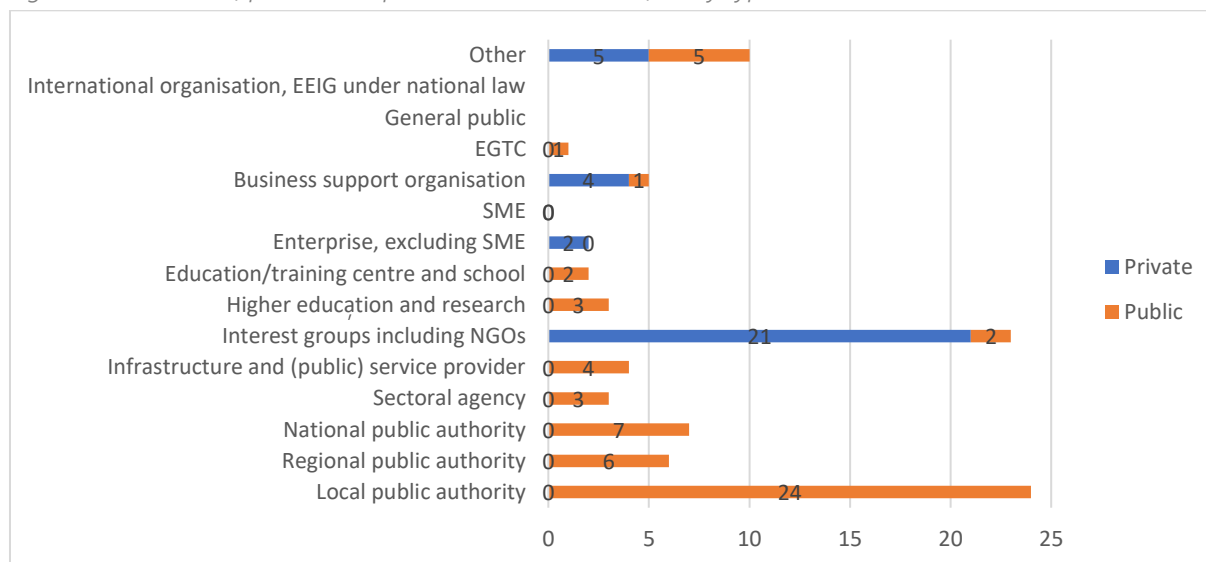
Figure 10: Number of projects regarding the number of included NUTS 3 regions (2–5)



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

We can therefore conclude that the most typical project involves four partners from two regions. Based on the legal status of partners, distribution is 66 % public to 34 % private, and is evenly balanced between the countries. But as several public institutions participate in more than one project, distribution based on the legal status of institutions is slightly more balanced – 63 % of public institutions to 37 % private. The main reason for this difference are local public authorities, since five are included in two projects, and regional public authorities, since two are included in three projects.

Figure 11: Number of private and public institutions classified by type



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Figure 12: Number of institutions as Lead (left) and Project (right) Partner² classified by type



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

Figure 13: Number of Lead (left) and Project (right) Partners classified by type



Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

There is a significant difference between the distribution of institutions by type for LPs and PPs as education/training centres and schools, and business support organisations participating only as PPs. The data indicate the dominance of interest groups, including NGOs and local public authorities as LPs and as PPs.

We considered the main types of beneficiaries supported in each Investment Priority (as stated in the CP SI-HU) as the expectations of the programme. Based on the represented variety and dispersion of partner types, we can conclude that expectations of the programme (as defined in the programme) regarding the representation of project partner types as target groups of beneficiaries are met. According to the data generated from the eMS, there are three types of institutions that are not involved as beneficiaries: SMEs, the general public, international organisations, and the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) under national law.

This programme is not targeting SMEs with a specific Investment Priority (i.e. 1(b) – Promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and the higher education sector), and since no specific output indicator

² Fifteen institutions are involved in projects only as LPs, 65 only as PPs, and seven as both LPs and PPs.

is linked to the number of SMEs (i.e. number of enterprises receiving support), it is reasonable to expect that this group of beneficiaries is not participating actively.

The general public may be a target group of projects or programme communication activities, but, legally, it cannot be a beneficiary (LP/PP). There are cases where institutions represent the interests of the general public (i.e. municipalities, local development agencies, local action groups, chambers, associations, etc.) but they can be identified also as other types (that are represented in the partnerships). Regarding international organisations and the EEIG, possible reasons behind the lack of participation probably include the lack of pre-financing, long refunding periods and the fact that projects are small-scale.

4.2 TARGET GROUPS

One of the aims of the CP SI-HU is to bring the project results out to those who use them – well beyond the project partnerships and the periods of project implementation. One of the key elements of project success is to identify the appropriate target groups and how to interact with them regardless of whether they are decision-makers, end users of products and results or other thematic experts. The CP SI-HU Priority Axes, each of them with their main target groups defined:

PA 1 – Attractive Region (IP 6c)

Main target groups:

- SMEs and individual service providers active in the sector of tourism or related services;
- Local communities;
- Tourists and visitors from the main touristic centres/magnets and from outside the programme area.

PA 2 - Cooperative Region (IP 11b)

Main target groups:

- Local, regional and state-level public administrations/institutions active in the sectors targeted by the indicative types of actions
- Local communities of the programme area
- General public benefiting from the improved capacities of the organisations/institutions involved in cooperation

Within the eMS, however, there is a broader list of target groups available to applicants. Additional target groups, which are not recognised by the programme as the main target groups, are available to the applicants when they submit the project. The list of all available target groups is as follows:

- Local public authorities
- National public authorities
- Sectoral agencies
- Interest groups, including NGOs

- Higher education and research institutions
- Enterprises, excluding SMEs
- Infrastructure and (public) service providers
- Education/training centres and schools
- General public
- Regional public authorities
- SMEs

When preparing a project progress report, the partnership had to indicate which and how many target groups (out of those anticipated in the AF) they have reached during the project, and provide the description and evidence (e.g. attendance sheets, newspaper circulation, viewership of TV shows, listeners to radio shows, etc.). We reviewed these reports and collected additional information during the interviews with LP.

First, we looked at the performance at each PA as a whole – how much was planned (target values) and how much was achieved. There are discrepancies because in some projects certain target groups are substantially larger than others and artificially raise the percentage. Therefore, we also calculated the average of the projects, eliminating the disparity between the individual projects.

Then we looked at the success of individual projects and compared the two Priority Axes to evaluate the comparison.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - in the analysis of the target groups, only the projects with which the interviews were performed (13) are taken into consideration – see chapter 2 for further clarification.

4.2.1 PA 1 – ATTRACTIVE REGION

The projects financed under this PA are oriented towards:

- supporting the preservation of the natural and cultural resources, and
- generation/conservation of the natural and cultural resources and generation/promotion of new, sustainable tourist products based on local resources.

As seen in table 8, projects are addressing all available target groups. During the elaboration of project proposal, applicants can choose in the eMS from wider array of target groups than the list of the main target groups per PA, listed in the programme. Consequently, projects tend to choose more (and wider) target groups than needed under the impression that they will impress the evaluator of their project proposal and receive more points. In many cases this leads to problems in achieving these values in the implementation phase of the project.

The table 8 shows aggregated values of target groups of all projects that are implemented within the PA 1. The column indicating mean value shows the result on programme level (share of the sum of all target and achieved values of all projects that addressed specific target group). The column indicating mean value shows the average success rate of individual projects in addressing specific target group.

Table 8: PA 1 – target and achieved values of target groups

TARGET GROUP	TARGET VALUE	ACHIEVED VALUE*	MEAN VALUE %	MEAN VALUE OF THE PROJECTS %
Local public authority	205	239	116.59	86.17
Regional public authority	2	0	0.00	0.00
National public authority	4	2	50.00	50.00
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	18	12	66.67	75.00
Business support organization	5	3	60.00	60.00
Interest groups including NGOs	100	161	161.00	175.29
Sectoral agency	16	32	200.00	175.83
Enterprise, excluding SME	5	1	20.00	16.67
SME	820	449	54.76	67.91
Education/training centre and school	160	112	70.00	186.67
Higher education and research	7	1	14.29	12.50
General public	444,750	353,975	79.59	774.10
Other	6,530	5,860	89.74	63.33

*most projects are still ongoing.

Source: Data acquired from eMS and interviews with LP and PP, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019.

As we can see in the table, the projects achieved the set values in three target groups out of 13: local public authorities, interest groups, including NGOs, and sectoral agencies.

Looking at the average value by project, the picture is different. The set values are achieved in relation to education/training centres and schools, and the general public.

Here we have to point out that majority of projects are not finished yet, so some target values are still to be reached. Lead partners of the projects with which we have performed the interviews (see chapter 2 for more details) state that the target values will be reached. However, we will be able to operate with more exact figures in the Impact II evaluation report.

In the case of SMEs, projects are failing to achieve set values. They are approximately at a half-point in terms of set target value, meaning that they will have difficulties reaching the goal. The same applies to the mean value of projects, where approximately 60 % of the target value has been reached.

The target group of tourists and visitors from the main tourist centres and from outside the programme area is achieved on project level. Even still, there is a discrepancy because one of the projects set a goal of 2,500 and reached 139,199. Without this project, the numbers would be significantly lower.

Table 9: PA 1 – Number of projects that reached (or exceeded) set target groups

TARGET GROUP	NUMBER OF PROJECT THAT ARE ADRESING THE TARGET GROUP	NR. OF PROJECTS THAT REACHED (OR EXCEEDED SET TARGET GROUPS)*	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Local public authority	8	4	50.00
Regional public authority	1	0	0.00
National public authority	1	0	0.00
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	2	1	50.00
Business support organisation	1	0	0.00
Interest groups including NGOs	7	3	42.86
Sectoral agency	3	2	66.67
Enterprise, excluding SME	2	0	0.00
SME	7	2	28.57
Education/training centre and school	3	2	66.67
Higher education and research	2	0	0.00
General public	8	5	62.50
Other	2	0	0.00

*most projects are still ongoing.

Source: Data acquired from eMS and interviews with LP and PP, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019.

The table 9 also shows us how the projects have progressed in the form of a percentage of their goals. It is evident that most of the projects have achieved their goal in relation to sectoral agencies and education/training centres and schools.

Not a single project has achieved the goals set for five target groups, indicating that the projects have set the figures too ambitiously or intend to achieve them in the near future (most projects have not yet been completed).

4.2.2 PA 2 - COOPERATIVE REGION

The projects financed under PA are oriented towards cooperation and enhancement of institutional capacity. The projects that are implemented within this PA will not develop new infrastructure and will not be focused on investments but are seeking opportunities offered by cross-border networks and cooperation with the aim of improving the situation in different socio-economic and environmental sectors.

As mentioned earlier, partners could choose from a wider array of target groups and not only from the main target groups listed in the programme. As seen in the table 10, partners did choose all target groups that were available, except sectoral agencies.

The table 10 shows the aggregated target values of all projects and the values achieved. In the last column we also present the mean value of the projects for the purpose of comparison.

Table 10: PA 2 – target and achieved values of target groups

TARGET GROUP	TARGET VALUE	ACHIEVED VALUE*	MEAN VALUE	MEAN VALUE OF THE PROJECTS
Local public authority	87	41	47.13	39.00
Regional public authority	21	23	109.52	152.50
National public authority	2	20	1,000.00	1,000.00
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	5	0	0.00	0.00
Business support organisation	30	30	100.00	100.00
Interest groups including NGOs	52	0	0.00	0.00
Enterprise, excluding SME	32	30	93.75	50.00
SME	212	333	157.08	83.25
Education/training centre and school	103	182	176.70	446.67
Higher education and research	13	6	46.15	33.33
General public	30,500	22,901	75.09	56.34
Other	60	9	15.00	45.00

*most projects are still ongoing

Source: Data acquired from eMS and interviews with LP and PP, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019.

As indicated in the table, the programme as a whole already achieved the set values in five target groups out of twelve: regional public authorities, national public authorities, business support organisations, SMEs and education/training centres and schools.

Looking at the average value by project, goals are achieved for the same target groups, with the exception of SMEs.

As results show, projects were successful at targeting their activities to reach the priority target groups of the programme. They targeted institutions and the general public, which, within this Axis, is understood not only as individuals, but also as businesses, SMEs and education/training facilities.

Table 11: PA 2 – number of projects that reached set target groups

TARGET GROUP	NUMBER OF PROJECT THAT ARE ADRESING THE TARGET GROUP	NR. OF PROJECTS THAT REACHED (OR EXCEEDED SET TARGET GROUPS)*	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Local public authority	4	1	25,00
Regional public authority	2	2	100,00
National public authority	1	1	100,00
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	1	0	0,00
Business support organization	1	1	100,00
Interest groups including NGOs	3	0	0,00
Enterprise, excluding SME	2	1	50,00
SME	4	2	50,00
Education/training centre and school	4	2	50,00
Higher education and research	3	0	0,00
General public	3	1	33,33
Other	2	1	50,00

**most projects are still ongoing*

Source: Data acquired from eMS and interviews with LP and PP, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019.

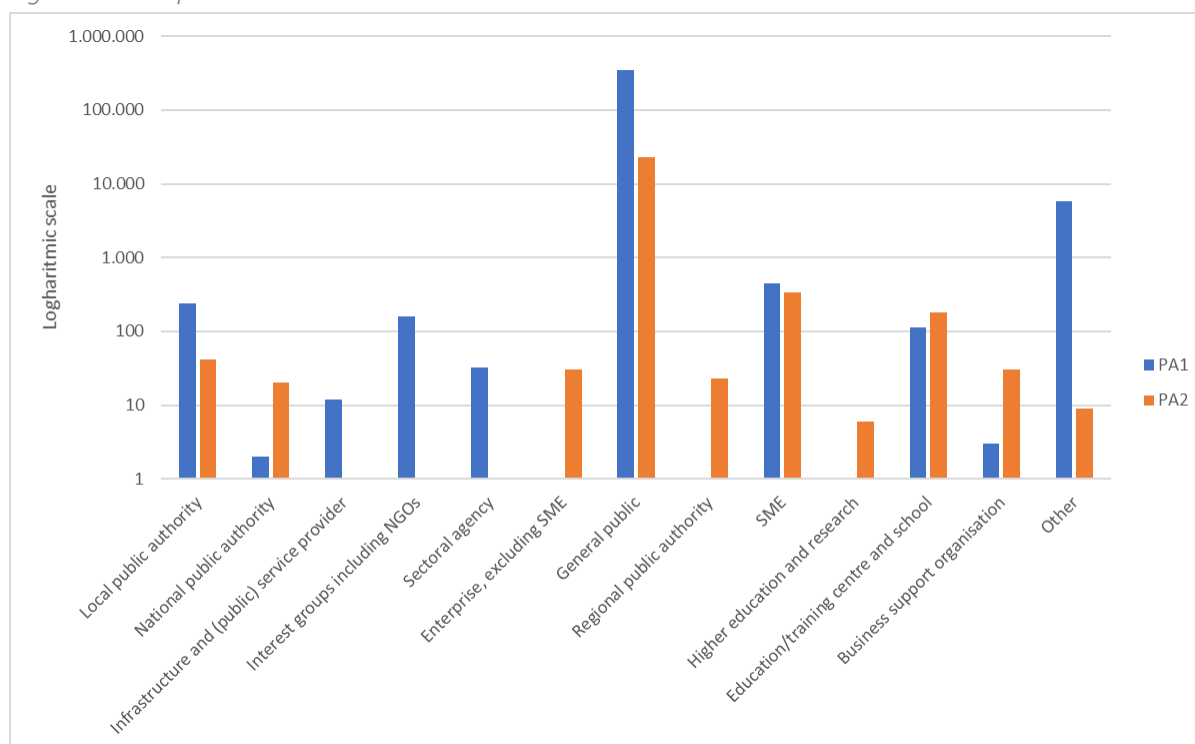
The table 11 also shows us how far the projects have progressed in the form of a percentage of their goals. As evident, projects reached their goals in relation to regional public authorities, national public authorities and business support organisations.

Not a single project has achieved the goals set for two target groups, indicating that the projects have set the figures too ambitiously or intend to achieve them in the near future (most projects have not yet been completed).

4.2.3 MAIN FINDINGS

In order to obtain a more holistic overview on the programme level, and since all projects can in the application form select the same target groups, we decided to compare the two priority axes regarding the reached target groups of 13 analysed projects (see Chapter 2 for more details).

Figure 14: Comparison between PA 1 and PA 2



Source: Data acquired from eMS and interviews with LP and PP, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019.

As the figure 14 indicates, projects from PA 1 have generally been more successful in reaching target audiences, which are also identified by the programme as primary audiences – the general public, SMEs and local public authorities. Projects within PA 2 were more successful in addressing regional and national public authorities, business support organisations and education/training centres and schools.

Data show that projects in PA 2 are currently more successful in addressing the planned types and values of target groups. At this stage of programme implementation, this is probably the

result of realistic value planning (in the application phase) and the fact that the majority of projects have not been completed yet, though the data will still change (rise).

It is worth mentioning that none of the PAs have reached the goal for the general public target group. This is probably due to the fact that certain projects (especially within PA 1) still need to implement certain sets of activities (brand, renovation of buildings, construction of bike lanes, etc.) before the project can impact the general public. Therefore, projects start to reach the general public at the end of the project or even after the project has been concluded. It is true that not all projects taken into consideration at this stage of the evaluation are concluded; nevertheless, we assess that some target values were set too ambitiously and that it will be difficult to reach some of the planned values (and target groups) by the project closure.

The methodology of counting the general public differs. There is no common method prescribed on the programme level for counting the indicator for target groups. In the case of some projects, the method (notably for counting the general public) is very straightforward: if, for example, an article is published in a local newspaper and this newspaper has 10,000 subscribers, then the target value is 10,000 since it is assumed that each subscriber will read the article. The counting method is similar for TV and radio. They calculate the reach of a certain medium (e.g. radio listeners or TV viewers) and the target value based on those numbers. That is why some projects have a target value of more than 100,000 people for the general public.. Of course, we cannot say that the general public counted in such a way was not included in the implementation of project activities. Different numbers should have different weight and should be ranked (in terms of the number of persons, attending a workshop should not be equal to the number of newspaper subscribers).

In the case of other target groups (municipalities, SMEs, NGOs, etc.) the counting is more precise; for example, attendance sheets are used at events organised within a project, or invitations are sent to the entities to take part in the events and each invited entity is counted in the target number.

In order to obtain feedback information about the CP SI-HU, an e-survey was prepared (see Chapter 2 for more details).

Almost all respondents to the survey (98 %) believe that the project addresses their needs properly, meaning that the target groups were adequately selected. Also, a high number of respondents (88 %) are sure that the activity in which they participated will continue after the project has been completed and that project results will have a lasting impact (79 % of respondents).

This result indicates that the programme and projects were presented to target groups efficiently and that target groups were appropriately selected.

However, 19 % of participants are not actually familiar with the results of the projects they have participated in.

The results show that, when preparing project proposals, partners select the right target groups and also adequately address them while implementing the project, but more attention should be paid to the dissemination and information about project results to target groups during project implementation. The Evaluation Team identified lack of follow-up activities from the projects towards target groups that were involved in the projects in terms of informing them about project results and the concrete benefits arising from their involvement..

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation showed that most of the target groups have not yet been reached. We attribute this to two factors. The first is that most projects have not yet been completed and therefore the planned values of the target groups are yet to be reached. The second reason is related to the first one, namely that given the progress of the projects, project dissemination activities are carried out in the second half of the project, so the projects have not yet been able to achieve certain values.

The target groups selected are adequate, but in the next financial period more attention should be given to the exact definition of target groups (such as the general public), as well as to the description of the monitoring method that will be used.

Furthermore, the distinction between informing target groups about the project and the involvement of target groups in the project activities is not clear. At the moment, everything counts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The target groups in eMS should be adequately defined in relation to the target groups recognised by the programme (to avoid misjudgement). We suggest that fewer categories should be available in eMS (or that the programme enables only selection of few PA related target groups). There is a category "other" and partners could use it to describe who they would like to include.

Especially in PA 1, in the case of the general public target group, the project activities that are not directly connected to the general public have to be performed first – the project brand has to be performed first and infrastructure has to be built – the general public can be reached only after these activities are completed. This usually happens in the last quarter of the project. Therefore, it is logical that projects start to reach the general public at the end of the project or even after the project is concluded. We recommend that two sets of target groups should be proposed at the stage of project preparation:

- Target groups that will be actively addressed by the project within the implementation work packages (i.e. included in the project activities, or cooperating in some manner) and that will be reached during project implementation.
- Target groups that will be informed about the project within the communication work package. They would mainly be reached in the last third of the project, informing them about the project results, and after the project. We recommend that these groups (i.e.

the general public, tourists) should not be quantified in the AF, only described in terms of how they will be reached.

We recommend, to further encourage projects, to plan activities involving the target groups evenly throughout the implementation of the project. Thus, there will be fewer situations where the project must reach the majority of target groups a few months before the end of the project.

In the case of the general public target group, the problem is that there is a big difference in how this target group is measured. We can have an exact number of attendees at an event/workshop/presentation, but by publishing an article in a newspaper or with a short contribution on TV, we can quickly (over)achieve our goal.

The number of participants and the number of potential readers/listeners/viewers are not equal and the programme should perhaps have separate categories to report them.

We recognise different categories of the general public target group – articles in newspapers, visitors, TV shows, radio shows, etc. That would help project partners to estimate project goals more realistically and would not pressure them to achieve unrealistic numbers during project implementation.

When preparing projects, it should be ensured that the partners estimate the numbers and categories of target groups more realistically. Consultations with JS, Info point and National Authorities should be tailored also in determination the number and scale of target groups. It would then be easier to reach them or, in the case of one evaluated project, there would not be such a discrepancy between the estimated and the reached values – the value of the general public reached was estimated at 2.50 and the number 139,119 was reported. In the process of preparing projects, partners overestimate the number and types of target groups in the hopes of making an impression and having a greater chance of succeeding.

As the survey shows, the projects and the programme are presented to target groups well, but project results should be presented better. We therefore recommend that, when preparing projects, partners should describe the methodology of how the project will disseminate project results to target groups.

5 PROGRAMME IMPACT

5.1 INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES

An analysis of the programme area shows that many challenges and needs are present. The CP SI-HU, considering its financial capability, chose priority axes that focused on two characteristics of the area: tourism and institutional cooperation.

In the case of tourism, it was recognised that it plays a significant role in the economy of the region. But it faces further challenges such as:

- underutilised natural and cultural potential in the rural areas to be valorised in sustainable tourism through cooperation within these areas and with magnets, resulting in integrated and harmonised actions,
- the need to diversify regional tourism involving the untapped potential of the rural, remote areas, while offering an alternative source of jobs and entrepreneurial pursuits,
- the need to improve the portfolio with new and innovative products/services in general, especially in the less developed areas in terms of tourism,
- the need to improve the image and visibility of the region to increase its competitiveness,
- the need for the promotion of the joint regional tourism “brand” through more harmonized product/service development.

In terms of institutional cooperation, despite indisputable results and a number of successfully implemented bilateral cooperation projects, there remains a necessity of addressing existing deficiencies in the quality, level and effectiveness of cooperation in the region. The main challenges are:

- The potential of cross-border cooperation should be exploited by reaching the “critical mass” of bilateral projects and activities in terms of the quality and quantity of the institutions involved.
- There is a need to establish or further develop cooperation connections between magnets and their hinterland – less developed areas in terms of tourism in order to boost a spatially more balanced development of tourism within the programme area.
- Bottlenecks in awareness, knowledge and capacities of local stakeholders should be addressed in order to form a solid basis for cross-border cooperation.
- Instead of ad hoc activities, institutionalized cooperation should be fostered in order to create harmonized and stable cooperation frames and to strengthen sustainability of the cooperation projects and activities.

To address the challenges, the programme set indicative results for each PA and selected projects that should accomplish them.

Table 12: Envisaged result and programme specific indicators per selected IP

IP	THE RESULTS THAT THE MEMBER STATES SEEK TO ACHIEVE WITH UNION SUPPORT	PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC RESULT INDICATORS (BY SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE)
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6c	The Programme aims to reach a higher level of development of sustainable forms of tourism in the remote, rural regions of the programme area, while building on the experience and attractiveness of the important tourist centres located here.	Number of overnight stays in the programme area
11b	The Programme aims to reach higher level, more stable, as well as more extended legal and administrative cross-border cooperation amongst the institutions and organizations from both sides of the border. The exchange of experience in innovative approaches, tools and working methods, know-how, best practices, empowerment, advocacy and other forms of capacity building will result in more efficient public administration, delivery of quality public services and functional governance initiatives to effectively address the joint challenges manifested in the programme area. In order to achieve tangible results a limited number of cooperation fields have been predefined reflecting the outcomes of the needs assessment (e.g. environment, employment, social services etc.).	The level of cross-border cooperation at institutional level in the programme area

Source: CP SI-HU and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., November 2019

According to the analysis of the results of implemented projects in PA 1, they could be grouped as follows:

- biking routes and creation of maps of cycling paths, marking cycling paths with signs, mobile applications and cycling tours,
- renovation/restoration,
- development of new tourism products predominantly related to cycling, and development of cross-border tourist destinations,
- establishment of camp sites,
- workshops, capacity building and exchange of knowledge,
- promotion – participation at fairs, promotional cycling, press events, promotional videos, promotional materials and video content.

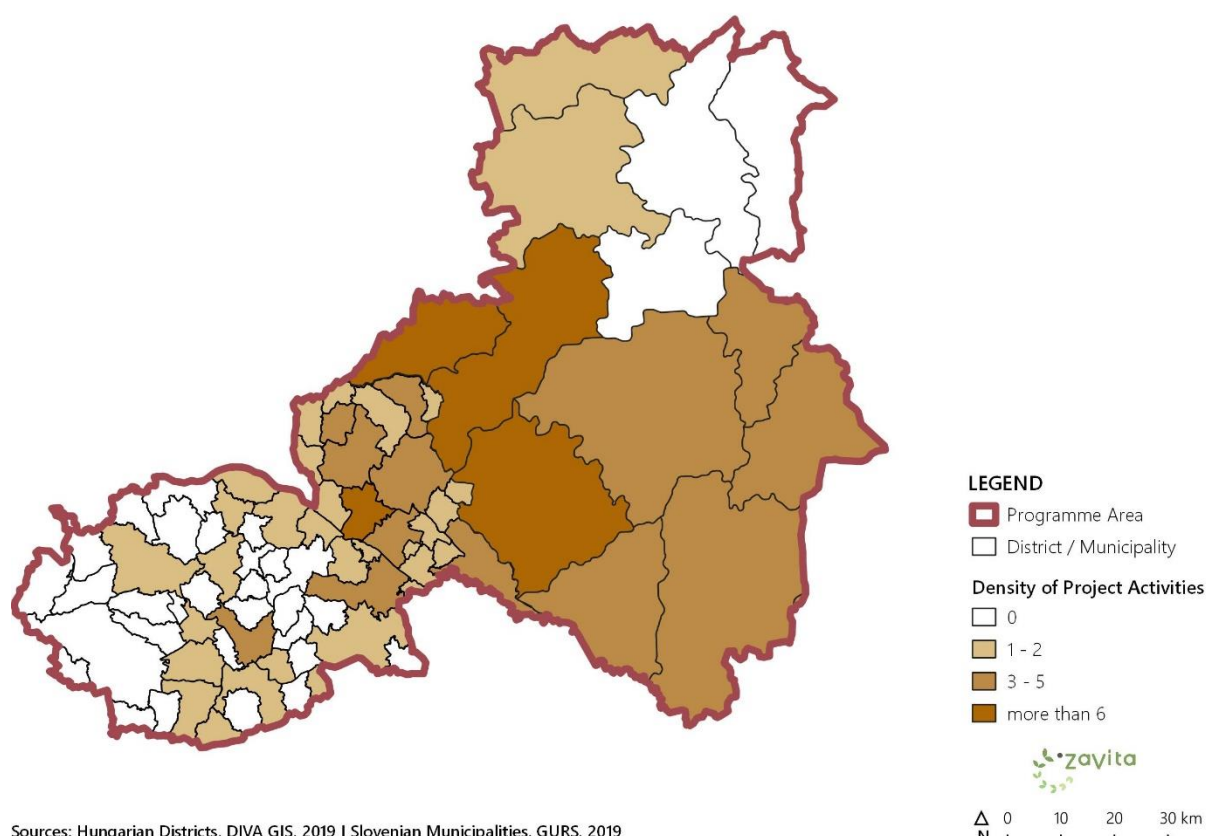
In PA 2, the main results could be grouped as follows:

- networking, workshops and exchange of expertise,
- all projects included at least one type of networking – workshops, trainings or transfer of knowledge,
- creation of common databases and digitisation of documented units,
- promotion – digital marketing, video content and internet promotion.

An analysis of project results and their impact in general indicates that projects generally addressed the problems that were pointed out in the programme.

In PA 1, the majority of activities focused on new tourism products, networking and promotion of the region. Infrastructure is not a dominant project activity, and they are mainly (in terms of the amount of activities and results) oriented towards educating local tourism service providers and establishing connections and networks among different stakeholders. Such activities notably raised awareness among the service providers regarding the specific needs of tourists/visitors to the area.

Figure 15: Territorial density of implemented activities by projects of CP SI-HU



Sources: Hungarian Districts, DIVA GIS, 2019 | Slovenian Municipalities, GURS, 2019

Source: Interviews with beneficiaries, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., December 2019

The figure 15 indicates the aggregated value of where main activities of selected 13 projects took place. The map shows combined value of the projects for both PA – divided values are available in the following sub-chapters. As it is clearly seen, the border area reflects the main intensity of the programme implementation as this is the area where majority of activities are performed. The density reduces with the distance from the border.

The current impact of the program on the cross-border area is undoubtedly positive and measurable as projects have built roads and cycle routes and developed tourism products. Many workshops were performed, different stakeholders and target groups (see chapter 4.2) were involved in the implementation of projects, and new material and data for databases were collected.

Interviewees also emphasized that the impact of the program on the area will probably be positive. New cross-border connections are forming, cross-border cooperation is strengthened, and individual synergies among some projects have been identified. The biggest obstacle remains the language, but it is also not an insurmountable obstacle.

To achieve greater impact in the future, cross-border cooperation program should address the issues that are locally oriented and that are recognized as important by all stakeholders. Taking into consideration the findings obtained from the interviews and e-surveys, we highlight the important aspects divided into two groups - Administrative and Content recommendations.

Administrative recommendations first refer to simplifying the application. Interviewees emphasized that in the next programme two level application form and a flat rate for all cost categories are proposed to be applied. This would simplify the application process and also attract institutions and stakeholders who are not currently applying to the programme (non-participating municipalities, non-governmental organizations, local societies, etc.).

Considering the practical needs of the programme area and institutions, the Evaluation Team considers that three new types of projects would be welcomed:

- the first type is the small-scale project fund for projects up to EUR 50,000, which would also be attractive to minor stakeholders who have ideas but not the resources to invest. However, in order that this fund would succeed, concrete changes in application phase and reporting phase should be done (in comparison with current traditional projects). The application for small-scale projects should be significantly shortened, as well as reporting and reimbursement! In preparation of the new programme period, we recommend that the most practical implementation of this option is further discussed and more detailly defined.
- the second type of projects would be strategic cross-border projects that pursue the interest of the cross-border area at different levels - spatial planning, natural disasters, cross-border mobility, etc.
- the third type represents the capitalisation projects that would network and capitalize traditional projects, and seek connections for enhancing their impact and financial effectiveness. These projects have potential and the capacity to be connected also with other cross-border and transnational programmes that overlap in the programme area.

The second type of recommendation refers to the content of the funded projects. All interviewees stress that greater cross-border cooperation is still needed. Many projects have already been implemented, but still not enough in this area. An important aspect is also the aging of the population, which is becoming a growing problem, especially in the rural part of the cross-border area. This is also linked to the emigration of young people, which the program could focus more on. Although the ageing of the population and emigration should be managed by the measures of national governments (and supported by national operational programmes), cross-border programmes nevertheless have an opportunity to address some issues with the highest possible synergy with national measures.

The programme should ensure that project activities continue after projects are completed. This could be achieved through a call for project capitalisation (being the last call in the programme period) or through some form of financing intended for projects already completed for the continuation of courses, workshops, trainings, etc.

5.2 PA 1 (6c)

Project partners have, in general, followed the guiding principles in preparing their project proposals. They found them quite useful and by taking them into account the projects resulted in higher compliance with the expectations of the programme.

One of the main challenges in the development and implementation of the projects addressing the development of sustainable tourism was how to better involve the countryside, i.e. that the new tourism products should not be developed only in already well-developed tourist centres (i.e. magnets), such as major spa resorts and towns.

The overall contribution of the programme to the set objectives is better recognition of the tourism potential of the area, which is predominantly based on the rich cultural and natural heritage and local traditions. Factors facilitating this contribution included media campaigns, tourism packages and promotion of developed tourism products (promotion of cycling and hiking tours, horseback riding programme, etc.).

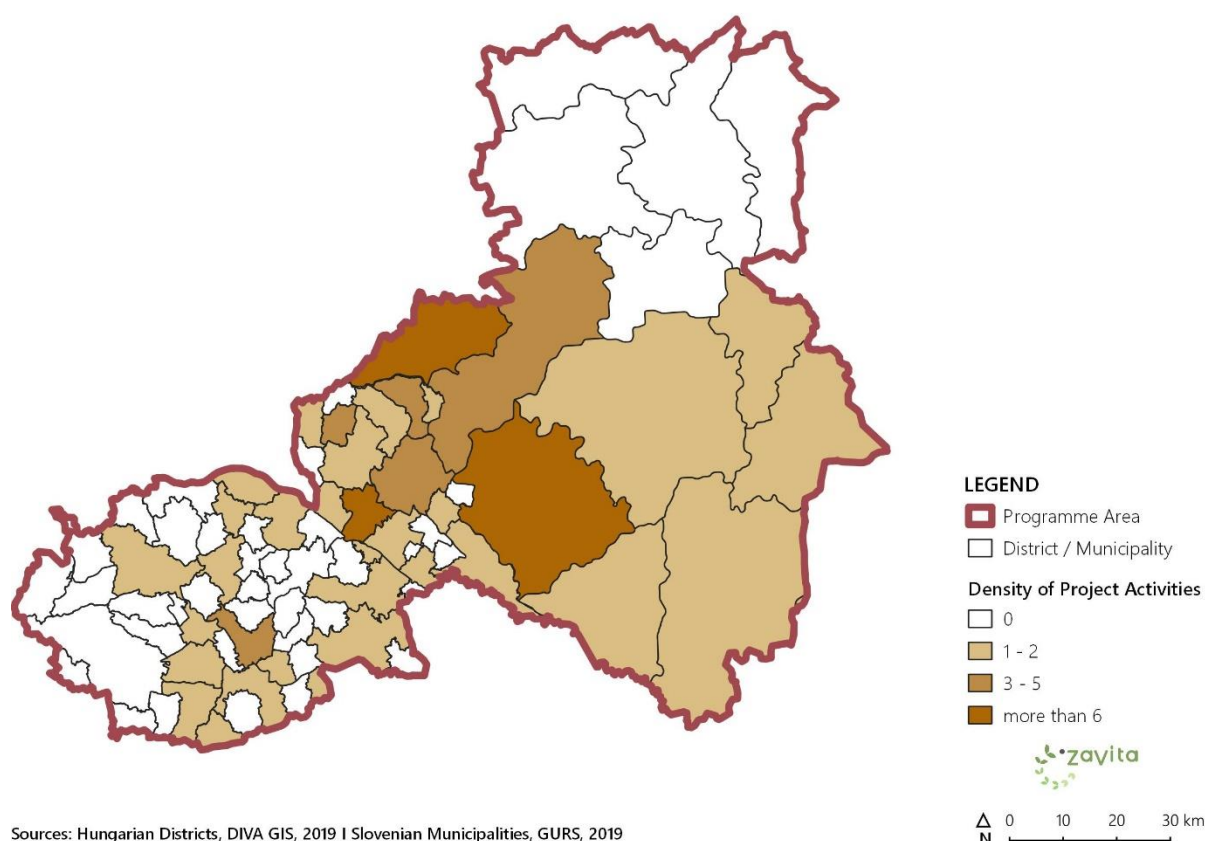
Infrastructure development, which was part of many projects within this PA, significantly contributed to the improvement of sustainable tourism in the area. Several factors have facilitated this contribution. Bike routes were built, connected to the EuroVelo 13 network and promoted. One project (GO IN NATURE) resulted in lookout points along the Mura, forest excursion points, a renovated camp and a lookout tower. In another project (MURA RABA TOUR), an abandoned military facility ("karaula") and campsite were renovated, thus creating an additional offer of accommodation that is popular among the visitors who use active tourism products. Such programme results undoubtedly have a direct positive impact on the programme results of this PA – Number of overnight stays in the programme area.

Another notable contribution of the programme is improved knowledge of stakeholders in the area. The factors facilitating this contribution include an increased number of tourist guides and workshops, and exchange of knowledge through trainings for service providers. All of this will ensure that sustainable development will be the guiding principle in the future projects in the cross-border area and that the project impact can be maintained even after the projects are completed.

In PA 1, surveys showed an unintended but positive impact that was not predicted. In some projects, the number of visitors who attended events organised within the project was underestimated. What is more, the impact of the events and media coverage was much greater than expected in some projects.

In order to present the territorial dimension of the programme impact within PA 1, we asked the LPs of selected projects during interviews to indicate the spatial distribution of the main project results or performed activities.

Figure 16: Territorial density of implemented activities by the projects within PA 1 of CP SI-HU



Sources: Hungarian Districts, DIVA GIS, 2019 | Slovenian Municipalities, GURS, 2019

Source: Interviews with beneficiaries, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., December 2019

The figure 16 indicates the aggregated value of where the main activities of selected projects within PA 1PA 1 took place. As evident, the projects addressed the border area adequately, with more activities concentrated in the border area, notably on the hills of Goričko Regional Park and the neighbouring Órség National Park.

The projects brought changes on the local level. Awareness about the opportunities offered by the region has increased in local communities. As a result, local residents welcome tourists and know how to advise and direct them towards different points of interest. Also, additional investments were made that were not financed by the programme. In some projects, partners had to invest more funds than originally planned in order to implement the project in line with the application form. In some cases, project implementation encouraged other institutions to invest.

Development of sustainable tourism is still relevant, but certain changes in further guidance and approaches have to be adopted. In the current and also in the all past programming periods, and in other programmes that overlap in the programme area, many tourism products and important infrastructure were developed. In order to maintain the cost benefit of these investments in future, capitalisation of already performed projects and their results should be enhanced. Therefore, one of the guiding principles in the field of tourism in the next programme period should be the development of joint destination management.

The cross-border area is still poorly connected and the tourism potential of the area, especially outside the large tourist centers (spa tourism as an example), is still underutilized.

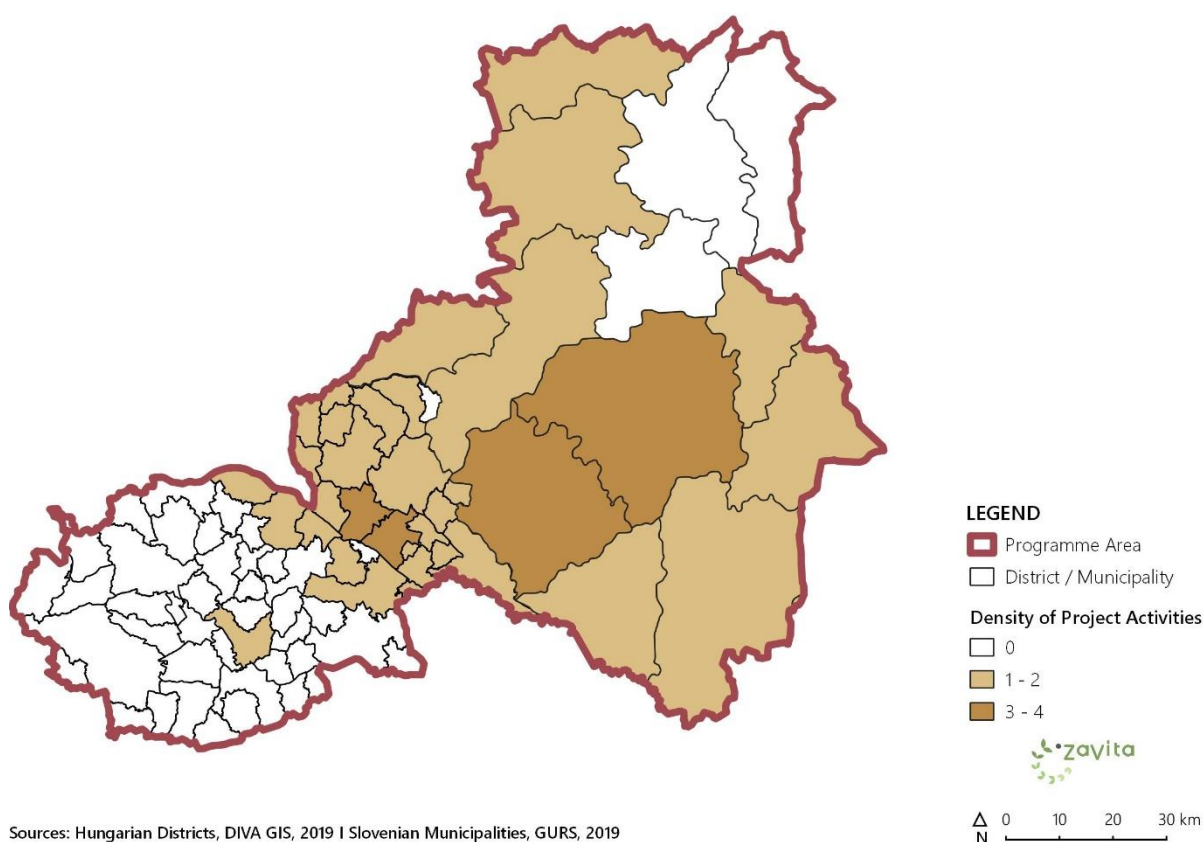
5.3 PA 2 (11b)

As already stated for PA 1, the project partners have, in general, followed the guiding principles in preparing their applications. They found them quite useful and by taking them into account the projects resulted in higher compliance with the expectations of the programme.

Projects within PA 2 also triggered some unintended but positive impacts that were not foreseen. The press reacted positively to the project activities and news coverage was better than expected. What is more, one project (Back in the day) got a chance to be introduced in Brussels and is together with two more (e-documenta Pannonica and ESCAPE) also presented as an example in an Interact capitalisation and communication brochure³. As regards project The Right Profession, some of the students, who visited local companies as part of project activities, got a chance to do internships in those companies or to maintain other forms of contact with them.

In order to present the territorial dimension of the programme impact within PA 2, we asked the LPs of selected projects in interviews to indicate the spatial distribution of the main project results or activities performed.

Figure 17: Territorial density of implemented activities by the projects within PA 2 of CP SI-HU



Sources: Hungarian Districts, DIVA GIS, 2019 | Slovenian Municipalities, GURS, 2019

³ <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1843-e-book-connecting-cultures-connected-citizens>

Source: Interviews with beneficiaries, elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o., December 2019

Looking at the geographical disbursement of activities and results of the project implemented within PA 2, it is evident that the Hungarian districts are much better represented than the municipalities in Slovenia, however, the border area (with the exception of one Slovenian municipality) remains completely covered.

The main impact that can be directly attributed to the programme is increased understanding that it is necessary to establish connections and cooperation with partners across the border in order to increase the capacities of all institutions involved and what in as a consequence develops the region as a whole. This was clearly identified in surveys and interviews and is a good base for future projects and activities.

Another important impact is the increased capacity of the stakeholders and target groups involved, which was achieved through workshops, sharing of practices, study visits and exchange of employees in the field of economic development of the area.

Better awareness of accumulated cultural heritage is another impact that could be attributed to the programme. Databases developed and built in the course of the programme are the factor that will help intensify further cross-border cooperation.

As already mentioned, the area still has much room for improvement in cross-border connections in terms of addressing common challenges through cooperation.

At the content level, there are two aspects in this area that the programme will have to recognise as challenges: an aging population (and the related matters of health and social inclusion), especially in rural areas, and the emigration of young people. These challenges are common throughout the area; they have not been adequately addressed yet and will require projects at the institutional and local levels. Furthermore, circular economy is an important issue that should be tackled in the next period.

6 SOCIOECONOMIC OVERVIEW AND SWOT

The aim of the socio-economic analysis is to establish whether the needs and challenges of the cross-border regions identified in the programme document are still relevant considering the fact that significant changes have happened in the eligible NUTS 3 regions of the programme area in the last few years due the general economic development, governmental measures and/or other development programmes.

The socio-economic analysis examined the main trends of the last six years (2014-2019)⁴ in terms of economic and social situation, tourism development, R+D, innovation, digital economy and society, environment and energy, and development of accessibility. The analysis has highlighted the major differences, if any, between the situations existed at the time of programming and the present ones.

Furthermore, the analysis looked into whether socio-economic changes are strengthening or mitigating the achievement of the expected results and impacts of the programme.

The socio-economic analysis of the present situation was based on desk research of statistical data from the EUROSTAT, the National Statistical Offices of Slovenia and Hungary; and the relevant reports and studies⁵.

The SWOT analysis and the assessment of needs was based mainly on the analysis of the situation but they also took into account information and opinions obtained from interviews with stakeholders of the programme including programme structures, lead partners and project partners, as well as non-beneficiaries.

Within the socio-economic analysis, the following topics have been reviewed:

- Economic situation: general economic performance and trends, economic structure, development of enterprises
- Labour market: general development of the labour market, activity rate, employment, unemployment, net earnings
- Social situation: main demographic trends, education, health care, social inclusion
- Knowledge-based economy: research and development, innovation, digitisation
- Development of the tourism sector⁶: tourist turnover, tourist infrastructure, other factors having impact on tourism sector development, for e.g. government measures, other programmes supporting tourism developments in the programme area.
- Environment and nature: environment and nature protection, climate adaptation, energy and circular economy
- Accessibility: road, railway, public transport, bicycle roads developments carried out in the programme area

⁴ At the time of preparing the socio-economic analysis in November 2019, statistical data were available for the period of 2014-2018. For the year of 2019, only estimations were given.

⁵ For a list of reports and studies see in Chapter 9.

⁶ Since this sector was and is a priority area for co-funding both in the previous (2007-2013) and in the present (2014-2020) CBC programme, it was analysed separately.

Based on the socio-economic situation analysis, a SWOT analysis and an assessment of needs have also been carried out to highlight possible future development needs and challenges of the programme area, and to identify opportunities for fields where the future cooperation programme could trigger positive changes.

For the purpose of the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment, a triangulation of different findings was carried out in order to identify the most suitable development opportunities for the region that might be supported by the SI-HU cross-border programme in the next period.

6.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME AREA

ECONOMIC SITUATION

General economic performance and trends

Both countries, and each county/region of the programme area enjoyed a very favourable economic environment during the period of 2014-2018.

Slovenia's economy was growing strongly in the examined period, particularly in 2017 and 2018, when the gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a rate of 4.4 % (2017) and 4.8 % (2018) respectively, and the country remained competitive internationally. The economic growth was mostly driven by investments.

In Slovenia, the GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) expressed as a percentage of the EU average was 82 % 2014, and 87 % in 2018, which shows an upward trend.

The Pomurska and the Podravska regions witnessed robust economic growth in the period of 2014-2018, as well. The per capita GDP also increased. The percentage of GDP per capita as the national average, however, decreased in this period, which means that other parts of the country developed more rapidly. The Pomurska region was considerably behind the average; in this region the GDP per capita represented just 67 % of the national average in 2017. The situation was slightly better in the Podravska region where the GDP per capita constituted 80.9 % of the national average in 2017.

The Hungarian economy was growing rapidly in the period of 2014-2018. Domestic consumption and investments were making up for lost years after the financial crisis and macroeconomic stabilisation. The growth rate of the GDP exceeded 4 % in 2017 and 5 % in 2018.

Domestic demand was the main driver of growth. Strong wage growth, the easing of precautionary saving motives and accessible financing were fuelling consumption and housing investments. The tightening capacity constraints, rising labour costs and easy financing conditions were encouraging corporate investments. Public investments as a share of GDP were set to stabilise at a high level.

In Hungary, the GDP per capita in PPS expressed as a percentage of the EU average was 68 % 2014, and 70 % in 2018, which shows an increasing trend.

Vas and Zala counties witnessed strong economic growth in this period but the GDP decreased in Zala in 2015. The per capita GDP grew as well. The percentage of the GDP per capita as the national average, however, decreased in this period, which means that other parts of the country developed more rapidly. Vas county was close to the national average (95.6 %) in 2017 while Zala county was considerably behind (75.9 %).

Table 13: Gross domestic products per capita as the percentage of national average

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017
Vas	99.8	96.7	98.3	95.6
Zala	80.1	80.2	75.5	75.9
Pomurska	68.4	67.1	67.6	67.2
Podravska	83.3	82.8	82.0	80.9

Source: National Statistical Office of Slovenia; National Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

Economic growth in Slovenia is expected to slow down to 3.1 % in 2019 and 2.8 % in 2020, which is closer to Slovenia's potential growth. Although the expected slowdown is not dramatic, it is nevertheless an indication that the favourable economic climate of recent years is unlikely to continue.

The growth composition is expected to shift more towards domestic demand, with net exports making a negative contribution by 2020. In the medium term, growing employment and rising wages are expected to continue to support private consumption. Investment is expected to be driven by high capacity utilisation rates and a tightening labour market. Amid high-income growth, high household savings and rapidly rising residential real estate prices, residential investment (i.e. investments into residential real estates) growth is forecast to remain strong in the next few years. Risks are mainly related to the external environment⁷.

The domestic recovery is nearing its limits amid external headwinds in Hungary. Economic growth is set to level off after the pent-up consumption unwinds, while investment is becoming stabilised at a high level. The external environment is also providing less support to export growth, while the major role played by the automotive industry creates a vulnerability to trade disputes and to regulatory and technological change.

Loose macroeconomic policies are heating up the economy in Hungary. The policy stimulus has supported productivity-enhancing investments, but as the economic cycle matures, it also risks creating new imbalances. Labour costs continue to outpace productivity growth and increase inflation. The external surplus of the economy is diminishing, as weakening exports cannot fully counterbalance dynamic import growth. The major increase in public investment is aggravating capacity shortages in construction, leading to cost overruns and project delays, and contributing to rapid house price increases. The persistently easy financing conditions are creating

⁷ Commission Staff Working Document – Country Report Slovenia 2019 (2019 European Semester), Brussels 27 February 2019.

opportunities to invest, but present a challenge in terms of using ample financial resources efficiently.⁸

Economic structure

Agriculture has a limited share in Gross Value Added (GVA)⁹ production in Slovenia, and the Podravska region shows similar characteristics. In the Pomurska region, the role of agriculture is still important but is experiencing a declining trend. In Hungary, the agricultural sector produces 4.4-4.7 % of GVA on average, while the GVA ratio is higher than the national average in Vas and Zala counties. Agriculture still plays a relatively important role particularly in Zala county.

The share of industrial production, including manufacturing, is stable in Slovenia with 27 %. In the two Slovenian programme regions the share of industrial production is close to the national average.

In Hungary, the share of GVA production is also around 27 %, but as regards the programme areas, it is outstanding in Vas county, where the automotive industry is the largest contributor to the industrial GVA. In Zala county, it is still above the national average but faced a declining trend in the examined period.

The share of GVA production by the construction industry remained nearly at the same level both in Slovenia and Hungary, declining only in 2016. Construction has a significant role in the Pomurska region.

The share of the service sector including wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities, as well as information and communication, is well below the national average in Vas county and in the Pomurska and the Podravska regions, but represents the same share in Zala county.

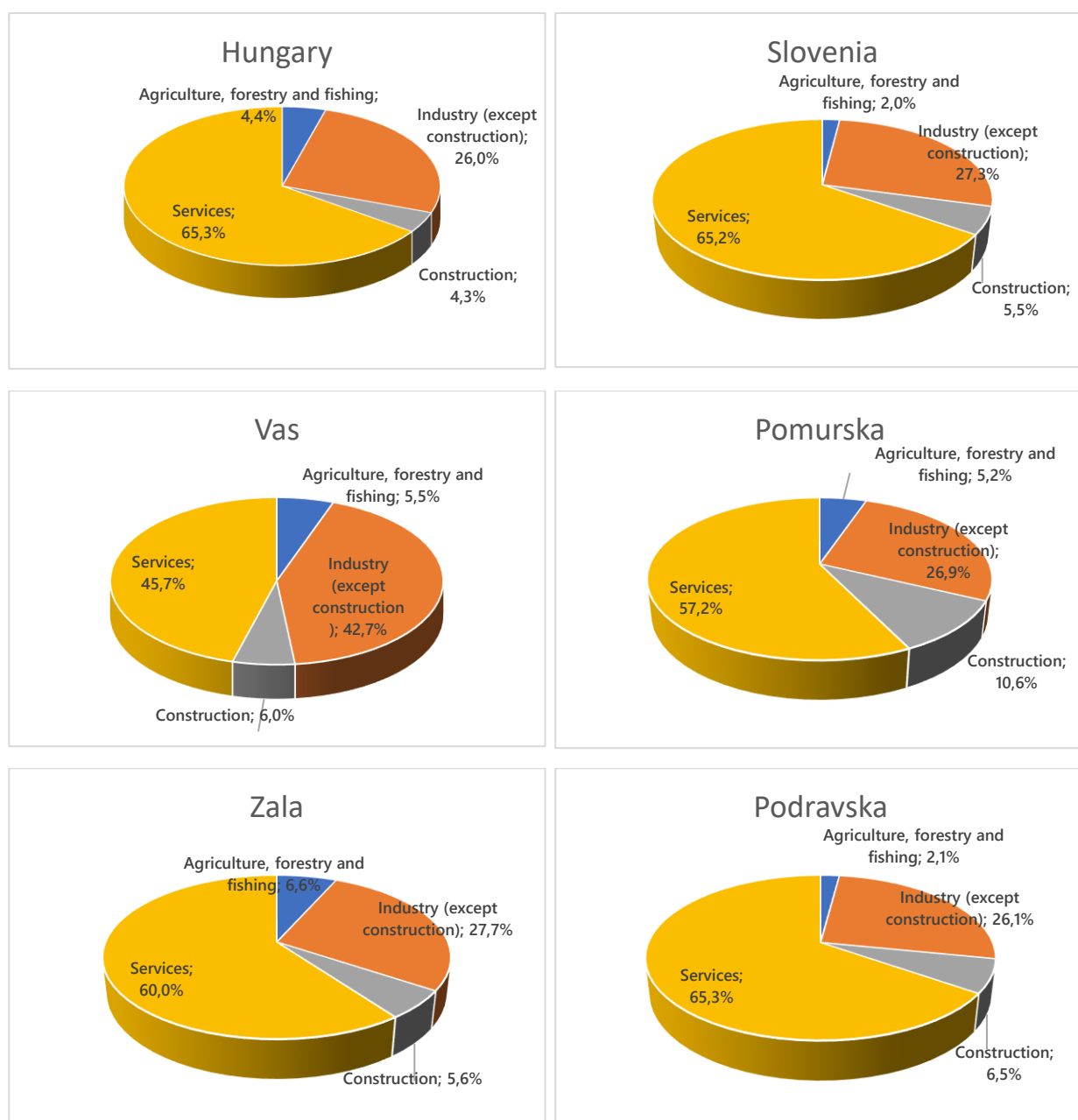
Share of GVA of the service sector including financial and insurance activities, real estate activities, professional, scientific and technical activities, and administrative and support service activities is much lower than the national average in Zala and Vas counties, lower in the Pomurska region, and higher in the Podravska region

Share of GVA of other services, including public administration and defence, compulsory social security, education, human health and social work activities, arts, entertainment and recreation, and repair of households' goods and other services, remained practically at the same level both in Slovenia and Hungary, as well as in the Pomurska and the Podravska regions. In Zala and Vas counties an increasing trend in this share could be observed.

Figure 18: Share of Gross Value Added at basic prices in 2017

⁸ Commission Staff Working Document – Country Report Hungary 2019 (2019 European Semester), Brussels 27 February 2019.

⁹ For a detailed statistical table, see in Annex 2



Source: Eurostat, November, 2019

Enterprises

The number of active enterprises in both the Pomurska and the Podravska regions increased in 2015 in comparison to 2014, but remained practically at the same level in the following years.

The number of active enterprises was growing considerably in both Hungarian counties, with nearly 13 % in Vas county, and with 8.2 % in Zala county from 2014 to 2017.

Table 14: Number of active enterprises

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017
Vas	15,171	15,563	15,918	17,121
Zala	18,080	18,482	18,715	19,571
Pomurska	7,870	7,970	7,983	7,872
Podravska	25,312	25,873	26,125	26,011

Source: Statistical Office of Hungary and Statistical Office of Slovenia, November 2019

Conclusion

Implementation of the SI-HU CBC programme was accompanied with favourable economic trends in the period of 2014-2019. The economic situation in both countries, as well as in the programme areas, is much better at present than it was at the time of designing the programme. The favourable economic situation created a positive basis for the implementation of the programme.

In terms of GVA production, the economic structure in the programme area did not change significantly in the period of 2014-2017. This situation is expected to remain unchanged in the medium term of the next five years. In each programme region, the service sector has the highest contribution to GVA. For Vas county, a risk factor is present due to the role of the car manufacturing industry, where considerable changes can occur in the next five years and have a reverse effect not only on the industrial production in this county but also on the service sector.

Favourable economic conditions stipulated the establishment of new ventures in Zala and Vas counties where the number of active enterprises increased significantly during the examined period. The number of enterprises in the two Slovenian regions remained stable. According to the interviews with certain project beneficiaries, there is an increasing interest among SMEs in creating connections to conduct business transactions at cross-border level.

LABOUR MARKET

Activity rate, employment, unemployment

The robust economic growth of recent years has also boosted the labour market in Slovenia. The employment growth was sustained through job creation across most sectors. The unemployment rate continued to decline (in 2014: 9.7 %, in 2018: 5.1 %) and the activity rate increased (in 2016: 76.2 %, in 2017: 78.6 %).

At the beginning of the examined period, both Slovenian regions suffered from high unemployment rate, 18.4 % in the Pomurska and 14.4 % in the Podravska region. The economic growth contributed to the job creation in these regions as well, and the unemployment rate decreased significantly, although it is still high in comparison to the national average.

Labour market performance in Hungary continued to improve in line with the generally good economic situation. The activity rate of those between 20 and 64 years of age reached a record 76 % in 2017, having increased steadily since 2009. Unemployment, including long-term and youth unemployment, dropped below the pre-crisis levels, and is forecast to decrease further.

The labour market continued to tighten. The number of job vacancies exceeded 87,000 in the third quarter of 2018, which is around 20 % more than in 2017. In parallel, labour reserves, including the numbers of part-time employees, unemployed people, participants in the Public Works Scheme and certain segments of the inactive population, were shrinking.

The economic activity rate was growing in each area of the programme.

Table 15: Table Economic activity rate, (in %)

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Hungary	58.7	59.9	61.1	61.8	62.5
Vas	60.8	63.0	61.8	62.4	65.0
Zala	59.2	58.5	59.8	62.5	62.5
Slovenia	63.9	65.2	65.8	69.3	71.1
Pomurska	50.7	50.6	51.3	53.6	n.d.
Podravska	54.0	54.8	55.6	57.6	n.d.

Source: Statistical Office of Hungary and Statistical Office of Slovenia, November 2019

The unemployment rate was declining both in Slovenia and Hungary. Parallel, with the national trends, it declined in the programme area, as well. The unemployment rate in Vas county was low at the beginning of the examined period, but decreased even further. In Zala county it declined significantly and is now below the national average. In the two Slovenian regions, the trend is favourable but the unemployment rate is still high and is well above the national average.

Table 16: Unemployment rate (%)

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Hungary	7.7	6.8	5.1	4.2	3.7
Vas	3.6	3.8	2.6	1.9	2.5
Zala	8.1	5.4	3.8	4.3	2.6
Slovenia	9.7	9.0	8.0	6.6	5.1
Pomurska	18.4	18.9	17.4	15.2	13.2
Podravska	14.4	13.6	12.5	11.0	9.6

Source: Eurostat, November 2019

Regarding the labour market efficiency, the Regional Competitiveness Indicator for this item was positive for Western Transdanubia¹⁰ (0.34) and negative for Eastern Slovenia (-0.20) in 2019. This means that Western Transdanubia performs better than the EU average, meanwhile the Slovenian side is below of the EU average.

Net earnings

In the two Slovenian regions, the average monthly net earnings of full-time employees were growing modestly.

The tight labour market and government measures were and still are fuelling real wage growth in Hungary. After years of moderation, wage growth has been accelerating sharply since 2017.

In the examined period, the average monthly earnings of full-time employees were growing, particularly in Vas and Zala counties, where the total growth was 41.5 % (Vas) and 37.7 % (Zala), respectively, during the five-year period. In spite of this, the average net earnings in these counties are still much lower than in the two Slovenian regions.

Table 17: Average monthly net earnings of full-time employees

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Net earnings, EUR	EUR				

¹⁰ Western Transdanubia includes Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala counties

Pomurska	912	923	940	970	1004
Podravska	929	939	955	986	1015
Vas*	445	470	511	581	630
Zala*	392	407	437	493	540
Previous year= 100.0%	%				
Pomurska	101.6	101.2	101.8	103.2	103.5
Podravska	100.5	101.0	101.8	103.2	102.9
Vas	104.2	105.6	108.9	113.6	108.4
Zala	102.2	103.8	107.3	112.8	109.5

*Calculated with 320 HUF/EUR exchange rate

Source: Statistical Office of Hungary and Statistical Office of Slovenia, November 2019

Though there are significant wage differences between the Slovenian and Hungarian regions, the workforce flow from Hungary to Slovenia is not significant at present, even though there are signs that a growing number of Hungarians are showing interest in work in Slovenia¹¹. This could be due to the fact that the unemployment rate is high in the Slovenian border region and job vacancies are simple limited; in addition to the language barrier, many people commute to Austria daily.

Conclusion

At present, the labour market is in a much better position than it was at the time of designing the 2014-2020 CBC programme. The situation improved year by year in each region of the programme area in terms of activity rates, employment and unemployment and net earnings. Significant positive changes occurred particularly on the Hungarian side.

However, differences remained that make cross-border co-operation difficult in the labour market. In the Slovenian programme regions, the unemployment rate is still high in comparison to the Hungarian programme areas. Despite that, net earnings are much higher in the Pomurska and the Podravska regions than in Zala and Vas counties. Since the net earnings are higher in Slovenia than in Hungary, it would be reasonable for Hungarian workers and employees to look for job opportunities in Eastern Slovenia but finding jobs would be difficult due to the high unemployment rate. Slovenian employees and workers might find jobs in Zala or Vas counties since the demand for qualified workforce is high there, but wages are much lower than in Slovenia. For this reason, Hungary is not attractive for Slovenian job-seekers. Furthermore, the language remains a significant barrier to the flow of workforce across the Slovenian-Hungarian border.

Considerable cross-border impacts on labour market co-operation can hardly be achieved due the above reasons in the short and medium terms.

SOCIAL SITUATION

Main demographic trends

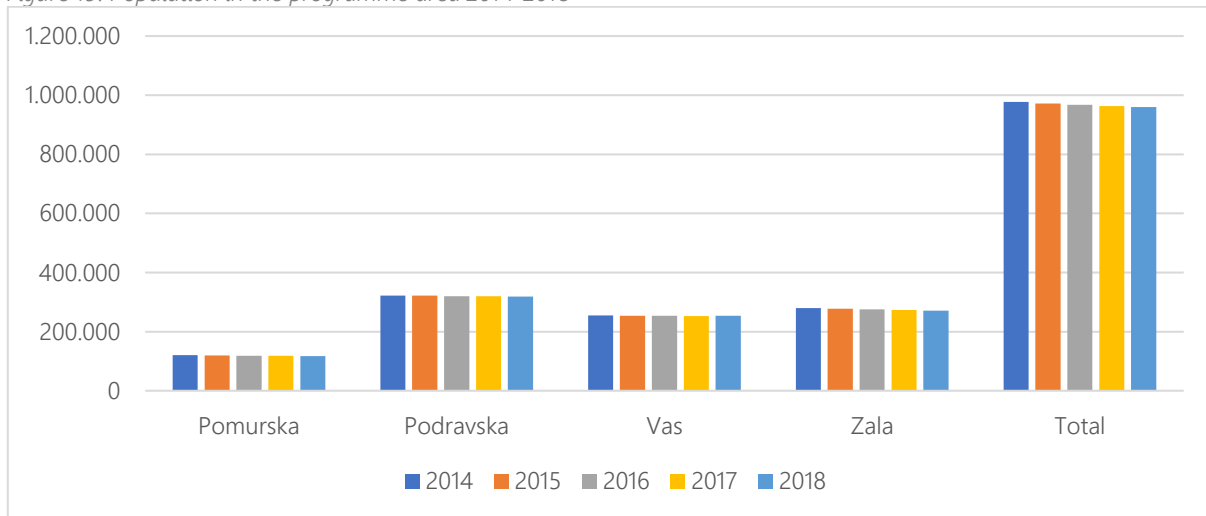
In 2018, the population of this border region was 959,725 which is with 16,940 people less than in 2014¹². Over the past five years (2014-2018), the negative demographic trend persisted in the

¹¹ This phenomenon was mentioned several times during the interviews.

¹² See Annex 2 Statistical tables

Slovenian-Hungarian border area, particularly in Zala county (-8,989 people), but also in the other three regions (Pomurska: - 3,017 people; Podravska: - 3,659 people; Vas: -1,275 people).

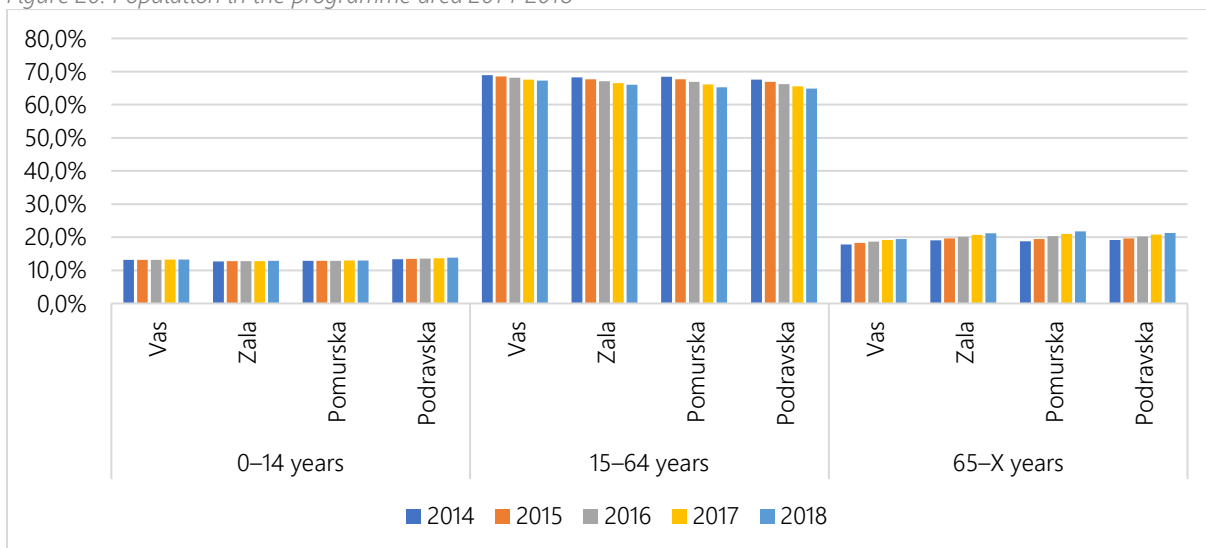
Figure 19: Population in the programme area 2014-2018



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia; Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

The share of age group 0-14 is relatively stable in each programme region, share of age group 15-64 is steadily declining, meanwhile the share of age group 65-X is increasing year by year.

Figure 20: Population in the programme area 2014-2018



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia; Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019, Relative figures, own calculation

The negative demographic trends can mainly be attributed to the relatively high natural loss. The negative demographic balance due to high outmigration resulted in population decline in Zala county and the Pomurska region. Vas County and the Podravska region, however, witnessed a positive migration balance in this period.

Education

In general, Slovenia has a well performing education system. The education spending as share of the GDP is above the EU average. The Apprenticeship Act¹³, which came into force in December 2017, supports the strengthening of the connection between education and practical experience in order to adjust knowledge and skills adequately to the needs of the economy. Participation in tertiary education is widespread in Slovenia but inequalities in access persist.

In Hungary, the education system is coping with several problems. Educational outcomes in basic skills and the tertiary attainment rate are well below the EU average and there is great variation between schools. In 2017, the early school leaving rate increased to 12.5 %, which is above the EU average of 10.6 %. The two tracks of vocational education and training differ strongly in terms of career perspectives for their graduates. The shortage of teachers remains a challenge. A continuing low level of participation in higher education is likely to further restrain tertiary attainment rates. Recent legislative changes aim to improve the labour market relevance of vocational education and training.

The Regional Competitiveness Indicator for basic and higher education was below the EU average in Western Transdanubia (-0.66 and -0.23, respectively), while these indicators exceeded the EU average (0.99 and 0.37) in Eastern Slovenia. These figures show major differences in the efficiency of basic education in the two countries.

Health care

In March 2016, the Slovenian Government adopted the National Health Plan (NHP) 2016–25 and launched a number of legislative initiatives with a view to ensure fiscal sustainability in the health sector. The NHP aims at strengthening primary healthcare and providing greater access to comprehensive and quality treatment through better care integration and a more adequate professional skill-mix across care levels. These reforms could also help Slovenia to respond to the changing needs of an ageing population, especially in the rural areas.

In Slovenia, financing for the healthcare system is currently highly cyclical and inadequate to face the expected cost increases due to the ageing of population and technological changes. Waiting periods and public procurement in healthcare are still inefficient despite recent efforts to improve both. The authorities have announced that the draft Healthcare Act will be adopted by the end of 2019. Slovenia does not have an overarching law that covers long-term care.

The Slovenian health system provides nearly universal coverage but there are extensive co-payments. To cover these, 87% of the population has voluntary health insurance and help is available for those who cannot afford it. Out-of-pocket payments are low overall, but the share of private expenditure is high compared to the EU average.

The Slovenian authorities plan to focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare. They aim to reduce waiting times and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public healthcare

¹³ The Minister of Education of Slovenia established a working group comprising key VET stakeholders: ministries (education, labour and economy), chambers, unions, schools, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (CPI) and the Employment Service of Slovenia. The working group prepared a draft Apprenticeship Act, which was adopted in 2017 after a public debate.

network (the management of healthcare institutions, quality and safety in healthcare and in long-term care for the elderly and ageing with dignity).

Although gradually improving, the health status of Hungarians lags behind that of most other Europeans and significant socio-economic health disparities persist. The timely provision of quality care remains a challenge, impacting life expectancy.

The health system's major agencies and services have undergone an almost continuous process of (re)centralisation since 2012, when ownership of hospitals was transferred back from local to the central government. Further mergers and reorganisation in 2015 made the National Healthcare Service Centre the umbrella organisation for other formerly independent authorities. It is now the leading organisation for healthcare provision. Its tasks range from hospital planning, care coordination, licensing of medical professionals and management of external funding to implementation of national strategies and communication with international research organisations.

The geographical concentration of hospitals and other healthcare infrastructures also affects access to care, particularly specialist services, but also to primary care providers. The recruitment of general practitioners (GPs) to rural areas is already challenging, and it will become even more difficult to replace the many GPs currently providing services in these areas when they retire in the coming years.

The Hungarian Government has made staff retention a priority issue in response to the mass emigration of healthcare professionals and the expansion of the private sector over the last decade. The salaries of doctors and nurses have been raised, and existing training and support programmes have been enhanced and extended. Despite the success of these measures, vacant posts remain difficult to fill, especially for general practitioners and maternal child health nurses. Healthcare infrastructure and capacities are distributed unevenly, with significant shortages in rural and deprived areas. There are major differences in waiting periods across regions for normal (not immediate, life-savings) surgeries.

In 2019, the Regional Competitiveness Indicator for health care was well below the EU average in Western Transdanubia (-1.46), but it was also negative for Eastern-Slovenia (-0.37).

The number of hospitals in the Pomurska (2 hospitals) and the Podravska (2 hospitals) regions as well as in Vas (5 hospitals) and Zala (4 hospitals) counties are the same as it was at the beginning of the programme. The hospitals of Vas and Zala are facing similar challenges as other hospitals in Hungary, namely the staff problems including the lack of adequate professional personnel and the problem of appropriate financing.

As regards the number of physicians or doctors per one hundred thousand inhabitants, there was a counter-trend in the two NUTS 2 regions in the period of 2014-2017, since the trend was decreasing in Western Transdanubia and increasing in Eastern Slovenia.

Table 18: Number of physicians or doctors per hundred thousand inhabitants

REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017
Western-Transdanubia	295	259	277	273

Eastern-Slovenia	235	244	254	252
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Source: Eurostat, November 2019

The beds available in hospitals per one hundred thousand inhabitants remained at the same level in both NUTS 2 regions in the examined period.

Table 19: Available bed in hospitals per hundred thousand inhabitants

REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017
Western-Transdanubia	721	725	720	719
Eastern-Slovenia	376	374	373	375

Source: Eurostat, November 2019

Social inclusion

The share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has decreased in Slovenia. For the whole society, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) decreased by 1.3 percentage points to 17.1 % in 2017. For people aged over 65, the AROPE was 18.3 % and approaching the EU average (18.1 %). Inequality as measured by the ratio of incomes of the richest 20 % of households compared to the poorest 20 % of households, continued to decrease and remains among the lowest in the EU. In spite of this, the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate was 6.6 % for people aged 18-64 in 2017, which was relatively low.

Hungary's overall poverty situation has been improving since 2013. In 2018, one out of five (19.6 %) Hungarians was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The number of people facing severe material deprivation and living in low work intensity households has halved since 2013. The severe material deprivation rate was still the fourth highest in the EU in 2017. The provision of long-term care for people with disabilities is improving but requires further attention. Thanks to generous parental leave benefits, the impact of non-pension social transfers on poverty reduction is one of the highest in the EU, but key elements of the social safety net can be improved.

The benefits of growth have not been equally distributed. At the same time, the share of income of the top 20 % has increased from 3.4 times that of the bottom 20 % in 2010 to 4.3 in 2017. This represents a significant increase in inequality, even though the ratio remains below the EU average of 5.1.

Conclusion

The adverse demographic trend continued in both countries, and in the programme areas. The population numbers are decreasing, while the ageing index of the society is increasing. The major problem is that this trend will continue in the next decade as well, and it will have a negative impact on the social care and pension systems.

The performance of the healthcare system in both countries is improving but the Slovenian system is in a much better shape. The structure of the healthcare systems in Slovenia and Hungary is different in terms of governance and financing. The efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare system should be improved in both countries.

The high level of centralization of the Hungarian healthcare system does not support cross border co-operation since decision-making is slow and regional healthcare institutions do not have the liberty and flexibility to initiate this type of co-operation. Knowledge-sharing, however, could be a possible field of co-operation. This could include for example exchange of experiences and good practices on health institution management, with special emphasis on knowledge and quality management of (human and financial) resource management.

There are many more possibilities for cross-border co-operation in social care, where the civil society and charity organisation of traditional churches play an important role in Slovenia and Hungary, as well. The Austria-Hungary CP Programme 2014-2020 for example supports projects – “Age Friendly Regions” and “Co-Age”, and the Slovenia-Croatia CP Programme 2014-2020 the project “CrossCare” – which are focusing on social care of elderly people at cross-border level. Although in these two programmes such type of activities are easier to implement due to less significant language barrier, such projects can be viable also in the Slovenia-Hungary cooperation programme.

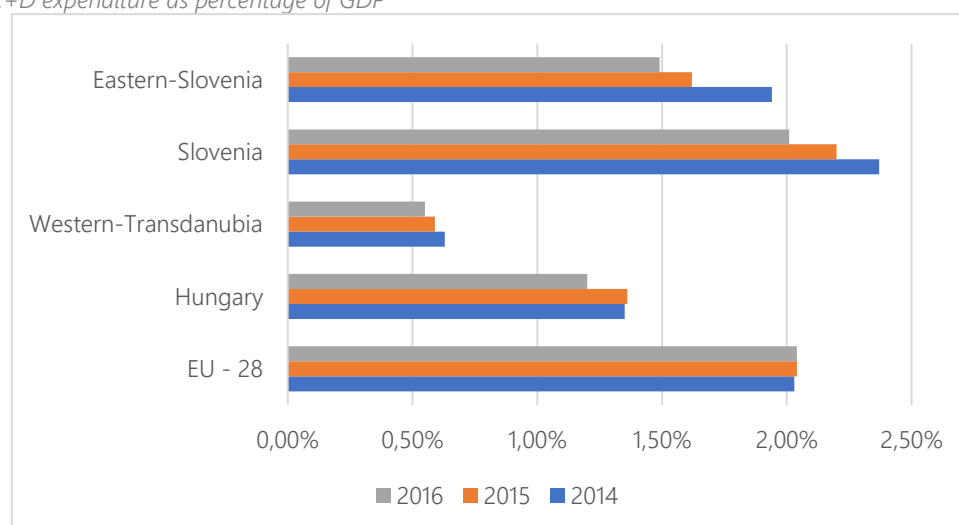
R&D, INNOVATION, DIGITAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Research and development

With regard to research and development (R&D) intensity (measuring R&D expenditure as a percentage of the GDP, at NUTS 2 level) Slovenia performed better than the EU average in 2014-2015. Although, R+D expenditure, was declining as a percentage of the GDP, it was still in line with the EU average in 2016 (2 %). Hungary was well below the EU average and was far from the target value in these years.

The border regions both in Slovenia and Hungary fell short of reaching the EU target of 3%. In Eastern Slovenia, R&D expenditure reached the EU-average of 2.0% in 2014, but the ratio was declining in the following years. In Western Transdanubia only a very small part of the GDP was spent on R+D in that period (0.55-0.63 %).

Figure 21: R+D expenditure as percentage of GDP



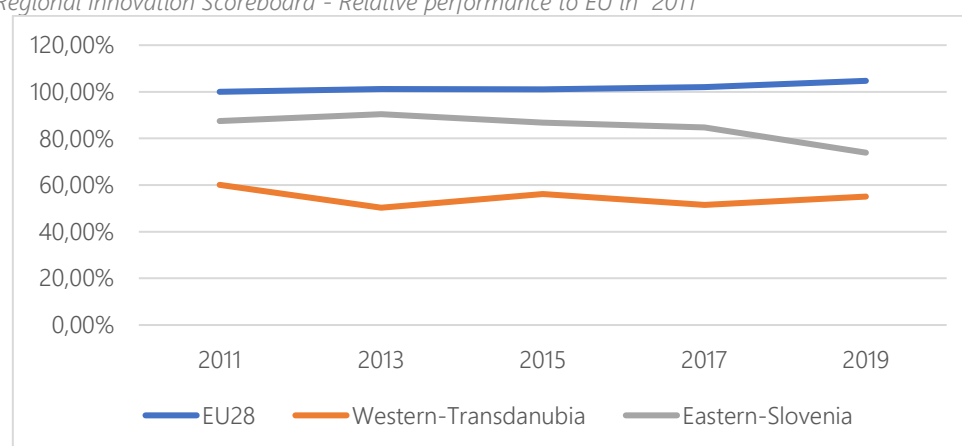
Source: Eurostat, November 2019

Innovation

According to the latest Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) 2019, both border regions in Slovenia as well as in Hungary remain moderate innovators, with innovation performance below the EU average, although the situation was much better in Eastern-Slovenia than in Western Transdanubia. In both regions, however, the RIS declined in comparison to the average EU figure of 2011.

The Regional Innovation Scoreboard assesses the innovation performance of European regions on a number of indicators, including population with tertiary education, lifelong learning, scientific co-publications, R+D expenditure of the business and public sectors, innovation activities, knowledge-intensive services, etc.

Figure 22: Regional Innovation Scoreboard - Relative performance to EU in "2011"



Source: Regional Innovation Scoreboard – European Commission, November 2019

The key indicators for innovation potential in the Commission's Regional Competitiveness Index (RCI) show that the conditions for innovation are well below the EU average in almost every aspect in Western Transdanubia. The innovation potential is also below the EU average in Eastern Slovenia but the situation is better than on the Hungarian side of the border.

Table 20: RCI-Innovation, 2019

	EU28 = 0 POINT	
	EASTERN- SLOVENIA	WESTERN-TRANSDANUBIA
Innovation dimension	-0.34	-0.87
Technological readiness	-0.40	-0.70
Business sophistication	-0.49	-1.30
Innovation	-0.14	-0.61

Source: RCI 2019 scores – EU Commission, Regional Policy, November 2019

Digital Economy and Society

In terms of digital economy and society, information is available mainly at the national level, while the situation at the regional level in the border region can be estimated with the national figures.

As for the 'Digital Economy and Society Index' (DESI)¹⁴, Hungary was rated the fifth lowest in the EU with 45.4 points, while Slovenia was only slightly below the EU average at close to 51 points in 2019. Though the index improved in both countries in the last three years (2017-2019), they could not change their rankings as regards the composite index. Slovenia improved its position in the provision of digital public services and in the use of internet services, meanwhile Hungary has a better ranking in terms of connectivity in comparison to the previous years.

Table 21: Digital Economy and Society Index

	WEIGHTED DESI		CONNECTIVITY		HUMAN CAPITAL		USE OF INTERNET SERVICES		INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY		DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES	
	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK
EU-28												
DESI 2017	46.9		51.2		45.4		47.8		37.6		54.0	
DESI 2018	49.8		54.8		47.6		50.7		39.6		57.9	
DESI 2019	52.5		59.3		48.0		53.4		41.1		62.9	
Slovenia												
DESI 2017	45.1	16	50.9	16	46.1	13	39.9	22	37.0	15	49.8	16
DESI 2018	47.9	15	53.4	18	45.7	14	44.4	21	39.5	14	57.0	16
DESI 2019	50.9	16	58.5	17	46.3	15	46.6	21	40.1	15	64.7	14
Hungary												
DESI 2017	40.1	23	51.9	15	41.2	18	45.4	14	23.7	24	35.0	27
DESI 2018	43.2	23	55.6	15	42.5	19	46.5	17	26.2	24	42.8	26
DESI 2019	45.4	23	60.4	14	42.1	20	48.0	18	25.4	25	49.8	26

Source: DESI Index, Country reports, Slovenia and Hungary, November 2019

With an overall "Connectivity" score of 58.5, Slovenia ranks 17th, which is slightly below the EU average. While fixed broadband coverage remained stable with 98 % of homes covered (slightly above the EU average of 97 %), Slovenia increased its fast broadband (NGA) coverage to 86 %, exceeding the EU average (83 %). Fixed broadband connections are available in 85 % of households, which is above the EU average of 77 %.

With regard to the "Human capital" dimension, Slovenia ranks 15th among the EU countries and performs below the EU average. Slovenia did not progress substantially in the human capital dimension in the recent years.

Overall, the use of internet services in Slovenia has increased, but remains below with the EU average.

¹⁴ The European Commission has been monitoring the Member State's digital competitiveness with the Digital Economy and Society Index across five dimensions since 2015.

Regarding the “Integration of digital technology” by businesses Slovenia ranks 15th among the EU countries, which is just below the EU average. Slovenia’s ranking dropped by one place compared to last year, with no progress on most of the indicators, except the use of cloud services and SMEs selling online. Slovenian enterprises are increasingly taking advantage of the possibilities offered by online commerce: 17 % of SMEs sell online (17 % on EU average) and 12 % of total SMEs make sales across the border (8 % in the EU). As much as 18 % of enterprises use social media and 17 % of Slovenian enterprises use cloud services (up from 13 % in 2017).

With regard to “Digital public services”, Slovenia ranks 14th among EU countries and is above the EU average. It performs very well in terms of access to open data and e-health. In 2018, Slovenia performed better than in the previous year in the use of pre-filled forms (61 against an EU average of 58). However, the take-up of e-government services for businesses is lower in Slovenia than in the EU overall, although a wide range of online services for businesses are being available. In e-healthcare services, Slovenia ranks 6th among the EU Member States, with 27 % of Slovenes having used health and care services provided online.

In “Connectivity”, Hungary is above the EU average, and now ranks 14th, after a sustained relative improvement in recent years. Although fixed broadband coverage stagnated at around 94 % of homes, fast broadband coverage increased to 87 %.

In the “Human capital dimension”, Hungary ranks 20th among the EU countries and is below the EU average, with no significant changes since last year. Basic digital skills remain below the EU average (Hungary ranks 21st out of 28), and basic software skills are also modest (22nd out of 28).

Overall, Hungary ranks 18th in the use of internet by citizens, which is below the EU average. As much as 75 % of the population uses the internet at least once a week, compared with 83 % in the EU as a whole.

Hungary is among the worst performing EU Member States in terms of “Integration of digital technology” in businesses. Uptake of ICTs is low across all the indicators measured in this dimension. Hungary has the lowest share of enterprises sharing information electronically in the EU.

Digital public services remain one of the most challenging areas of a digital economy and society. In this dimension of the DESI Hungary ranks 26th out of 28 EU Member States, despite progress in the provision and the use of e-government services. Since 2016, e-government users have increased substantially, from 38 % to 53 %, although this is still below the EU average of 64 %. As for e-healthcare, where the results of the latest policy developments cannot be tracked yet, Hungary performs well on the use of electronic prescriptions

The number of households with internet access increased in both NUTS 2 regions in the examined period and by now 84-85% of the households have internet connections.

Table 22: Percentage of households that have internet access

TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Western-Transdanubia	76	79	83	83	85
Eastern-Slovenia	n.d.	73	77	80	84

Source: Eurostat, November 2019

Conclusion

Future competitiveness of the countries will greatly depend on their progress towards R+D, innovation and digital economy and society. In this respect, there is a mixed picture in both countries. R+D plays an important role in Slovenia, including Eastern –Slovenia. In Hungary, and particularly in Western Transdanubia, R+D expenditure in comparison to the GDP is at a very low level.

The innovation potential of Eastern Slovenia is still moderate but it is close to the EU-average. The innovation potential of Western Transdanubia is well below the EU average.

Both countries have made progress in building the digital economy and society but could not improve their position in ranking among the 28 EU countries.

The percentage of households with internet access is relatively high in Eastern Slovenia and Western Transdanubia.

Supporting R+D co-operation and innovation at cross-border level is beyond the scope of the CBC programme. This type of projects usually requires a great deal of financing. Co-operation of Slovenian and Hungarian researchers and innovators, however, can be carried out in the EU framework programmes for research and innovation (in this period for example the Horizon 2020 programme provides joint opportunities).

With regards to the co-operation in the development of digital economy and society, co-operation would be preferable and could generate considerable impact in the fields of "integration of digital technology" and "digitalisation of public services".

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM SECTOR

The CP SI-HU states that "the potential in natural and cultural heritage of this cross-border region provides excellent opportunities to create a competitive joint regional tourism destination" but "the region is still characterized by territorially unbalanced tourism turnover with high spatial concentration on some core tourism areas attracting the majority of the guest arrivals". This statement is still valid; the cross-border region is characterized by unbalanced tourism turnover.

The two countries promote tourism activity following different principles. In Hungary it is centralized (association of tourism destination management - TDM offices), but the TDM offices are struggling with human resource and budget problems. The regional TDM offices are not in the position to launch a nation-wide promotional campaign for the region where they are operating. In Slovenia, the general promotion of tourism (especially on global markets) is managed by the Slovenian Tourist Board. However, some regions, regional destination organisations and local tourist information centres are increasingly investing in promotional activities on-line as well as at international tourism fairs and events. Although this is more effective for promotion of non-mainstream local brands and products, it is generally still quite fragmented.

On the Hungarian side, three EU-financed mainstream programmes and one national have supported tourism-related developments in the 2014-2020 programming period:

The Economic and Innovation Operative Programme has been supporting the touristic investments of the tourism magnets (grant amounting to 300-1200 million HUF) in Vas County: Bük, Körmend and in Zala County: Hévíz, Kehidakustány, Zalakaros, Keszthely.

Improving the visibility of tourism potential of other areas including smaller cities, villages, rural areas has been supported by the Territorial Operative Programmes.

The Territorial Operative Programme supported six tourism-related projects in Vas County (value of the grant: 60-300 million HUF), and 15 projects in Zala County (value of the grant: 50-450 million HUF). These investments were intended for the development of tourism attractions, or bicycle routes.

The Rural Development Programme supported the small-scale tourism investments (max. amount of grant: 50 million HUF), three in Vas County, and thirteen in Zala County. Most of these small-scale investments are intended to develop accommodation places, meanwhile the others focus/focused on the development of tourism attractions.

The Kisfaludy Tourism Development Program, which is financed from national sources, supports – among others – the development of accommodation services (pension, hotels) (value of the grant for pension: 5-60 million HUF, value of the grant for hotels: max 300 million HUF. In this case, however, the hotel concerned should have at least 100 beds)¹⁵.

In addition to the mainstream programmes, the Austria-Hungary and the Hungary-Croatia INTERREG programmes also supports tourism activities.

On the Slovenian side, investments in tourism infrastructure/products in the current period can be supported by the following programmes or financial sources:

The three main national Operational Programmes related to EU Funds; the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020; the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020; and the Operational Programme for European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Local Action Groups (LEADER/CLLD): within the regions of Pomurska and Podravska 11 Local Action Groups are established that – each through their own strategies – support also small-scale investments in tourism.

Cross-border and transnational programmes of the European Regional Development Fund represent an important tool for the development of geographically and thematically diverse tourism projects. In addition to being a part of the CP SI-HU, both Slovenian regions are involved also in two other cross-border programmes (Slovenia-Austria and Slovenia-Croatia).

Some of the projects that were co-financed by the above-mentioned programmes have already been finished and some of them are still underway. These investments might have an impact on the supply side of tourism services in Vas and Zala Counties in the following years. Obviously,

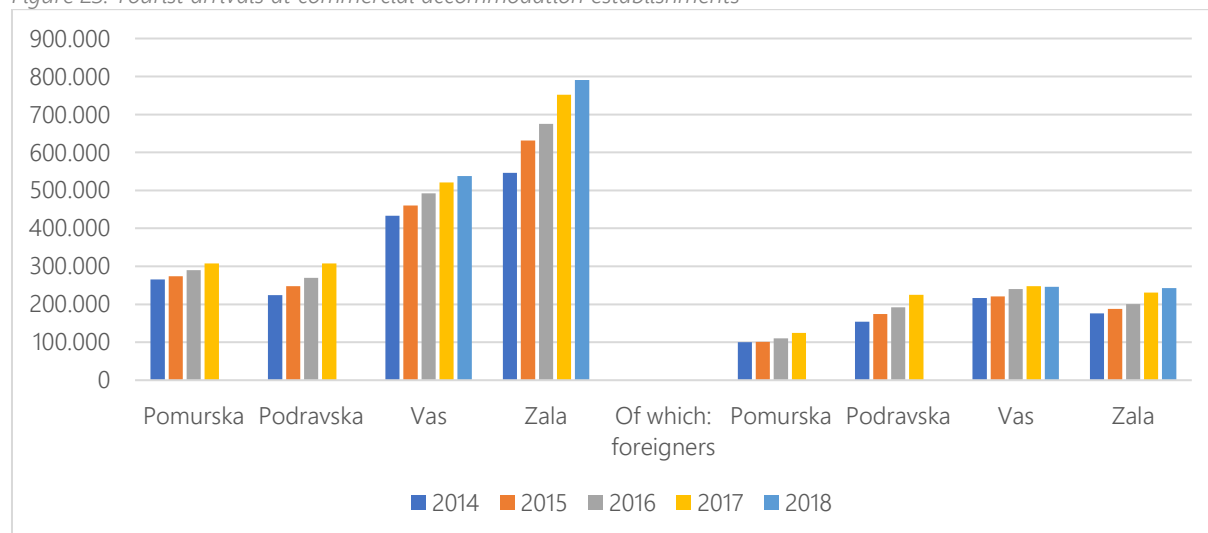
¹⁵ The homepage of the programme – www.kisfaludyprogram.hu – does not contain any information on the approved projects and thus neither on the supported projects in Zala and Vas counties.

they can have an impact on the utilisation of the tourism products developed under the SI-HU CBC 2014-2020 programme.

Tourism turnover

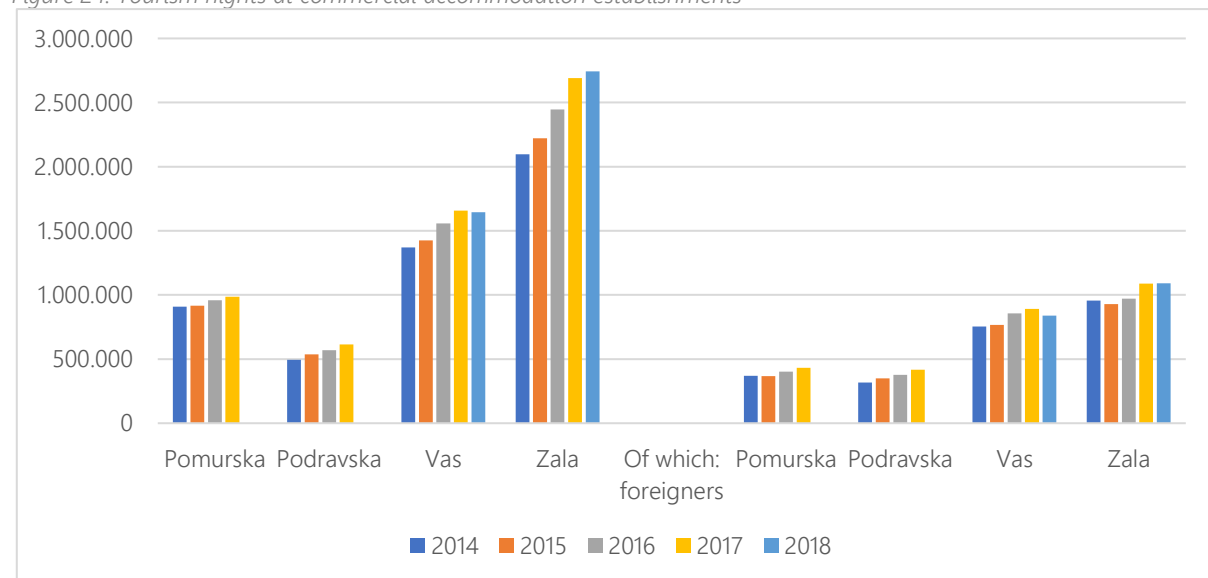
In all of the four eligible programme areas the tourist arrival increased significantly, mainly due to the revival of domestic tourism, except in the Podravska region where the number of foreign tourists increased even more. Overnights stays at commercial accommodation establishments exhibited an upwards trend as well.

Figure 23: Tourist arrivals at commercial accommodation establishments



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

Figure 24: Tourism nights at commercial accommodation establishments



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

The average length of stay, however, decreased in each region both in the case of domestic and foreign tourists. If this trend continues, it will be an unfavourable swing for the efficient exploitation of cross-border tourism products since it means that less time remains available for the guests to discover the local touristic attractions. The tourism program packages developed by the projects can contribute to reverse this adverse trend.

Table 23: Average length of stay at commercial accommodation establishments (nights)

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total					
Pomurska	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	n.d.
Podravska	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	n.d.
Vas	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.1
Zala	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.5
Of which: foreigners					
Pomurska	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.5	n.d.
Podravska	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.8	n.d.
Vas	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.4
Zala	5.4	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.5

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

Tourism infrastructure

The development of tourism infrastructure in terms of the number of bed places at commercial accommodation establishments showed an increasing trend in Vas county and the Pomurska and the Podravska regions, while it decreased in Zala county, apart from the hotels, where an increase (+175 beds) occurred. This is a clear sign that mainly the small tourism service providers went out of business (-1930 beds) in this county. Podravska is another region where only the hotels were able to increase their bed places (+4128), while many bed places ceased to be available (-3107) in other accommodations establishments in the period of 2014-2017.

Since hotels can be found mainly in tourist magnet centres, the figures indicate that the position of rural areas deteriorated in Zala county and the Podravska region¹⁶ as regards the tourism infrastructure in terms of bed places. In Vas County and the Pomurska region, however, lots of new bed places became available not only in hotels but in other commercial accommodations establishments (2050 in Vas, and 1734 in the Pomurska region).

Table 24: Number of bed places at commercial accommodation establishments (pc)

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total					
Pomurska	76 845	77 826	78 568	80 455	n.d.
Podravska	87 580	88 435	87 926	88 601	n.d.
Vas	12 725	14 092	14 826	15 324	15 732
Zala	27 540	29 447	27 512	26 654	25 785
Of which: hotels					
Pomurska	40 241	39 420	38 709	42 117	n.d.
Podravska	44 454	46 127	46 825	48 582	n.d.
Vas	6 714	7 105	7 690	7 880	7 671
Zala	14 001	13 963	13 903	14 271	14 176

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

¹⁶ The total number of bed places are equal: hotel bed places + non-hotel bed places. Hotel bed places increased in Podravska by 4128 pcs in the period of 2014-2017. The total bed places, however, increased only by 1021 pcs during this period. This means that the bed places in the non-hotel categories decreased by 3107 pcs (1021= 4128 + (-3107))

Conclusion

Tourism activity is still very important for each programme area and could be a driving force in the local economy of rural areas. There is a long-standing tradition in this field in the cross-border cooperation and a lot of experience has already accumulated. The tourism activity has also increased in the border region and those activities that are relevant for rural areas with active touristic attractions are becoming more popular, including biking and hiking, cultural tourism, wine tourism and other eco-tourism activities. There is still enough scope for further development of the cooperation in tourism activities at cross-border level.

Based on the interviews with some LPs and PPs, the “magnet” concept, however, is not functioning adequately. None of the interviewed project partners mentioned a sufficient degree of cooperation between the tourism services and products developed by their projects and the “magnets”. The reason could be twofold. The projects should more familiarize the managements of resorts with the new tourism products. In addition, the core touristic centres (mainly spas) have recently carried out large investments in order to improve their services and increase their capacities. For this reason, their interest is to provide their own services to the guests and are not interested in organizing programmes for their guests outside their facilities.

ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND ENERGY

Environment and climate adaptation

Slovenia has already reached the greenhouse gas emission targets in terms of Europe 2020 strategic targets. Slovenia’s greenhouse gas emissions in relation to the GDP are declining but they are above the EU average. Despite emission reductions for several air pollutants, air quality in Slovenia continues to raise concerns, especially due to increasing traffic as transport emissions are increasing, and will (as predicted) continue to dramatically grow in the next years. In addition to traffic, individual wood-fuelled furnaces for heating of houses on wood are the main contributors to air pollution. The territory of Slovenia (valid also for regions that are included in the programme) is exposed to the risks of an increasing number of natural hazards due to climate change, such as floods, landslides and droughts.

Hungary is on track to meet its climate goals, but challenges remain there in decarbonisation and climate change adaptation. Emissions not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System are allowed to increase by a maximum of 10 % by 2020 compared to 2005 levels. Instead, they fell by 9 % by 2017, and are forecasted to decrease by 19 % by 2020. Despite this improvement, air pollution remains a problem. The main sources of pollution are residential solid fuel combustion, agriculture and transport emissions. The transport sector, which is a large contributor at country level to air pollution in cities, increased its greenhouse gas emissions by 24 % from 2013 to 2016. The situation in the major cities of Zala and Vas counties is probably similar to the country level air pollution but in the rural areas transport-generated air pollution is much lower. Further decarbonisation of the economy will require investments. In addition, half of Hungary’s territory is significantly exposed to climate change risks including drought and floods, which create the need for investment.

Nature protection

The programme area is abundant in valuable natural assets on both sides of the border. In each programme region there are Special Conservation Areas (SCAs) designated as such in both countries by laws and regulations. The territory of nature protection areas in the programme area did not change in the examined period and the same regulations are in effect as the ones at the design stage of the 2014-2020 programme.

The area of the Natura 2000 sites is 113,655 ha in the Pomurska region, and 121,315 ha in the Podravska region. The main protected territory is the Goričko Regional Park in the Pomurska region where 96 % of the territory is under Natura 2000 protection. The landscape protection regions cover 47,790 ha in the Pomurska region and 7,185 ha in the Podravska region. Nature conservation areas cover 11,571 ha in the Pomurska region and 18,438 ha in the Podravska region.

The territory of protected areas of national significance in Vas county covers 47,523 ha, of which 42,689 ha comprise a national park, 4609 ha constitute landscape protection regions and 225 ha consist nature conservation areas.

The territory of protected areas of national significance in Zala county covers 25,528 ha, out of which 23,295 ha comprise national park, 1,908 ha constitute landscape protection regions and 329 ha consist of nature conservation areas.

There are several Natura 2000 sites in Vas and Zala counties as well. The total territory of the Órség National Park (Vas county) belongs to the Natura 2000 network due to the unique bird species that can be found there. There are Natura 2000 sites in the Fertő-Hanság National Park and in the Balaton Uplands National Park, as well.

According to the latest EC Country Report on Slovenia, the status of the natural environment including habitats and species is deteriorating, mainly due to the inappropriate urbanisation, farming and water management practices, although Slovenia's economy depends on its natural environment, and natural assets are used for a variety of developing green businesses that drive the local economy

The Slovenian-Hungarian border region is assessed as having low levels of Green Infrastructure (GI) networks, with low capacity to provide habitat and connectivity for large mammals and low capacity to deliver ecosystem services.

Energy

Slovenia is well on the way to reach its Europe 2020 energy sustainability targets. It has already achieved its energy efficiency target and is above the indicative trajectory for the renewable energy target. However, energy consumption in Slovenia is above the EU average and is increasing. Because of increasing energy consumption, new sources of energy have to be identified. Their positioning in a specific location, however, is problematic (from natural and social aspects), particularly with regard to wind and hydro power plants.

The share of the renewable energy in the total primary energy use is around 12 % in both countries.

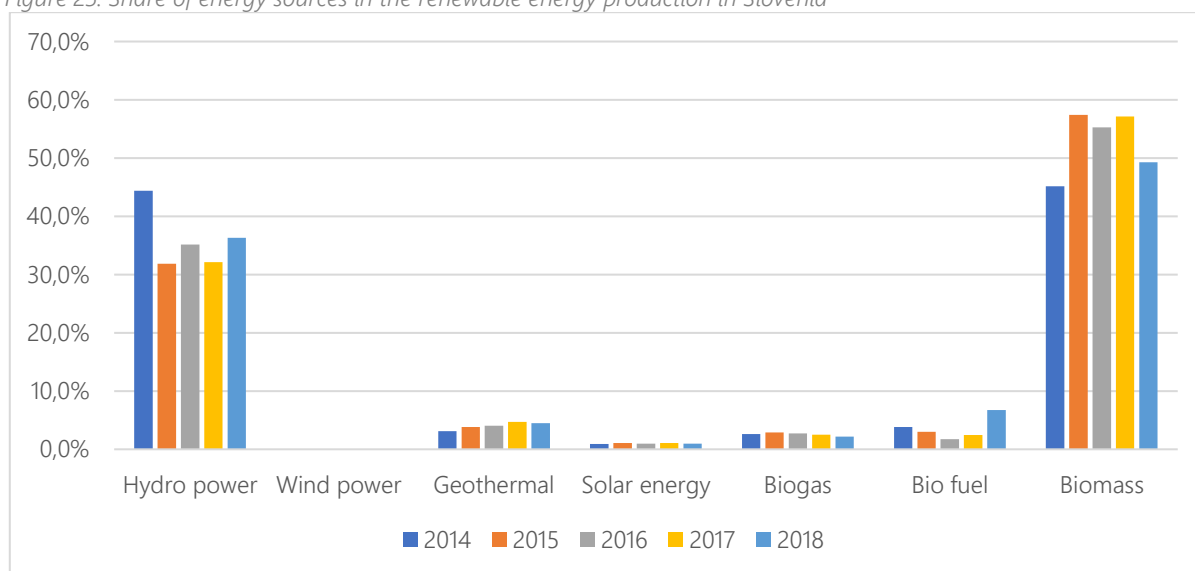
Table 25: Primary energy use, TJ (Terra Joule) and share of renewable energy

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Slovenia - Total	194 450	198 790	206 438	209 688	210 893
Of which: renewable (SI)	23 977	25 324	25 668	25 118	25 910
Share of renewable (SI)	12.3%	12.7%	12.4%	12.0%	12.3%
Hungary - Total	1 005 080	1 062 422	1 078 710	1 125 044	
Of which: renewable (HU)	125 923	133 808	135 016	132 808	
Share of renewable (HU)	12.5%	12.6%	12.5%	11.8%	

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

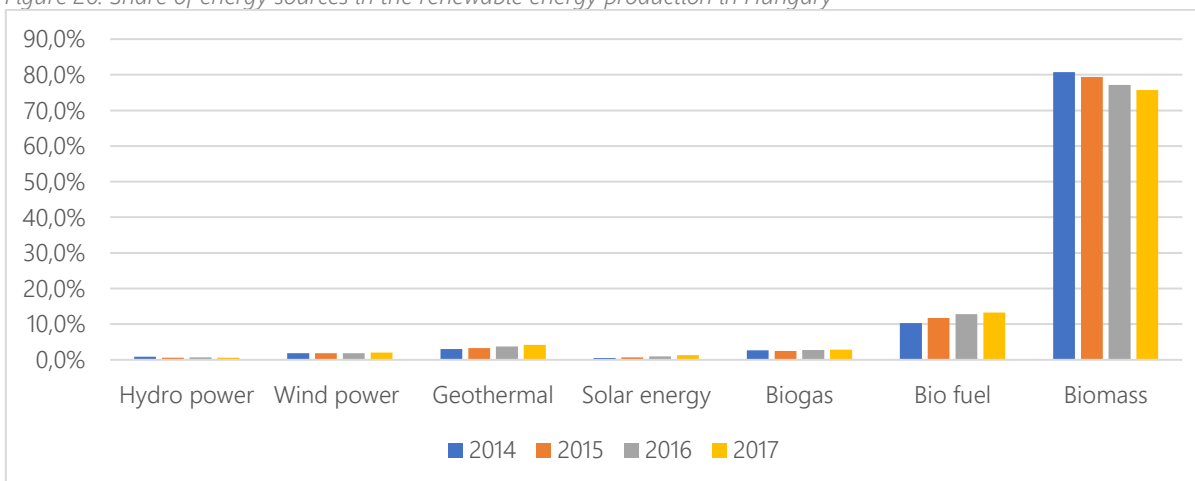
The share of the energy sources in renewable energy production is different in these two countries. Biomass is the most important energy source in both countries, constituting 50 % (2018) in Slovenia, and 75.7 % (2017) in Hungary. In Slovenia hydropower plays also an important role (36.3 % in 2018). In Hungary biofuel ranks second in renewable energy production (13.3 %). In Slovenia wind power does not play any significant role in renewable energy production and the same could be said of hydropower in Hungary.

Figure 25: Share of energy sources in the renewable energy production in Slovenia



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

Figure 26: Share of energy sources in the renewable energy production in Hungary

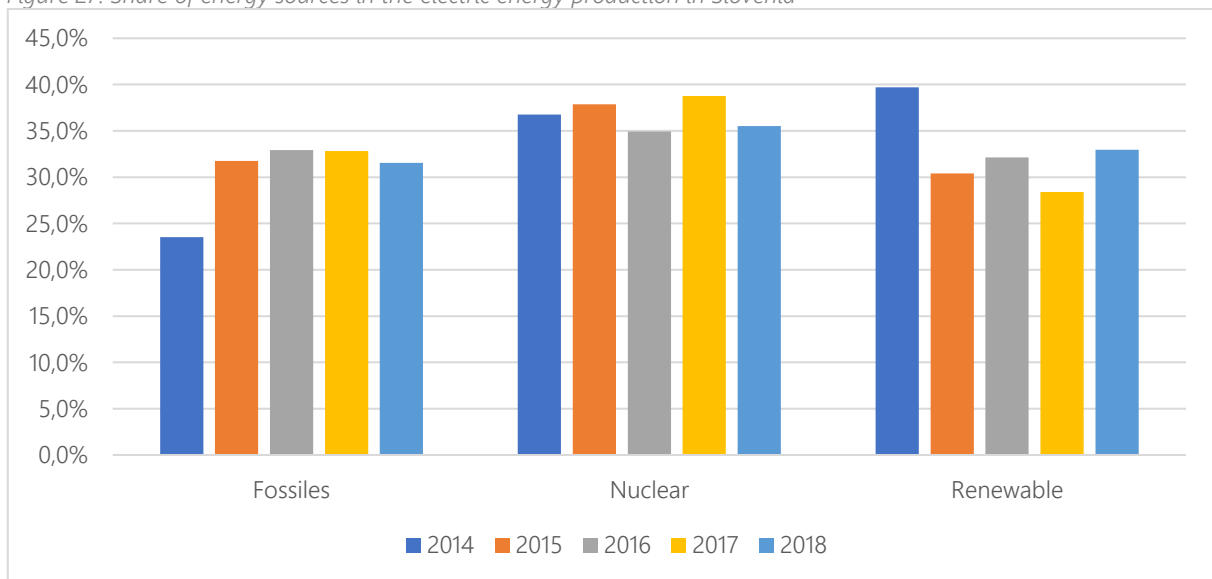


Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

It should be noted, that geothermal energy plays an important role on both sides of the SI-HU border region.

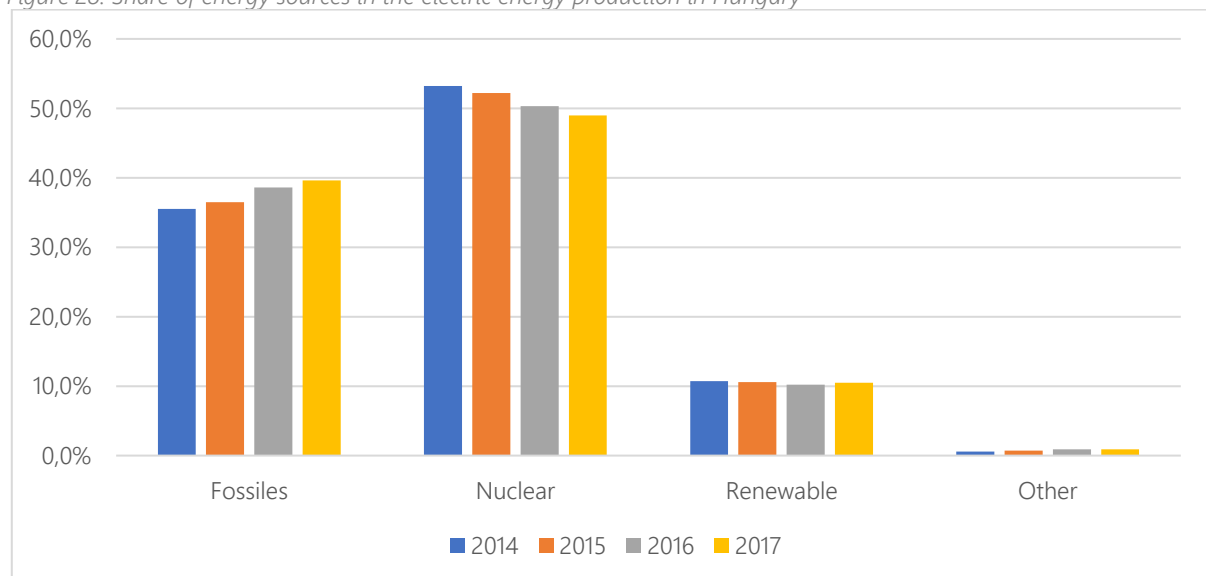
In Slovenia, renewable energy takes up a very high share (32.9 % in 2018) in electric energy production, and plays a similar role as fossil fuel (31.5 %) and nuclear energy (35.6 %). In Hungary, nuclear energy has the highest share (49.0 % in 2018), but share of fossils energy is also considerable (39.6 %). The share of renewable energy is around 10 %. Considering the plans of the Hungarian Government, to further develop the nuclear power plant in Paks, the leading role of the nuclear power will be maintained in the future, as well. It is expected, however, that the role of renewables will increase while fossil fuel energy use decreases at the same time.

Figure 27: Share of energy sources in the electric energy production in Slovenia



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

Figure 28: Share of energy sources in the electric energy production in Hungary



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Hungary (own calculation), November 2019

Circular economy

In 2018, Slovenia published the “Roadmap Towards Circular Economy in Slovenia”. According to this Roadmap “the Circular Economy is one of Slovenia's strategic development priorities. It is closely tied to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and included in key national documents such as A Vision for Slovenia in 2050 and Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 as well as in Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy. The strategy's main goal is improved quality of life for everyone”.

The Roadmap is based on the “Circular Triangle”. The triangle unites three inseparable elements – Circular Economy (business models), Circular Change (government policies) and Circular Culture (citizens). These three aspects are interdependent and are at the core of systemic change.

Slovenia is progressing towards a resource-efficient circular economy, but waste management remains challenging. On average, 71 % of raw materials consumed domestically are imported. Waste collection, prevention, reuse and high-quality recycling to close the materials loop are thus important to reduce Slovenia's dependency on imported materials and to retain value within the Slovenian economy. The municipal waste recycling rate in Slovenia was well above the EU average in 2016, but Slovenia still has difficulties in this sector.

Hungary is in the initial phase of moving towards the circular economy. Despite the recent major reform of the waste management system Hungary is at risk of failing to achieve the 2020 target of 50 % preparation for re-use/recycling of municipal waste. In 2016, the proportion of recycled municipal waste remained 11 percentage points below the EU average, while the proportion of landfilling exceeded it by 23 percentage points. Progress is slow due to a lack of incentives for households to participate in separate waste collection, and insufficient economic instruments.

Although slowly rising, the recycling rate of municipal waste in Hungary is only 35%, well below the EU average of around 46%. More efforts are therefore needed if Hungary is to meet the 2020 target of 50% of municipal waste recycling. Despite a 16% drop since 2013, landfilling is still the predominant form of municipal waste treatment in Hungary (48% vs. the EU average of around 28%).

The recent restructuring and centralization of the waste management system in Hungary have caused serious financial problems at several service providers and their poor financial situation is consolidating just slowly.

Information on circular economy is available mainly at the national level, but it is assumed that the border regions are in line with the national trends at least in waste management, while lagging behind in other aspects.

Conclusion

In terms to the relationship between Órség National Park and Goricko Nature Park, cooperation in nature protection is very good. Maintaining the unique flora and fauna in the border region is in the long-term common interest of both countries. Further co-operation between the two countries in this field is essential.

The two countries have different energy strategies. Although the share of the renewable energy in the total energy usage is similar in Slovenia and Hungary (12 %), the main sources of renewable energy production in Slovenia are hydro power and biomass, while the main source in Hungary is the biomass. There are much greater differences in the sources of electric energy production, with the share of renewable energy in Slovenia exceeding 30 %, while its share in Hungary is around 10 % (see Figure 28: Share of energy sources in the electric energy production in Hungary). Strong co-operation at country level in this field is not expected, although private businesses can find their own interest in implementing joint projects to use biomass for energy production. Furthermore, since geothermal energy is an important energy source on both sides of the border region, co-operation in the utilization of this type of energy should be further developed.

Slovenia has made progress towards the circular economy, while Hungary is still in the initial phase. Although the two countries have reached different progress levels in building the circular economy, there is scope for co-operation among municipalities and civil organisations at cross-border level to organise events where information on the philosophy and requirements of circular economy towards the society can be jointly disseminated.

ACCESSIBILITY

Road connection

Both countries belong to the Schengen area and border-crossing is barrier-free. The two main border crossing points are at Rédics/Dolga vas (Lendava) on the route route E75/86 and Tornyiszentmiklós/Pince on the A5/M70 highway.

Road connections between the two countries have not changed since 2014, apart from a few kilometres of bicycle routes, the construction of which has been supported by the SI-HU CBC programme. There are 11 border-crossing points alongside the Slovenian-Hungarian border, with an acceptable density of and distances between the crossing points. For the time being, no new crossing-points are planned.

The reconstruction of highway M70 between Letenye and Tornyiszentmiklós to extend the lanes up to 2x2 was finished at the end of 2019. This development will improve the road traffic conditions between the two countries.

In Zala and Vas counties numerous public road developments have been carried out by the National Infrastructure Developing Private Company Ltd. from 2014 on, that contributing indirectly to the quicker access to the border region.

Railway connections

Access to, as well as frequency and speed of cross-border rail connections have not changed in the last six years either. A direct cross-border passenger railway connection between the main centres is available only from Zalaegerszeg to Murska Sobota, Ptuj and Maribor, but with a quite low frequency. There are some technical barriers which hinder the improvement of the situation, including different traction, differences in signalling and safety systems, and a lack of multi-system

locomotives. In the medium term, improvements to railway connections between the two countries are not expected.

Railway connections do not facilitate the tourism activity and other cross-border activities of the population living in the border regions.

Public transport

There is no public bus transport between Slovenia and Hungary directly on the border region. None of the bus stations on the two sides of the border are connected to each other. The only bus transport between Hungary and Slovenia is limited to connecting the capitals, Budapest and Ljubljana, three times a week (through Zagreb, Croatia). In the SI-HU CBC region, this bus line stops only at Nagykanizsa. Regular public bus transport between the two countries in the border region is not expected mainly due to the continuous reorganization of the public bus sector responsible for long-distance bus transport.

The lack of public transport connection hinders joint development and performance of cross-border activities in the field of tourism and cooperation of population in the border region.

Bicycle route developments

Two long-distance European bicycle routes cross the region. There are favourable conditions for biking, and developments have taken place over recent years to connect the cycle routes across the border.

In Slovenia, the increased popularity of cycling as a form of active leisure time and holidays resulted in enhanced cycling infrastructure (separate roads, thematic roads, maps, signs, etc.) not only around the tourist magnets, but throughout the Podravska and Pomurska regions.

In Hungary, the mainstream programmes supported the development of bicycle roads in Zala and Vas counties, as well.

Conclusion

Road connections between the two countries are good, and there are enough border-crossing points with appropriate distances from one to the other. The railway and public bus transport at cross-border level, however, is negligible.

The recent bicycle road developments supported by the mainstream programmes and the ongoing CBC programme have facilitated the connection to the EUROVELO 13 network, which improves the possibilities of biking tourism. Further developments for extending bicycle routes or supporting the backing infrastructure of bicycling could have a positive impact on the tourism activity in the region.

6.2 SWOT

Although the eligible regions of the programme area are not uniform in terms of their economic and social situation and natural resources and future prospects, they share common features and common challenges. The SWOT analysis is striving for highlighting these common features and

challenges of the programme area alongside which common development needs can be identified. Individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as development needs of the eligible regions, however, should be tackled by the mainstream programmes in line with their own regional strategies.

Table 26: SWOT analysis

FIELD	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Economy	Economic performance has been improving. The importance of the service sector is growing.	Structural imbalances in the economy that increase the risks of vulnerability.	Seeking cooperation among Slovenian and Hungarian enterprises would strengthen their economic position. This would reduce “dependence” on Austrian partners since at present both Slovenian and Hungarian enterprises are mainly looking for Austrian partners (in terms of cross-border relations). Green industries and green solutions in agriculture. Supporting the matching of market demand and supply at cross-border level.	Unfavourable national policies and bureaucratic hindrances combined with a lack of support and cooperation opportunities may lead to continuous lack of cooperation in the border area.
Labour market	Declining unemployment rate, growing net earnings	The main employers are large foreign companies with uncertain trends. In many cases they employees numerous people, families depends of one company (e.g. automotive industry).	Knowledge and skills of crafts and tradition.	Emigration of labour force towards national hubs or abroad.
Social situation	Tradition and rich cultural heritage.	Ageing society. Inadequate employment opportunities in the rural areas.	Enhancement of traditional practices – sustainable farming and tourism. Development of and support to local associations and NGOs. Development of innovative business ideas.	Further negative demographic trends and depopulation.

FIELD	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Knowledge-based economy	Favourable percentage of educated young people	Lack of employment opportunities for people in the tertiary sector.	Strengthening circular economy.	Brain drain might continue in the future.
Tourism	Accumulated experience. Connections established. Good tourist products developed and implemented.	Visibility is still low. Tourism infrastructure in the rural areas is still insufficient. Tourism activities are still concentrated in core centres.	The popularity of biking is increasing.	Without proper connection and well-steered destination management that will build on achieved results, the invested funds will be lost.
Environment and nature	Numerous sites of natural heritage on both sides of the border. Well-managed nature protection areas. Good quality of nature conservation – attractive landscapes	Great pressures to change the purpose of the land into an industry and energy source (fracking, hydropower plants). Pollution of land due to intense agriculture.	Cooperation and networking among the fields and interdisciplinary areas. Development of new promotional methods and focusing on individual guests.	Neglectful management of visitor flows if their numbers will increase.
Accessibility	Enough border crossing points. Good road transport.	Negligible public bus and railway transport across the border	Subsidized local cross-border bus line.	Further lack of adequate public transport which is necessary for day-to-day travel of people across the border will lead to a lack of cooperation/understanding of both cultures.

6.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

Cross-border programmes should contribute to the elimination of obstacles that hinder the cooperation between institutions, businesses and people across the border.

CBC programmes should concentrate on joint interventions that can generate considerable impact on eliminating obstacles and strengthening cooperation with a limited budget. Another important aspect is to utilize synergies with mainstream programmes and the macro-regional ones. When designing the next programme the following joint needs of the programme area should be taken into consideration:

Further exploitation of touristic potential of the cross-border region

The previous (2007-2013) and the present (2014-2020) CBC programmes put in a lot of effort to support projects with the aim of improving the visibility of the border regions and making the public familiar with the tourist attractions outside the core touristic centres in the border region. Though considerable progress has been achieved and several joint tourism products have been developed, there are still numerous opportunities for further developments of tourism activity. In addition, the results achieved should also be further maintained through joint promotional actions.

A joint SI-HU tourism brand name should support the sustainment of the current cross-border tourism projects. This brand name should be developed jointly by the project owners. Promotional campaigns in order to familiarize the public with this brand name can be supported by the next SI-HU CBC programme.

The green, slow, environment-friendly tourism activities should be supported, including biking and hiking. Since the public transport in the border region, particularly at cross-border level, is not satisfactory, most of the tourist attractions, apart from the core ones, can be reached mainly by car. The CBC programme should support efforts to connect rural tourist attractions with biking and/or hiking routes, in order to mitigate the burden of tourism-related traffic pollution on the environment and climate change.

Furthermore, future support in tourism in the period 2021-2027 should strongly build on the results of the previous two programmes (CBC SI-HU 2007-2013 and CP SI-HU 2014-2020), and considering also possible synergies with other overlapping cross-border programmes in the CP SI-HU programme area. Further projects should focus more on destination management, promoting, networking and merging the results and products from previous projects.

Preservation of the natural assets

The national/nature parks, landscape protection regions and nature conservation areas, including Natura 2000 sites, play multiple roles. The unique flora and fauna of these territories are preserved and maintained, they attract eco-tourism and encourage the application of good agricultural practices. Protected cross-border areas in particular should maintain their fruitful cooperation and monitor the visitor flows, and if needed, adopt appropriate measures for their sustainable management.

Improvement of cross-border co-operation of small and medium size businesses

There is a growing need on both sides of the border to jointly seize business opportunities. Although the CBC programme cannot support business transactions directly, but it can facilitate to match demand and supply sides by supporting the establishment/further development of internet-based platforms run by public entities. These platforms can help the Slovenian and Hungarian enterprises to find partners and business opportunities in both countries. Integration of digital services in the business operation of the SMEs should be further developed in both countries, particularly in Hungary. The CBC programme can also play a role in this procedure through supporting projects which identify innovative solutions for the integration of digital services in the business operation and that can be utilized at cross-border level.

Strengthening cross-border co-operation between public institutions

Cooperation should be encouraged especially in health, social care, education, circular economy and cultural institutions, as well as between professional bodies such as chambers of commerce and enterprise promotion agencies.

In the health sector, cooperation can focus on the management of healthcare institutions, including knowledge and quality management, and human and financial resource management.

Cooperation in social care can focus on improving the quality of life of those elderly people who need regular care either at home or in care centres. Cross border cooperation can include the elaboration of innovative social care models and exchange of good practices in developing social care network in the border region.

Furthermore, cross-border co-operation of the civil society should be promoted in order to discover and learn each other's cultural values and traditions. Promotion of cultural assets can support the handing down of traditions/cultural values, which are important for the civil society and /or minorities for the next generations. Common traditions/cultural experiences can bring people closer together across the border.

Organisation of events relating to circular economy, green industries, green services, green agriculture and green households

Such events could encourage environment-friendly solutions for municipalities, institutions, SMEs, service providers, farmers and residents. Although the fight against climate change and elaboration of adaptation strategies should mainly be supported by mainstream and/or macro-regional programmes, CBC programmes can also contribute to these efforts, particularly if they are linked to relevant elements of mainstream and macro-regional programmes (Danube Strategy).

Supporting preparation of concept/feasibility studies

Such studies/plans can provide possible solutions for improving public bus transport and/or railway connections across the border. Improving public bus and railway connections at cross-border level would lead to an increase in sustainable mobility and reduction in CO2 emissions. Further it would strongly support the tourism activity. Since the CBC programme has limited financial resources, this can be part of a "Small Project Fund" with maximum grant amount of EUR

50,000. These types of studies can present feasible technical options and the proposed solution based on an adequate selection procedure (eg. cost-benefit analysis, or multi-criteria analysis). Development of detailed implementation plans and the implementation itself, however, will not be part of the CBC project but they should be financed by mainstream programmes.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The CP Interreg V-A SI-HU 2014-2020 is still being under implementation. A few projects have already been completed, but most of them will be finished in 2020 (8 projects) and 2021 (5 projects). At the present stage of the programme implementation, conclusions can be drawn only with reservations.

The set overall and specific objectives of the CP Interreg V-A SI-HU 2014-2020 were and still are relevant. Better usage of underutilised natural and local values, strengthening of local economy in rural areas through sustainable tourism developments, and improving cross-border co-operation are very important objectives aimed at joint development of the cross-border region. The selected Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities (TO6 – IP 6c and TO11- IP 11b) were appropriate to support the achievement of the set objectives and to trigger positive changes in the cross-border region.

The useful, but individualistic programme projects, which are not interlinked and harmonized (apart from a few ones) cannot eliminate the major obstacles to efficient cross-border co-operation. The 2014-2020 SI-HU CBC programme has not changed the poor cross-border accessibility and interoperability in terms of public transport (it was beyond the scope of the programme), could not contribute significantly to the harmonization of labour market needs and has not been able to mitigate considerably the poor tourism infrastructure in remote rural areas. Although the programme will improve the visibility of the rural areas of the cross-border regions through the implemented tourism-related projects, unbalanced tourism turnover has remained and a common cross-border tourism brand is still missing.

Co-operation between public institutions at cross-border level has been strengthened by the programme in several fields (education and training, labour market, economic development, culture, environment protection and energy). These types of co-operations, however, should be institutionalized and maintained for longer term and not only limited to the lifetime of a certain project.

Linkage of the CBC programme with national mainstream and macro-regional programmes is very limited, practically negligible. Obstacles that hinder effective co-operation at cross-border level, could be eliminated much more efficiently through joint efforts of CBC, mainstream and macro-regional programmes.

Examples of such co-operations:

Improving public transport at cross-border level:

- Identification of needs and solutions – Concept/Feasibility Study – CBC programme

- Supporting a pilot project to test the proposed solution(s) – macro-regional programme
- Supporting the launch of a new public transport service at cross-border level – mainstream programmes

Increasing bicycle tourism at cross-border region:

- Designing of new bicycle routes - Feasibility study – CBC programme
- Building of new bicycle routes – mainstream programmes or CBC programme
- Familiarizing the European public with these new bicycle routes – macro-regional programmes).

To illustrate the changes that have been made in the programme area in terms of meeting the needs of the programme area (as defined in the CP SI-HU) and identifying the gaps between the achieved and remaining/emerging needs, we have elaborated the table 27.

Table 27: Relevance of needs of the CP SI-HU 2014-2020

AREA	NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE CP SI-HU 2014-2020	RELEVANCE OF THE NEEDS AT PRESENT AND FOR THE FUTURE
Environment and energy	<p>There is a need for cooperation in the field of cross-border environmental protection</p> <p>There is a need for joint awareness raising and actions on reconciling various environmental interests in the area (agriculture, tourism, nature conservation and cultural heritage) in order to protect biodiversity, and natural assets, while using their endogenous potential in a responsible and environment-respective way</p> <p>There is a need for strengthened cooperation in exploiting natural assets in promotion and development of new and novel forms of sustainable tourism: "slower" tourism close to the nature is a real development option for the less developed, rural regions of the programme area</p> <p>There is a need for joint measures in environmental risk management (floods, droughts, fires, etc.), in order to protect the natural environment and human habitat</p> <p>There is a need for increased and jointly coordinated exploration of the potential in renewable energy sources, which may identify new solutions for the energy dependency of the region and contribute to the efforts on climate change mitigation</p>	<p><i>The programme has made progress in strengthening the co-operation in environment protection at cross-border level to protect biodiversity and natural values.</i></p> <p><i>New and novel forms of sustainable tourism products have been developed by several projects. However, these products do not cover the whole rural regions of the programme area. There are still unexploited areas with tourism potential.</i></p> <p><i>Environmental risk management has not been tackled by any project. The energy policies of the two countries are quite different. Renewable energy plays a more important role on the Slovenian side. In spite of this, co-operation in the field of energy efficiency and utilisation of renewable (geothermal) energy has started with the aim of transferring knowledge and experience. This co-operation should be continued since there is a lot of potential in the utilisation of renewable energy sources.</i></p>
Demography and social wellbeing	<p>There is a need to increase the population retention force and thus to slow down the decline in the population of the programme area</p> <p>There is a need to address mutually urgent social and health challenges through development of innovative social/health services for inhabitants of the Region including youth and groups of people with special needs, such as the senior population, people at risk of poverty, marginalized groups of people, or disabled people</p> <p>There is a need to improve the labour mobility based on access and availability of quality vocational training on both sides of the border; vocational orientation has to be strengthened, as well</p>	<p><i>The population of the programme area declined further in the last five years and the need to stop this trend is still highly relevant. Decline in the population can be mitigated and stopped mainly by nation-wide government programmes. Although, due to its size, the CBC programme can just slightly influence this trend. But it can contribute to the mitigation of emigration from the programme area through supporting activities/projects that can lead to job-generation (i.e. in tourism) or improvement of quality of life (i.e. healthcare, social care, education, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Social and health challenges should also mainly be tackled by Government's programmes. Each programme area is still coping with social and health challenges. Cross-border programme can support the health care of elderly people and the quality management of healthcare institutions in the border region, mainly with the exchange of good practices and promotion of networking in these fields.</i></p>

AREA	NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE CP SI-HU 2014-2020	RELEVANCE OF THE NEEDS AT PRESENT AND FOR THE FUTURE
		<i>The vocational training and apprenticeship system should be further strengthened in both countries, particularly in Hungary, in order to meet the requirements of the labour market. In the framework of SI-HU 2014 CBC programme some preliminary joint steps have been made in this direction but the co-operation in this field should be continued in order to achieve results. (The current reorganisation of the Hungarian vocational training system might slow down this co-operation down).</i>
Accessibility	<p>There is a need to improve cross-border mobility by ensuring the appropriate interoperability of the two sides of the border in terms of road network and public transportation.</p> <p>There is a need to promote sustainable (green) transportation modes, both in terms of infrastructure/services and in terms of safety.</p> <p>There is a need to improve the tourism-related transport infrastructure, to create the conditions for tourist-friendly means of transportation (hiking, bicycle routes, horse riding networks, and water tourism).</p>	<i>As regards public transportation, including railway and public bus transport, at cross-border level, there are no changes, i.e. the situation is still inadequate. Improving the situation is mainly the task of mainstream programmes but cross-border programmes can also contribute to the improvement through the financing of feasibility studies and pilot projects. Road and bicycle networks, however, have improved slightly, partly due to the cross-border programme. Improving accessibility through public transport is a must in order to achieve a higher impact of the future CBC programme.</i>
Economy and labour market	<p>There is a need to stop the decline in high quality workforce due to migration (brain drain)</p> <p>There is a need to address the high unemployment rates, especially in the rural areas, and support access of vulnerable groups to the labour market by providing alternative opportunities for job creation</p> <p>There is a need to promote entrepreneurship/self-employment at the local level</p> <p>There is a need to improve institutional cooperation enabling the region to better address labour market challenges (e.g. strive jointly towards a more demand-driven vocational training)</p>	<i>High quality workforce is still leaving the region, particularly in Hungary, but the process is slowing down. The unemployment rate is declining. On the Hungarian side it is negligible at present, moreover there is a lack of workforce in several branches. On the Slovenian side it should be declining further. Labour market challenges still exist due to the inadequate matching of vocational training to the labour market needs, particularly in Hungary.</i>
Tourism	<p>There is an underutilized natural and cultural potential in the rural areas which needs to be valorised in sustainable tourism through cooperation within these areas and with magnets, resulting in integrated and harmonized actions</p>	<i>In the last few years, several projects have focused on exploiting the tourism potential in the programme areas, including the CBC programmes, as well as mainstream and macro-regional programmes. The situation is improving but there are still "blank areas" as regards the exploitation of touristic potential.</i>

AREA	NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE CP SI-HU 2014-2020	RELEVANCE OF THE NEEDS AT PRESENT AND FOR THE FUTURE
	<p>There is a need to diversify regional tourism involving the untapped potential of the rural, remote areas, while offering an alternative source for jobs and entrepreneurship</p> <p>There is need to improve the portfolio with new and innovative products/services in general and especially in the less developed areas in terms of tourism</p> <p>There is a need to improve the image and visibility of the region and thus its competitiveness</p> <p>There is a need to promote a joint regional tourism “brand” through harmonized product/service development</p>	<p><i>A joint regional tourism brand is still missing, though several projects of the SI-HU CBC programme are striving to create regional-type brand. The owners of the tourism projects should elaborate a joint brand name and campaign in order to familiarize the general public with this brand name. Such activities could be supported with the following cross-border programme.</i></p> <p><i>Co-operation with magnets is still at low level and should be strengthened in the future.</i></p> <p><i>Image and visibility of the region should be further developed.</i></p>
Co-operation	<p>The potential of cross-border cooperation should be exploited through reaching the “critical mass” of bilateral projects and activities in terms of quality and quantity.</p> <p>There is a need to establish or further develop cooperation connections among magnets and rural, less developed areas in terms of tourism in order to boost a spatially more balanced development of tourism of the programme area.</p> <p>Bottlenecks in awareness, knowledge and capacities of local stakeholders should be addressed in order to form a solid basis for the cross-border cooperation.</p> <p>Instead of ad hoc activities, the institutionalized cooperation should be fostered in order to create harmonized and stable cooperation frames and to strengthen sustainability of the cooperation projects and activities</p>	<p><i>Cross-border co-operation is improving gradually and several projects support co-operation activities, although “critical mass” has not been achieved, yet. Cooperation is, however, still inadequate among civil organisations and people-to-people connections should also be strengthened at cross-border level.</i></p> <p><i>The present “magnet concept” seems to be inefficient for two reasons. The project owners have not familiarized yet the managements of the resorts with the potentials of new tourism products., The touristic magnets are not really keen on increasing their connections with rural areas and “sharing their guest nights” with other touristic destinations.</i></p>

The programme addressed territorial development by combining the thematic and territorial dimensions to meet the requirement of integrated approach to territorial development.

In PA 1, the preservation of cultural and natural heritage was combined with sustainable development of tourism activity in the rural areas. The approved projects under this PA reflect these ambitions since nearly all of them have met this expectation, and linked the development of tourism activities and/or products to cultural and natural heritage.

In PA 2, supports for existing and new forms of cooperation was envisaged with the aim of promoting regional development, preserving natural assets, expanding cooperation between institutions and local communities, as well as creating attractive living conditions for the citizens of the programme area. The approved projects under this PA strengthen existing cooperation, and help the creation of new forms of it. However, support was provided nearly exclusively to the cooperation between public institutions and the programme did not contribute to improved cooperation of civil organisations or to the strengthening of people-to-people connections.

The current socio-economic development has a positive impact on the programme area and programme objectives.

The economic development has been very favourable in the programme area since the beginning of the programme period in 2014, when this programming period started. It will have a positive impact on the programme area and can support the achievement of the programme objectives. Tourism turnover, for example, increased significantly in the four eligible areas of the programme which can contribute to achievement of the set target objective of PA 1 (increase in overnight stays).

Apart from demographic issues, social development is also positive, as unemployment is decreasing, while the activity rate is increasing and net earnings of the employees and workers is higher. Territorial imbalances in this respect, however, have remained and rural areas are lagging behind the industrial and administrative centres. The Activity of rural areas (municipalities of these areas) to participate in the programme is much lower than the industrial and administrative centres. Several factors could contribute to this phenomenon individually or cumulatively. Municipalities of rural areas might not have enough information on the cross-border programme, or they might not have the necessary human and financial resources to participate in the programme, or might not have good project ideas i.e. neither touristic nor natural/cultural values can be found on their territories), or due to language barriers they prefer the participation in national programmes. Programme structures should strengthen their efforts in the next programming period to help these municipalities participate in the programme (targeted information campaign, intensive consultation on developing project proposals, etc.).

7 EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

7.1 BACKGROUND AND COMPLIANCE

The Communication Strategy for the CP SI-HU has been adopted by the MC on 24 November 2015.

It builds on the activities and experience relating to communication within the last programme period.

An annual communication plan is adopted for each individual year by the MC, and the progress of implementing the Communication Strategy and the annual implementation plan is monitored.

OBJECTIVES

The Communication Strategy defines three main objectives at different levels, with corresponding activities and interventions (see the table 28) that should be undertaken, and it describes the means/communication tools that are being used to undertake those communication activities to achieve the set objectives.

Table 28: Objectives of the communication strategy

TYPE	OBJECTIVE
General objective:	To enhance the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the area of CBC through effective use of communication instruments, especially by communicating the existence of the European funds and added value that the cohesion policy brings to the CP SI-HU in the 2014–2020 period through its wide array of instruments
Specific Objective 1 at programme level:	To motivate potential beneficiaries and to communicate the possibilities of using the EU Funds
Specific Objective 2 at project level:	To inform the target audiences about the practical benefits of the projects implemented and their impact on day-to-day life of the citizens in the cross-border area

Source: Communication strategy of the CP SI-HU Version 1, November 2015

COMMUNICATION PHASES

The Communication Strategy distinguishes three phases and one continuous activity throughout the entire programme period:

- Phase 1: Promoting the results, benefits and best practices of the OP SI-HU 2007–2013 (2014–2016)
- Phase 2: Promoting funding opportunities in the framework of the CP SI-HU 2014–2020 (2016–2020)
- Phase 3: Promoting the results, benefits and best practices of the CP SI-HU 2014–2020 (2017–2023)
- Provision of information and support to (potential) beneficiaries and programme partners (entire programme period)

SYSTEM OF IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The responsibility of programme communication lies with the MA and is undertaken operationally by a Communication Manager working within the JS, who is responsible for the overall programme communication and coordination with the Unit for Public Relations and Promotion of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. In the case of CP SI-HU the Communication Manager is the same person as the head of the JS. This creates an additional workload for the Head of the JS, which means that this person cannot be fully committed solely to the duties and obligations of Communication Manager.

Additionally, programme beneficiaries of supported projects are obliged to undertake specific project-related communication activities within the scope of their respective projects. The JS supports and monitors the beneficiaries in their communication activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The Communication Strategy of the CP SI-HU and the subsequent provisions within the programme comply with Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 (Articles 115–117 and Annex XII). The implementation system for the Communication Strategy of the CP SI-HU is well-established and is effectively involving programme partners at the programme level (the JS) and in the two Member States.

Coordination among the JS employees who perform communication activities takes place on a non-systematic basis. The partners involved regard the necessary information exchange as sufficient, and satisfactory communication activities of the programme are following the phases of communication as distinguished in the Communication Strategy. Progress can be recorded in specific activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, the Head of the JS is in charge of implementing the Communication Strategy. We recommend appointing a self-contained Communication Manager in the next programming period, who is to be responsible only for the realisation of the Communication Strategy, especially for the dissemination of projects results.

7.2 ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ACHIEVING THE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

The system of objectives, interventions/activities, and employed communication tools can be illustrated as follows:

Table 29: Objectives, interventions, and tools of the communication strategy

OBJECTIVES	INTERVENTIONS	TOOLS
General objective: To enhance the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the area of CBC	Increasing the level of awareness of the EU funds among the general public and the benefits of CBC for the general public in the programme area in order to achieve a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme website • Social media (Facebook) • E-newsletter

OBJECTIVES	INTERVENTIONS	TOOLS
through effective use of communication instruments, especially by communicating the existence of the European funds and added value that the cohesion policy brings to the CP SI-HU in the 2014–2020 period through its wide array of instruments	positive perception of the European cohesion policy among members of the general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications • Promotional materials, giveaways, etc. • Conferences • Seminars and workshops • Events for the general public • Media communication (press conferences, press releases, etc.) • Advertising • Electronic media (radio, TV) • Best practice examples
	Promoting the European cohesion policy in both Member States and its positive contribution to the development of the CBC region	
	Ensuring access to programme-related information	
	Encouraging the integration of potential beneficiaries in Hungary and Slovenia to draw European resources for CBC	
Specific Objective 1 at programme level: To motivate potential beneficiaries and to communicate the possibilities of using the EU funds	Ensuring well-functioning internal communication between the programme structures to make the programme function effectively	
	Providing information on all programme-related issues (programme documents, eligible area, available funds, etc.)	
	Strongly promoting funding opportunities to activate the potential beneficiaries	
	Supporting the beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects	
	Actively cooperating with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices, and to learn from one another	
	Providing information on co-financed projects to the general public	
	Promoting the benefits of CBC in the programme area	
Specific Objective 2 at project level: To inform the target audiences about the practical benefits of the projects implemented and their impact on the day-to-day life of the citizens in the cross-border area	Informing the beneficiaries about the duties attached to the funding	
	Supporting and encouraging the beneficiaries in communication activities	
	Underlining the benefits of CBC for members of the general public in the programme area	

Source: Communication strategy of the CP SI-HU, 2015

7.2.1 ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Interventions were done by following activities:

- Increasing the level of awareness about the EU funds among the general public and the benefits of CBC for the general public in the programme area in order to achieve a positive perception of the European cohesion policy among the general public. This has been done through:
 - creation of project-related events (e.g. contract signature events) for PPs and their regional systems,

- organisation of an excursion to see good-practice examples on European Cooperation Day (2018 and 2019),
- active media communication,
- support provided to the beneficiaries in their communication activities in their specific sphere.
- Promoting the European cohesion policy in both Member States and its positive contribution to the development of the CBC region, to which the entire set of communication tools is contributing.
- Ensuring access to programme-related information. This has been done through:
 - creation and continuous management of the programme website as the main source of information about the programme,
 - distribution of news via the e-newsletter,
 - publication of news on the programme's Facebook page,
 - seminars and workshops on funding opportunities and implementation requirements for potential and existing beneficiaries, and applicants,
 - publications.
- Encouraging the integration of potential beneficiaries in Hungary and Slovenia to draw European resources for CBC. This has been done through:
 - distribution of information about the open call via the e-newsletter, Facebook and on the website,
 - active media communication,
 - seminars and workshops on funding opportunities and implementation requirements for (potential) beneficiaries and applicants.
- Ensuring well-functioning internal communication between the programme structures to make the programme function effective. This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information (and the eMS) on the programme website,
 - communication and information exchange at the MC meetings.
- Providing information on all programme-related issues (programme documents, eligible area, available funds, etc.). This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information on the programme website,
 - publication of programme documents, information on calls for proposals and manuals for project implementation,
 - seminars for (potential) beneficiaries.
- Strong promotion of funding opportunities to activate potential beneficiaries. This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information on the programme website,

- publication of programme documents and information on calls for proposals on the website, Facebook and via e-newsletter,
- active media communication,
- organisation of events (such as the kick-off event).
- Supporting the beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects. This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information on the programme website,
 - publication of programme documents, form sheets and manuals for project implementation,
 - seminars for beneficiaries,
 - face-to-face support from the JS, the NAs, RAs and the FLC.
- Actively cooperating with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices, and to learn from one another. This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information on the programme website,
 - communication of programme information via Facebook and e-newsletter,
 - organisation and participation in seminars (e.g. Interact).
- Providing information on co-financed projects to the general public. This has been done through:
 - publication of a project map and a list of supported projects and relevant project information on the programme website,
 - distribution of this information via Facebook and e-newsletter,
 - organisation of an excursion to see good-practice examples on European Cooperation Day (2018),
 - support provided to the beneficiaries in their communication activities in their specific sphere,
 - publication and distribution of the brochure on projects of the previous programme period,
 - active media communication.
- Promoting the benefits of CBC in the programme area. This has been done through:
 - organisation of an excursion to see good-practice examples on European Cooperation Day (2018),
 - support provided to the beneficiaries in their communication activities in their specific sphere,
 - publication and distribution of the brochure on projects of the previous programme period,
 - active media communication,
 - creation of project-related events (e.g. contract signature events) for PPs and their regional systems.

- Informing the beneficiaries about the duties attached to the funding. This has been done through:
 - provision of all programme-relevant information on the programme website,
 - publication of programme documents, form sheets and manuals for project implementation,
 - seminars for beneficiaries,
 - face-to-face support from the JS, the RAs and the FLC.
- Supporting and encouraging the beneficiaries in communication activities. This has been done through:
 - the JS and the RA supporting the beneficiaries in their communication activities in their specific spheres,
 - provision of the Communication Manual for project implementation,
 - publication of project news on the programme website, Facebook, and e-newsletter,
 - active media communication,
 - creation of project-related events (e.g. contract signature events) for PPs and their regional systems,
 - face-to-face support from the JS, the RAs and the FLC.
- Highlighting the benefits of CBC for members of the general public in the programme area. This has been done through:
 - publication of project information on the programme website,
 - distribution of this information via Facebook and e-newsletter,
 - organisation of an excursion to see good-practice examples on European Cooperation Day (2018),
 - support provided to the beneficiaries in their communication activities in their specific sphere,
 - publication and distribution of the brochure on projects of the previous programme period,
 - active media communication.

CONCLUSIONS

So far, programme communication has covered all the envisaged communication activities and employed almost the entire range of communication tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This wide range of communication activities and utilisation of communication tools should be continued.

7.3 COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The Communication Strategy envisages the following set of communication tools, including:

- Programme website
- Social media (Facebook)
- E-newsletter
- Publications
- Conferences
- Seminars and workshops
- Events for members of the general public
- Media communication (press conferences, press releases, etc.)
- Electronic media (radio, TV)

The specific activities relating to each of these tools were as follows:

- Programme website

The programme website (www.SI-HU.eu) was launched in December 2015. The website is intended for all target audiences of the CP SI-HU. It is available in three language versions (SI, HU, EN).

The website conforms to the requirements of the EC. It is structured into News, Programme, Open Call, Projects, Partner Search and a section about the relevant programme structures.

The utilisation of the website is being monitored with Google Analytics as seen in the table 30. The following data apply to the period from December 2015 to October 2019:

Table 30: The utilization of the CP SI-HU website

	2015*	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Visitors	653	8,964	6,536	6,813	6,278	29,244
Sessions	1,105	21,540	17,178	16,277	14,349	70,449
Page views	7,366	70,974	50,623	39,759	35,276	203,998

*Since the official publication of the programme web site (18.12.2015)

Source: Data provided by the JS (from Google Analytics) and elaborated by ZaVita, November 2019

Since the official launch of the website in December 2015, the number of visits peaked in 2016 when the call was published and two deadlines for submission of project applications were set.

Considering the origin of visitors, 55.8 % of them were from Slovenia, 31.15 % from Hungary and 13.05 % from other countries. There is a considerable difference in the share of visitors between the countries.

The representatives of programme structures regard the website and its contents as very useful, with 45 % of them rating it good and 55 % very good.

- Social media (Facebook)

The CP SI-HU is active on Facebook. The news that is shown on the website and distributed via the e-newsletter is also published here. The Facebook page has received 179 likes and has 193 followers.

Among the representatives of programme structures, the Facebook page received the worst ratings, with 10 % rating it bad, 20 % rating it satisfactory, 30 % rating it good and only 10 % rating it very good.

- E-newsletter

There were 139 e-newsletters since the programme started. Considering the language of e-newsletters, 139 (all of them) were in the Slovenian language, 113 of them were in the Hungarian language and 108 in the English language.

The newsletters were distributed to 213 e-mails (2019). In 2017, the mailing list contained 256 addresses, but this number dropped slightly due to the GDPR requirements.

Half of the representatives of programme structures rated e-newsletters as good and 30 % rated them as very good.

- Publications

The following has been published within this communication tool:

- The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary (English): 100 copies
- Citizen summary of the CP SI-HU (in English and in the Slovenian/German language): 1,200 copies

These materials have been distributed by the programme partners at events, seminars, in media contacts and at individual meetings.

- Promotional materials, giveaways

Practical items such as pens, writing materials, USB-sticks and calendars with the programme logo have been distributed to participants at events and workshops.

- Conferences

An opening conference (kick-off) was organised for the programme launch, accompanied by a press release and a press conference.

- Seminars and workshops

In total, seven workshops on application procedures and on reporting issues were organised with the existing and potential beneficiaries in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. They were attended by 467 persons.

Representatives of programme structures consider workshops as satisfactory since 36 % of them rated them as good and 37 % of them as very good.

- Events for members of the general public

In total, six events were organised for the general public. In 2016, 2017, 2018 and in 2019 these events took place in the framework of European Cooperation Days.

In 2016, there were also two events on the topic of contract signings.

Representatives of programme structures consider such events to be very important for communicating the programme's benefits to members of the general public. As many as 64 % of them rate such events as good and 31 % of them rate them as very good.

- Media communication (press conferences, press releases, etc.)

Media communication is conducted via the JS (preparation of press releases and media materials for programme events) in both programme languages (Slovenian and Hungarian). One press conference was organised at the kick-off conference. It was attended by 148 participants.

So far, 11 press releases on programme issues have been prepared by the JS.

- Electronic media (radio, TV)

In terms of the electronic media, only TV was used. Eleven news items/contributions were published on different TV stations, nine in the Slovenian and two in the Hungarian language.

CONCLUSIONS

The programme is using almost every available form of communication tool to reach the public in a concerted manner.

The web page of the programme and workshops serves as the basic source of information. It contains all the necessary information and documents for project partners, applicants and the general public. Regularly updated and administrated by the JS, it also provides news about projects, activities and events connected to the programme.

Workshops and events are also an important source of information for potential applicants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- a broad mix of communication tools should be maintained in the future as well,
- the website should remain the central communication point,
- organisation of events should continue,
- ways to improve communication on the internet should be considered. Although the website is the central communication point, presence on Facebook is lacking impact. News posted on Facebook should be tailored to the audience and not just repeating the web page content.

7.4 COMMUNICATION BUDGET AND SPENDING

For programme communication, a budget of EUR 100,000 (of which the ERDF provided 50.00 %) was allocated for the entire 2015–2023 period.

Table 31: Communication budget 2015–2023

COMMUNICATION BUDGET	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Planned	/	20,000	20,000	10,000	10,000	100,000
Spent	/	24,233.57	30,181.84	6,584.59	3,553.46	64,553.46

Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o.

The spending of the communication budget is monitored by the Communication Manager and annually reported to the MC.

CONCLUSIONS

The spending of the communication budget is reasonably in line with the plan and well-monitored. The higher expenditures, which are in line with the plan in the eMS, for communication in the first two years can be attributed to the needs of the initial phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The manner of spending and monitoring expenditures for programme communication should be continued.

7.5 INDICATORS AND MONITORING

The Communication Strategy defines a set of result (3) and output (7) indicators for monitoring the progress and achievements of programme communication.

Table 32: Communication indicators

INDICATOR	UNIT	TARGET VALUE	SOURCE	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Awareness about EU funded cross-border projects	Percentage	48 %	Eurobarometer survey	x	x	x	x	x	X
Recognisability of the CP Interreg SI HU	Percentage	60 %	Survey	x	x	x	x	x	X
Knowledge of the programme website	Percentage	80 %	Survey	x	x	x	x	x	X
Number of visits to the website	Visits	10,000	Monitoring	653	8,964	6,536	6,813	6,278	29,244
Number of submitted electronic messages with informative contents	Messages	40	JS	3	25	38	38	35	139
Number of workshops performed	Workshops	8	JS	0	3	2	1	1	7
Number of participants at workshops	Participants	400	JS	0	260	101	57	49	467

INDICATOR	UNIT	TARGET VALUE	SOURCE	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Number of mailing list members	Addressee	500	JS	15	212	256	212	213	213
Number of created information materials (e.g. printed brochures, leaflets, etc.)	Issues	1,000	JS	1,300	0	0	0	0	1,300
Number of events performed	Events	8	JS	1	1	3	1	1	7
Number of participants at events	Participants	600	JS	148	105	421	150	250	1,074

Source: Data acquired from the JS and elaborated by ZaVita, d.o.o.

For the general objective of enhancing the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the area of CBC, three result indicators have been defined:

- Awareness about EU-funded cross-border projects
- Recognisability of the CP Interreg SI-HU
- Knowledge of the programme website
- Number of visits to the website

The first two result indicators are targeting the general public and data should have been collected via a survey. However, the programme is not finished yet and a survey is yet to be conducted. Also, it is difficult to imagine that a survey could meaningfully answer these two indicators. For a proper response, the survey should have been prepared at the beginning of the programme and the same participants should then be interviewed at the end of the programme to see the difference in the knowledge and recognisability of the programme.

Regarding the third result indicator, "Number of visits to the website", 29,244 visits¹⁷ were registered by October 2019 (in 70,449 sessions with 203,998 page views). The target value for this indicator was 10,000 visits, which is a value that has already been reached. When looking at these visits on the website in detail, a substantial imbalance is noticeable regarding the origin of visitors, with 55.8 % visitors being from Slovenia and 31.15 % visitors from Hungary.

Output indicators have been defined for the specific objectives:

- Motivate (potential) beneficiaries about/communicate the possibilities of using EU funds and

¹⁷ Visits of different users. Source: Google Analytics.

- Inform the target audiences about the practical benefits of the projects implemented and their impact on the day-to-day life of the citizens in the cross-border area.

The progress towards achieving the target values of these indicators by October 2019 is as follows:

Some indicators have already been reached; number of participants at workshops and events, number of information material, and number of electronic messages.

JS still has two events to organize – one event and one workshop. In case that beneficiaries will express interest, JS will organize additional workshops (i.e. about reporting).

Regarding the addressees in the JS database for the mailing list, a considerable drop in numbers could be observed in 2018. This is due to the GDPR requirements when the contacts needed to actively confirm their willingness to remain in the database. It is not likely that the target value (500 subscribers) will be reached. The indicator and the target value for the created information materials is 1,000 issues. It is not clear whether this indicator refers to “copies of materials produced” or to “a number of different information materials created”. It is more likely to mean the first (it is not realistic to expect 1,000 different information materials created). So far, two different types of information material have been produced, with a total of 1,300 hard copies. Additionally, it is possible to download these publications from the programme website (the information on the number of downloads was not available).

CONCLUSIONS

The first two indicators do not adequately serve the purpose of measuring and monitoring the achievement of communication objectives. The target value of the third result indicator (visitors to the programme website) has already been surpassed before the end of the programme.

The progress towards achieving target values shows that some values have already been reached, some are expected to be reached and some very likely are not going to be reached (number of mailing list members).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The difference between the Slovenian and the Hungarian response website should be carefully analysed and measures should be taken to increase the information spread to the Hungarian side as well. This could be done through enhanced promotional and awareness-raising activities in Hungary (preferably done by the HU info-points), especially in the light of the programming process for the following programme period.
- Due to the GDPR requirements, it is recommended to reconsider the number of e-mail subscribers in the next programme period – a lower number would be more realistic.
- To include a number of followers on social media – this is important because e-mail is becoming obsolete and younger generations in particular are not using it anymore.
- Followers on social media should be attracted with prize games, quizzes, invitations to events, etc.

- The number of created information materials should be defined more precisely. We recommend taking into account both the values of “copies of materials produced” and “the number of different information materials created” because both indicators have a purpose.

7.6 PERCEPTION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME BY TARGET GROUPS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

There is no information regarding the perception among target groups and the general public about the Communication Strategy. A survey that could provide that kind of information would be a serious financial burden to the communication budget and the expected information obtained would not be in direct proportion with the cost of the survey. In fact, due to the limited budget both for the support provided by the programme and for programme communication, it is not likely that a representative survey could measure the specific impact of the programme’s communication activities on the general public.

However, programme partners and target groups have been asked about their general opinion regarding the perception of the CP SI-HU.

- Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries, in general, think that the programme addresses the relevant needs of the programme area. They believe the programme is in line with the needs of the area and the projects provide the right solutions regarding development of the area. It addresses the less developed and rural areas where there are little prospects to develop different sectors or agriculture. They agree with the programme document that tourism can be a driving force for economic development in the cross-border region. They also appreciate that, considering the small budget of the programme, the programme tries to achieve the maximum results.

- Target groups

A sufficient number of people within the programme’s target groups have received information about the programme and the requirements to submit project applications. They also believe that the programme addresses the right needs of the area in the sense that it connects different stakeholders, and purchased equipment and mentors will be available after the projects are finished.

As regards the performed e-survey for target groups, 19 % of respondents are not familiar with the project results. This is a considerably high percentage and shows that projects lack follow-up activities towards the target groups involved. The utilisation of the programme’s electronic media shows higher figures for Slovenia.

- Non-beneficiaries

Non-beneficiaries assess that the programme adequately address the needs of the area. They believe that the programme is well-accepted among the general public. For them, the role of the programme is to enhance the possibility of cross-border development in the spirit of EU cooperation and connection of cross-border areas.

CONCLUSIONS

There are no reliable first-hand data available regarding the perception of the CP SI-HU within the target groups and the general public.

Beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and target groups find the programme useful and believe that it addresses the relevant needs of the programme area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the beneficiaries, the CP SI-HU is a well-known and accepted operational programme for funding their project ideas. Thus, we believe that communication activities to motivate potential beneficiaries and to communicate the possibilities of using EU funds (Specific Objective 1) could be less intense. That said, communication activities should be more tailored towards the networking among the projects and dissemination of project results, thus contributing to better synergies of the projects/programme and enabling better capitalisation of the results of the funded projects.

8 CONCLUSION

The CP SI-HU is being implemented in an efficient and effective manner due to clear administrative rules, adequate support of the eMS tool, and professional and highly experienced people involved in all programme structures. The nationally and linguistically diverse staff at the JS are a considerable asset, which includes employees with a strong background from both participating countries, thus contributing to lively cross-border cooperation and notably reducing language and cultural barriers.

In terms of the programme's specific output, result and financial indicators, the programme realisation is well on track and no major hindrances have been identified that would influence the project final realisation.

Based on an in-depth analysis of the selected 13 projects we can conclude that the projects are achieving tangible results and notable impact in their respective fields. However, in the majority of cases, a long-term impact is still foreseen (it will be clear after the implementation of the projects or even later). The impact of implemented projects could be significantly higher if more attention were devoted to the networking of similar projects, enhancing their synergies and capitalisation of project results. Taking into consideration the high number of INTERREG programmes in which the regions of the CP SI-HU programme area can cooperate in, projects could be linked on an even bigger scale.

Despite its modest size, the INTERREG Cooperation Programme between Slovenia and Hungary remains an important stream of cross-border cooperation. The necessity for further enhancement of this programme is crucial to maintain the existing and create new partnerships between the countries that could benefit from stronger cooperation.

9 SOURCES

- Application forms of approved projects and reports thereof in the electronic Monitoring System (eMS)
- Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary 2014-2020 Citizens' summary
- Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia–Hungary 2014–2020, September 2015
- Comprehensive analysis of the existing cross-border rail transport connections and missing links on the internal EU borders, Final report, European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Policy
- Communication Strategy of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary for the programme period 2014–2020, November 2015
- Country Report Hungary 2019, Commission Staff Working Document, 27.02.2019
- Country Report Slovenia 2019, Commission Staff Working Document, 27.02.2019
- Digital Economy and Society Index, 2019 Country Report Hungary
- Digital Economy and Society Index, 2019 Country Report Slovenia
- ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme: Cross border public services, Final Report, 14.01.2019
- Evaluation Plan of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary for the programme period 2014–2020, September 2016
- Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary, July 2017
- Ex-post evaluation of the OP Slovenia–Hungary 2007–2013, November 2015
- Ex-ante evaluation of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary 2014–2020, March 2015
- ER SEA of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V–A Slovenia–Hungary 2014–2020, June 2015
- Eurostat, November 2019
- Implementation Manual for beneficiaries
- Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2019, European Commission
- Report from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies, 29.01.2019
- Relevant national and EU legislation (notably Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 and Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013), and the EU legal texts for the financial perspective 2021–2027 published on 29 May 2018
- Roadmap towards the circular economy in Slovenia
- State of Health in the EU, Hungary, Country Health Profile, 2017, European Commission
- State of Health in the EU, Slovenia, Country Health Profile, 2017, European Commission
- Statistic office of the Republic of Slovenia, November 2019
- Study on Cross-Border Cooperation: Cross-Border Care, Final Report, European Commission DG for Health and Food Safety, March 2018
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office, November 2019

10 ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of performed interviews

Nº	DATE OF INTERVIEW	INSTITUTION	PROJECT
1	6 September 2019	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy	TA – JS
2	6 September 2019	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy	TA – MA (Maribor)
3	16 September 2019	Pomurje Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Right Profession
4	16 September 2019	Pomurje Museum Murska Sobota	e-documenta Pannonica
5	16 September 2019	Municipality Murska Sobota	GO IN NATURE
6	16 September 2019	Development centre Murska Sobota	Right Profession II, GO IN NATURE
7	17 September 2019	Municipality of Apače	ESCAPE
8	17 September 2019	PRAK l.c.c.	MURA RABA TOUR
9	17 September 2019	Municipality Moravske Toplice	GardEN, GreenExercise
10	18 September 2019	Research and Educational Centre Mansion Rakičan	Back in the day
11	18 September 2019	ITC – Innovation Technology Cluster Murska Sobota	Green Exercise*
12	18 September 2019	Institute for Culture, Tourism and Sport Murska Sobota	IronCurtainCycling, Guide2Visit (PP)
13	19 September 2019	Zavod nazaj na konja, Zavod za razvoj, raziskave in izobraževanje v konjeništvu in na področju aktivnosti in terapije s pomočjo konja	HORSE BASED TOURISM - HBT
14	19 September 2019	Scientific Research Centre Bistra Ptuj	Guide2Visit, IronCurtainCycling
15	25 September 2019	Zala County Government	IronCurtainCycling
16	25 September 2019	Őrség National Park Directorate	Green Exercise
17	25 September 2019	Human Chance Consulting Non-profit Ltd.	Folk Music Heritage
18	26 September 2019	Self-Government Office of Vas County	Guide2Visit
19	26 September 2019	Vas County Chamber of Commerce and Industry	DUAL TRANSFER, Right Profession II
20	30 September 2019	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Zala County	E-ECONOMY
21	30 September 2019	Local Government of Lenti	GardEN
22	30 September 2019	West-Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Ltd	Green Line, IronCurtainCycling
23	14 October 2019	Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia (SOS)	Non Beneficiary
24	21 October 2019	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy	TA – MA (Ljubljana)

*Contact person was previously employed at the leading partner of this project as a coordinator.

Annex 2: Indicative tables for socioeconomic analysis

Table 1: Gross value added at basic prices

NACE_R2	AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING			
GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	4.7 %	4.5 %	4.6 %	4.4 %
Vas	6.0 %	5.5 %	5.5 %	5.5 %
Zala	6.3 %	5.9 %	7.0 %	6.6 %
Slovenia	2.3 %	2.4 %	2.2 %	2.0 %
Pomurska	6.5 %	6.9 %	6.3 %	5.2 %
Podravska	2.5 %	2.6 %	2.5 %	2.1 %
NACE_R2	INDUSTRY (EXCEPT CONSTRUCTION)			
GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	26.3 %	27.5 %	26.7 %	26.0 %
Vas	44.8 %	44.1 %	44.1 %	42.7 %
Zala	33.1 %	33.7 %	28.0 %	27.7 %
Slovenia	27.1 %	27.1 %	27.1 %	27.3 %
Pomurska	24.5 %	25.1 %	26.0 %	26.9 %
Podravska	27.0 %	26.5 %	26.4 %	26.1 %
NACE_R2	CONSTRUCTION			
GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	4.3 %	4.1 %	3.7 %	4.3 %
Vas	5.0 %	6.0 %	5.1 %	6.0 %
Zala	5.3 %	5.1 %	4.9 %	5.6 %
Slovenia	5.7 %	5.5 %	5.3 %	5.5 %
Pomurska	11.6 %	9.9 %	10.2 %	10.6 %
Podravska	6.7 %	6.8 %	6.4 %	6.5 %
NACE_R2	WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; TRANSPORT; ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITIES; INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION			
GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	23.8 %	23.5 %	23.3 %	23.5 %
Vas	14.9 %	15.1 %	15.1 %	15.3 %
Zala	20.4 %	21.4 %	23.0 %	23.3 %
Slovenia	24.1 %	24.3 %	24.5 %	24.8 %
Pomurska	18.3 %	18.8 %	18.6 %	18.9 %
Podravska	20.1 %	20.1 %	20.3 %	20.9 %
NACE_R2	FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE ACTIVITIES; REAL ESTATE ACTIVITIES; PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES; ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICE ACTIVITIES			
GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	21.0 %	20.4 %	20.9 %	21.4 %
Vas	13.6 %	13.1 %	12.6 %	12.6 %
Zala	15.7 %	14.5 %	14.9 %	14.7 %
Slovenia	21.6 %	21.8 %	21.5 %	21.5 %
Pomurska	19.2 %	19.2 %	18.2 %	18.0 %
Podravska	23.2 %	23.5 %	23.1 %	23.1 %
NACE_R2	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY; EDUCATION; HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES; ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION, REPAIR OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND OTHER SERVICES			

GEO/TIME	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hungary	19.9 %	20,0 %	20,8 %	20.4 %
Vas	15.7 %	16.2 %	17.7 %	17.8 %
Zala	19.3 %	19.3 %	22.2 %	22.0 %
Slovenia	19.1 %	18.9 %	19.3 %	18.9 %
Pomurska	19.9 %	20.2 %	20.6 %	20.3 %
Podravska	20.5 %	20.6 %	21.4 %	21.4 %

Source: EUROSTAT (own calculation from absolute figures), November 2019

Table 2: Number of population (head)

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Pomurska	120,221	119,454	118,712	118,010	117,204
Podravska	322,241	321,547	320,294	319,342	318,582
Vas	254,580	253,997	253,689	253,109	253,305
Zala	279,623	277,290	275,027	272,798	270,634
Total	976,665	972,288	967,722	963,259	959,725

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia; Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019

Table 3: Tourist arrivals and tourist nights

NUTS REGION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Tourists arrivals, total, heads					
Pomurska	265,165	274,202	289,823	307,539	/
Podravska	223,867	247,587	269,969	307,658	/
Vas	433,117	459,816	492,397	520,551	537,798
Zala	545,893	631,641	675,224	752,035	790,724
Of which: foreigners					
Pomurska	99,691	101,044	109,884	124,743	/
Podravska	153,928	174,005	192,302	224,987	/
Vas	216,811	220,442	240,262	247,533	245,560
Zala	175,863	187,726	200,852	231,187	242,220
Tourist nights total					
Pomurska	909,079	915,638	959,620	986,316	/
Podravska	494,985	535,945	568,464	615,440	/
Vas	1,370,449	1,424,834	1,558,445	1,656,835	1,644,761
Zala	2,097,552	2,222,375	2,446,822	2,690,551	2,743,060
Of which: foreigners					
Pomurska	369,669	366,443	402,736	431,441	/
Podravska	317,022	350,084	377,565	415,889	/
Vas	754,134	766,005	855,568	892,020	839,199
Zala	955,598	927,781	971,397	1,089,115	1,090,767

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia; Statistical Office of Hungary, November 2019