



CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION ON THE POLISH-SLOVAK BORDERLAND - EXAMPLES OF JOINT TOURISM INITIATIVES

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Abstract

The article presents examples of cross-border cooperation between Poland and Slovakia based on the EU funds. The article presents jointly implemented projects and micro-projects. A micro-projects are a separate projects implemented under the Umbrella Project by at least two entities - a minimum of one on each side of the border. Micro-projects are identified as relatively small budget projects which elaborate their objectives and implement their activities with the involvement of local civil societies. Particular attention was paid to actions that contribute to the protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage and undertakings affecting the development of tourism in the border areas. The background for the analysis is a short characteristic of the study area and a theoretical introduction to the problems of European cross-border cooperation.

Key words

Borderland, cross-border cooperation, Euroregions, umbrella projects, micro pro-jects, natural and cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

The Polish-Slovak borderland is one of the most attractive tourist destinations, which is due to its generous and diverse cultural and natural values. An attractive, diverse terrain, natural plant communities and a clean environment, free of significant settlement concentrations, are the assets of this area. A rich, multicultural history of the area where different ethnic and national groups came into contact and coexisted left many traces, often considered a European rarity, which constitute today the sightseeing richness.

The way in which these resources were developed does not fully exploit their values and possibilities therefore a number of actions related to the protection and promotion are now being taken. However, these actions require financial support and such support comes from the projects implemented in the framework of EU programs.

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OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this article is to present directions of the cross-border cooperation between Poland and Slovakia and to approach some forms of this cooperation which contribute to the development of tourism in the border region.

Cross-border cooperation

The idea of regional cooperation appeared in Europe in the 60s of the twentieth century. It was related to the emergence of the concept of “the Europe of the regions” (Lechwar 2012). At that time, there also appeared Western Europe’s first Euroregions (on the borderland between the Netherlands and Germany), which are characterized by highly institutionalized cooperation structures (Berzi 2013)

Cross-border cooperation is one of the most important elements of the European policy of development of the regions (Greta 2003, Lechwar 2012, Sumpor, Dokić 2011). It is also one of the forms of international cooperation. According to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (1980), the cross-border (or transfrontier) cooperation must be understood as any concerted action designed to reinforce neighbourly contacts between the communities and territorial authorities of two or more contracting parties, as well as the conclusion of agreements and adoption of arrangements necessary to implement such plans.

The European Charter of Border and Cross-Border Regions demands that the cross-border cooperation included the relations between the regions adjacent to each other, and the relationships of local authorities and institutions representing particular border areas (Wieczorek, Głąb 2016).

Actions under cross-border cooperation may involve many issues, such as tourism, protection of natural and cultural environment, infrastructure, development of small and medium-sized enterprises, education, activation of various social groups.

The cross-border cooperation may take various forms and can be carried on different planes like agreements on cooperation between the neighbouring countries, as well as partnerships (cooperation of two communes). Euroregions are considered to be the most institutionalized form of cooperation. The European Union supports all kinds of activities carried out within the framework of Euro-regions, which are based primarily on contracts concluded between local and regional authorities. The cross-border cooperation within the Euroregion framework is supposed to undertake and harmonize various actions in the field of science and culture, as well as education and economy. These actions should be beneficial for both parties, as well as serve the deepening of the relationship between economic operators and local community residents (Wieczorek, Głąb 2016).



Among different forms of cross-border cooperation on the Polish borders, Euroregions prevail. They were created during the entire period of Polish political and structural transition, both as a result of bottom-up actions taken by the territorial authorities located on both sides of the border (as well as in three or more adjacent countries), and as a result of government initiatives. A Euroregion focuses on establishing and implementing cross-border contacts between citizens, politicians, institutions, economies and social partners, which is reflected in admitting these entities to participate in the decision-making processes, as well as in various programs and projects. (Wieczorek, Głęb 2016).

European border regions require support and assistance, mainly legal and financial ones. A special role in this area has the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). Its actions are directed at supporting, promoting and implementing international projects within the European Union. The ETC, known as Interreg is built around three aspects of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and international (Interreg C). Poland acting within the ETC participates in 7 cross-border cooperation programs (Raszeja – Osowska 2016).

The cross-border policy is implemented through operational programs and projects.

The projects carried out and financed by the cross-border programs should encourage development of relationships and connections between local governments, educational and cultural institutions and non-governmental entities. An important factor is the support for the socio - economic development of border regions which are characterized by a lower level of development than the country's average (Lechwar 2012). Cross-border cooperation contributes to cohesion in Europe, which means it tackles the disparities between rich and poor regions and improves the functioning of the so-called "Peripheral regions" (Ślusarz 2008, Sumpor, Dokić 2011).

Depending on the program, financial support may relate to the so-called hard projects (e.g. investment), or to soft ones (e.g. training, courses, festivals).

A significant role is played by micro-projects, which are designed to promote local initiatives in line with the idea of "people to people". They are implemented under the umbrella projects. Of all these actions special attention should be paid to: organization of trainings, courses, educational activities, organization of cultural events, development of infrastructure, participation in joint sports events that promote healthy lifestyles (Raszeja – Osowska 2016). The vast majority of micro-projects are soft projects.

Cross-border cooperation on the Polish-Slovak border area

The first program of financial support for the Polish - Slovak borderland was launched in 2000 by the EU Phare CBC Poland - Slovak Republic. Throughout 4 editions of the program (2000-2004) the support was given to the operations for the de-



velopment of communication infrastructure, environmental protection, improvement of the quality of life and the development of local networks. The greatest interest raised the Small Projects Fund, which was continued in a different form in later programs (Halás 2007).

In 2004, the actions of the Phare pre-accession program have been replaced by the initiative Interreg III A. In the years 2004 to 2006 more than 315 projects were completed ranging from technical and communication infrastructure projects (25), environmental infrastructure projects (22), projects for the development of human resources and entrepreneurship support (32), protection of cultural and natural heritage (40) to projects supporting local initiatives called micro -projects (196).

The subsequent years, 2007 - 2013, saw the continuation of actions under the Interreg PL - SK in the four priority axes:

- Priority axis 1. Development of cross-border infrastructure:
 - communication and transport infrastructure
 - environmental protection infrastructure,
- Priority axis 2. Socio-economic development:
 - the development of cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism,
 - protection of natural and cultural heritage,
 - network projects
- Priority axis 3. support for local initiatives (micro-projects)
- Priority axis 4. Technical Assistance. (Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018a, Program Operacyjny Współpracy... 2018).

In the current financial perspectives 2014 - 2020, the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Poland–Slovakia focuses on three challenges:

- protection, strengthening and development of the main potential of the area - natural and cultural heritage,
- improving transport infrastructure,
- development of education and increasing opportunities for lifelong learning in order to use the resources of the area.

Implementation of the a/m challenges is based on four axes:

- Priority axis 1. Protection and development of natural and cultural heritage of the border area.
- Priority axis 2. Sustainable cross-border transport.
- Priority axis 3. Development of cross-border education and lifelong learning.
- Priority axis regarding technical assistance. (Program współpracy... 2015)



Possible beneficiaries are:

- government administration and local governments, their unions and associations,
- units established by the state or local government to provide public services,
- education system institutions and universities,
- NGOs, non-profit organizations,
- the European grouping of territorial cooperation,
- churches and religious associations,
- research units. (Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018b)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prior to the analysis the following research questions had been raised:

- Who are the project applicants?
- What projects in connection with tourism have been and are being implemented in the area of the Polish-Slovak borderland?
- What are the effects of actions undertaken in the projects?
- Which districts the highest number of beneficiaries applying for EU funds come from?

DATA AND METHODS

The method applied in the study was a desk research method, i.e. a method based on the analysis of existing documents that present phenomena and things that occurred in the past and predict the trend of changes. The study relies on official documents, statistics, statements and reports issued by offices and other institutions, and the so-called contextual information providing a broader view of the analysed issue. The information used was received from such institutions as Marshal Offices, Euroregions, Statistical Offices, the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Poland – Slovakia. It is available on these institutions' websites, published in the form of brochures and statistical studies. Another source was the authors' own unpublished information. During the analysis the obtained data were compiled, verified and processed. These actions helped to develop conclusions on the studied issue (Bednarowska 2015).

Unfortunately, the authors failed to collect the whole set of data partly because of the lack of reply of some institutions to the requests for information. Therefore, this study relates to the projects and micro-projects implemented by two Euroregions: the Carpathian Euroregion and Tatras Euroregion whose area of operation covers a large part of the Polish-Slovak borderland (Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Provinces in Poland and: Žilina and Prešov Regions in Slovakia).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the study area

The Polish border with Slovakia has 541 km, representing 15.4% of the total length of the Polish border, and 39.9% of the total length of the Slovakia's border. On the Polish side the border provinces are Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and the Province of Silesia (a total of 11 districts) bordering the two Slovak provinces or regions (called "kraje" in Slovak nomenclature) - Žilina Region and Prešov Region (13 districts). (Pogranicze polsko – słowackie 2009)

In this study, the analysed area is that covered by the Cross-border Cooperation Program Poland - Slovak Republic, i.e. larger than the area immediately adjacent to the border.

In Poland, these are the Districts of Pszczyna, Cieszyn, Bielsko-Biała, the municipality of Bielsko-Biała with county rights, the Districts of Żywiec (Silesia Province), Olkusz, Chrzanów, Oświęcim, Wadowice, Sucha, Myślenice, the Tatras District, the District of Nowy Targ, Limanowa, Nowy Sącz, the municipality of Nowy Sącz with county rights, the District of Gorlice (Małopolskie Province), the Bieszczady District, Districts of Lesko, Sanok, Brzozów, Krosno, the municipality of Krosno with county rights, the Districts of Jasło, Rzeszów, the municipality of Rzeszów with county rights, the Districts of Przeworsk, Przemyśl, the municipality of Przemyśl with county rights, the Districts of Jarosław, Lubaczów (Podkarpackie Province). While in Slovakia these are the districts of: Čadca, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Bytča, Žilina, Martin, Turčianske Teplice, Ružomberok, Dolný Kubín, Námestovo, Tvrdošín, Liptovský Mikuláš (Žilina Region), Spišská Nová Ves (Košice Region), Poprad, Kežmarok, Stará Ľubovňa, Levoča, Sabinov, Bardejov, Svidník, Prešov, Vranov nad Topľou, Stropkov, Medzilaborce, Humenné, Snina (Prešov Region) (Figure 1).

The overall size of the support area is 39 167 km², of which the Polish side covers 58.2% and the Slovak side 41.8% (Program współpracy... 2015).

The study area, thanks to the abundant resources both natural and cultural ones, is extremely attractive for tourists. It allows for practising various forms of tourism - leisure tourism, sightseeing or interest tourism (Klamar, Mika 2015).

Active tourism is promoted by the land relief, which, on the Polish-Slovak borderland is the most important factor in the development of tourism. The entire border between Poland and Slovakia runs along the Carpathians ridges, mainly within the Western Carpathians (Outer, Central and Inner), and in the east along some part of the Eastern Carpathians (Outer and Inner) (Krokusová 2017). The highest peak of the Carpathians is Gerlach (2 655 m above sea level) situated in the Tatra Mountains in Slovakia. We can identify here mountain ranges of alpine type as well as lower foothills and milder forms. This diversity creates the possibility of active recreation for a wide range of tourists, and some of its forms are walking, riding, cycling and water skiing or water recreation, birthwatching on a number of water reservoirs in the region. (Koščová, Koščová 2017).



Figure. 1

The support area covered by the program Interreg VA Poland - Slovakia

Source: Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018b

In the Carpathians, there are many areas that have retained their original character. The most valuable ones were covered by legal forms of nature protection. In Poland, within this area there are 6 national parks (Babiogórski, the Bieszczady National Park, Gorczański, Magurski, Pieniński, Tatrzański) whose total area is 825,88 km². In Slovakia, there are also 6 national parks (Little Fatra, Poloniny, Pieniny, Tatras, Big Fatra, Slovak Paradise) with a total area 1 901.19 km². (Kucharczyk 2009)

Important natural assets are numerous and varied mineral water sources, creating foundation for the development of spa tourism. On the studied area operates a total of 21 health resorts of various therapeutic profiles: Iwonicz Zdrój, Rymanów Zdrój, Polańczyk Zdrój, Horyniec Zdrój, Goczałkowice Zdrój, Krynica Zdrój, Muszyna, Piwniczna Zdrój, Rabka Zdrój, Swoszowice, Szczawnica, Wapienne, Wysowa Zdrój, Żegiestów Zdrój (Poland), Bardejovské Kúpele, Vyšné Ružbachy, Korytnica – kúpele, Liptovský Ján, Lúčky Kúpele, Rajecké Teplice, Turčianske Teplice (Slovakia). (Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia 2018, Kúpele na Slovensku 2018, Pawlusiński 2015)

An important addition to the natural values is rich and diverse cultural heritage. Particularly noteworthy are the sites listed in the UNESCO World Heritage, which are represented on the studied area by 9 sites, out of which 3 are complex sites. In the Polish part of the border area these are: Auschwitz – Birkenau, the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940 - 1945) in Auschwitz, the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska Region (in Binarowa, Blizne,



Dębno, Haczów, Lipnica Murowana, Sękowa), wooden Orthodox Churches of the Carpathian region (in Radruż, Chotyniec, Smolnik, Turzańsk, Powroźnik, Owczary, Kwiaton, Brunary Wyżne). Whereas in the Slovak part these are: A Urban Complex of Bardejov, Wooden Churches and Orthodox Churches of the Slovak part of the Carpathian region (in Hervartov, Tvrdosin, Kezmark, Leštiny, Hronsek, Bodružal, Ladomirova, Ruska Bystra), the primary beech forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe, Vlkolíneć, Levoća, Spišský Hrad and the associated cultural monuments. (UNESCO 2018)

Financial perspectives 2007 – 2013

In the years 2007 - 2013 a total of 26,563,851 euros was allocated for the implementation of Priority Axis 3. The allocation amounted to 22,514,924.15 euros, of which 99.40% was used. Funding the umbrella project by the European Regional Development Fund amounted to 85% of eligible costs. On the Polish side the Priority 3 was managed by: The Carpathian Euroregion, the Tatras Euroregion, the Beskydy Mountains Euroregion, and on the Slovak side by Higher Territorial Units (through the Regional Development Agencies). (Interreg Polska – Słowacja 2018c)

The micro-projects in this perspective were to establish and strengthen direct contacts between Polish and Slovak communities in the border areas and create foundation for further projects in the future.

To actions which were mostly supported included the protection and preservation of natural and cultural heritage; expansion and modernization of tourism infrastructure; actions to improve the situation of marginalized groups; implementation of minor "soft" investments, organization of cultural and sports activities.

On 3 calls for applications there were submitted 1676 applications, 729 of which received funding.

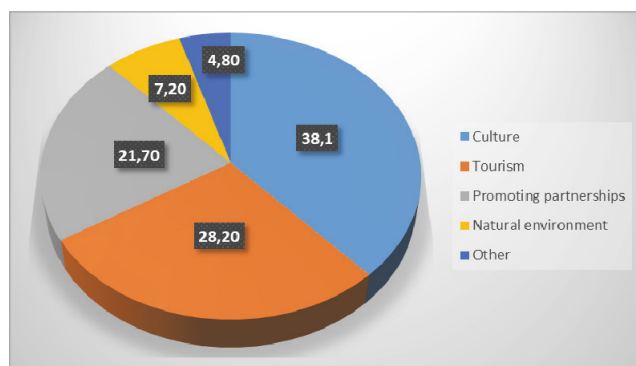


Figure 2

Implemented micro-projects acc. to main categories (in %)

Source: Own work based on: Euroregion Tatry 2018a



In the Carpathian Euroregion we implemented 123 projects and in the Tatras Euroregion – 143 (Tab.1). The largest percentage of completed applications concerned culture (38, 1%) and tourism (28.2%) (Figure 2).

Table 1 Implemented micro-projects acc. to main categories in Euroregions

CATEGORY	CARPATHIAN EUROREGION		TATRAS EUROREGION	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE [%]	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE [%]
Culture	21	17.1	43	30.1
Tourism	35	28.4	39	27.3
Promoting partnerships	44	35.7	48	33.6
Natural environment	14	11.4	8	5.6
Other	9	7.4	5	3.4
Total	123	100	143	100

Source: Own work based on: Euroregion Tatry 2018a

Beneficiaries of the micro projects over the analysed area were: local government units (44%); public administration (26.1%) and non-governmental organizations (21.1%). Other units, i.e. educational, cultural or ecclesiastical institutions accounted for 8.8%. A similar structure of beneficiaries showed the Carpathian and Tatras Euroregions: (Tab.2).

Table 2 Beneficiaries of the micro projects

CATEGORIES	CARPATHIAN EUROREGION		TATRAS EUROREGION	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE %	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE %
Local government units	51	41.4	64	44.7
Non-governmental organisations	34	27.6	26	18.2
Educational institutions	12	9.7	13	9.1
The state administration	5	4.1	13	9.1
Ecclesiastical institutions	2	1.6	0	0
Cultural institutions	9	7.5	24	16.8
Others	10	8.1	3	2.1
Total	123	100	143	100

Source: Own work based on: PL-SK 2007–2013 2015a



Most often the micro-projects applicants on the Polish side were entities in the districts of Nowy Targ, Rzeszow (including the municipality of Rzeszow), Krosno and the Tatras District (Figure 3.). Their partners from Slovakia came mainly from the the districts of Prešov (including the municipality of Prešov) – 22,4%; (including the municipality of Svidník) – 21%; Humenné – 10,1% and the districts of: Bardejov and Snina (5,7% each).

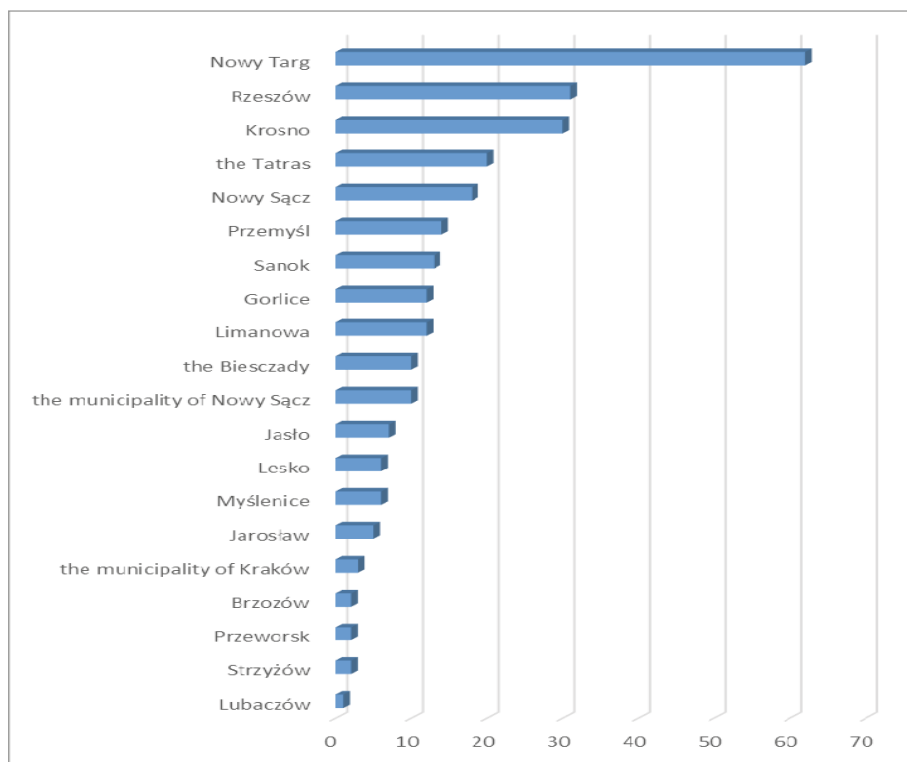


Figure 3

The micro-projects applicants by districts

Source: Own work based on: PL-SK 2007–2013 2015b

Judging by the amounts of received funding in the area of the entire Polish - Slovak borderland the dominant role played the projects for an amount of 25 - 50 thousand euro. They accounted for over 60% of completed applications. (Figure 4)

In the Carpathian Euroregion the largest share had the projects over 35 thousand euro (56.1%) and the Tatras Euroregion was dominated by micro-projects with a budget of EUR 25-35 thousand. Euro (34.3%) (Tab.3).

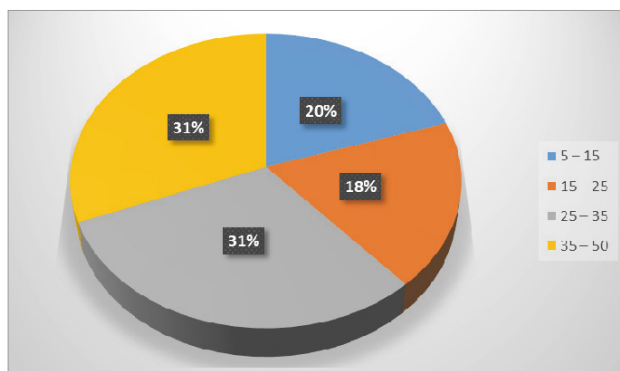


Figure 4

Implemented micro-projects - by the amount of received funding

Source: own work based on: PL-SK 2007–2013 2015b

Table 3 Implemented micro-projects - by the amount of received funding in Euroregions

THE AMOUNT [EURO IN THOUS.]	CARPATHIAN EUROREGION		TATRAS EUROREGION	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
5 - 15	12	9.8	18	12.6
15 - 25	9	7.3	32	22.4
25 - 35	33	26.8	49	34.3
35 - 50	69	56.1	44	30.7
Total	123	100	143	100

Source: own work based on: : PL-SK 2007–2013 2015b, own sources

The most important effects of the Umbrella Project within the tourism industry should be: demarcation, marking and modernization of more than 1644 km of hiking, walking and biking trails, creating more than 500 new tourism products on the Polish - Slovak border area, organization of more than 4,000 training sessions, meetings and conferences and a publication devoted to the Polish - Slovak topics (albums, maps, guides, videos). The added value of all actions taken was a strong commitment of more than 1,800 partners and cooperating institutions after the completion of the project (Tab. 4).

In the present financial perspectives particular interest raised the issues related to active tourism, mainly cycling, skiing and horse riding (approx. 55% of the complex micro-projects). Part of this activity was modernisation of the existing bike trails, horse riding trails and cross-country skiing trails and marking the new ones, publishing the maps, organisation of Polish - Slovak rallies and competitions to promote this form of activity. In the Carpathian Euroregion, cooperation and EU funds allowed for creating new tourism products related to astrotourism (including

**Table 4** Program indicators and additional umbrella projects in the years 2007 – 2013

INDICATORS	TOTAL	THE CARPATHIAN EUROREGION	TATRAS EUROREGION
Number of joint projects	729	123	134
Number of partners	1,630	304	334
Number of institutions cooperating after the project completion	1,812	379	246
The length of marked biking / walking/ ski trails	1,644 km	330 km	265 km
Number of new tourism products	517	27	33
Number of issued publications by the number of copies	1,647,108	228,570	680,000
Number of organized meetings / conferences	4,188	850	932
Number of permanent cooperation structures	42	9	11
Number of web pages on the projects	224	75	51

Source: Own work based on: Euroregion Tatry 2018a

an information centre of the “Bieszczady” Dark Sky Park). Several projects (approx. 4%) concerned building a common brand and development strategy of the Tatras and the Bieszczady Mountains as tourist regions. For this purpose, joint tourism and recreation events were organized, and there was developed an integrated system of tourist information. Another, equally important aspect of tourism activities, was related to the development of a common system of monitoring road, water and tourism safety on both sides of the border.

Over 90% of the projects resulted in the publications related to the implemented topic of natural assets, cultural history or ethnography. These were information folders, albums, maps, popular science books, information boards, e-books, usually published in several languages (Polish, Slovak, English).

Especially important in the implementation of micro-projects was social integration of people living on both sides of the Polish and Slovak border. Multiple meetings, conferences, courses, and events were attended by approx. 36 000 people of different ages and social status.

In addition to the Priority Axis 3 micro-projects in the period 2007-2013, there were also carried out other projects in the field of tourism, financed from the budget of the Priority Axis 2.

In the Carpathian Euroregion 3 “large” projects for a total amount of more than EUR 3 721 000 could be completed. They focused on niche tourism, i.e. astrotourism



and archaeological tourism. They lead to the building of viewing platform in the Open Air Museum Carpathian Troy in Trzcínica and there was created an archaeological park in the Local History Museum in Hanušovce nad Topľou. The objective of the project "Carpathian Sky" was to develop tourism products related to astronomy in the area of Polish - Slovak borderland through the construction or modernization of infrastructure related to astronomy, the exchange of experience and knowledge of astronomy, light pollution and tourism but also building a network of cross-border cooperation. The greatest funding received the project called Development of Infrastructure of Active Tourism through the creation of a network of cross-border tourism products in Krosno, Prešov and Svidník. These actions allowed for creating the Adventure Park in Krosno, modernizing the ski lift in Czarnorzeki, an artificial skating rink in Svidník and Rope Center in Prešov. Additionally, there were organized conferences, training sessions for trainers, as well as the Summer and Winter Games for Polish and Slovak Youth. (Serwis Programów... 2017).

Financial Perspectives 2014-2020

Analysing the projects submitted in the current financial perspectives, the focus is on those implemented under the Priority Axis 1, which aims to develop new forms of promotion of the natural environment and cultural heritage, providing a sustainable and effective way of using them. The actions undertaken under the projects should result in raising the level of economic and settlement attractiveness of the border area and the increase in tourism and recreation services (Program współpracy... 2015).

We analysed both large projects and micro-projects implemented under the Umbrella Projects.

In the financial perspectives 2014 - 2020 the approval was granted to 32 major projects (as of June 2018) for the above-mentioned axis. The vast majority of applicants were both the state and local government authorities (65.6% of the total number of approved applications) and the group of beneficiaries which included museum centres, cultural centres, national parks etc. (21.9%). The smallest group were associations, local action groups, foundations and other organizations (12.5%). Most applications, 75% were submitted by partners acting within Poland. Overall, 91 beneficiaries are involved in these projects, including 43 from Poland. The largest number of beneficiaries come from the Districts of Nowy Targ (Poland) and Dolný Kubín (Slovakia) (Figure 5). In the Districts of Brzozów, Jasło, Krosno, Lubaczów, Przemyśl, Przeworsk, Sanok, the municipality of Przemyśl, Limanowa, Myślenice, Olkusz, Auschwitz, Wadowice, Pszczyna, the municipality of Bielsko-Biała (Poland), Bytča, Liptovský Mikuláš, Martin, Turčianske Teplice, Humenné, Spišská Nová Ves (Slovakia) no activity of even one beneficiary was recorded. The amount of the ERDF funding for all projects is 47,332,541.73 euros.



Figure 5

The participation of beneficiaries in the projects by districts

Source: Own work based on: *Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018d*

The implemented projects can be noted for their focus on the development and promotion of active tourism (43.7% of applications), and secondly on culture and heritage tourism (37.5% of applications). Among the applications regarding active tourism the majority refer to cycling tourism (28.1% of all applications submitted), hiking tourism (12.5%) and combined forms of tourism - hiking and cycling (6.2%). The projects are primarily aimed at the creation of new routes, expansion or modernization of existing infrastructure on routes and trails.

Heritage promotion and development of tourism are also fostered by conclusions which help build new cross-border thematic routes. In the current financial perspectives there will be created the following new cultural routes:

- *On the footsteps of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire* - a digital route connecting sites, in which the Austrian troops stationed: Rzeszów, Strzyżów, Korczyna, Dukla, Barwinek, Stropkov, Velkrop, Bukovce, Mirol'a, Bodružal, Krajná Poľana and Nižný Komárnik (Serwis Informacyjny Urzędu Miasta Rzeszowa 2018)
- *Living Archeology Trail* – an archaeological and cultural trail running from Trzcianica through Nowy Żmigród, Bardejov to Hanušovce nad Topľou, with a mobile application (Muzeum Podkarpackie w Krośnie 2018)
- *Tracing technical monuments from Podhale to Liptov* - it connects sites related to the technical heritage of the borderland in Nowy Targ, Pribylina and Ludrová (Miasto Nowy Targ 2018)
- *Wallachian Culture Trail* – presenting cultural heritage of Wallachian settlers, one of the "Fathers of Europe", depositories and emissaries of the mountains



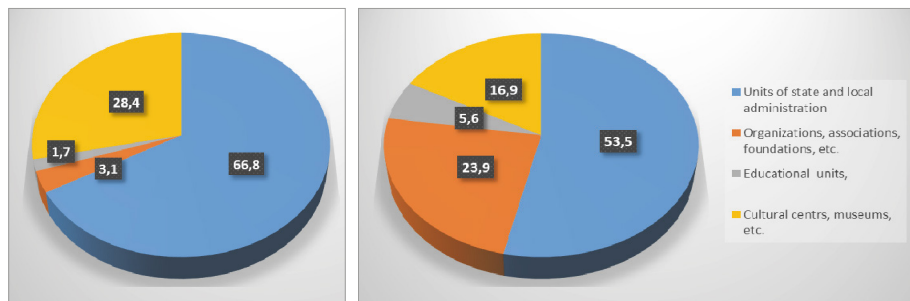
culture which paved the way for the development of the Carpathian Region since the Middle Ages (Procarpatia 2018)

Another group of border area projects are micro-projects implemented under the umbrella projects. Likewise, their analysis covered only those that fall within the framework of Priority Axis 1.

The Association Carpathian Euroregion Poland together with the partner Prešov Self - Governing Region implement the umbrella project entitled "Implementation of micro-projects relating to the conservation and development of natural and cultural heritage in the Carpathian Euroregion and HTU in Prešov", which were founded by the ERDF to the amount of EUR 5,334,089. 22. The association of "Tatras" Euroregion and Žilina Self-Governing Region implement the umbrella project entitled "We share the nature and culture" for a total amount of EUR 5,956,041. 96. There were already two calls for micro-projects and currently (as of June 2018), there have been jointly carried out or are being implemented 137 micro-projects. The total of 71 micro-projects implemented in the Carpathian Euroregion involved 96 beneficiaries, and 66 micro-projects implemented in the Tatras Euroregion had 104 beneficiaries. Among all beneficiaries the largest group are administrative units - communes: 32 in Poland and 42 in Slovakia; towns and municipalities: 13 in Poland and 19 in Slovakia; districts: 5, only in Poland. The record holders when it comes to participation in micro-projects are: The town of Svidník (8 participations in micro-projects) and the Regional Development Agency in Svidník (7 participations in micro-projects).

Applicants for micro projects, as in the group of projects analysed above, are mainly from Poland (59.2%). These are: administration units, which make up for 53.5% in the Carpathian Euroregion and 66.8% in Tatras Euroregion of micro-projects lead partners. In addition, there are various types of associations, local action groups, foundations, organisations (13.9%), cultural centres, museum centres, libraries, Forest Inspectorates (21.2%), and the smallest group constitute educational units - universities and schools (3.6%) (Figure 6).

Among the districts covered by the program the majority of applications (as the micro-project lead partner) were submitted in Nowy Targ (11.7%), in the municipality of Rzeszów with county rights (8%) and in the districts of Sanok, Limanowa and Nowy Sącz (5.8% in each). In Slovakia, the number of applicants is much smaller. Most applications were filed in the District of Prešov (3.6%), while the beneficiaries of the District of Svidník are co-partners of the largest group of micro-projects, up to 8.2% (Figure 7). Districts, where neither one beneficiary was involved in cross-border cooperation in the framework of micro-projects are: District of Brzozów, the municipality of Przemyśl, Chanów, Olkusz, Oświęcim, Wadowice, the municipality of Nowy Sącz (Poland), Bytča, Čadca, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Martin, Ružomberok, Turčianske Teplice (Slovakia).



We share the nature and culture

Implementation of microprojects relating to the conservation and development of natural and cultural heritage in the Carpathian Euroregion and HTU in Prešov

Figure 6

Applicants for micro-projects (in %)

Source: own work based on: *Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018e, Euroregion Tatry 2018b, own source of the Carpathian Euroregion*



Figure 7

Share of beneficiaries in micro-projects by districts

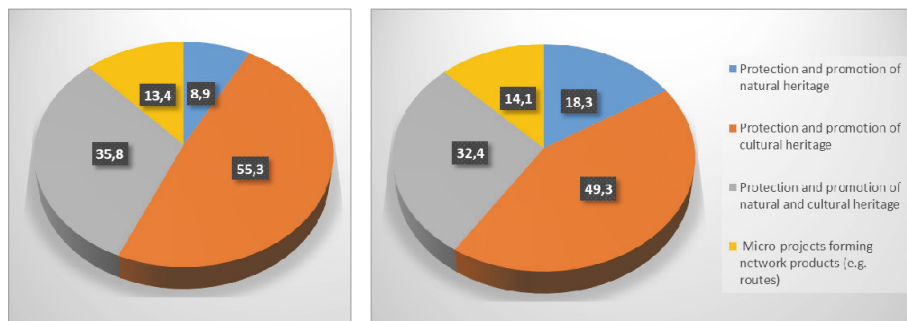
Source: own work based on: *Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018e, Euroregion Tatry 2018b, own source of the Carpathian Euroregion*

Micro-projects represent mainly so called soft projects, supporting the development of cooperation, being important for an exchange of views and experiences, seeking common solutions to various problems and presenting achievements of partners. Currently implemented micro-projects are meant to increase the utilization of natural and cultural heritage, development of new forms of promotion, the creation of local networks of cooperation in the border area. These actions will



undoubtedly contribute to increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the area, will help to create new cross-border tourism products, thus contributing to the protection of natural and cultural heritage which in many cases is already disappearing.

The largest number of micro projects relate to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. They represent 52.5%. The second significant group are mixed micro-projects (which refer to natural and cultural heritage), the smallest number are those which relate exclusively to natural heritage. (Figure 8)



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Implementation of microprojects relating to the conservation and development of natural and cultural heritage in the Carpathian Euroregion and HTU in Prešov

Figure 8

Types of micro-projects (in %)

Source: Own work based on: *Interreg Polska–Słowacja 2018e*, *Euroregion Tatry 2018b*, own source of the Carpathian Euroregion

CONCLUSIONS

Cross-border cooperation plays an important role in the development of border areas, which are often peripherally located parts of the countries with poorer infrastructure. Therefore, a common exchange of experience, joint cross-border activities contribute to the growth of their economic and social attractiveness. Projects presented in this article are of particular importance for the development of tourism and recreation. Undertakings that are jointly and consistently carried out on both sides of the Polish - Slovak border contribute to the protection and preservation of a generous natural and cultural heritage, allow for the extension and modernization of tourism infrastructure, create new tourism products, promote heritage through the organization of joint cultural events, entertainment or sports. The key added value of the projects is an increase in the attractiveness of the border area, and an indicator of success of these undertakings should be satisfaction of the communities living in border areas and increase in tourist interest in the region.



Referring to the hypotheses posed in the introduction, it must be stated that:

- On the Polish - Slovak borderland, most project and micro-projects applicants come from Poland. In the financial perspectives 2014 - 2020 approx. 75% of applications for projects and 59% applications for micro projects were submitted by Polish beneficiaries. The majority of applicants are both state and local government administration units, accounting for over 50% of all applicants.
- The projects relate mainly to the protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage by organizing meetings, festivals, conferences, and at the same time contributing to the promotion of the area and the development of tourism
- The material results of these joint actions are: new tourism products, tourist walking, cycling, horse riding trails, and the expansion and improvement of tourism infrastructure. In the financial perspectives 2007-2013 more than 500 new tourism products were created and there were marked more than 1 400 km of new trails. It is worth noting that the resulting tourism products are frequently one point-oriented, they don't have a developed marketing strategy allowing for further development and increase in tourist attractiveness of cross-border area.
- Most active in applying for the EU funds turned out to be beneficiaries from the districts of: Nowy Targ, the Tatras, Krosno and Rzeszow in Poland and Prešov, Svidnik and Humenne in Slovakia.
- Although the financial perspectives 2007-2013 led to the creation of more than 200 websites and editing more than 1 million copies of various publications, unfortunately, in many cases, what remains after the completion of the project is „inactive“ websites lacking current information, renewed publications of maps, folders or updated information boards.
- Nonetheless, over 1,800 institutions that established cooperation in the financial perspectives 2007-2013 and continue to cooperate with their partners, along with 42 permanent structures of cooperation, can be hailed as a great success.

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