

Cooperation in the field of tourism alongside the Hungarian-Ukrainian borderline

The tourism market in the region

Transcarpathia is the richest region of Ukraine in terms of natural sights, historical, and cultural places to visit, which can therefore due to its territorial endowments provide several opportunities for entertainment, leisure and recreation to its visitors. Only the Crimean region with its seashore can precede this territory but only in the summertime if comparing the number of foreigners visiting the two regions. Different climate zones appear in the area, ranging from the warmer climate of the endless fields of lowland districts to the pastures of the highlands. The number of days that are suitable for holidays is also the most favorable in the Transcarpathian region throughout the country. The region's geographical position allows the Transcarpathian region to involve the southwestern part of the Carpathian Mountains and a piece of the Hungarian lowlands.

The other huge administrative unit constituting the border region is the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County situated on the Hungarian side of the Hungarian-Ukrainian state borderline, the borderland areas of which are mainly lowland territories with small villages that today are not considered to be among the touristically frequented places in Hungary. The closeness to three state borders (Slovakian, Ukrainian and Romanian) means a significant challenge for the county to develop. The intensive traffic crossing the region advanced the county's central role to strengthen in the region. The tourism potential of the county is continuously emerging with the help of its various natural resources, the presence of thermal springs and spas, cultural values and ethnographic traditions (Turistacsalogató [Tempting Tourists], 2006).

The cooperation in the borderland is based on the common concept accepted in 2002 by both countries, according to which the common goal of the Ukrainian-Hungarian border region is to promote the development and closing up of economy and social cohesion, by raising the quality of life of the population living there, by leveraging the opportunities present in the cooperation of the border areas (Gazda [The Farmer], 2005).

There are several national parks and reservation areas in Transcarpathia that safeguard many unique species of plants. Mineral waters and spas of the region are also worth mentioning, as they spring from almost 700 sources and have already been widely known and used in the 17th century. The following peculiar natural sights can be looked for in the region: Lake Sinevir, Shipot waterfall, and a unique field of Narcissi. There is a memorial place that signifies the geographical centre of Europe in the Rakhiv district, beautiful wooden churches, castles and ruins of castles, palaces which have survived over the centuries for the succeeding generations.

The whole territory of the region is interwoven by rivers and brooks. The area belongs to the basin of the River Tisza, out of the river's total 966 km length, a 201 km long part is situated on the territory of Transcarpathia, and its sources are also in the Carpathian Mountains. The so-called Black- and White-branches of the River Tisza become one river at Rakhiv which then flows on while picking up all the rivers running down on the slopes of the Carpathians. Among them are the River Tarac, the River Talabor, the Rivers Nagyág and Borzha, besides this river is the source of five branches of the River Bodrog the River Latorca, and the River Ung. Among the tourists the Salty Lakes of Soltvino are quite popular, the ratio of salt in which can be compared with that of the Dead Sea. There are numerous mineral water sources and spa sources that are favorable for convalescence holidays. Several sanatoriums and health

resorts have been built in the recent years in Transcarpathia that specialize in curing balneology, rheumatisms and other complaints.

Besides medicinal tourism, the water tourism has also become popular in the area. Interest has appeared in rafting down the mountain rivers. Rivers and brooks provide excellent opportunities for canoeing, paddling in kayaks, and rowing in wide waters. Today only the Village Tourism Association in the Vynohradiv district provides such services in cooperation with the Association of Nature-lovers of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. The route of the tour on the River Tisza touches upon the following settlements: Tiszabecs-Szatmárcseke-Tivadar-Vásárosnamény, Vásárosnamény-Tizamogyorós-Tuzsér-Ibrány-Tokaj (the Northern region of Hungary). It can be seen that the proposed water tours focus on the Northern part of the River Tisza, which is said to be the most romantic part of the river.

According to the reports of the Transcarpathian Rescue Service, the mountain peak of Hoverla is visited by 50-100 people a day in summer, but winter holidays also have good reputations. It can be asserted by the fact that in winter, the skiing resorts are almost occupied to 100%. In the recent years walking tours in the mountains have gained popularity as well. In the area there are about 400 tourist routes ranging in their difficulty levels. More than 300 thousand people a year visit the wonderful national parks and reservation areas of the region.

A novel opportunity in Transcarpathia is embedded in the ethnic festivals, which are usually combined with wine tours and exotic tourism. From this point of view the Rakhiv area is very peculiar, with its living hutsul-highlander traditions that attract many visitors, by their national festivals, products of local handicraft, Christmas traditions concerning various nativity plays. Every spring they have a colorful, eventful tourist-alluring folk holiday during which they bid farewell to their farm animals, before the animals are being driven out to the mountains (Transcarpathia, European Region, 2007).

Horse tourism, as a service for foreigners mainly, today is offered only in the districts of Svalyava, Mizhiryia, Uzhorod and in Berehovo. Animal hunting tourism and its development is still a promising field for investments. Nowadays, it has become very popular to breed exotic animals in the region. Several districts of the region possess farms where deer, wild-hogs and ostriches are bred. In the mountain forests hunting seats fitted with all modern conveniences are awaiting tourists.

The rivers and dead waters of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County provide good opportunities for water tourism, but they just partly possess the necessary infrastructure. To be able to carry out water trips or to travel on the board of speed-boats it is unavoidable to have several ports. The region is rich in architectural monuments. There are many museums, collections of local historical relics and folk houses in the region. A unique relic from the history of industries is the Water mill of Túristvándi and the Tarpai Mill. Besides, some of the palaces are already utilized, but still there are some castles and mansions that have not been made of use yet (Tiszadob-the Castle of the Andrásy's, Vaja, Lónya, Mándok, Gávavencsellő). The Castle of Kisvárda, the earthwork of Szabolcs, the latter of which has remained in the best condition among the earthworks from the Early Middle Ages in Europe, and is one of the unique architectural monuments in the border region (Magyar Turizmus, Zrt. [Hungarian Tourism, Closed Joint Stock Company], 2006).

The town famous for its spa and its evocative holiday resort is Sóstógyógyfürdő. It has the largest and the richest country Zoo in the country. The only open-air ethnographic museum of

Hungary the Múzeumfalu, the Krúdy Inn, the Park spa, the Lake spa, the Public Baths and the place are fulfilling all expectations, the Jacuzzi, which was opened in 2005. Only a few kilometers from the centre of Nyíregyháza, is the Sóstófürdő reminding one of the intact natures, and is the favorite holiday resort for those who want to recover and take some rest. One can find here open-air baths, lake for boating, curing thermal water, parks, beautiful buildings and all that is embedded in a wonderful forest environment.

Both Transcarpathia and the settlements of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County are situated in the border region and are rich in their historical sights. The historical sights that can be found in Transcarpathia are as follow: ruins of the Khust Castle, the Castle of Mukachevo, the Castle of Uzhorod, the Perényi and Bethlen Castle, medieval churches, the kuruc memorial pillar in Dolha-and the natural sights-the mountain pass of Verecke, the source of the River Tisza-they bear witness of the most glorious parts of the Hungarian history (Figure 50).

The monuments of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County are as follow: the County Hall, designed by Ignác Alpár in an eclectic style, the Crown Inn, the Central School of Evangelists and Theatre named after Zsigmond Móricz. The most valuable monument of the town is the Evangelist church, which was built in a baroque style. The atmosphere of the Main Square is enhanced by the City Hall, the Kossuth statue, the Castle of the Savings Bank, and the Roman Catholic Church, which has two towers and was built in a neo-roman style. The secessionist-style buildings of the town are also worth mentioning: the Nyírvíz Castle, the Agricultural Savings Bank, the former Bristol Hotel, and the Greek Catholic Bishop's Castle. Some of the masterpieces of today's architecture are the Zoltán Kodály's Central School, the new wings of the Theological College and that of the College of Nyíregyháza and the building of the County and Town Library named after Zsigmond Móricz. Memories of the past are to be found in the Museum named after András Jósa, and in the Kállay's collection (Figure 51).

Village tourism

The level of village tourism in Transcarpathia experienced a rapid growth, due to which the region became the first among the regions at a national level. The scenery of the region attracts a lot of people, and with the development of village tourism more and more people take part in the programs led by tourist guides. It has become possible to take part in organized trips by bus or by bike and in water tours.

Figure 50.

The former comitats of Ung, Bereg, and Ugocsa.

With the support of the Ministry of Economy and Traffic of Hungary and the Új Kézfogás Public Funds a series of training sessions were organized in Transcarpathia that equipped participants with hospitality certificates. The trainings were delivered with the help of specialists of the National Organization of the Village and Agrotourism Association and those of the Foreign Institute of the Budapest School of Economy who coordinated the sessions and due to the support of the Budapest School of Economy valid certificates were drawn up by the National Registry List with which the participants were awarded after finishing the training. Trainings, similar in their focus to the above-mentioned ones were organized in Visk, Csetfalva, Jánosi, Nagydobrony, Técső and in Mezővári. The result of them was 100 certified hosts, who are hosting tourists all over the region. One can already learn about their activity and the services of their guest houses at several websites (www.karpatinfo.net, www.zoldfturizmus.fx3.hu).

Figure 51. Major monuments in the neighboring countries

Source: www.szulofold.hu

Village tourism in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County has several decades of past experience. In general, village tourism was considered to be a supplement to the monthly salary in villages. But in the recent decades even in the EU member states village tourism has made a step forward as one of the means of treating the economic crisis i.e. overproduction in the field of agriculture and is therefore supported centrally as well. This unique branch of tourism has not become an individual activity on the side of the hosts, but exists more or less within the confines of families and supplements the everyday village life. Village tourism is not only one of the cheapest ways of spending a holiday, but from several aspects it is a full-of-matter way of spending vacations. The proposed alluring features of village tourism-fresh air, silence, village lifestyle, traditions, folk customs, the closeness of nature and the delightful experiences of gastronomy-can be attractive for guests but only if raised to an appropriately high quality.

The conditions for developing village tourism are given. The natural, historical, architectural monuments, rivers, lakes, sources and spas, flora and fauna, folk architecture, handcrafts, centuries-old customs, tours by bike or on foot, fishing and hunting, horse-riding, local national dishes can make village tourism attractive for tourists living both in and outside of the country. A further advantage of this way of spending one's holiday is that it is available at an affordable price. But today the lack of well-trained specialists, marketing work, and the lack of cooperation among the hosts, the bad condition of the sewerage, the lack of appropriate treatment of waste, etc. cause serious problems. There is a need to make village tourism popular, to train specialists and to stipulate their fields of activity legally.

Tourist-attracting events in the border region

In this small corner of the country, at the entrance door that opens both to East and West, different cultures, nations and religions meet. The Transcarpathian Hungarian local governments, civil organizations and organizations safeguarding various interests organize an endless number of events during the year, several of which can be of interest for tourists. The so-called village days are very often combined with ethnographic and art exhibitions, for instance, gastronomy presentations are held, where one can get familiar with the local spices, flavors. Fairs are organized in different settlements where one can buy not only the works of Transcarpathian craftsmen but works of folk art too. These fairs start at the end of June and last until the middle of September. In the majority of the densely populated villages (Nagydobrony, Visk, Dercen, Nagybereg, Salánk, Tiszapéterfalva, Nagymuzsaly) there are 1500-2000 participants at a public event. The organizers of the Gut Whitsun Days prepare an eventful series of programs every year.

Traditionally Berehovo gives home to the Transcarpathian Hungarian Musicians' Rendezvous. At such meetings different musician generations of the region can meet each other. Alongside the musicians who are in their fifties and sixties, playing their retro music, young talented teenager musicians also appear on the stage. The breathtakingly beautiful Lake Sinevir gave place to the 13th Summer Academy, between 6th and 10th of July, 2007, where local and foreign lecturers dealt with the up-to-date problems of the Transcarpathian Hungarians. The Aréna camp (during the first week of August) attracts 1500-2000 youngsters in general, who can take part in several cultural events during the long weekend they spend at the bank of the River Borzsa. In the evenings well-known Hungarian and Ukrainian bands and presenters enter the stage. In the ancient Transcarpathian settlement of Salánk, a Tradition-

guarding Art camp is organized every July in the local Secondary School named after Kelemen Mikes. The school-age children taking part in the camp can get familiar with wood-carving and with other old crafts such as, felting, stringing of beads, making fancy leather goods, working with clay, etc.

In the central settlement of the former Ugocsa comitat near the River Tisza, every year a Transcarpathian Hungarian Folkdance and Folksongs Camp is organized in Petrovo. In the camp famous Hungarian presenters teach participants, students and teachers too. In the meadow which is situated between Petrovo and Nagypalád, between the 1st and 10th of August every year a Yurta camp is organized, which allows the participants to try out how conquering Hungarians lived in the 9th century. At the same time an Art Camp is organized in the same place. All of the named camps, the two organized in Petrovo, and the one organized in Salánk are welcoming participants from Hungary, if registering in advance. The Transcarpathian Hungarian Folk Dance and Folklore Festival changes its place year after year. But Nagydobrony and in the recent years Eszeny gave home to the meeting of Tradition-guarding Folk bands. Germans, Romanians, and Romas living in Transcarpathia also organize their folk festivals every year. The Mártyisor of the Romanians takes place in a different Romanian village every time, the Germans' festival is organized in one of the Svabian-populated villages around Mukachevo, the Romas' folk festival usually takes place in Uzhorod (www.karpatinfo.net).

In many settlements of the Northern-lowland region at every time of the year various tradition-guarding events are alluring visitors. Specifically, the events connected with gastronomy can be highlighted, as villages have preserved the traditions of preparing folk dishes. In the Szatmár microregion the first 'lekvárium' of the country was created in 2004. Walnuts, squashes, cabbages and cornels are the representatives of the region and they are the core elements of the microregions' unique gastronomy, and are the foundation stones of the majority of gastronomical events and the core elements upon which village tourism can be built. The Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Organization of the Association of Village Tourism organizes the Szatmár Festival every year, within which one can take part in the Gyarmat Feasts-Fehérgyarmat, International Strudel Festival-Tiszaakóród, International Fish soup-making Competition-Túristvándi, International Plum Jam-making Competition-Szatmárcseke, International Walnuts Festival-Milota. The Vacation-International Tourist and Holiday Exhibition and Fair have earned considerable reputation, as well as the Tureurocenter-International Tourism Exhibition and Fair, organized every year in Uzhorod.

Information centers for tourists in Transcarpathia and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County

There are several information centres for tourists in Transcarpathia: Information Center for Tourists and Exhibition Hall in Berehovo, Information Office for Tourists in Mukachevo, Information Office for Tourists in Uzhorod. From these offices mentioned only the Information Center for Tourists and Exhibition Hall in Berehovo is in close cooperation with the Hungarian tourinform offices network and uses the tourinfo logo. The services of the offices mentioned include information service, organizing trips for tourists, arranging accommodation, tour guiding, and in one of the rooms of the Information Office for Tourists in Berehovo seasonal exhibitions are organized, from the works of Transcarpathian folk artists. In the same room, souvenirs, works of various folk crafts, tourist guides, maps and other publications can be purchased. Unfortunately the information offices work autonomously, apart from each other, they lack cooperation and reciprocal communication.

In spite of this fact in Hungary the Tourinform Offices bear great significance, as they can have influence over shaping the tourists' facilities of their own environment to a large extent. Concluding an agreement with the Hungarian Tourism Closed Co. guarantees the appropriate and equally high level of services in any part of the country. There are three offices working in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, two of which are in Nyíregyháza and one is in Vásárosnamény (Tourinform, 2002). Tourinform offices carry out numerous events together; they recognize each others' work and help each other. The regional local government employs reference people of tourism, who have key roles in interpreting questions of the trade toward decision-making people, and in harmonizing the work of Regional Marketing Offices with that of regional challenges. The cooperation between the region and the Regional Marketing Offices includes the coordination of taking part in the domestic and foreign exhibitions together, the mutual editing of tourism publications introducing the common territories, regular updating of the common tourism database; comparing refinements of tourist products and calls for tenders touching upon tourist investments. Unfortunately there is no possibility for Transcarpathian offices to enter the network of Tourinform offices, but as the example of the Information Center for Tourists in Berehovo shows, mutual compromises can lead to a mutually well-working activity.

To aid the staff of tourism with specialists in Transcarpathia tourism trainings are organized regularly at several educational establishments. At the Geography faculty of the Uzhorod National University, and at the Tourism department of the Technology College of Mukachevo there are trainings of tourism, the language of education is Ukrainian. There is a huge interest towards this specialization, as in general there are 15 applicants for one state-funded place. School-leavers can also obtain qualifications of tourism and hospitality management (New Opportunities, 2007).

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County has well-established traditions in higher education. At the College of Nyíregyháza there is a tradition that students of Geography take part in specialized courses on tourism skills, and in some of the courses offered by the Country Register of Trainings (tourism manager, tourist guide). While over qualification is a present phenomenon in higher education, there are gaps to be filled in, in the field of tourism including the lack of trainings as for certain trades, the skills of health tourism are also missing parts of education, and there is also a need for well-educated assistants in the field of hospitality.

To harmonize the program of the trainings and to train bilingual tourist guides (Hungarian and Ukrainian) the Hungarian Office of Regional Development has already started negotiations with the above mentioned educational establishments and with the associates of the appropriate ministries in Ukraine. Nowadays there is a definite need for tourist guides who know both Ukrainian and Hungarian well, and who know the border region well, as their presence is essential for the quality improvement of tourism in the region.

Common trade events and common realized tourism projects

"Sustainable tourism development at the Eastern borders of the EU"-The Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Region Development together with the EuroClip-EuroKapocs Public Funds having its centre in Nyíregyháza, in spring 2005 organized an international conference with this title. The aim of the event was to: promote the development of village tourism, and to establish and maintain close relationships with Hungarian specialists. The conference aimed at exploring the facilities, yet unexplored from the point of view of tourism and by paying attention to the already existing attractive powers and those that will be formed in the future giving a helping hand so that in both regions the quality development of tourism could

enter the foreground. It was attended by more than 50 participants coming from Transcarpathia and from the neighboring Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.

With the help of the project “*Tourist and monument routes reaching beyond the borders*” which was realized within the PHARE program, a publication appeared introducing tourist routes in Hungarian and in Ukrainian. The Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency was the beneficiary of the project. Another event, a conference about “*Developing borderland tourism in the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion*” which aimed at introducing development opportunities for tourism beyond the borders in the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion, its relationship to the EU projects, and describing the tourism repertoire of the region. Ukrainian, Hungarian and Slovakian tourism specialists and representatives of different organizations were present. The following provisions were adopted as the outcomes of the conference with reference to the future:

- developing a common strategic plan for improving tourism;
- uniting the marking systems so that they can be applied on the basis of the same principles (e.g.: signboards, etc.);
- harmonizing the trainings of tourism specialists in higher educational institutions, paying special attention to the acquisition of local and regional expertise;
- improving the cooperation among the already existing Information Centers for Tourism, harmonizing their activity systematically.

The “*Developing borderland tourism in the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion*” conference was attended by almost 100 people. The written form of all presentations delivered at the conference and the descriptions of all successfully realized tourism projects within the frame of borderland co-operations were published by the organizers of the event.

Our latest project, that was realized not so long ago, had the title of “*Establishing and maintaining tourism relationships across the borders in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and in the Transcarpathian region*”. It had its direct aims to establish co-operation among the organizations existing in the two regions and having the promotion of tourism in the named regions as their focus; to create common program packages for tourists; to harmonize tourism events and happenings. Mapping tourism attractions and making these attractions well-known-and therefore raising the number of tourists-with the aid of different marketing devices (e.g.: tourist guides, tourist website) also belonged to the named project. During the project two workshops were organized (one in Nyíregyháza, and the other in Huszt) and two study tours were carried out (i.e., the Szatmár-Bereg and the Transcarpathia tour), on the basis of which a study was drawn up, and two tourist guides were compiled and a website developed introducing the tourist attractions of the two regions. The participants of the programme were: a representative from each of the 11 multipurpose associations, tourism specialists, co-workers of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency Public Company, a representative of each of the 13 districts from the Transcarpathian region and the associates of the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Region Development.

In the recent months several common tourism publications were published and websites were designed in both Hungarian and Ukrainian, with the aim of informing visitors coming to the area. The most well-known issues of these publications are the following ones:

1. At the Eastern border of the EU (available in Hungarian, Ukrainian and in English).
Editor-in-chief: the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency Public Company.
Partner organization: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development.

Year of publication: 2005.

2. The touristic map of the Upper-Tisza region (available in Hungarian, Ukrainian and in English).

Editor-in-chief: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development. Year of publication: 2005.

3. Monument and tourist routes reaching across the borders (available in Hungarian and in Ukrainian).

Editor-in-chief: the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency Public Company.

Partner organization: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development.

Year of publication: 2006.

4. The tourist information map of Transcarpathia (available in Hungarian, Ukrainian, and in English).

Editor-in-chief: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development. Year of publication: 2007.

5. New opportunities for cross-border tourism development in the Carpathian Euroregion (available in Ukrainian and in English).

Editor-in-chief: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development. Year of publication: 2007.

6. Zakarpattya tourist guide (available in Ukrainian and in English, and the Hungarian version is in press).

Editor-in-chief: the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development. Year of publication: 2007.

In the recent months due to the realization of various EU tenders two new websites have been developed, i.e. www.karpataljaturizmus.info, and the www.tour-ceu.eu.

Beginning from 1990 the EU financially supports cross-border cooperation alongside the Ukrainian-Hungarian borderline, through applications submitted to the following programs: PHARE CBC, INTERREG, for instance. The TACIS CBC project started in 1996 and has its own budget. Small and micro-projects participating in the program, aim at supporting cooperation in the border region (TACIS CBC, SPF-MPF) at the Western border of the Community of Independent States, and financing small-scale projects aiming at enhancing cooperation between local and regional powers. The following tourism projects and projects improving cross border cooperation were realized within the TACIS CBC: renewing the border crossing point of “Tisza” (total budget: 2.8 mln €); Supporting tourism and local improvements in the Carpathian region of Ukraine (total budget 1.5 mln €), Developing a strategic plan on the rivers of Ung, Latorca and Bug (total budget: 1.9 mln €); Introducing a strategic approach supporting cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian basin (Developing a Carpathian Strategy 2003-2011; Bridge to cooperation, 2003), creating the Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Regional Development.

The Váti Public Company which was responsible for the realization of the PHARE program in Hungary, requested the EU to expand the spheres of action of the PHARE CBC to the Ukrainian-Hungarian borderland. The EU started to operationalize the PHARE “Fund of a temporary small-scale project” within the INTERREG project in 2002-2003 (foreign borderland initiative, 2003/005-004) with an independent budget. These projects were submitted by the Hungarian side, but to obtain access to the sources there was a need to involve Ukrainian specialists who did not profit from the project but at least were enriched with experience and with technical skills.

To better coordinate the devices of the union focusing on border regions, and because of the change in the borderlines, due to the 2004 extension, the European Committee aimed at reforming the cooperation alongside the new borderlines. One device of the reform was the Neighborhood Program, which served as the common financial frame for cross border co-operations taking place between 2004 and 2006. Between 2004 and 2006 about 20 mln € were allocated in the form of financial support among Ukrainian applicants, who participated in projects that contributed to improving cross border cooperation within the expanded EU and within the framework of the INTERREG III program. (Ukraine-Poland-Bielorussia, Ukraine-Slovakia-Hungary, Ukraine-Romania). The program is financed by two European Union Funds: in Hungary and in Slovakia it is the European Regional Development Fund, in Ukraine it is the TACIS CBC (At the Eastern borders of the EU, 2005).

Besides the two programs listed above, in the future two other distinct programs of ours are worth mentioning in the field of cooperation between Hungary and Slovakia, and among Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine, which can be supported in 2007-2013 instead of TACIS by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument, in the amount of 70 mln € and with the participation of the Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk and Csernivci regions. It can be concluded that after the enlargement of the EU new opportunities arose for funding Ukrainian-Hungarian cross border co-operations. To such a borderland region as Transcarpathia, which takes part in three neighborhood programs (Ukraine-Poland-Bielorussia, Ukraine-Slovakia-Hungary, Ukraine-Romania), there is a great opportunity for improving cross border cooperation with the support of such programs like the TACIS CBC and the INTERREG III.

Introducing some of the tourism projects (Váti Public Funds, 2006)

Developing program packages for tourists in the border region

Beneficiary: Bereg Area Development Association

Partner organization: Hungarian Cultural Association of the Bereg region

The amount of support: 35 034 €

The aim of the project: founding the sphere of activity for tourism suppliers and potential investors, assisting them by developing common marketing products and product refinement programs.

The outcomes of the project: by working out cross-border program packages for tourists the development contributed to the strengthening of economic, cultural and social relationships. Regular and continuous communication and contact was established between partner organizations and among those people living in the border regions. Such professional relationships were supposed to significantly enhance the economic growth in the territory, and to promote economic activities in the border region, after the changes in law systems and in infrastructure developments were carried out that seem to be necessary concomitants of becoming a member of the EU. As partner organizations operate in their given regions, a thorough knowledge of the region can be expected from them, which in turn can greatly contribute to their creation of program packages for tourists due to which tourism in the border region becomes livelier which in turn can contribute to the infrastructural development of the region. Therefore the programme promotes the creation of common tourism ventures.

“From Rakhiv to Rakamaz” developing water tourism on the River Tisza

Applicant: Association and Club of Hungarian-Ukrainian Water tourists and hikers

Partner organization: Club Tisza

Amount of support: 38 400 €

The aim of the project: finding ways for developing and utilizing the opportunities the River Tisza, as a natural water tour and a link between the two countries can give in a way that it could enhance economic development in the two regions, and promote interregional programs and cooperation between them.

The outcomes of the project: as the result of the cooperation, the opportunities for water tourism have been developed, the number of people interested in water tourism has increased the number of visitors grew, and water tourists became exposed to more program opportunities. The number of tour programs has increased and the range of appropriate structural and material devices was expanded. The cooperation between tourism specialists of the two countries has been institutionalized and became more direct. Information bulletins have helped visitors to get familiar with the services offered by the local entrepreneurs. Consequently incomes coming from tourism have grown, which at the same time can be the source of economic flourishing too.

Monument and tourist routes across the borders

Applicant: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency Public Company

Partner organization: Transcarpathian Association of local governments in the border region

Amount of support: 21 064 €

The aim of the project: raising the number of tourism projects reaching across the borders, harmonizing the realization of tourism developments on both sides of the borderline, as the result of mutual introduction of tourist sights on both sides of the border, increasing the number of tourists visiting the regions.

The outcomes of the project: specialized trainings contributed to the precise and complete informing of managers, through which the efficiency of cross border cooperation was enhanced. A new charming points map was designed, new set of offers for tourists were compiled, which serves the employers' needs. The quality of tourism services, the knowledge of organizations has been expanded, tourism co-operations were created. The publication drawn up in the project is available in several languages for tourists; the number of visitors traveling to the region is growing, which contributes to the wage-expanding opportunities of the local population.

Opportunities for developing tourism in the border region

Applicant: Trade and Industry Chamber of the Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg County

Partner Organization: Transcarpathian Trade and Industry Chamber

The amount of support: 28 160 €

The aim of the project: introducing goods and services available for tourists in the region, increasing cooperation and investment opportunities in the border region, ensuring a higher rate of leveraging tourism capabilities of the region.

The outcomes of the project: as the result of the development interest toward ecotourism and active tourism can be satisfied to a greater extent. Developing quality tourism initiated a balanced territorial developmental process on both sides of the border. The compiled publication provides a free advertising opportunity which is an excellent possibility for small and medium entrepreneurs. The Chamber passed the publication besides the territorial chambers to the foreign embassies residing in Hungary and to Hungarian embassies existing outside Hungary. The feedbacks are favorable.

Tourism cooperation between Nyíregyháza and Uzhorod

Applicant: the local government of Nyíregyháza, the town of county rank

Amount of support: 28 000 €

The aim of the project: enhancing cooperation between the two regional centres of Uzhorod and Nyíregyháza in the field of tourism in a way that specialists, entrepreneurs, officers working in the field of tourism in the two towns can share their opinions and thoughts so as to professionally advance the Ukrainian partner's chances of joining the EU. The partners share opinions at local discussions and make the description of attractive sights of their own region available through a common bilingual publication.

The outcomes of the project: the long-term maintenance of the outcomes achieved by the project is secured. Nyíregyháza, the town of county rank will keep the publication updated in the future. Co-workers in the tourism section, utilizing their obtained network, are expected to co-work in the future and to establish business relationships. The use of the obtained interpreter-translator system might help to overcome the language barriers in building relationships.

Development of tourism and maintaining health without borders

Applicant: Foundation "For saving the health of people in the new yard"

Partner organization: The mayor's office of Berehovo, town of county rank

Amount of support: 49 540 €

The aim of the project: to match health preserving and health improving tourism developments with tourism developments by utilizing Ukrainian-Hungarian human and natural resources. We aim at shaping the forms of consciousness at conferences, during tours and through presentations. We intend to improve health culture and to assist the accommodation of disadvantaged people into the society. To save and respect our environment and to enhance ecotourism are important tasks.

The outcomes of the project: We expanded our project and are improving it on both sides of the border; our aim is to create a health zone working in a common spirit, which can mean preserving the health of several thousands of people and provide job and living opportunities for another thousands of people. The name of this zone could be the "Tisza-charm, health meadow".

"Establishing and improving tourism relationships across the borders in Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg County and in the Transcarpathian region"

Applicant: Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg County Development Agency Public Funds

Partner Organization: Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Region Development

The aim of the project: to establish cooperation between organizations aiming at developing tourism in the two regions, creating program packages for tourists, harmonizing events and happenings for tourists, mapping the tourist attractions and making them well-known, and therefore increasing the number of tourists, with the help of various marketing devices (e.g.: tourist guides, websites for tourists).

The outcomes of the project: during the project two workshops and a study tour were organized (one of them in Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg County and the other in Transcarpathia), based on the experiences of which a publication was written up, and two tourist guides introducing the tourist sights were compiled and a website designed. The layout of the tourist guide allows for the replacement of certain pages so as to make the content always up-to-date. The brochures having a continuously renewed content will be accessible for download from

the website in a printer-friendly format. The manual and the website will contain in both Ukrainian and in Hungarian, those pieces of information that were gathered during the realization of the project.

“Establishing information centres for tourists in Transcarpathia”

Applicant: Ukrainian-Hungarian Office of Region Development

Partner organization: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Development Agency Public Funds, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Organization of the Association of Village Tourism

The aim of the project: the task of the project was to solve problems referring mainly to the expansion of services offered for tourists by information centres, referring also to the existing tourism organizations in the region as well as to the informing of local and foreign tourists. Solving the explored problems together with improving the social and economical situation of the Transcarpathian region can mean a definite step forward so that the region could be one of the most dynamically developing regions in Ukraine.

The outcomes of the project: As the result of the project, Information Centre for Tourists and Exhibition Hall were created in Berehovo, and an International Conference was organized, having the following title: “Developing borderland tourism in Carpathian Euroregion”. During the realization process a detailed tourist guide was created, a trilingual tourism website and a tourist guide introducing Transcarpathia in Ukrainian and in English.

The development plans of the Regional State Tourist Office

To develop tourism, Ukraine needs a new approach to deal with tourism policy, which focuses on marketing and advertising activities; on developing infrastructure and products; on modernization (Regional Tourism Department, 2006). The Transcarpathian region is divided into three tourism recreational zones on the basis of social ethnic, economic and climate elements:

- the Northwestern zone: which involves the Nagyberezna, Volóc, Mizhirya, Svalyava, and Perecseny districts;
- the Central-eastern zone: here belongs the districts of Ilosva, Huszt, Tyachiv and Rakhiv.
- the Southern (the most developed) zone: which is made up of the districts of Uzhorod, Mukachevo, Berehovo and Vynohradiv (Figure 52.).

The aim of cross border co-operations is to analyze and evaluate the present situation and tourism capabilities, and to develop suggestions to be submitted to the appropriate state organs, to takeover Hungarian experiences, analyze marketing and market segmentation, to explore deficiencies and denote guidelines for improvement. The five most important plans were constructed on the principles described below:

- take into account and evaluate the already existing capabilities and products;
- to research and analyze the incoming tourism marketing and on the basis of the conclusions drawn define guidelines to be followed on the market of tourism products and services;
- examine laws stipulating tourism and its development;
- denote the developmental line of tourism products and infrastructural services;
- define those already existing tourism products and potential territories that are capable of improvement in the future.

Figure 52. Geographical regions in Transcarpathia

Source: www.szulofold.hu

Arrangements aiming at improving tourism:

- To establish appropriate infrastructure, renew already existing hosts and accommodations.
- To increase the efficacy of the service sphere (healthcare, traffic, insurance system, etc.)
- To eliminate insecure border crossing occasions and the reasonless waiting at the border crossing points.
- To improve the conditions of the road systems, and outplace unambiguous informative signs (road signs).
- To establish reliable security.
- Structured administrative and legal conditions.

Altogether 13 districts and 2 towns were involved in the evaluation process. Sub-regional plans were designed, to expand investment opportunities. The area was divided into three sub-regions from the point of view of analysis:

1. The Transcarpathian plains involving the districts of Uzhorod, Vynohradiv and Berehovo:
 - Its being situated in the borderland, can assist in developing international tourism and there is an opportunity for cooperation with the neighboring countries.
 - Railroads and public roads are of international relevance from the point of view of building up transit traffic, building hotels, motels and hospitality institutions must be reinforced.
 - Rivers and thermal waters help to build up water- and medicinal tourism.
 - The historical wine region provides possibilities to build up gastronomic and wine tourism.
 - The historical castles and the towns with their rich past places the development of cultural tourism in the foreground; there are investment opportunities for building accommodations and places to visit to serve cultural tourism.
2. The Upper-Tisza region, covers mainly the district of Rakhiv:
 - The highland area is favourable for improving mountain tourism.
 - The presence of many rivers, sources of thermal waters and spas, and the already existing sanatoriums and convalescent hospitals are favourable for improving medicinal tourism.
 - The most important sight in the region is the Hoverla, and one can find the Carpathian Biosphere Reserved Area in this region too, there is a possibility to specialize in mountain tourism and build the necessary infrastructure.
 - The ethnic variegation and the hutsul traditions help the eco-ethnic tourism to develop.
 - The greatest opportunity lies in the development of eco tourism, a plan has been developed that covers one part of Rakhiv to create a ecological recreation zone.
 - Village tourism also has an opportunity in itself.
 - There is a need to renew and build a series of institutions serving leisure tourism.

Investment activity

There are two laws that stipulate investment activity today in the field of tourism, i.e. the specific system of investment activity in Transcarpathia and Special zones in Transcarpathia. Appropriate conditions should be secured to realize investment plans in parallel with the suggestions laid down in the two laws, among which the development of medicinal and the hotel industry, and the mountain tourism enjoy priority.

Up to the summer of 2004 ten projects were adopted, the total budget of which cost 11.7 mln. USD. 6 mln. \$ out of this amount were spent on medicinal tourism, 3 mln. \$ on the hotel industry, and 1 mln. \$ to improve the quality of services for the tourists. Up to this time 8.5 mln. \$ were incorporated into the improvement, which amounts to the 72.4% of the total amount. During two and a half years the amounts of investments have in 2.5 times. The interest of foreign investors shows an increasing tendency towards the region. In 2006-2007 5 tourism investments were carried out in Transcarpathia, in a value of 17.6 mln. \$. These are as follow:

- The extension of the sanatorium and convalescence hospital “Szoleni Mlaki” in the district of Mukachevo;
- Building a hotel with 200 accomodations near the “Kvitka Polonina” sanatorium in the district of Svalyava;
- Renewing work of the “Thermal Star” convalescence hospital in the district of Uzhorod;
- The reconstruction works of the “Derenivska Kupilj” sanatorium in the district of Uzhorod;
- The establishment of a tourist estate “Kucsera” in the district of Mizhirja.

Challenges of the future

According to the plans and conceptions referring to the future, incoming tourism will enjoy priority in the Hungarian-Ukrainian border region, but its development is to a great extent influenced by the sketchiness of the laws, stipulating the rules of incoming and outgoing. At the Ukrainian side of the state borderline the further infrastructural improvement of the border crossing points is a burning question. There is a need for enhancing the quality of services, reducing the waiting time, and establishing information centres at the border crossing points.

According to the present conditions the greatest deficiency is the condition of the infrastructure alongside the roads that could help in approaching and serving the needs of certain tourist institutions, and renewing the already existing objects or building new ones alongside the headways is a more and more burning problem. In relation to this issue as well, a project has been adopted to build camping places, motels, and the building and renewing works have already been started. Within this project, in 2001 the renovation process of the Vita motel has been started in the Berehovo district, in Voloc district on the Kyiv-Chop-Budapest road, in the Ilosva district (on the Mukachevo-Rakhiv-Ivanofrankovsk road) a motel has been renewed in each of the districts. In the Vynohradiv district (on the Mukachevo-Rakhiv-Ivanofrankovsk road), in the Voloc district (on the Kyiv-Chop-Budapest road), in the Mizhirja district (Dolina-Huszt), in the Mukachevo district (on the Kyiv-Chop-Budapest road), in the Perecheny district (on the Lvov-Uzhorod road), in the Svalyava district (on the Kyiv-Chop-Budapest road), in the Uzhorod district (on the Kyiv-Chop-Budapest road), and in the Huszt districts (on the Mukachevo-Rakhiv-Ivanofrankovsk road) motels are planned to be built in the future. In the districts of Voloc, Mizhirja, Rakhiv, Tyachiv camping places and rest places are being built.

On the basis of research and empirical observations specialists have come to the conclusion that there is a need for multidirectional development in Transcarpathia. The conditions for recreation and leisure tourism have to be presented in all of the districts. There are improvement opportunities for medicinal tourism in 9 districts and for hiking in 10 of the districts. In the mountain districts one can specialize in ski tourism. In 7 districts there is a proved need to improve ecotourism, in 5 of the districts business-, in 4 horse riding-, in six hunting- in two biking tourism. Altogether 8 districts are suitable for building up conditions for transit tourism. The districts of Berehovo, Vynohradiv, Mizhirya, and Rakhiv are the most suitable districts for improving village tourism. The districts of Berehovo, Uzhorod and Mukachevo are the most capable of improving cultural tourism.

The joint work in the Ukrainian-Hungarian border region has already had an effect and might have an effect on supporting tourism via developing regional information networks, which can promote the organization of activities, and can enhance the dialogue between the members. The activities of tourism organizations can become more effective on the basis of co-work, which in the long run can infer the development of the target area, the tourism and economic development of the border region.

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