

Slovak-Hungarian Joint Study for the Urban and Territorial Development of the cross-border area of Neogradiensis Euroregion

Summary document for the three-language study on the cross-border region Banská Bystrica and Nógrád counties with special focus on Lučenec and Salgótarján

SLOVAKIA



HUNGARY



Area involved
Devisers

NOVOHRAD
AUREX, s.r.o



SALGÓTARJÁN
URBAN DEVELOPMENT Co. Ltd.



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A Nógrád Megyei Területfejlesztési Tanács
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(Nógrád County Regional Development Agency to the Nógrád County Regional Development Council)

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I.
INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This study has been worked out under the umbrella of the intergovernmental agreement between the Slovak and the Hungary Republic on the domain of the planning and development of cross-border areas with regards to matters such as interregional relationships. The initial order on the Slovakian part was passed by the reference division of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic later on – due to restructuring - transferred to the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, whereas on the Hungarian part by the reference division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Territorial Development later on – due to restructuring - transferred to the Prime Minister’s Office of the Hungarian Republic.

	Territorial planning long-term		Regional planning medium-term	
	National	Regional	National	Regional
Slovak Republic	KURS	Territorial plan for the integrated territorial unit	National Development Plan Operational Programmes	Social and economic development programme of the region
Cross-border cooperation		Study for Urban and Territorial Development of Cross-border area of Euroregion Neogradiensis	Phare CBC Interreg III A	Strategic development plan of Euroregion Neogradiensis Territorial and regional development project of the Slovako-Hungarian cross-border region
Hungary	National Physical Plan		National Development Plan Operational Programmes	Social-economic development scheme of the region

I.1. Assignment

Activity in this respect started on the basis of the offer provided by the deviser in autumn 2000, prompted by the invitation of the respective ministries of the two countries and preceded by detailed discussions of the competent parties, namely the representatives of the state administration authorities, and concerned actors of the public and private sectors on both the Slovakian and the Hungarian part.

The subject matter of this study is as follows:

- Global analysis of the present state of settlement structure,
- Definition of development possibilities, and
- Setting up proposals for future development.

The study covered

- the southern sub-county territorial units of the Banskobystrický county (Veľký Krtíš, Lučenec, Poltár, Rimavská Sobota and Revúca) on the Slovakian side, with special regard to the development of the region of districts Lučenec and Poltár;
- and Nógrád county with special regard to the development of Salgótarján and industrialised zones around, on the Hungarian side.

The objective of this document is providing orientation for cross-border cooperation in terms of the development of Euroregion Neogradiensis.

The prospective time range of the proposal involves a period of 10 – 15 years.

The four main specifications of the assignment are as follows:

1. the analysis of the development dynamics in the cross-border region
 - a.) Features of the actual state
 - b.) SWOT analysis
2. objectives, priorities, measures to be taken
3. integrated territorial development scheme
4. proposals and recommendations

The segments 1a, 1b, 2, 3, and 4 are to be broken down in the way detailed hereunder:

- Human resources, settlement structure, demographical characteristics
- Environment-, nature-, and landscape protection
- Transport and technical facilities
- Economic structure

A common aim of both the Hungarian and the Slovakian parties is to respond to the existing difficulties due to the peripheral location of the agglomerations, and to assist the development of the region.

By the end of the year 2003 the revised shortened version of the study was accomplished, putting an end thereby to this phase of the project.

I.2. Task force

Interstate task force of experts ensured the independent solution of the task, where the team of the firm AUREX provided the Slovak part and the team of the firm SCET Hongrie – the name of which changed to be URBAN DEVELOPMENT Co. Ltd. - provided the Hungarian part. Devising took place in close cooperation, with special regard to the representatives of the regional authority of the state administration and chamber of commerce on both sides of the border.

I.3. Devising methodology

When considering development possibilities of the area concerned from the point of view of utilizing the cross-border Slovak-Hungarian cooperation potentials special attention should be paid to the Lučenec and Salgótarján axis, its relation to Budapest, the major metropolis of the region, as well as all accessible funds. The objective of this task was to outline a cross-border study of spatial development.

The methodology for the cross-border study was dictated by the expertise of Slovak and Hungarian professionals devising the methodology of the cross-border study of spatial development of the regions along the river Danube, which was tested on site as well. This initial methodology was subsequently adapted by the cross-border task force, and accepted by the assigner.

The basic concept of the approach is to harmonise the principles of spatial planning and regional policies by considering the basic long-term development trends detailed in the territorial plan with reference to the area of transport and technical infrastructure. The main aim of which was to connect the region into the international European transport corridors in order that the internal sources of the region are mobilised.

Difficulties to be encountered when drawing up methodology were the discrepancies in the legislations, the differences in the public administration systems, and the absence of certain parts of the plan documentation on either side.

When devising methodology, sections concerning settlement structures and environment were proposed by the Slovak part, whereas, sections concerning transport, technical infrastructure, and economic structures were outlined by the Hungarian side.

The imminent accession of both countries into the EU offers a new dimension for cooperation in terms of the development of the cross-border region, all the more so, since historically it represented one unit. The logic of the methodology ensures the possibility for physical implementation.

The methodology specifically concentrates on cooperation at international, interregional and cross-border levels. Graphic supplements add to the clarity of the principles contained in the study. Comparison of the texts aroused problems, especially in the case of Chapter 1, due to the differences in statistical data processing in the two countries.

The shortened version outlines major steps to be taken, in view of the global aims specified.

I.4. Working procedure

In the year 2000 the analytical chapter of the study concerning the Slovak part of the cross-border region were ready, and evaluated by the authorities of the Banskobystrický county. The inputs from DOP were also evaluated.

The analytical chapter concerning the Hungarian side was drawn up in the first half of the year 2001. Later on, in the second half of the year 2001 and in 2002 chapters 2, 3 and 4 were worked out. The document was unanimously approved of by the Nógrád County Development Council.

In 2002 translation and exchange of the ready part of the documentation from the national languages into English was done, which is the basis of the present joint material.

In spite of the known difficulties of the international cooperation, both parties benefit from the common activity by gaining information about the challenges and opportunities seen by the representatives of the regions.

The shorten version worked out in the second half of 2003 and early this year takes updated projects and the upcoming CIP Interreg IIIA into account.

The creation of the shorten version was preceded by three joint negotiations, and the present copy is the result of the final meeting in Lučenec in January.

II.
**ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT
DYNAMICS**

II. Present Cross border Dynamics - SWOT Analysis

The cross border region is strongly influenced by the Budapest agglomeration of middle European importance and by the Banská Bystrica - Zvolen (cca 150000 inhabitants). agglomeration of Slovakian importance. Settlement structure of the cross border region can be split into three parts: western (Balassagyarmat, Veľký Krtíš and Šahy), central – the core one (Salgótarján, Lučenec) and eastern one (Rimavská Sobota). The latter area adjoins the Miskolc agglomeration on the Hungarian side, which is outside the Neogradiensis region. The rest of the region represents an extended area of rural countryside.

II.1. Human Resources, Settlement Structure and Living Standard

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient available labour force with favourable proportion of economically active inhabitants, skilled labour in industry, metallurgy, craftworks, agriculture, and forestry. ▪ Appropriate position for settlement structure development emphasized by the existing North-South and East-West development axes of both national and European significance. ▪ Advantageous border position, able to attract interest from the Budapest agglomeration. ▪ Appropriate background conditions for the settlements. ▪ Diverse existing settlement structure, suitable for various types of development. ▪ Existing centres with good conditions (Lučenec, Salgótarján) provide basis for cross-border development. ▪ Appropriate conditions for the development of tourism in the whole area both in the summer and winter seasons, based on the well-preserved rural environment and the remote villages in the highlands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unbalanced, unfavourable age, educational and social structure of inhabitants, compared to the national figures in both countries. ▪ Long-term high unemployment rate. ▪ High proportion of Gypsy inhabitants with low education. ▪ Low social and living standard in the region, high unemployment. ▪ Existing cross-border co-operation is unsuitable for long term operation. ▪ Low level of urbanization with high proportion of rural settlements in the South-West and North-East areas of the region. ▪ Tourism-related infrastructure not suitable for the required development.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adjoining urban zones of significant size and large number of inhabitants in the middle of the cross-border region, along its North-South axis (Pásztó, Bánytereny, Salgótarján, Filakovo, Lučenec, Poltár). ▪ Possibilities for comprehensive cross-border co-operation in the area of labour market, culture, tourism, business contacts etc. ▪ Development of the region can be further increased by existing development axes providing easy access to neighbouring economic centres. ▪ Potential for rural settlements for the development of rural tourism. ▪ Mountainous environment invites to weekend tourism from the Budapest agglomeration, Miskolc and the Northern part of the Great Hungarian Plain. ▪ Possibilities for using the thermal waters of Lučenec for medical and recreation purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socio-economic impacts on the region may further diversify the already unbalanced demographic structure. ▪ Migration of young people to the economically more developed regions. ▪ Spreading of deviant trends in the local society. ▪ Falling further behind in the area of education and the use of information technologies. ▪ Small settlements irreversibly lose their inhabitants. ▪ Strong, concurrent concentration of both social and cultural problems in some settlements. ▪ Some settlements in good locations lose their attractiveness for tourism due to social and demographic problems.

II.2. Environment, Nature and Landscape Protection

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relatively low impact of settlements on the natural environment. ▪ Region rich in nature protected areas as well as cultural heritage. ▪ Quality of the environment is increasing due to the closure of heavy industry, the expansion of environment-friendly technologies and the decrease of environmental impact caused by agriculture. ▪ Significant natural resources (minerals, forests, etc.). ▪ Institutional system for communal waste disposal in all settlements. ▪ Developing activities of the non profit sector in the area of environmental protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local deficit in the potable water supply in Slovakia and low water quality on both sides of the cross border region. ▪ Logging in protected areas, spreading of weeds. ▪ Weak infrastructure in the area of waste- and sewage management. ▪ Serious environmental damage in the former heavy industry areas, high river contamination, soil- and consequent ground water damage. ▪ Low level of the cross-border cooperation in the area of environmental protection.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity for the development of tourism, based on favourable natural environment and rich cultural heritage. ▪ Co-generation of electricity within existing heat sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low priority of environmental issues. ▪ Quality of surface and ground water endangered by the economical activities and insufficient sewage system. ▪ Increase of transport endangers air quality. ▪ Insufficient budget for public utility development. ▪ Failure of implementation of revitalization programmes for contaminated industrial areas. ▪ Absence of environmental cross-border co-operation.

II.3. Transport and technical infrastructure

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advantageous transport-geographic position. ▪ Proximity of the Central European junction of Helsinki corridors. ▪ Proximity of the V. Helsinki Corridor. ▪ Transportation corridor of main road No. 21 joins the most urbanised region: the development and transportation axis of the middle part of Southern Slovakia at Lučenec. ▪ Technical infrastructure essential for economic activity is provided. ▪ Supplies of electricity and drinking water for the population are provided. ▪ Gas supply for the population has been constructed to a significant extent. ▪ Lučenec is a natural regional junction for both railway and road transportation means. ▪ The area of Lučenec and Salgótarján is a node in the energy- and communication networks of the cross-border region and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technical state of the railway line Hatvan-Salgótarján-Filakovo is completely out of date. ▪ Ratio of dwellings connected to the sewage system is still extremely low. ▪ Exhaustion of capacity appeared on main road No. 21 between junctions with main roads No. 23 and 22 ▪ Exhaustion of capacity appeared on main road No. 21, in the sector between Salgótarján and Filakovo. ▪ No international railway line runs along the transportation corridor of main road No.2, so chances of construction of combined freight transport are low. ▪ The share of railways in transportation is decreasing. ▪ Missing railway link between Šahy and Balassagyarmat ▪ Missing bridges and road connections across river Ipoly along the border
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilisation of the beneficial transportation geographic position in the interest of economic development of the cross-border region by conscious improvement of the corridor of main road No. 21 ▪ Establishing pre-conditions for traffic infrastructure required for economic development in the urbanised region of Pásztó-Bátónyterenye-Salgótarján-Filakovo-Lučenec, by construction of a speedway with 2 lanes in each direction in the corridor of main road No. 21 ▪ Connection of the integrated urbanised region of Eastern Nógrád and Lučenec to the national and European economy by developing main road No. 21 ▪ Improving conditions for transportation of goods and passengers in the urbanised region of Eastern Nograd by reconstructing the railway line Hatvan-Salgótarján-Filakovo-Lučenec. ▪ Providing pre-conditions for combined freight transport by reconstruction of railway line Hatvan-Salgótarján- Filakovo-Lučenec. ▪ Improvement of level road and railway crossings. ▪ Possibility to complete the Bratislava-Šahy-Balassagyarmat-Lučenec-Kosice railway line by constructing the currently missing link between Šahy and Balassagyarmat. ▪ Connecting settlements on opposite sites of river Ipoly by construction of new bridges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main road No. 21 is expected not to be able to carry, with its present parameters, the traffic amount to be increased due to the integration to the EU and the economic development. ▪ Development of main road No. 2 into a motorway or speedway will take place but construction of a speedway with 2 lanes in each direction in the corridor of main road No. 21 will not happen.

II.4. Economic structure

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signs of closing up appear in the region. ▪ Industry has a significant and defining role in the economy of the region. ▪ New poles of industrial development have been created. ▪ Existing material and technical basis of industrial enterprises ▪ Availability of non-metallic raw materials ▪ Exhibition and congress centre of international level in Lučenec ▪ Productivity of the building industry is rising ▪ Free capacities within the building industry ▪ Number of guest nights spent by foreigners is increasing. ▪ Nature Protection Areas are important attractions for tourists. ▪ Micro-regions of Salgótarján and Lučenec, situated on different sides of the border, have similar cultural and economic properties, strengthening each other. ▪ Rich cultural heritage provides additional attraction to tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small diversity of industry with low level of producing added value ▪ Dependence of the employment rate on just a few large enterprises ▪ Low work productivity and competitiveness of enterprises, low efficiency of industrial enterprises resulting from out of date technologies ▪ Tourist accommodation options only satisfy moderate requirements ▪ Low rate of international tourism. ▪ Low interest of investors in the whole of the region ▪ Unemployment rate way above the national average ▪ Low ratio and activity of small and medium enterprises. ▪ Low ratio and productivity of the service sector. ▪ Agriculture in crisis. ▪ Failure to reconvert traditional mining and heavy industrial activities into competitive local economy ▪ The crisis of traditional industry gave an unfavourable image to the region. ▪ Lack of co-ordinated and resolute image-creation and marketing activities.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic development creates a larger number of new job opportunities. ▪ As a result of improvements in the transportation infrastructure, the position of the region will be significantly stronger from the point of view of investors. ▪ Based on the rich cultural heritage and the attractive natural environment, growth of tourism may be take off as a result of a co-ordinated tourism development programme ▪ Growth of the defining sectors of the local economy (industry, tourism) will be followed by the development of the service sector. ▪ Development of the local economy and infrastructure provides good opportunity for the growth of Hungarian-Slovakian cross-border economic and regional development. ▪ Due to economic development and cross-border co-operation processes strengthening each other, the agglomeration of Lučenec and Salgótarján could grow into a dynamic, cross-border urbanised region, forming a new development pole, significant even on a Central European scale. ▪ Potential for the creation of common production zone Lučenec- Salgótarján ▪ The following sectors of industry might become driving forces for economic development in the region: glass and building industry, production of parts in the metal industry, production of equipment for environment management, assembling of electronic parts. ▪ The corridor of Warsaw Katowice - Budapest- Adriatic will be constructed so the economic region of Lučenec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should the economic development of the Western and Eastern part of Nógrád county become too unbalanced, utilisation of the opportunities provided by the Lučenec-Salgótarján co-operation will not be possible, despite the full co-operation from the Slovakian partner and the development of Lučenec region. ▪ The ongoing motorway developments provide regions in similar situation with a faster access to the economic centre of the country and other developed EU regions. ▪ Political changes making cross border economic and regional development co-operation impossible or hindering it could take place, thus potential opportunities provided by the developing region of Salgótarján and Lučenec having a population of several hundred thousand inhabitants, will not be easy to utilise for investments. ▪ Investment capital chooses regions positioned at geographically longer distance – in some cases these regions have a better image as well - and economic development avoids the region. ▪ Economic crisis has a negative effect on conditions of every day life, which all together results in a new increase of negative social and demographic processes, such as growth of long term unemployment, decreasing and progressively ageing population, the social and economic integration of gypsies becomes even more difficult. ▪ As a consequence of the long-term crisis situation, the area becomes less and less interesting for

and Salgótarján will strengthen and move into the centre of two-directional economic flow.

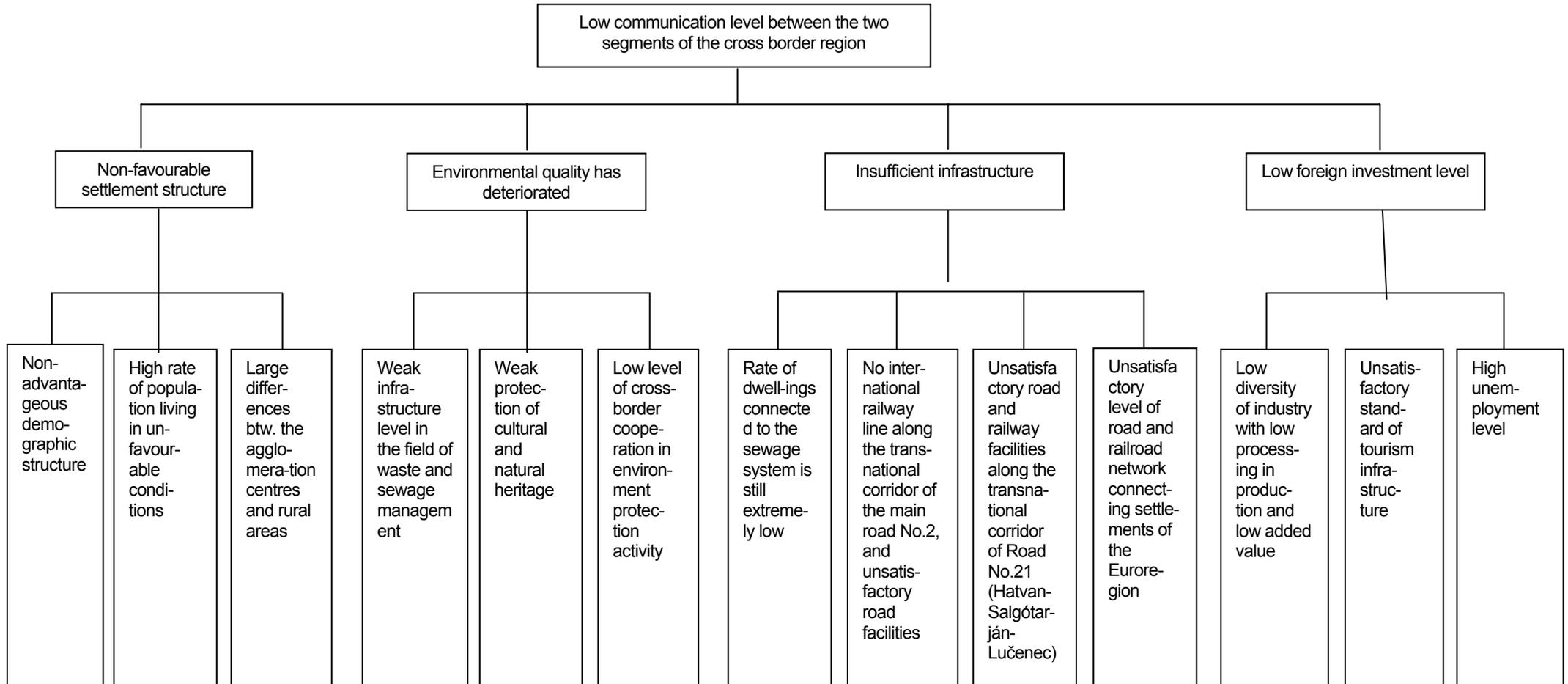
private investors, governmental developments and from the aspects of improving Slovakian-Hungarian co-operations.

- The necessary developments in transportation infrastructure will be cancelled.

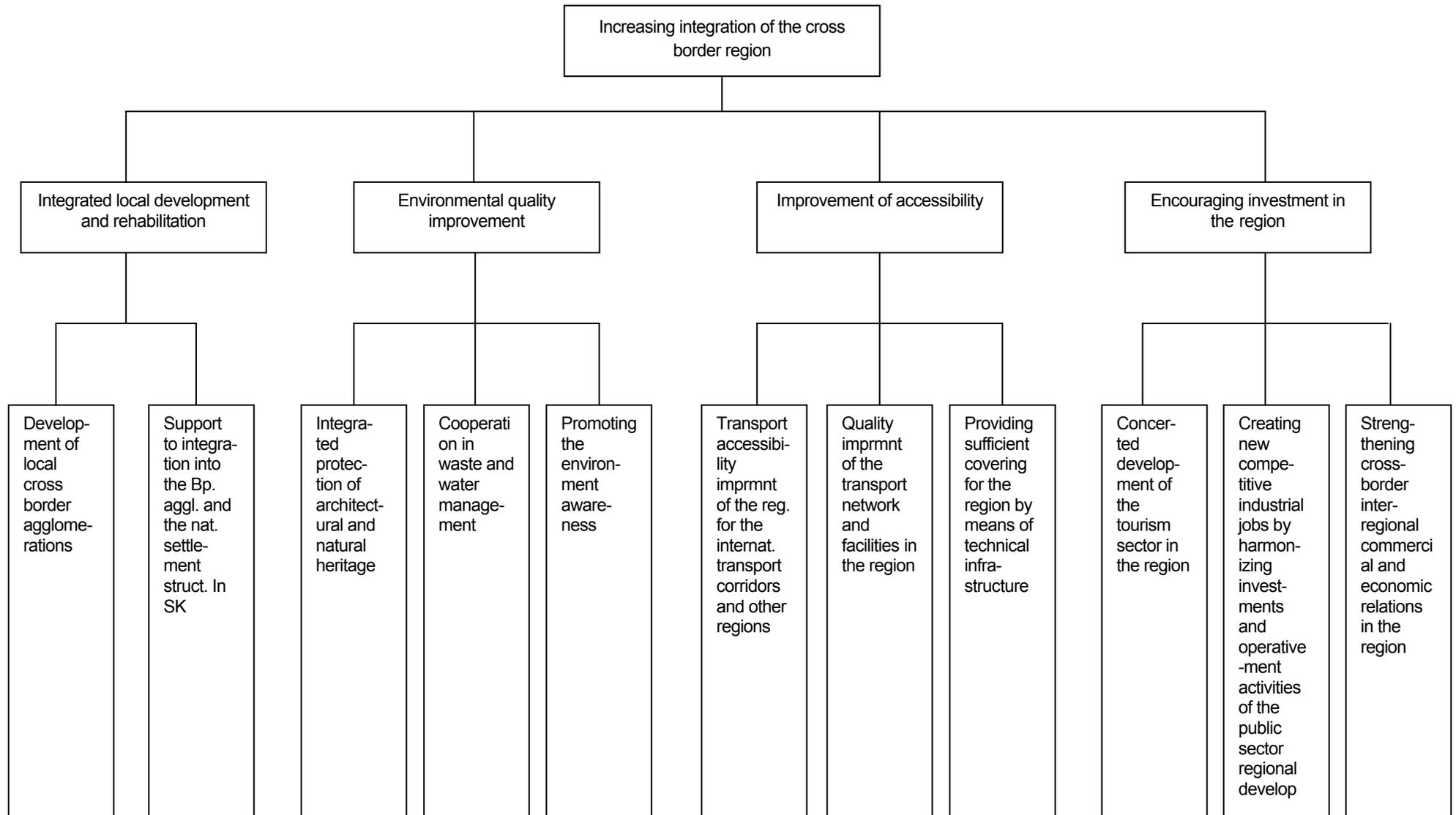
III.
PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

III. Tree Diagram Representing Problems and Objectives

III.1. Problems



III.2. Objectives



IV.
OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES

IV. Objectives, priorities, measures

IV.1. Global development objectives

Increasing the integration of the cross-border region

IV.2. Strategy objectives of the cross-border region development - Neogradiensis:

Increasing the competitiveness of Euroregion Neogradiensis through support to economic, social and culture development.

IV.3. Specific objectives for the development of the cross-border region Neogradiensis:

Strengthening cross border settlement structure of Euroregion Neogradiensis and its progressive integration into global settlement structures (Banská Bystrica – Zvolen, Budapest agglomeration).

Intensifying activities in the domain of environment-, natural and cultural heritage protection.

Increasing the level of transport and technical infrastructure in the Euroregion Neogradiensis and improving its accessibility from the European corridors (Helsinki corridors).

Enhancing the social-economic development of Euroregion Neogradiensis, with special regard to human resources, tourism and SME-s, and the creation of competitive industrial jobs.

IV.4. Priorities of the cross-border region development - Noegradiensis

PI: Cross-border development of settlement structure and its integration to the settlement structure of Slovakia and Hungary

I-1 Creation of a balanced demographic structure

I-2 Supporting the development of cross border competitive settlement structure through planning, project development and networking

I-3 Social and human resource development at cross border level

PII: Cross-border environment, nature and cultural heritage protection

II-1 Elimination of the existing environmental burdens and supporting economic development by environment-friendly high technology

II-2 Integrated protection of the natural and cultural heritage

II-3 Waste management development

PIII : Strengthening of regional transport and technical infrastructure and accessibility of the region

III-1 Accessibility of the cross-border region from the international corridors

III-2 Efficient cross-border transport network in the region

III-3 Development of cross-border technical infrastructure

PIV : Development of tourism, human resources and SME-s

IV-1 Strengthening the labour market in the cross-border region by building cross-border economic zones

IV-2 Supporting the development of cross-border social infrastructure in order to stabilise optimal demographic development of the region

IV-3 Development of tourism

IV-4 Support to SME-s

V.
MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES

V. Measures and activities

- V.1. PI: Cross border development of settlement structure and its integration to the settlement structure of Slovakia and Hungary
- V.1.1. I-1 Creation of a balanced demographic structure
- Reinforcement of the development and rehabilitation of the cities as being the development centres
- V.1.2. I-2 Supporting the development of cross-border competitive settlement structure through planning, project development and networking
- Preparation and establishment of operative urban rehabilitation and urban development actions with the purpose of the rehabilitation of declining and disturbing industrial areas and the regeneration of the urban tissue
 - Eliminating environmental damages with governmental support, which is a precondition for the re-utilization of industrial areas in the inner parts of towns in accordance with operative urban development action plans to be approved
- V.1.3. I-3 Social and human resource development at cross border level
- Activating the different forms of co-operation in terms of education, culture, health, social policy and sport
- V.2. PII: Cross-border environment-, natural and cultural heritage protection
- V.2.1. II-1 Elimination of the existing environmental burdens and supporting economic development by environment-friendly high technology
- Provide legislation protection for the proposed protection areas
 - Shaping up a system for retaining ecological stability
 - Conservation and recultivation of the environmental elements
 - Supporting environmental education at all levels
 - Support of activities of the non-profit sector in the area of environment protection
 - Preparation and establishment of operative urban rehabilitation and urban development actions with the purpose of the rehabilitation of declining and disturbing industrial areas and the regeneration of the urban tissue
 - Eliminating environmental damage with governmental support, which is a precondition for the re-utilization of industrial areas in the inner parts of towns in accordance with operative urban development action plans to be approved

- V.2.2. II-2 Integrated protection of the natural and cultural heritage
- Creation of the forest park in the area Lučenec – Veľká nad Ipľom
 - Evaluation of the possibility to exploit thermal waters in Lučenec
 - Integrated protection of natural values and architectural heritage of Hollókő, which is part of the World Heritage
 - Preparation and establishment of operative urban rehabilitation and urban development actions with the purpose of the integrated protection of architectural heritage in the town centres of Lučenec, Veľký Krtíš, Filakovo, Salgótarján, Szécsény and Balassagyarmat
- V.2.3. II-3 Waste management development
- Construction of sewage network and sewage treatment plants on the settlements.
 - Constructing of establishments necessary for the treatment of communal and hazardous waste by the help of funds from the European Union
- V.3. PIII : Strengthening of regional transport and technical infrastructure and accessibility of the region
- V.3.1. III-1 Accessibility of the cross-border region from the international corridors
- Building of the highway road connection in the direction Zvolen – Lučenec – Košice
 - Building of the highway road connection in the direction Hatvan - Salgótarján – Lučenec
 - Development of transport facilities in the direction of Budapest – Šahy - Banska Bystrica
 - Construction of double rails in the bottleneck of the southern railway line Zvolen – Lučenec - Košice, its electrification and modification in compliance with AGTC parameters
 - Construction of double rails in the line Hatvan - Salgótarján – Lučenec and its electrification
 - Reconstruction of the Šahy – Balassagyarmat – Lučenec railway line
 - The preconditions for combined transportation are to be created during the development of the international transportation corridor in the north-south direction by harmonising road and railway developments.
 - The development of the international transportation corridor in the north-south direction to connect the most important development pole of the middle part of southern Slovakia (Lučenec region) so that it becomes a dynamically developing cross-border urbanised economic region together with the area of Bátonyterenyé - Salgótarján.
 - Improving accessibility of the eastern urbanised area of the Nógrád county from Budapest on road and railway as well.
 - Development of the main transportation network of the county to be carried out in the way that the values of natural environment are protected.

V.3.2.

III-2 Efficient cross-border transport network in the region

- Building of the southern highway road (in a short-term period) in Slovakia and joining it with the Hungarian border to enhance cross border connection
- Building of a highway road in the direction of Lučenec – Filakovo – Salgótarján
- Quality improvement of the railway line N. 164, Filakovo – Šiatorská, Bukovinka – Salgótarján and the possibility of building double rails
- Improvement of the route N. 161 Lučenec – Veľký Krtíš to add to the efficiency of the cross-border communication
- The development of transportation infrastructure in order to reduce regional inequalities between the western and eastern parts of Nógrád County.
- Development of the road network in order to encourage the economic development of the densely populated urbanised region of eastern Nógrád suffering from economic difficulties.
- Concerted development of the bicycle road network in the cross-border region in order that the facilities for tourism are provided.

V.3.3.

III-3 Development of cross-border technical infrastructure

- Construction of bridges over the border river
- Development of the road network connecting settlements

V.4.

PIV : Development of tourism, human resources and small and medium enterprises

V.4.1.

IV-1 Strengthening of the labour market in the cross-border region by building cross-border economic zones

- Preventing the economic splitting of the cross-border region.
- Development of secondary schools (secondary grammar schools and vocational schools) in settlement centres
- Creation of higher education faculties in Lučenec and Salgótarján
- Creation of centres for life-long education in the settlement centres
- Establishment of an international research and education (silicate) centre in Lučenec
- Cooperation between the silicate economic zone and the Salgótarján - Bátorýterenyé business zone

V.4.2. **IV-2** Supporting the development of cross-border social infrastructure in order to stabilise optimal demographic development of the region

- Exploitation of existing Hungarian-Slovakian/Salgótarján-Losonc cooperation potentials to achieve cross-border economic development.

V.4.3. **IV-3** Development of tourism

- Providing complete high standard tourism service near the Ružiná recreation area
- Supporting active tourism in rural areas, and in the mountains such as Ostrôžky, Revúcka vrchovina, Stolické vrchy, Cerová vrchovina, Cserhát, Karancs-Medves, and Mátra.
- Development of the recreation areas such as Látky in the mountains (district Detva), Kokava nad Rimavicou, Kokava – Háj, and Utekáč – Valuška.
- Further development and tourism promotion of the Ancient Remains in the Ipolytarnóc Nature Reservation.
- Integrated development of tourism infrastructure in the environment of Somoskő Castle
- Preparation and establishment of operative urban rehabilitation and urban development actions with the purpose of the integrated protection of architectural heritage in the town centres of Lučenec, Veľký Krtíš, Filakovo, Salgótarján, Szécsény and Balassagyarmat.
- Concerted continuation of nature protection and tourism development in the areas Karancs-Medves Nature Reservation, the Cerova Mountains, the Mátra and the Cserhát Mountains.
- Exploitation of the beneficial elements of tourism in order to achieve economic development.

V.4.4. **IV-4** Support to SME-s

- Support for new green-field and brown-field industrial parks in view of investment interests
- Promoting the development and modernization of main industrial sectors
- Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises

VI.
**CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

VI.1. Conclusion

The urban study of the cross-border area of the Euroregion Neogradiensis is the first document to deal with the specific problems of the region in question. At the beginning the accession of both countries to the EU was just an aspiration, whereas when the joint study was completed it was a declared fact. This document being a shortened version of the Urban study of the cross-border area of the Euroregion Neogradiensis is the result of an activity of a period of three years, and contains modifications based on the changes in the third year. The fact that present study reflects the real situation and conditions in four selected areas guarantees a clear vision of the real possibilities for development. Situation assessment resulted in the conclusion that disparities in the region are caused by regional isolation, and it is the development of transport infrastructure by way of joint cross-border development projects that is able to respond the challenge.

This multilingual study was a starting point for an increase of the cross-border cooperation in urban and spatial development planning at the level of the Euroregion including the level of the micro-regions concerned.

VI.2. Recommendations

The next phase will involve a detailed elaboration of the crucial projects identified hereunder and in chapter VIII and have this study officially accepted by regional level actors. This activity should be backed by the supporting means of the EU, mainly INTERREG IIIA. Desirably an intensification of the information flow and exchange of best practices should take place between the two parts of the cross-border region with the aim to:

- further develop the middle-term development operational program (strategy) in line with the long-term intentions of regional development described in the urban study to create the conditions for their progressive carrying out.
- create the conditions (mainly by way of the preparation of the development projects) for raising funds from the EU, and the state, to invite new investors to the Euroregion Neogradiensis.
- The following area to be developed should be the Velký Krtíš - Balašské Ďarmoty – Szécsény axis.
- integrate into the coming-up studies connected hereby, the evolution of the neighbouring development axes, mainly the towns of Ipoly valley (Velký Krtíš-Balassagyarmat-Szécsény-Lučenec) line;
- work out a development study of the settlement centres in the Euroregion Neogradiensis
- provide systematic support for the enhancement of the quality of the transport connection in the axis Budapest-Rétság-Velký Krtíš-Balassagyarmat;
- restore the railway track along the Ipoly river to connect Šahy – Balassagyarmat and then to proceed to Velký Krtíš–Lučenec in the form of a project of mutual partnership and cooperation;
- systematically complete the EUROREG NEO project register, and it should be gradually carried out.

VII.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

VII. Strategy implementation

The study is an evolving document being periodically monitored and supplemented with new projects. Effective cross-border co-operation necessitates the creation of an institutional framework.

VII.1. Institutional framework

Steering and Implementation Board (SIB)

SECRETARIAT EUROREGION NEOGRADIENSIS

Lučenec Regional Development Agency

Nógrád County Regional Development Council

Regional Development Council of North Hungary Region

Associations of Local Governments for the Development of the Micro-Regions

Slovak and hungarian regional chambers of commerce and industry

Financial Resources:

National authorities of the respective countries in charge of the management of EU subsidies

Development Agencies

Associations of Local Governments for the Development of the Micro-Regions

The private sector, in the framework of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) at project level

Implementation Organizations (IO):

Lučenec Regional Development Agency

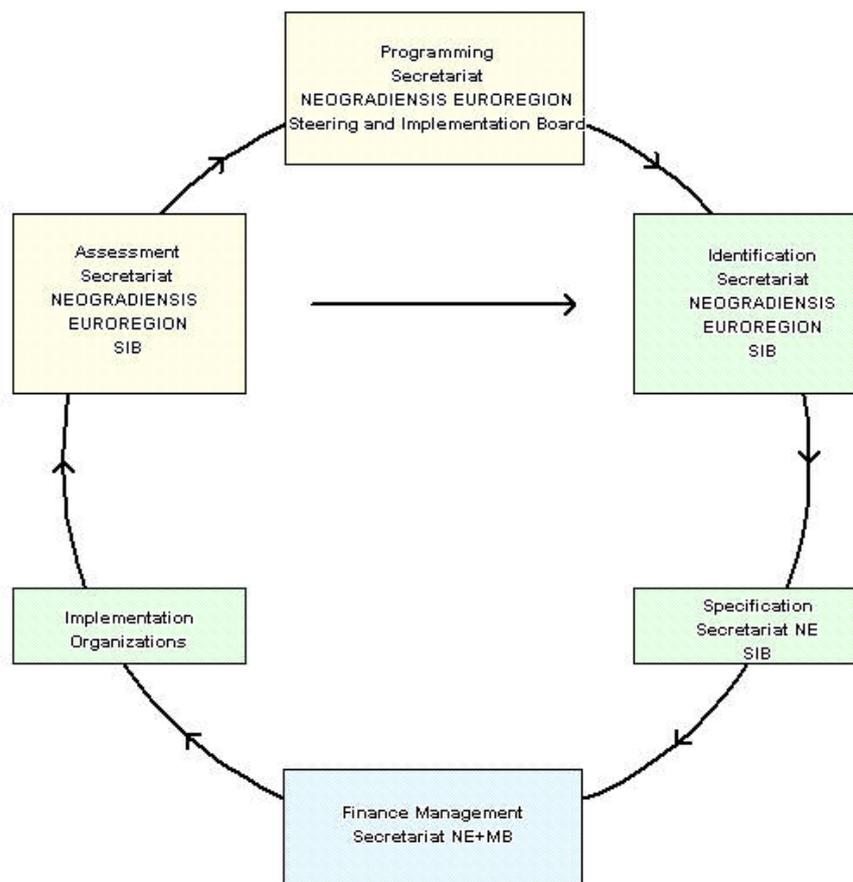
Nógrád County Regional Development Agency

Development organisations of the micro-regions

Monitoring Body (MB): forum of experts and local politicians

Encountering the problems due to the underdeveloped status of the future EU region, revealed by present study should be carried out in the way that it is in compliance with the project cycle proposals of the European Commission.

VII.2. Project cycle



Programming phase – In the urban study for the cross-border area Euroregion Neogradiensis a thorough analysis has been developed. Priorities and measures envisaging the long-term development of the cross-border region were hereby outlined. The study is going to be discussed and the program will accordingly be formed by Steering and Implementation Board (SIB).

Identification Phase – RDA Lučenec in co-operation with the actors of the Hungarian members of the Steering and Implementation Board have been shaping up projects being integrative parts of the project pipeline. Some of the projects appear in chapter VIII. of present study. Involved institutions will deal with continuous identification of operational projects.

Specification phase – Institutions submitting proposals shall select a particular project out of the project pipeline taking topicality, feasibility and possibilities of financing into account; and ensure that it will be devised in accordance with the above.

Finance Management – is related to the specification phase. It is the role of the SIB to set up the optimal solution for financing the carrying out of the chosen project. Seeing that the region is a cross-border territory, the appropriate financial solution will mainly be based on the structural fund of EU INTERREG IIIA Slovakia-Hungary- Ukraine.

Implementation Phase – The carrying out of the selected projects are predominantly based on INTERREG IIIA.

Assessment – The deviser of the project together with the secretariat of the Euroregion Neogratiensis will evaluate the progress and define the following steps. Since it is a long-term study, the deadline for the evaluation of the proposal will be 2007, when the program cycle of 2002-2006 is accomplished.

VIII.
PROJECT PIPELINE

VIII. Project pipeline

VIII.1. Priority projects of the Hungarian part

VIII.1.1. Human Resources, Settlement Structure and Living Standard

- Integrated urban development projects to develop the centres of micro-regions
- Integrated rehabilitation of villages
- Cultural, educational, social and health projects to retain the population of the micro-regions
- Training schemes for the Gypsy population.

VIII.1.2. Environment, Nature and Landscape Protection

- Elimination of past injuries of nature
- Preservation and rehabilitation of the country landscape to encourage tourism
- Integrated protection and promotion of cultural heritage to encourage tourism

VIII.1.3. Transport and technical infrastructure

- Development of main road No. 2. and No. 21. into a motorway having 2 lanes in each direction, has absolute priority.
- Reconstruction of railway line Hatvan-Salgótarján-country border.
- Reconstruction the Sahy-Balassagyarmat-Ipolytarnóc railway line
- Restoration of the bridges over the river Ipoly.
- Development of the road network connecting micro-regions and settlements.
- Constructions of bicycle roads to encourage tourism.
- Increasing rate of dwellings connected to the sewage-system on the settlements having drainage, with special regard to the construction of a sewage system and a sewage treatment plant at Bátorfyerénye.

VIII.1.4. Economic structure

- Improving economic capacity of the region.
- Improving rate of employment, decreasing unemployment significantly.
- Socio-economic employment schemes to help the Gypsy population catch up.

- Creating new, competitive industrial jobs by harmonising job-generating investments and operative regional development activities of local governments and the national government.
- Intensifying the trans-regional European commercial and economic relations of the region with present and future member countries of the EU.
- Strengthening cross-border inter-regional commercial and economic relations in the region.
- Development of tourism
- Development of SME-s

VIII.2. Priority projects of the Slovakian part

VIII.2.1. Human Resources, Settlement Structure and Living Standard

- Develop the integrated development projects of the Euro - region 's centers concentrated on increase of their competitiveness with the possibility of utilisation the potential of the Budapest agglomeration
- Develop the complex renovation of the country concentrated on the improvement of the quality of living standard and development of tourism supported by sustainable development of agriculture, forestry and water management
- Increase the competitiveness of the region 's centers by way of integration of the development projects, by the way of working out the territorial plans and plans of social and agricultural development
- Intensification of the contacts between Lučenec and Salgotarián and creating of the integrated cross-border agglomeration
- Support of the progressive elimination of the unfavorable demographic and educational structure of the population including the training schemes for Romany population

VIII.2.2. Environment, Nature and Landscape Protection

- Working out the studies and documents creating the condition for improving of the environment
- Systematically solve the questions of the water management with the aim to ensure enough water resources for supplying by the drinking water, development of tourism and fishing industry
- Reducing of the quantity of waste by setting up of the chadless and low waste technologies by progressive appreciating of the waste
- Restructuring of management in the country in harmony with its natural potential

- Saving the historical heritage for next generations (Filakovský hrad, Modrý Kameň, Saving of the Jewish synagogue in Lučenec, reconstruction of the castle in Želiezovce)
- Protection of the natural heritage (forest - park – Ladovo, utilizing of the mineral spring Bušince)

VIII.2.3. Transport and technical infrastructure

- Building up of the highway in the line of international tug E571 (Zvolen – Lučenec – Košice) with marking R2
- Modernization of railway communication, setting up of two tracks, electrification and rebuilding to parameters AGTC track No 160 (Zvolen – Lučenec – Košice)
- Connecting of the south traffic corridor to the suggested highway R2 and railway knot Lučenec
- Modernization and enlargement of the traffic corridor north-south (Lučenec – Salgótarján – Hatvan – Budapest) by which the connection of the region to traffic nets of the Europe meaning will be ensured
- Building up of the cross-border crossings and bridges through the river Ipeľ
- Building up of the energetic source PPC south from Lučenec
- Development of communication systems
- Utilizing of the potential of the international gas line

VIII.2.4. Economic structure

- Improving economic capacity of the region.
- Improving rate of employment, decreasing unemployment significantly.
- Socio-economic employment schemes to help the Gypsy population catch up.
- Creating new, competitive industrial jobs by harmonising job-generating investments and operative regional development activities of local governments and the national government.
- Intensifying the trans-regional European commercial and economic relations of the region with present and future member countries of the EU.
- Strengthening cross-border inter-regional commercial and economic relations in the region.
- Development of tourism
- Development of SME-s