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Programm zur grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit SLOWAKEI - ÖSTERREICH 2007-2013

Program cezhraničnej spolupráce SLOVENSKÁ REPUBLIKA - RAKÚSKO 2007-2013

Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia – Austria 2007-2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since 1989, the overall aim of the INTERREG Community Initiative has been to ensure that national borders do not remain a barrier to the balanced development and integration of the European territory. In 1995 – based on a decision by the European Parliament – the Interreg initiative was complemented by the Phare cross-border programmes in order to extend the cross-border co-operation approach to the external borders of the European Union.

Austria and the Slovak Republic participated in the Interreg IIA – Phare CBC Programmes 1995 – 1999, which helped to improve and intensify cross-border co-operation in the joint border region and in the Interreg IIIA – Phare CBC Programmes 2000-2006, which was more challenging, particularly in the light of enlargement of the European Union 2004.

The relevance of the cooperation activities between the EU members states and its regions in effectively addressing the economic, social and territorial disparities has been recognised by the transformation of the INTERREG Community Initiative into one of three objectives of the EU Cohesion policy for the period 2007-2013 – European Territorial Cooperation. The cross-border co-operation represents the main area in terms of financial allocations under the European Territorial Cooperation objective (77%). The next generation of the cross-border cooperation programmes aim at the increasing the cohesion by further integration of the border regions contributing to the priorities set out on the Community level. The interventions in the border regions should primarily focus on:

- Encouraging the entrepreneurship, in particular, the development of SMEs, tourism, culture and cross-border trade
- Encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources as well as the prevention of natural and technological risks
- Supporting links between urban and rural areas
- Reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services, and cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities
- Developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures in particular in sectors such as health, culture and education
- In addition, promoting legal and administrative cooperation, the integration of cross-border labour markets, local employment initiatives, gender equality and equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources and facilities for R&TD can be supported.

The Operational Programme for Cross-border Cooperation between Austria and Slovakia (OP CBC SK-AT) in the programming period 2007-2013 concentrates on putting in place the joint strategies (actions) for sustainable development of the border region responding to the relevant problems and opportunities of the border region implemented by flexible cooperation structures and networks. There will be an option for implementation of the multilateral projects with involvement of Czech



and Hungarian partners in case this approach will provide a significant added value and the project results would not be achieved by bilateral cooperation¹.

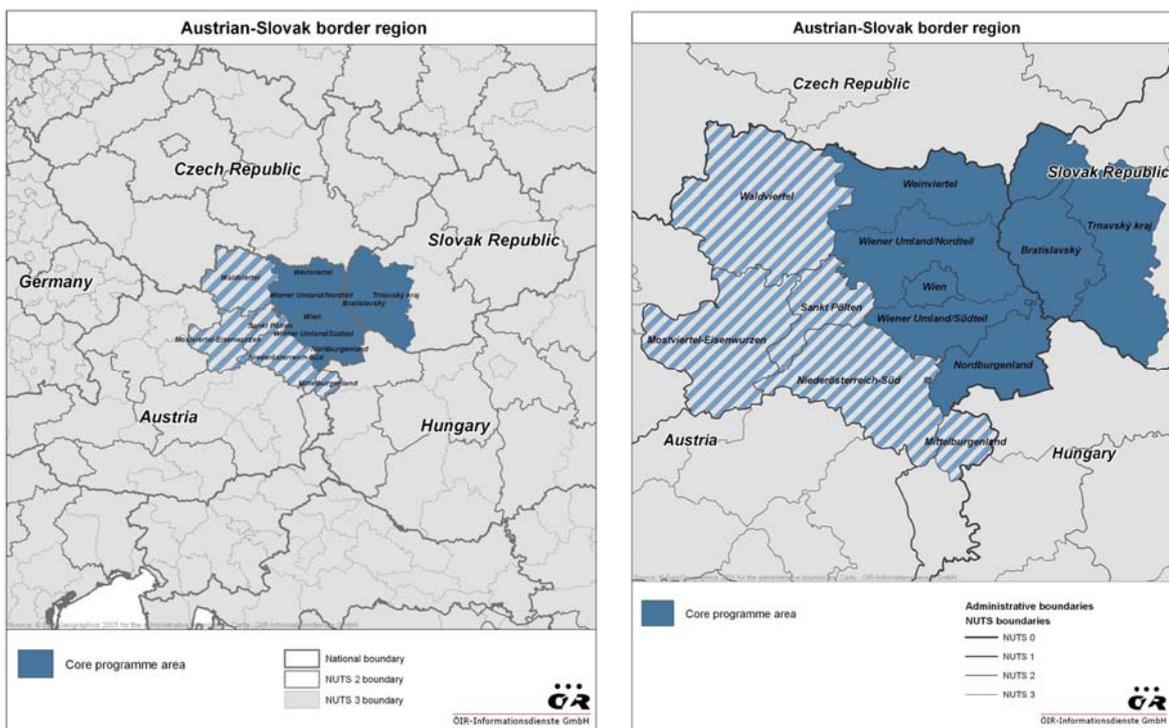
1.2 Programme area

The Austrian-Slovak border region consists of the following NUTS III regions:

In Austria: Weinviertel, Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Wiener Umland-Südteil, Nordburgenland, Wien (core programme area) and the neighbouring (adjacent) regions Waldviertel, Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen²³, Sankt Pölten, Niederösterreich-Süd and Mittelburgenland

Slovakia: The self-governing regions of Bratislava and Trnava.

Map 1: The Austrian-Slovak border region



The programming region thus contains the main area of the proposed Central European Metropolitan Region (recently named “Centrope”) and includes the relevant hinterland for the Vienna-Bratislava Twin-City-Concept (which is in the core of the larger Centrope-Region, which also encompasses Brno (CZ) and parts of western Hungary. Based on the experience gained in the period 2000-2006 and given the larger, functional-region background, the programming area of the SK-AT-programme 2007-13 was expanded, now including the western parts of Lower Austria (Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen).

¹ With reference to the Art. 21 (1) of the Regulation no. 1080/2006 on ERDF

² Because of the intensive functional relations the extension of the programme area to NUTS II level (including the western and southern parts of Lower Austria and Mittelburgenland) was decided according to Art. 21 (1) of the Regulation no. 1080/2006 on ERDF. This represents a continuation of the 2000-2006 programme area.

³ As justified and accepted by the European Commission March 15th, 2007.



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1.3 Legal framework

The main legislative framework for the preparation and implementation of the programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation objective including the cross-border cooperation programmes is defined by the following regulations:

- Council **Regulation** laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (EC) **No 1083/2006** of 11 July 2006,
- **Regulation** of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Regional Development Fund (EC) **No 1080/2006** of 5 July 2006,
- **Regulation** of the European Parliament and the Council on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EC) **No 1082/2006** of 5 July 2006,
- Commission **Regulation No 1828/2006** setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions in the European Regional Development Funds, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council in the European Regional Development Fund.

Additionally, the Programme partners intend to sign the Memorandum of Understanding providing a basis for implementation of the cross-border initiatives within the border region.

1.4 Programming process

The programming of the Operational Programme for Cross-border Cooperation between Austria and Slovakia in the period 2007-2013 started in the autumn 2005. The process was based on the common experiences and co-operation structures established for programming periods 1995-1999 and 2000-2006 as well as new challenges for the integrated development of the border region.

The preparation of the OP CBC SK-AT was steered by the Bilateral Working Group composed of the relevant representatives of the national and regional authorities: in Austria the Länder Burgenland, Vienna, Lower Austria and the Federal Chancellery, in Slovakia the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava Self-governing Region and Trnava Self-governing Region. The work of the Bilateral Working Group was supported by the external expert group and ex-ante evaluators responsible also for carrying out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Working sessions of the group were held throughout the whole programming phase in order to ensure effective communication leading to identification of the common priorities for the development of the border region and setting up the appropriate implementing structures:

Date/Location	Milestone
20 October 2005, Pezinok	1 st Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: overall strategic approach, identification of key issues/challenges, draft action plan and methodology, technical assistance
01 December 2005, Vienna	2 nd Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: status reports on the EU and national policy frameworks, information on external support, the elaboration of the programme documents and procedures



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Date/Location	Milestone
21 February 2006, Vienna	3 rd Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: external support, lead partner principle, learning platform, project development
24 March 2006, Vienna	4 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting and workshop 1: SWOT – analysis, scope of the co-operation programme
02 May 2006, Bratislava	5 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting and workshop 2: preparation of SEA, future implementing structures
29 May 2006, Bratislava	6 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting and workshop 3: Comments on the 1 st draft of the OP CBC AT-SK, presentation of the first report of ex-ante evaluator, specification of the programme priorities and interventions
12 July 2006, Neusiedl/See	Meeting of the members of the Bilateral Working Group within the seminar on monitoring indicators and selection criteria in Objective 3 CBC: discussion on the indicators and selection criteria
18 October 2006, Orth/Donau	7 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting and workshop 4: discussion of the 3 rd draft of the OP CBC AT-SK, indicators and beneficiaries and next steps to be taken
30 October 2006, Vienna	Meeting of the Task Force for Indicators: setting up the indicators on programme and priority levels, indicators related horizontal themes, selection criteria
24 November 2006, Bratislava	8 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting and workshop 5: discussion of the 4 th draft of the OP CBC AT-SK, ex-ante evaluation and SEA, project beneficiaries and payment flows
29 January 2007, Vienna	2 nd meeting of the Task Force for Indicators: completion of the priority themes related to OP CBC AT-SK, specification of the programme indicators and their quantification, definition of impact indicators
2 February 2007, Vienna	9 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: general framework for Technical Assistance, operational implementation framework and next steps and milestones
9 March 2007, Bratislava	10 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: discussion of the 5 th draft of the OP CBC AT-SK and next steps necessary for its completion
26 March 2007, Vienna	11 th Bilateral Working Group "Preparation for the Programming Period 2007-2013" meeting: Technical Assistance, financial allocations, co-financing rates from ERDF
4 May 2007, Vienna	12 th meeting of the Bilateral Working Group – the new Central Monitoring System
19 June 2007	Kick-off meeting for the programme
20 June 2007, Bratislava	13 th meeting of the Bilateral Working Group staffing of JTS, Technical Assistance, final changes to the programme
29 June 2007	Submission of the Draft OP via SFC2007
10 July 2007	Statement of Admissibility by the European Commission
20-21 September 2007, Petronell	14 th meeting of the Bilateral Working Group – JTS presentation, comments to the OP, Structure of the application form, application procedures, information and publicity
16-17 October 2007, Bratislava	15 th meeting of the Bilateral Working Group – eligibility of expenditure, preparation of Central Monitoring System
22-23 November 2007, Trnava	16 th meeting of the Bilateral Working Group – comments to OP, eligibility of expenditure, co-financing of operations, selection criteria



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Submission of the final version of OP to the European Commission via SFC
2007

In addition to the members of the Bilateral Working Group, other relevant social and economic partners were invited to actively participate in the process of public consultation of the OP CBC SK-AT for 2007-2013. The purpose was two-fold: i) to inform the wider public on the state of preparation of the programme for the cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia including indicative fields of eligible activities to be supported under the programme and ii) to provide the public with an opportunity to express their opinions and to provide valuable inputs to the programming process. Public consultation was organised under the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the OP CBC SK-AT in line with SEA Directive and corresponding national legislations.

1.5 Ex-ante evaluation

The ex-ante evaluation was carried out parallel with the preparation of the operational programme. It was based on the following set of evaluation questions:

- appraisal of the socio-economic analysis and the relevance of the strategy with a view to the needs identified in the context of the interventions,
- evaluation of the rationale of the strategy with regional and national and EU policies
- evaluation of the expected results and impacts
- appraisal of the proposed implementation systems.

The full text of the final report of ex-ante evaluation in English is available in the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, Cross-Border Cooperation Department (gal@build.gov.sk).

1.6 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The basic structure and content of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) are based on the SEA directive (Directive 2001/42/EC), the SEA guide for cohesion policy 2007 – 2013 and they also take into account national guidelines in the countries involved in the CBC.

The objective of the AT-SK CBC strategic document is creating an attractive, vital region recognized on European level. It could be realized with help of focusing to knowledge economy achievable through specific priorities, such as: strengthening cooperation between key stakeholders of economic and social development in the region, increasing the competitiveness by respecting the principles of sustainable development and transferring knowledge and know-how to the region. In order to assist in promoting these aims, the SEA is focused on determining and analyzing issues need to be considered during elaboration of the programming document, evaluating specific objectives of the document and proposing recommendations and indicators to minimize the long-term cumulative effects on environment as an outcome of projects implemented under the CBC.

During the SEA process, we identified key environmental issues and concerns that should be considered, assessed linkages and impacts between objectives and strategies of the document, evaluated proposed indicators to monitor impact and effectiveness of projects, compiled the environmental report, and finally provided the report for consultation. From methodological point of view, these steps involved top-down approaches to identify and to evaluate EU and national level policies and strategic documents. Through their objectives they provided guidelines for assessment of the regional scale activities addressed in the programming document. Top-down approaches are also followed in evaluating the environmental issues and concerns. This is based on national documents of Austria and Slovakia including reports on the state of the environment. Evaluation of environmental issues is based on the areas suggested by the SEA directive and guiding documents and on their relevance to regions involved in the CBC. The identified issues are air and climate, water, soil, biodiversity, fauna and flora, landscape and cultural heritage. The identified areas of environmental concerns are noise, energy efficiency and renewable energy, waste, adaptation to climate change and transportation. Evaluation of environmental issues and concerns are conducted through outlining the relevant data regarding to the current state of environment in the region. It also identifies the evolution of changes that occurred in the last decades and also anticipated changes. Identified trends in the region represent a basis for the evaluation of impacts of the



outlined priorities and actions in short and long-term period. Bottom-up approaches in the assessment are ensured through the involvement of regional and local development documents and data, and also through consultations with local experts.

The AT-SK CBC programming document covers some important issues regarding to sustainable development and environmental protection. The SWOT analysis correctly identifies major areas for the program interventions which represent the core part of the document. The proposed objectives are consistent with identified priorities and are in accordance with the needs and opportunities of the cross-border region. The evaluation report for SEA outlines expected environmental impacts of potential project activities conducted under the CBC by seeing environment as a cross-cutting issue that may be impacted on diverse scales with different levels of seriousness. It also takes into account diverse opportunities to minimize negative effects on environment.

From environmental point of view, the expected results of this strategy will probably provide scattered initiatives focused different principles of sustainable development. Document incorporates principles of environmental friendly and sustainable development into their priorities and also identifies instruments for their achieving. However, the environmental issues are addressed in a very general way. It captures only environmental protection and biodiversity conservation, the impacts of options such as flood protection and adaptation to climate change, soil and water conservation could be discussed on more detailed level. Assessing of priorities focused on social capital and educational activities is complicated; however these activities have a huge potential in the region and competent approaches can be based on rich experiences of the Austrian partners. It will be beneficial, if priorities such as RD-cooperation and business innovation, which are consistent with national strategies, will be further elaborated. Attention must be spending to link them with other strategic goals and with sustainable development issues. This requires investing to networking activities representing a basis for successful regional development; however they are not always creating measurable outcomes (in quantitative terms). The partnership and networking initiatives need to be linked with already existing networks from previous programming period of CBC.

In order to minimize negative impacts on the environment, principles of sustainability, as they presented in the strategic document and included in outcomes of SEA, will form a principle that should be applied as a basic criteria for selection of projects. In case of the measures targeted towards landscape planning, the adopted planning documents need to be taken into consideration. Moreover, for all planned activities that may have direct or indirect negative impact on environment environmental should be work out impact assessment EIA based on the criteria defined by national legislation. Furthermore, during planning of industrial processes in supported projects attention must be spend to selection of the best available technologies promoting environmental protection, minimizing negative impact on components of environment including the analyzed environmental issues and improving the analyzed areas on environmental concerns.

The evaluation report for SEA outlines the list of indicators to monitor environmental impacts of the policies, plans, and projects and they need to be regarded as a part of overall monitoring and reporting framework. This includes monitoring of risks factors and assessing causes and consequences of environmental quality in the region. From the viewpoint of non-technical measures, key importance has promotion of education activities concerning to nature protection and conservation of natural wealth, promotion of partnerships between representatives of industry and authorities for protection and monitoring of environment and cultural heritage including municipalities with aim to coordinate interests of various participants in early stages of projects preparing. It can contribute to



extension of positive consequences also to spheres, which directly are not part of a project and can also lead to stimulating of economic activities in the region.

In the programming document proposed indicators extension recommended by indicators for monitoring impacts of key environmental issues and concerns that include monitoring negative impacts of development initiatives on population through increased level of noise, air pollution, changes in water quality, land-use change and impacts on biodiversity. But the suggested list of indicators also creates opportunities to monitor achievements of the projects by monitoring changes in renewable energy production, recycling and accessibility of developed services. We identified these indicators as the crucial source of information on potential negative impacts of development initiatives especially regard to human health.

The major weakness of the strategic document is the lack of sufficient interest spent on ensuring efficiency and transparency of the listed potential interventions. To minimize these potential negative criteria for selection of projects have to be based on transparent and objective criteria that define the supported activities in a way enhancing the region's opportunities on the project scale.

During implementation of the programme, it is possible to expect mainly positive direct and indirect impacts on environment and quality of life in the region mainly in following areas:

- Improvement, development and increase of the quality of shared management systems of environmental conservation, protection of nature (including habitat protection), minimizing air and water pollution and monitoring and assessment of impacts of development activities based on the cooperation of stakeholders in the involved region;
- Support of penetration of clean technologies and technologies minimizing the impact of industrial and domestic processes on environment and furthermore support of educational and research activities in order to create opportunities for shared learning and knowledge dissemination;
- Direct impacts on fauna, flora, soil, land-use change and management, property, water quality and hydrology, air quality, climate change, change in noise levels, landscape protection, cultural heritage and interaction between these components;
- Address emerging environmental issues and concerns including climate change adaptation, risk management and emergency preparedness
- As regards impacts on human health, the program will have indirect positive effects on improvement of major death effects in the region (heart diseases, cancer and related diseases linked to the quality of environment), due to the above-discussed outcomes.

The objective of the programme is in coherence with other relevant documents both at national and EU level. Major impact of the program in relation to other documents is given by improving cross-border cooperation, interaction between the key stakeholders, addressing the major issues and challenges in order to enhance the quality of life in the region, which can serve a basis for larger-scale national and international activities and increasing efficiency of other EU funded initiatives.



2. REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE AUSTRIAN-SLOVAK BORDER REGION

2.1 General characteristics and geography

The Austrian-Slovak border region is divided into three distinct spatial-functional areas:

- The northern part of the region (Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Weinviertel, Trnava) is predominantly agricultural and lacks cross-border transportation links due to the natural barrier of the river March/Morava.
- The agglomeration axis Vienna-Bratislava is the core of the entire border region. Vienna and Bratislava jointly have a population of over 2 million inhabitants and are the major centres of the region with respect to the number of inhabitants, jobs and infrastructure and industrial zones.
- The southern parts of the region (Wiener Umland-Südteil, Nordburgenland the city of Bratislava and the southern parts of the region of Bratislava) belong to the development triangle Vienna-Bratislava-Győr and have a well-developed cross-border transportation infrastructure and are attractive as business locations. This is one of the most dynamic areas within the joint Austrian-Slovak border region.

The border region is characterised by large urban-rural disparities. Both capital regions, Vienna and Bratislava are close to areas at extreme peripheral locations (e.g. Weinviertel, northern parts of the districts of Bratislava and Trnava).

Approximately 4.5 million inhabitants, thereof 2.3 million women, lived in the Austrian-Slovak border region in 2004. Due to the fact that both capitals are situated in the joint region these are the regions in which the population is concentrated in both countries: one-third of Austrians and nearly one-fifth of Slovaks live on only about 10% (Austria) and 11% (Slovakia) of the respective country's territory.

Table 1: **Area, inhabitants and population density**

	Area in km ²	Inhabitants 2004		Density (inh./km ²)
		Total	Women	
Austria (border region)	22,086	3,376,737	1,746,404	152.9
Slovak Republic (border region)	6,199	1,154,330	600,589	186.2
Border region – total	28,285	4,531,067	2,346,993	160.2

Source: EUROSTAT

On a large-scale perspective, the Austrian-Slovak border area is where three large European landscapes merge. The Alps converge in this region with the Leitha Mountains and curve in a great arc to the Carpathians (Hundsheimer Berg, Malé Karpaty). Both mountain ranges converge here with the lowlands of the Little Hungarian Plain. These factors make for a highly varied landscape on both sides of the border.

This region is crossed by major rivers which flow into the Danube river system that runs from west to east. The river systems are not only shaping the formation of the landscape, because of their



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unique flora and fauna and wetlands (Thaya, March/Morava, Danube) some of them are highly protected areas (national parks).

The Neusiedler See, Europe's only steppe lake is another most important landscape factor of this region. In 1993 the national park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel was established and covers an area of about 20,000 hectares.

2.2 Demography

The demographic structure and trends are affected by the regional structure of the border region with high concentration of population in the urban areas and on the opposite side the development of the rural regions. From these structural features the following most important demographic trends can be derived for the border region:

- increasing suburbanization processes in the urban areas
- dynamic population growth
- ageing population as consequence of overall demographic change like decreasing fertility rates, increasing life expectancy
- increasing population due to migration – a special issue in urban areas

The immediate vicinity of the two capitals of Vienna and Bratislava has an enormous population potential within a rather "confined" space. In the period 1991-2001 the population trends are very dynamic in the Austrian part, especially in the adjacent regions to Vienna. In the Slovak part of the border region population decreased.

The subsequent period from 2001 to 2004/2005 marked a moderate continuation of this trend. In this period the Austrian part of the region has reported again a slight growth, the Slovak part of the region remained stable.

Table 2: Population structure in 2004 and population trend 1995-2004 (EUROSTAT)

Regional unit	Population trend (change in %)			
	1995-2004		2001-2004	
Nuts III region	Total	Women	Total	Women
Austria – Border region	5.3	-	3.0	2.6
Slovak – Border region	-1.2	-	0.3	0.3
Border – region total	3.1	-	2.1	1.8
Austria	2.8	-	1.6	1.4
Slovak Republic	0.2	-	0.0	0.1

Source: EUROSTAT



2.3 Economic structure and development

2.3.1 Level of economic activities

The level of economic activities and development of the Austrian-Slovak border region is characterised by:

- pronounced regional differences in prosperity that become manifest in significant urban-rural disparities
- in the prosperity slope from the Austrian to the Slovak border region
- different speed of the economic growth (growth rates, number of jobs, structural changes)

While the gross regional product per inhabitant is between 63.1% and 172.9% of the EU average on the Austrian side of the border, in the Slovak border region it attains rates of between 51.0% and 115.4% (sources of data – Eurostat). Nevertheless, the region as a whole has reported a dynamic growth in the previous years (2000-2003) of 7.2%. Moreover, it has a unique economic potential to even increase its economic growth rate, which would bring it to the position of one of the rapidly growing regions of Europe.

Table 3: Level of economic development (GDP (PPS)/Inhabitant)

Regional unit	GDP (PPS) per capita 2003	GDP (PPS) per capita 2000-2003
Nuts III region	Index EU25= 100	In %
Austria – Border region	146.8	3.4
Slovak Republic – Border region	86.5	19.9
Border region total	127.4	7.2
Austria	120.9	4.1
Slovak Republic	52.0	18.6
EU25	100.0	8.1

Source: Eurostat

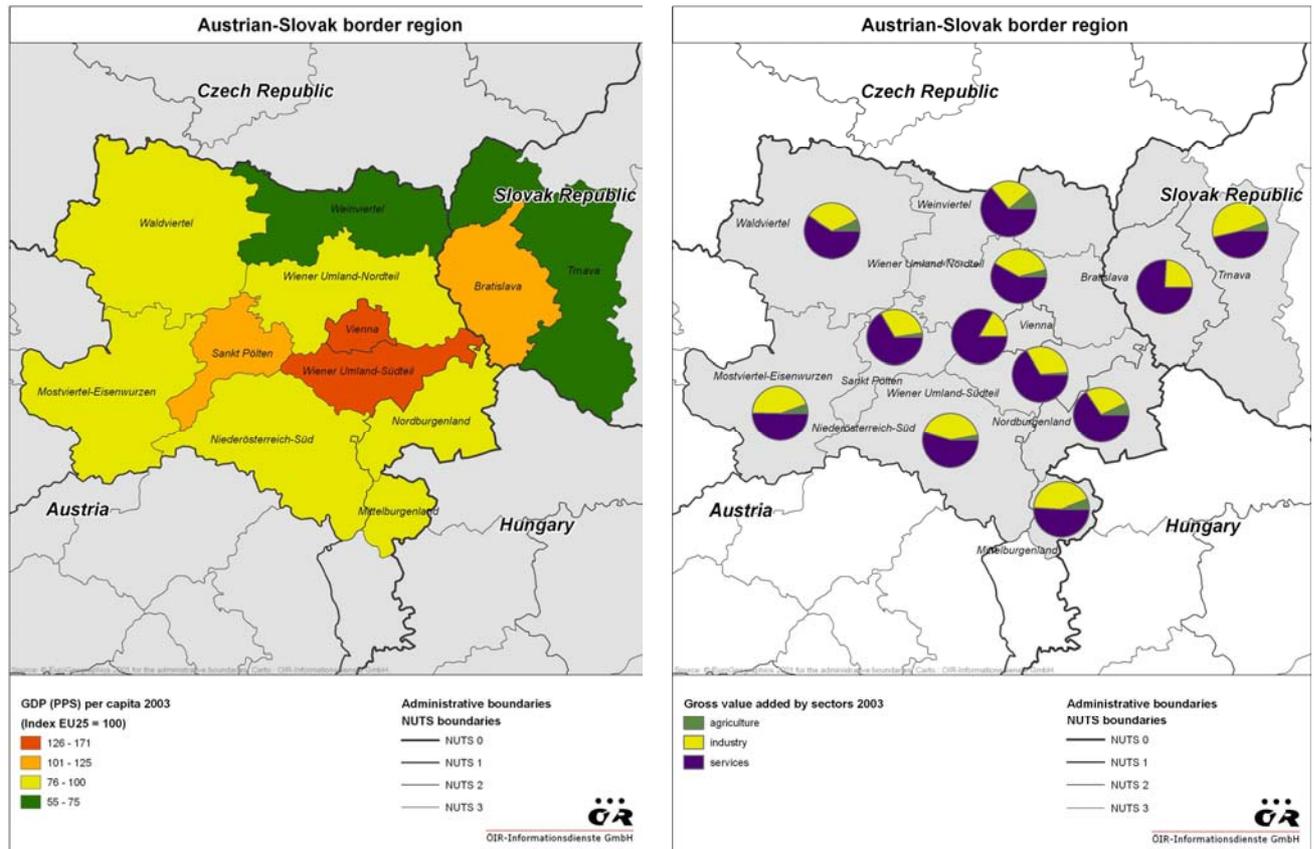
The economically most developed regions are the urban regions Wien (172.9%), Wiener Umland-Südteil (131.1%) and Bratislava (115.4%), which reach visibly higher values than national averages. These regions create a vital economic centres of the border region and actually feature among the economically most powerful regions both on the national and on the European level.



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Map 2: GDP level 2003



2.3.2 Economic structure

The heterogeneous economic structure of the Austrian-Slovak border regions is basically dominated by the urban agglomerations of Vienna and Bratislava, which constitute the centres of economic activity and employment in the entire region. The main characteristics of the region in terms of economic structures are:

- a higher dependency on the urban economies (dynamic, jobs, commuting)
- high shares of the tertiary sector with an important industrial base and a dynamic industrial development caused by foreign direct investment and new orientation
- agriculture as an important economic base in some sub-areas (e.g. Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Weinviertel, Nordburgenland, Southern part of Bratislava and Trnava region)

Being the national capitals, both cities also serve as the administrative centres of the two countries. Consequently, the share of public services is relatively high in both of these cities and consequently regions.

The **secondary sector** assumes a relatively important role in most of the areas of the border region in terms of economic activity and employment. The consumer goods industry, chemical industry, food and machine industry has been dominant in the economic centres, some parts of the surrounding regions also boast a high share of industrial and commercial activity. Moreover, the



construction industry has been playing a relatively important and increasing role in the whole region. The urban industrial structures are liable an ongoing restructuring process. With new orientations (e.g. biotech) on the one hand and a very attractive policy for new (foreign) investments the regions counteract the negative consequences of reindustrialisation.

Table 4: **Economic structure of the Austrian-Slovak border region – gross value added by sectors**

Regional unit	Total in Mio. EUR	Agri- culture	Share of gross value added in %			
			Manufacturing/Production of physical goods		Services	
Nuts III region			Total	Construction	Total	Tourism
Austria – Border region	74,315	1.1	20.4	-	78.5	-
Slovak – Border region	9,406	2.4	31.1	-	66.5	-
Border region total	83,721	1.2	21.6	-	77.1	-
Austria	204,285	1.9	30.1	7.7	68.0	4.5
Slovak Republic	26,397	4.5	35.0	6.1	60.5	1.5

Source: EUROSTAT

Although standardised activities have increasingly been relocated to peripheral regions in the past few years, production lines with a low technological content still play a predominant role in the urban economic structure. For years, this has been giving rise to structural problems and steadily declining employment. Small and medium-sized enterprises predominate in the rural areas of the Austrian border region. Industry is concentrated in a few locations.

Based on a broad production-oriented service industry, the authorities have been promoting the establishment and expansion of commercial and industrial centres, as well as innovation and technology centres in a number of locations. These initiatives aim at enhancing the region's appeal as a commercial and industrial location, and at promoting the expansion of existing enterprises as well as the establishment of new enterprises in the respective areas.

The Slovak border region exhibits a high above average concentration of industry within the Republic of Slovakia. The automotive industry, in particular, has grown markedly in this area over the past few years. In the wake of restructuring and modernisation measures, industrial employment has been decreased substantially in the Slovak border region since the beginning of the 1990s. Unlike Austria, the Slovak secondary sector is characterised by a predominance of medium-sized and large enterprises. SMEs have only just started to emerge. SMEs cope with long-lasting problems of competitiveness on the Slovak market and still represent a limited share of the industrial sector.

The industry remains an important sector of the economy of the border region. The main challenges for the industrial structure and development in the border region result from:

- the attractive location advantages (industrial tradition, high level of qualification, regional specialisation...)
- access to highly developed educational and research infrastructure
- sectoral, institutional and regional co-operation structures (e.g. cluster)
- distinct speed of industrial development, process of modernisation process and structural changes



- distinct level of income/wages and productivity
- differences in the size of enterprises

In large parts of the border region, **agriculture** still constitutes an important pillar of the regional economic structure since it provides employment for still considerable number of people. The concentration on agriculture on both sides of the border is more pronounced than the respective national averages.

The **tertiary sector** plays the predominant role in the whole border region. In the last years the expansion of the service sector had strong influence on the overall development of employment. The increasing number of jobs was the result of this structural change. The service sector is dominated by jobs for women; therefore the expansion has very positive effects on female employment.

During the last decade, the service sector has significantly improved and has played an indispensable role in the economic environment of the Slovak border region. Most types of services (private, public) have been expanded, partially also due to the involvement of SMEs. In the 2001-2004 national comparison, the employment share in the service sector has rapidly increased from 57% in 2001 to 69% in 2004.

The border region is one of the most attractive destinations of European and international importance for foreign as well as domestic tourists. The attractiveness of the region reflects the wide range of products and services accompanied with well developed tourist infrastructure.

Concerning the tourism branch in the border region distinct structural differences and can be identified:

- high regional and/or regional concentration of tourism (cities, health resorts, summer season)
- disparities in quantity and quality of the tourist supply (urban – rural, regions with high tourism intensity – less developed regions)
- missing cross border destination marketing and management

In the reporting year 2004/05, the Austrian border region recorded a total of roughly 12.3 million overnight stays. The Slovak border area in the past few years, tourism increased markedly. Apart from mass tourism, the authorities have been making an increasing effort to promote quality tourism (e.g. culture tourism, vacations on farms, etc.).

There are two visible trends in the development of tourism sector in the region that evolved over the years. The prevailing one is oriented on the tourism in the “urban” areas and reaches the level of 75% of the overall number of the overnight stays with considerable share of foreign tourists. The city of Vienna and the city of Bratislava represent the key centres. On the other hand, there are destinations with strong focus on recreation, excursion and health tourism playing a major role in the rural regions and for domestic tourism.



2.4 Labour market

Approximately 1.9 million persons are employed in the border region, which represents a significant share of the national labour markets. Naturally, the centres of economic activities provide the most employment opportunities for inhabitants of the regions, hence influencing also the labour market of the surrounding regions. The situation can be illustrated by the fact that about 60% of the working persons had in 2004 their job in one of the capitals, which implies very intensive commuting to from the surrounding regions (districts) to the employment centres.

The labour market in the border region is characterised by the following issues:

- high concentration of jobs in the urban areas
- lacking job opportunities in the rural regions
- intensive commuting relationships (intraregional, cross-border)
- pronounced disparities in wage levels
- increasing unemployment, high share of unemployed persons with problematic background (long-term, low qualification, ...)

2.4.1 Employment: structure and trends

Since the early nineties, the labour market in the Austrian border region has registered a very dynamic development, albeit with substantial differences within the border region (see map 3). Above-average expansion of employment in this region was clearly attributable to the tertiary sector. New jobs were created in tourism (e.g. Vienna airport) and in trade (shopping malls, warehouses). In public services, trends in rural and urban regions differed remarkably. Especially in the regional centres, job growth in the health sector (hospitals, social care institutions) has led to a rise in employment since the late eighties. This positive trend in services also had a positive impact on female employment. This expansion, however, was due largely to the creation of additional part-time jobs. This trend seemed to have continued in most of the regions.

In manufacturing, highly divergent trends were recorded. The largest number of jobs was lost in industries that underwent restructuring, such as the food, beverages and tobacco industries, while additional jobs were created in the chemical industry, in the construction industry and related industries (wood processing and wood working). The positive development in the secondary sector benefited mostly men.

In Slovakia, the political transition was soon followed by a rapid reform of the labour market structures that prevailed under state socialism, which meant above all a drastic decline in primary and secondary sector employment. The Bratislava region, however, was affected by this process only to a relatively minor extent.

While the decline in employment since the early nineties amounted to about 20% for all of Slovakia, job losses in the Bratislava region were clearly below the national average as less dramatic layoffs of employees in the production sector were compensated by rapidly expanding employment in the tertiary sector. In 1990s in the Trnava region, however, the process of de-industrialisation was less successful. During last three years, the enhancement of the situation was supported by the development of automotive industry in the region. Since 1999, the situation on the labour market



has rapidly improved in both Slovak regions and has considerably exceeded the national average (2.9%). In 2004, women accounted for 41.4% of employed persons in Slovakia.

Map 3: **Employment trends and employment structure (based on national data)**

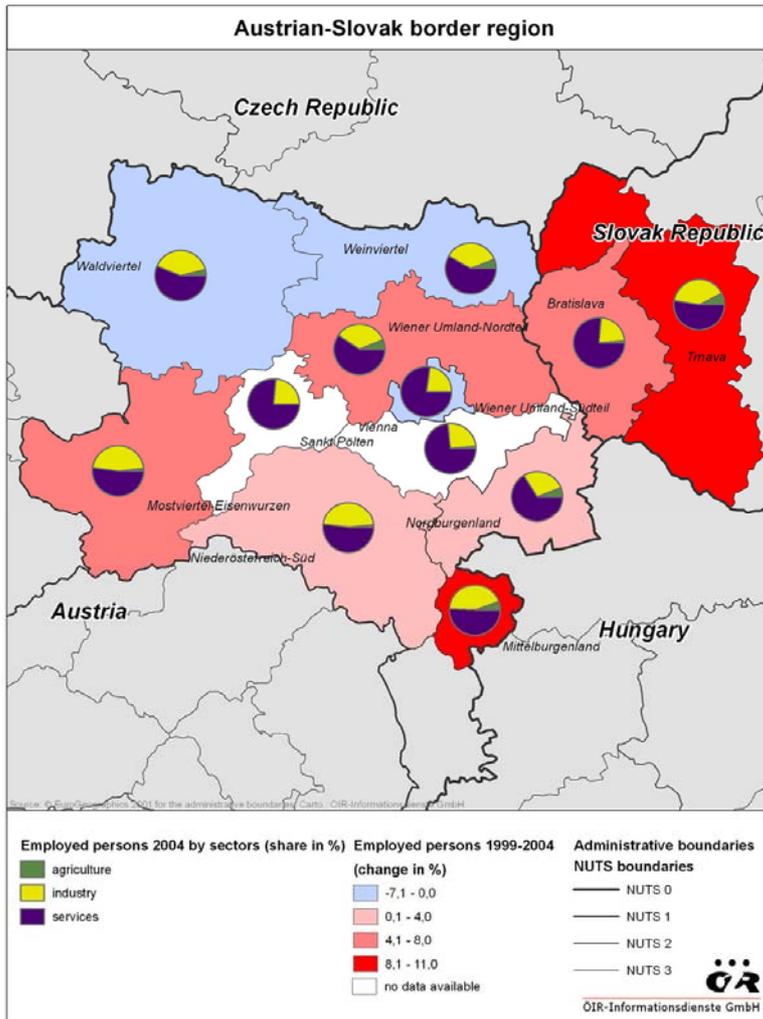


Table 5: **Employment trends in the Austrian-Slovak border region**

	Austrian border region	Slovak border region	Border region total	Austria	Slovak Republic
Dependent employees absolute '03	1,251,200	585,740	1,836,940	4,145,500	2,062,690
change 1999-2003 in %	0.9	4.9	2.1	1.5	0.0

Source: EUROSTAT

2.4.2 Unemployment

The level and structure of unemployment is developing in line with the business/economic cycle, the regional economic structures and changes. Therefore within the border region very different development processes can be observed during the last years.



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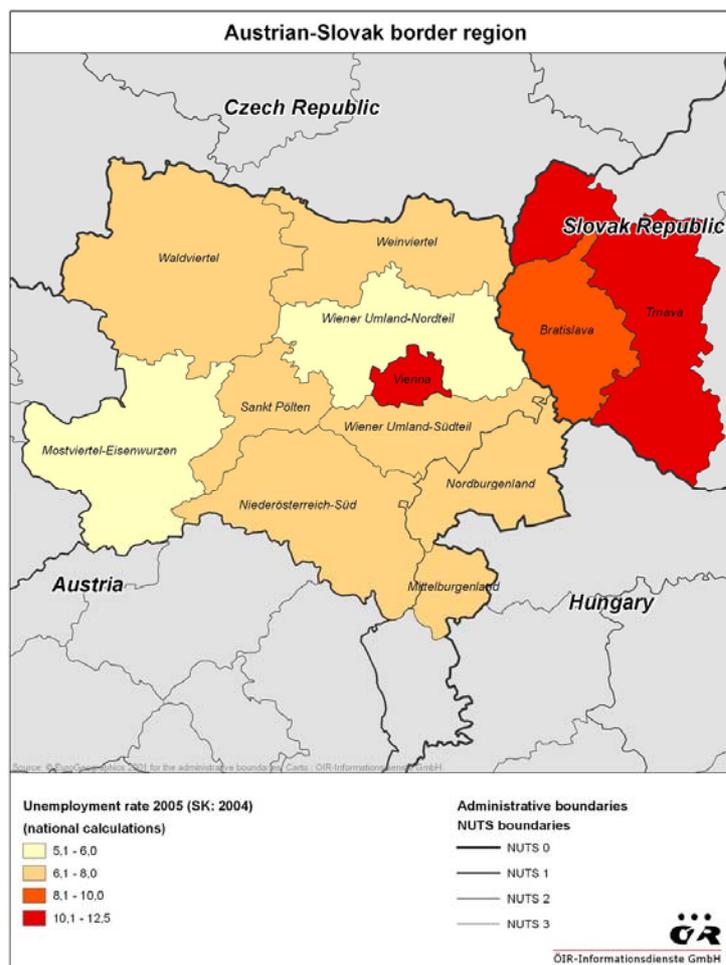
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Using the LFS-data (EUROSTAT) in the border region about 150,000 people were unemployed in 2004, about 57% are living in the Austrian border region. The unemployment rate represents 8.3% (border region Austria 7.3%, border region Slovakia 10.3%). The unemployment trend does not run the same direction. In the period 2000 – 2004 the number of unemployed people increased very strong in the Austrian border region, while on the Slovak side the number of unemployed people declined.

In Austria the structure of unemployment in the rural areas is characterised by a large share of low-skilled workers and a disproportionate share of persons previously employed in production jobs. Remarkable differences by sex have to be noted: Male unemployment has been increasing even stronger in this period than female unemployment. A large number of the unemployed belong to labour market problem groups and are affected by social or geographical mobility restrictions. They generally have only low skills.

Compared with the Slovak average (18.1% in 2004) in the border region the unemployment rate based on registered data is low. Nevertheless the rise in unemployment since 1999 has continued and, as a result of restructuring measures, has still affected even large parts of the skilled workforce. A large share of the unemployed comes from production jobs. The share of skilled workers is above the average.

Map 4: **Unemployment rate** (based on national registered data)





2.4.3 Assessment of the Cross-Border Labour Market

During the last 10 years cross-border labour market relations in the border region gained an entirely new quality. The typical sign of the labour market is one way economic migration – workers from Slovakia, mostly from the area around Bratislava, used the opportunity to find employment in nearby Niederösterreich, Burgenland and Vienna. In 2005 about 7,300 Slovak people were employed in Austria (Source: Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich). Parallel to labour migration, the number of daily and weekly commuters from Slovakia to Austria increased. Workers from Slovakia are employed in just a few segments of the Austrian labour market, primarily in hotels and restaurants, in social and public services, and in agriculture and forestry.

Although the EU accession in May 2004 theoretically allowed the Slovak citizens to enter the Western Europe labour market without working permission, Austria as one of most EU15 countries introduced transitional provisions to limit free movement of labour for up to 7 years (2+3+2 years) and it will not open its labour market to new EU Member States, including Slovakia. Two years after accession the transitional provisions towards Slovakia are still being applied.

From the 1st of May 2006, the second phase of the transitional period starts. In any event, the Accession Treaty provides that Member States that decide to lift restrictions on the 1st of May 2006 will have, throughout the remainder of the transitional period, the possibility to reintroduce restrictions using the safeguard procedure set out in the Accession Treaty, should they undergo or foresee disturbances on their labour markets. In April 2006 Austria replaced those limitations by additional three years. With this extension, the free movement of labour force can be realised by 2010.

It can be expected that the number of employed persons and commuters from Slovakia to Austria will remain stable till the removal of the restrictions, however after opening the Austrian labour market the number can increase.

2.5 Innovation system – education, R&D

The innovation system in the border region can be characterised in the following way.

- The region is the national centres of research and development activities and potential
- There is a high concentration of educational and research institutions and employment
- Different levels and structure of expenditure for R& D on national level

The main indicator gross domestic expenditure for R&D shows a very low level of gross domestic expenditure for R&D in % of the GDP in Slovakia, and a percentage above the EU level for Austria. While the structure of expenditure in Slovakia is dominated by the enterprises and the state, in Austria the shares of enterprises and the universities are significantly higher.

In both regions around the two capitals, the levels of education and training are above the respective national average. The professional structure of Vienna shows a large proportion of employees with higher education, and the share of self-employed individuals is twice as high as the overall Austrian average, owing to the concentration of sciences and art as well as legal and business consultancy services in the capital. Bratislava has a high level of education, too, compared to the national average. Almost 21% of Bratislava residents aged over 15 have an university degree while



the national average is only 7.8%. Both capitals Vienna and Bratislava are seats of top-ranking institutions of education and research, which makes them the clear centres of that sector in their respective countries. Both border regions are the focal point of science and research within their national contexts.

The Slovak Academy of Sciences has its main seat in Bratislava too and maintains 45 of its 54 institutes in this city. The non-university research sector is marked by a number of excellent institutions (which are also involved in political consulting) with roots in the strong civil society sphere of Slovakia. All in all, there are 169 research institutions (50.5% of all Slovak research units) with more than 12,300 employees in the Bratislava region. 151 of these institutions with more than 10,600 employees are located in Bratislava alone.

45.2% of all research units in Austria are situated in Vienna, owing, in particular, to the high concentration of research institutions in the public sector and co-operation projects ("other research facilities"), more than half of which are located in Vienna. By contrast, this exceptionally high share of non-industrial research has a percentage of 17.5% of private, industry-related research which, thus, corresponds more closely to the overall distribution of industrial enterprises in Austria in terms of both location and specialisation.

As national data show there are distinct lacks in the access to the results of research and development activities for SMEs. Beside the universities and colleges, other public and private research institutes the regional innovation and technology centres are offering special infrastructure for (new) innovative firms and know-how transfer activities. In the last years some of these institutions running this centres have also developed cross border activities. (e.g. ECO plus, WIBAG, WWFF)

2.6 Infrastructure – transport, technical infrastructure

2.6.1 Transport and infrastructure

The transport infrastructure in the Austrian-Slovak border region is determined by:

- the degree to which the entire border region is connected to the European high-speed network,
- the area's accessibility in inter- and intra-regional terms
- lack of the connections in some areas (missing border crossings across river March/Morava)
- inner-urban and agglomeration traffic problems

Within the border region there are large differences in terms of inter- and intra-regional accessibility. Whereas the Vienna/Bratislava area and the trilateral border area of Slovakia/Austria/Hungary are internally linked both by roads and railways, though with qualitative shortcomings in infrastructure and transport organisation, these links are inadequately developed in large parts of the area along the border further to the north, which is mainly due to the peripheral location of this area and the barrier formed by the river March/Morava.

In an interregional and intra-regional context, the two large cities are each a central national hub within the transport network (railway, road, air and water transport). If viewed from an overall cross-border perspective, the main traffic axes of the two countries are symmetrical, because both



Vienna and Bratislava are at an extreme peripheral position within their respective national territories, whereas within the border region they hold a central position and the intra-regional traffic flows are directed towards these centres.

Up to now, the limits of the existing infrastructure have become evident in the wake of the increasing traffic flows along the east-west and north-south axes. The development of the cross-border transportation network has failed to keep pace with the dynamic development of the region. Among other things, the road connecting Vienna and Bratislava is a bottleneck for the flow of west/east traffic (detour for road freight traffic, road travels through Hainburg, low capacity of the border crossing Berg/Petržalka). This gap is planned to be closed, when the highway connecting the A4 motorway linking Vienna and Budapest to the southern bypass of Kittsee and the highway border crossing Kittsee/Jarovce will open for traffic.

Within the agglomerations on both sides of the border, the high degree of integration of the cities and their surroundings causes traffic congestion on the roads that have to cope with regional as well as national and international traffic flows.

Of the European transport corridors defined in the Helsinki Agreement, corridors IV and Va have direct links to the region. In the future, the regional transport routes must be oriented on the major international routes in order to achieve a harmonised transport network. Particularly relevant in the co-operation area are the following TEN-T projects:

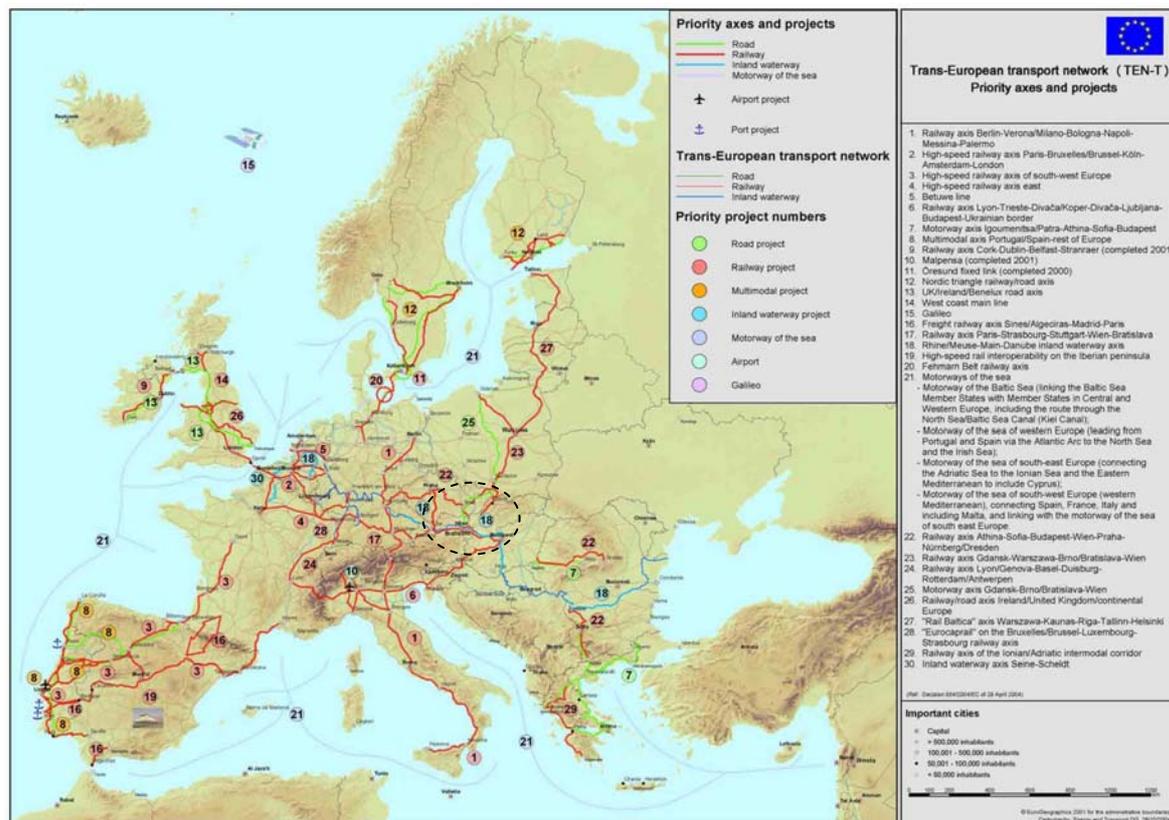
- 18 Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway
- 22 Railway axis Athina-Sofia-Budapest-Wien-Praha-Nürnberg-Dresden
- 23 Railway axis Gdansk-Warszawa-Brno/Bratislava-Wien
- 25 Motorway axis Gdansk-Brno/Bratislava –Wien
- 17 Railway axis Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Wien-Bratislava



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Map 5: Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)



Concerning the **roads** the main problems in the region are:

- The northern part of the Austrian border region, however, is largely undeveloped as regards motorway infrastructure. The main roads between Vienna and this area are national roads.
- Compared to other parts of the country, southern Slovakia (Šamorín, Dunajská Streda) is still somewhat behind in terms of road infrastructure, but there are plans to build a "Southern Road Line".
- Transport capacities on the road network outside of Bratislava are sufficient. The access roads into and the passage roads through Bratislava, however, pose certain problems
- In the northern part of the border region there is no border crossing possibility for the international traffic.

The connecting cross-border **railway** lines were largely neglected in the past and sometimes even dismantled. Given the expected increase in importance, some lines like the Parndorf-Kittsee-Bratislava line has been restored, and a restoration of the former Bratislava line (Vienna-Hainburg-Bratislava) appears to be an interesting option for the future. Although railway capacities, in general, may be considered sufficient, there is still a need for certain modernisation measures

- the further improvement of the railway connection between Vienna and Bratislava
- the connection of the railway system to the urban transport systems
- the modernisation of the rolling stock, stations,
- improving the links between railway system and air transport (connection to the airports)



- to improve the attractiveness of the railway (for cross border commuting)

As an international route of transport the **Danube** plays an important role in the border region. The geographical potential for transport was increased considerably with the opening of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal and the extension of the Gabčíkovo storage lake. In the period 2000 – 2005 the freight transport on the Danube (measured at Hainburg) increased from 7.1 Mio. tons to 9.0 Mio. t.

The ports of both Vienna and Bratislava are designed to fulfil vital functions in handling cross-border freight traffic and in removing freight traffic from roads in the process of encouraging and expanding combined modes of transport. The waterway Danube is still important for tourist use connecting 4 European capitals and their surroundings. With the “Twin city liner” connecting the cities of Bratislava and Vienna a new attraction started to operate on 1 June 2006.

Given the mounting levels of freight transport, expanding the **combined modes of transport** and intensifying cooperation of the different transport operators (road, railway and water-borne transport, in particular) is going to be of vital importance in the region. The extension of freight terminals and the handling of logistical tasks by the ports are main activities in this context.

In the Austrian-Slovak border region two international **airports** are situated in immediate vicinity of each other in the border region. The Vienna-Schwechat airport has become one of the major traffic hubs between Western and Eastern Europe as well as for destinations to the Middle East. In 2005 15.89 Mio. passengers were counted.

Passenger frequency at the Bratislava-Ivanka airport, by comparison, is much lower. However, this airport has reported a significant increase in the number of transported passengers in last five years. In the period 1999 to 2005 the number of passengers (excl. transit) increased by 21% and the volume of cargo rose by 44.2%, what finally improved the Bratislava airport importance in the region. Recent trends, however, indicate that there is a considerable potential for synergy between these two airports and that Bratislava-Ivanka is already taking on a certain relief function for Vienna-Schwechat. An expansion of public feeding lines, such as the gradual expansion of the Bratislava line (express line from Vienna's city centre to the airport, enhancing existing services to Wolfsthal and establishing a connection to the Kittsee-Bratislava route), is also being discussed in this context. Furthermore, the Ivanka international airport in Bratislava is to be modernised and better integrated into the inner-regional public transport system.

As a result of long-standing cooperation, a number of cross-border **cycling routes** were established in the trilateral region between Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. The cycling route along the March/Morava and the international Danube cycling route are of particular importance for tourism in the Austro-Slovak border region. Both on the Austrian and the Slovak side of the border, various side routes were established (e.g., in Slovakia, a route to the Carpathians, Morava Cycling Rote) to add to the Danube route and make it even more attractive for tourists. Plans for a further expansion of the cycling routes network (in co-operation with Hungary) are under way; these also include a further integration of national nature protection areas (the Danube wetlands, Neusiedlersee, the March/Morava wetlands, Malé Karpaty, etc.).



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2.6.2 Public utilities infrastructure

The public utilities infrastructure in the region is marked by a considerable difference in quality on the two sides of the border. While a high infrastructure level in the fields of water supply, wastewater management and waste management has been observed throughout the Austrian part of the region, there has been and is still a lot to be done on the Slovak side to ensure and improve the quality of these services. These basic facilities, as well as qualitative improvements in this sector are among the fundamental prerequisites for enhancing the appeal of the location and for initiating successful strategies to attract companies to the region.

Availability and treatment of groundwater are considered major problem areas. Long-term solutions have to be found here to counter pollution and drops in groundwater levels both on the Austrian side (especially in Marchfeld region along the March/Morava) and on the Slovak side (in the area between Trnava, Bratislava and the Danube).

2.6.3 Power supply

The border region between Austria and Slovakia is rich in watercourses, and these ample water supplies are used extensively for power generation. It is not only the newly-erected hydroelectric power stations in Vienna and Gabčíkovo which contribute significantly to the power supply of the entire region. 13% of Vienna's power consumption is covered by hydroelectricity, for example. On the Slovak side, local power suppliers are only able to cover 20% of the power consumption of the Bratislava region, while additional electricity has to be imported. Further power suppliers in the region are the hydroelectric power stations of Kráľová and Madunice as well as the nuclear power station in Jaslovské Bohunice.

The high energy demand from households and the production sector gave rise to searching for and utilising other forms of energy. In recent years the sources based on renewable energy increases in the entire border region. The most used energy is the energy of rivers, the utilisation of wind energy and biomass has started in last few years. Solar energy is used minimally.

But not only the natural resources for producing renewable energy also a high level of experience and research expertise in this field is available in the region. As one example the European Centre for Renewable Energy (Güssing and Bruck an der Leitha) can be mentioned. Bratislava and the University of Mosonmagyaróvár are partners in that trilateral network and one of the main activity of this network – financed by INTERREG IIIA – is the establishment of a “master course on Renewable Energy in Central and Eastern Europe”.

2.6.4 Telecommunications

The telecommunications infrastructure in the entire Austrian-Slovak border region is being brought up to modern, quickly evolving standards at a very fast pace. A modern ground-based and non-ground-based telecommunications infrastructure is crucial to ensuring the competitive power of the entire region.

Border areas in both countries are covered by telephone network and mobile communication is provided by several mobile operators. The number of telephone subscribers to the terrestrial network in Slovakia is constantly decreasing, in period 2003-2004 it declined by 2,9%.



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The dynamic development in the sector of mobile telephony, however, lessens the urgency to expand the terrestrial telephone network. On the other hand, the DSL connections allowing internet access increased by 89% from 2003 to 2004.

2.7 Nature and environment

Nature and landscape protection

The Austrian-Slovak border region is characterised not only by the existence of two urban agglomerations, but also by a high share of natural particularities. The area situated directly at the border along the March/Morava river, tangentially to the two capitals, occupies a special position as a so-called "low wetland area". This area, which is extremely sensitive to ecological influences, was designated a landscape or nature protection area both in Austria and in Slovakia, so that only a limited scope of building activities is permitted there. The wetlands along the Danube from Vienna to the national border were designated a national park in 1996 and thus fall under the highest category of protection. Another cross-border national park was established on the eastern shore of Neusiedlersee and in the adjacent Seewinkel areas.

Beside national parks, nature reserves are among the most strictly protected areas in Austria. The majority of the protected areas in Austria, are protected landscape areas. These are to a large extent semi-natural areas with outstanding landscape features and a high recreational value. The protection's objective is to maintain the landscape's appearance and ensure recreation and tourism. The objective of the nature parks is to convey knowledge on nature, accordingly, central focus is placed on their educational and recreational value. Nature conservation is also given top priority in Slovakia. Schemes to protect the ecosystem in the Bratislava region stipulate three regional biocorridors (Danube, Malý Dunaj and March/Morava) as well as the landscape protection areas of Záhorie (along the March) and the Lower Carpathians/Malé Karpaty, where special attention is to be given to nature and landscape preservation in order to maintain their quality as recreation areas within easy reach of the city of Bratislava.

A coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation is set up under the title **Natura 2000**. The protected areas designated according to the Bird Directive are integrated into the Natura 2000 network. The EU Member States are establishing the conservation area network Natura 2000 based on two directives, one on bird protection (Bird Directive) and one the protection of habitats of flora and fauna (Habitat Directive). Natura 2000 aims to lastingly protect the habitats and animal and plant species of European significance mentioned in the Annexes of the Directives. In this context, the European Commission emphasises the essential role of spatial planning for the preservation of species diversity and sets out how spatial planning can contribute to both the preservation and sustainable management of ecosystems. Each Member state has designated relevant areas for each of these regions.



2.8 Socio-cultural aspects

Cultural diversity

The variety of cultural heritages in Europe can be regarded as having an inestimable value. Apart from the basic geographical factors, different cultural, political and economic development paths have shaped the current spatial structure of the EU. Different language and cultural areas, and different ways of life have developed in the different parts of Europe.

The Austrian-Slovak border region is not only characterized by a variety of landscapes, but also by a broad spectrum of languages and cultural identities. Beside the two official languages German and Slovak other languages are spoken (Hungarian, Croatian, Romanes) by the state-approved ethnic minorities. Thus making it the melting pot of the Germanic, the Slavic and the Indo-germanic cultures.

The rights of ethnic minorities are guaranteed by the constitution and ensure the minorities to maintain and develop their cultural heritage (language, culture, social life, etc.). The prevailing minorities in the region develop their culture and language in kindergartens, schools with the teaching language of their own. Cultural heritage is maintained by a intensive cultural life in form of concerts, theatres, museums, associations, institutions, libraries, radio and television, newspapers etc.

This variety of cultural areas and the joint history does not only determine the variety of languages but also expresses in settlement structures and the cultural heritage.

In the Slovak border regions of Bratislava and Trnava, the major population is Slovak (nationality); however, the largest minority is Hungarian (with higher proportion in the Trnava region), then followed by Roma, Czech, and German minorities. From the less numerous population Croatian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Russian, Bulgarian minorities are also represented. At the national level, in the period 2001-2004, there was reported a slight decrease in the number and proportion of Slovak population (to 85.7%) and Hungarian minority population (to 9.6%). The number and proportion of other less numerous minorities remained approximately at the same level.

Corresponding to the last census there were about 16,200 Burgenland-Croats living in Burgenland and about 2,500 in Vienna, about 10,700 Hungarians in Vienna and about 4,700 each in Burgenland and Lower Austria. About 1,800 Slovaks were counted in Vienna.

Social services and health care

In the future the framework for the development of social services (health, care of elderly people) will change because of the demographic change and the growing economic and political integration between the EU member states. In the context of cross border development, problems like the joint supply of the high level quality of medical care, the joint use of available capacities, the cooperation structures and possible joint cross border activities of public and private institutions in these fields are worth to discuss.

Different dimensions of cross border social services and social work will gain importance in the future: to secure the quality of supply, the financing of the health and care system, social rights and social policy frameworks on the EU level and in the member states. On the EU level a high-level reflection group is currently being established to examine the issues arising from increased patient



mobility and greater interaction between the national health systems. It can be expected, that the results of this consultation process will lead to a new framework also for trans-national cooperation, networking and competition.

The Austrian-Slovak border region is well equipped with medical infrastructure. The health and care system is organised in accordance with the national legal frameworks.

Since 2004 a large reform in the public health sector has been introduced in Slovakia. The reform brought a broad restructuring of the sector with the impact on the reduction of number of health care facilities and providers, a large scale of new legislation with the direct impact on the health care providers and patients. Most of health care services and interventions changed to fee-based services and legal relationship of clients, health care staff and health insurance institutions have significantly changed. In order to increase the efficiency of health care in Slovakia, optimising of network of health care providers is under the preparation.

The aims of the Austrian Health Structural Plan (Österreichischer Strukturplan – Gesundheit) are sufficiency, accessibility, high level of quality in all regions and efficient in an economic sense. The health infrastructure is traditionally concentrated on hospitals. The high degree of stays in hospitals and beds are indicators for this special situation. Considering the new challenges like changes of the age structure of the population, new regional and quality requirement and financial restrictions a new approach was formulated in the new Structural plan. One element of this new approach is the definition of regional supply areas, which have to fulfil different criteria regarding the infrastructure, the frequencies and the competencies.

2.9 Co-operation structures

Contacts and exchange at the personal, economical and political levels have a long tradition along this border region and offer an excellent starting position for establishing and intensifying relationships on a regular institutionalised basis. In this context, the ethnic minorities on both sides of the border could also play a major role (in Austria: Slovaks, Croats, Hungarians; in Slovakia: Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Croats etc.).

In the ongoing period the cross-border cooperation can be described along the following structure:

- Cooperation on a political and administrative level (e.g. CENTROPE)
- Cooperation on an institutional level (EuRegio)
- project based cooperation initiatives

For the regions and cities in the quadrangle, open borders and the enlargement of the EU have created new opportunities for cross-border cooperation and a common future. CENTROPE for example is a joint initiative of the Austrian federal provinces Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland, the Czech region South Moravia, the Slovak regions Bratislava and Trnava, the Hungarian counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas, as well as the cities of Bratislava, Brno, Eisenstadt, Győr, Sopron, St. Pölten, Szombathely and Trnava. Based on the Kittsee Declaration of 2003, these regions and cities work jointly on the creation of the Central European Region. This political dimension of the Central European Region finds its expression in the regular Political Conferences of the governors, county presidents and mayors of the regional capitals – the first encounter held in Kittsee in Sep-



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tember 2003 was followed by the St. Pölten conference in April 2005 and by the Viennese meeting in March 2006.

At the project level, experts from the fields of administration, research, consulting and civil society are working to deepen co-operative relations and to draft and develop common strategies, measures and activities. This work includes multilateral working groups as well as e.g. the expertise of business agencies.

The EUREGIO is one example for a co-operation on institutional level. The EUREGIO Region Weinviertel-South Moravia-West Slovakia, founded in 1997, consists of the districts of Gänserndorf, Hollabrunn, Korneuburg and Mistelbach. In Slovakia the member areas are the self-governing region of Bratislava (Bratislavský kraj) with the district of Malacky and the self-governing region of Trnava (Trnavský kraj) with the districts of Senica and Skalica in the West Slovak Region of Záhorie. In South Moravia there are the border districts of Břeclav, Hodonín, Znojmo and Brno-venkov. A total of 270 municipalities support the EUREGIO union in three regions inhabited by more than one million people. The EUREGIO acts as an platform for information and know-how transfer, as supporter for economic development and socio-cultural activities and as lobbyist for the specific regional concern. The thematic main fields of activities are location policy and economic and business development, labour market and qualification, environment – agriculture – environmental technology, tourism – wine – culture, youth – gender mainstreaming, regional and local partnership.

Beside the political and institutional platforms a large number of project aimed at the establishment of sustainable co-operation structures in the fields of regional and urban planning, transport, labour market, renewable energy, education and so on.



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3. SWOT-Analysis

3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

This comparison of the strengths and weaknesses reflects the differing overall structural conditions along the Austrian-Slovakian border and points out the opportunities and risks.

Located at the intersection of three countries, the southern parts of the border region (NUTS III regions Nordburgenland, Wiener Umland-Südteil, Wien, Bratislava and Trnava) have clear locational advantages with respect to overall settlement and economic structures, and thus show a positive dynamic of growth. The vicinity of the two capitals, Vienna and Bratislava, as well as the region's well-developed infrastructure plays an important role.

The situation is different within the border region:

- Urban agglomerations (Vienna – Bratislava)
- Rural regions with weak economic structures and poor cross-border accessibility (Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Weinviertel, Trnava)
- Dynamic regions with a manifold economic structure (Nordburgenland, Wiener Umland-Südteil, parts of Bratislava region)

The region has developed dynamically since the opening up of the borders — highly dynamic, advancing from a low level in Nordburgenland, which is also true for the Bratislava region in Slovakia (the strongest region in Slovakia).

Despite the progress achieved in catching up, the disparity in the levels of prosperity and development, with all of the positive and negative consequences this implies, poses the greatest challenge to the goal of establishing functioning cross-border relations for the future.



Overview Strengths and Weaknesses

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Economic development, regional competitiveness	<p>Central geographic position at the intersection of three countries (central part of Europe)</p> <p>Good accessibility along the central axes and location of two international airports</p> <p>Highly attractive locations for investment and development of economic activities</p> <p>Vienna and Bratislava – capitals, centres of politics, administration and economy</p> <p>Existing networks and cooperating structures in the regions, emerging clusters</p> <p>Dynamic economic activities/high economic growth</p> <p>Diversified economic structure, existing industrial traditions and positive climate for industrial activities</p> <p>SMEs: Orientation on sectors with higher added value, gradually involved in clusters/networks</p> <p>High level of demand for services/high share of tertiary sector (services) on GDP and high potential in the sector services</p> <p>Development of regional and specific priorities of tourism with partly high qualitative standards</p> <p>Growth of economic and export performance</p> <p>Dynamic development of foreign investment/ attractive locations for the foreign direct investments (in Slovakia)</p> <p>Concentration of education, research and development capacities and their close distance</p> <p>Existing cultural and social relationships and variety of languages (minorities)/Existing cultural and social links, cultural and ethnic diversity</p> <p>Multilateral governance structure CENTROPE</p>	<p>Landscape restrictions, protected areas as an obstacle (March/Morava) for economic development (e.g. transport infrastructure, industry)</p> <p>Inter- and intraregional disparities and marked differences in the consequences of structural changes (past and future)</p> <p>Deficiency in developing SMEs, especially in the rural areas of the border region (low level of diversification of economies in the rural areas of the border region)</p> <p>Structural problems for the urban economies (segregation, labour market, ...)</p> <p>In rural regions poor competitiveness with regard to hard and soft location factors, high degree of dependence on the urban agglomerations</p> <p>Still relatively important role of agriculture in the rural areas in terms of employment</p> <p>Poor exploitation of tourism and leisure opportunities in rural areas of border region</p> <p>Low degree of co-operation between tourism and agriculture to form new offers</p> <p>Lack of joint marketing/strategies in tourism</p> <p>Low level of common strategies, approaches and systems to be implemented in the border region</p> <p>Limited “spread out” effects from the centres to the peripheral areas contributing to increase of disparities</p> <p>Limited financial capacities of SK partners to pre-finance projects and lack of financial instruments supporting project implementation</p>
Labour market development	<p>High supply of qualified labour force and high level of qualification and education of the population esp. in the urban parts of the border region</p> <p>Dynamic growth of employment in services</p> <p>Important high-qualified service sector in major cities</p> <p>High flexibility of the labour market able to respond to the needs of knowledge and innovation intensive emerging sectors</p>	<p>Disparities (wages, social systems, job opportunities) between the Austrian and the Slovak border region</p> <p>Pressure on the urban labour markets caused by immigration and/or unqualified workers, consequences on the regions with a high percentage of commuting</p> <p>High percentage of seasonal unemployment</p> <p>Few employment opportunities for highly-qualified persons in the rural regions</p> <p>Missing strategies for the development of cross-border labour markets</p>
Environment – Sustainable development	<p>Landscape reserves and protected areas</p> <p>Potential for regional co-operation in the fields of renewable energy and natural resources management</p> <p>Sufficient resources of water and reservoirs of underground waters</p>	<p>Increase in traffic with consequences on environmental situation</p> <p>Differences in legal frameworks, ecological standards and lack of common monitoring and management of resources</p>



3.2 Opportunities and Threats

	Opportunities	Threats
Economic development, regional competitiveness	<p>High growth potential due to economic development which is clearly above the EU average</p> <p>Potential of expanding regional markets into the neighbouring country, leading to an enlargement of market areas and to new demand for products</p> <p>Cost reductions may be realised through integrated production (co-operation and chains of production across borders), at the regional level also accessible for very small enterprises</p> <p>Networking, co-operation and integration (business, institutions) allow growth in markets and improved quality also for SMEs in the border regions;</p> <p>Integration and utilisation of cost reductions and/or use of partners' know-how will lead to higher competitiveness in domestic and adjacent markets, making increased sales possible; this will allow for the development of higher skills and advances in the economic performance, also in small enterprises</p> <p>Internalisation of outcomes and results of innovations, R&D activities</p> <p>Rapid transformation to knowledge-based economies with features of the learning border region</p> <p>Creation of larger, more integrated and varied tourism regions that will be more competitive in an international environment</p> <p>Development of qualification and research based production and services</p> <p>Growth potential of the region, however differentiated (lower in AT)</p> <p>Joint destination management based on the know-how exchange (experiences from AT)</p>	<p>High disparities in prices, income, wages, social security with negative consequences for entrepreneurs, SMEs, certain branches and employees</p> <p>Increase of the disparities in the economic performance and competitiveness within the border region</p> <p>Barriers to effective transfer of know-how and innovations outside of the economic centres</p> <p>Limited demand and absorption of innovations by SMEs (mainly in SK side)</p> <p>Absence of the efficient support systems (business aid schemes including the access to risk capital) to enhance the application of research and development in the business</p> <p>Low share of private investments in the R&D activities (SK)</p> <p>Low intensity of cooperation between SMEs and research institutions and consequent loss of global competitiveness</p> <p>Substantial decrease in FDI inflow (SK)</p> <p>Global stagnation and downfalls in key sectors with significant impacts on the concerned regions</p>
Labour market development	<p>New qualification offers based on the high density of education infrastructure</p> <p>Systems for forecasting of the labour market in the border regions (demand and supply) allowing to prevent major imbalance</p> <p>New platforms for gender mainstreaming and considering the equal opportunities between men and women in the development strategies</p>	<p>Pressure on wage levels, substitution of local labour force by employees from neighbouring countries, particularly in jobs with low qualification and skill requirements</p> <p>Loss of dynamic and skilled labour force (brain drain) and insufficient supply in highly progressive sectors</p> <p>Aging of the labour force accompanied with negative demographic trends</p>
Environment – Sustainable development	<p>R&D activities and experience with new technologies and qualification (e.g. renewable energy, production process)</p> <p>Common management and use of systems in the field of environment contributing to sustainable development</p> <p>Intensified cooperation in flood prevention and risk management</p>	<p>Cross-border commuting, increased traffic volumes, both in freight and passenger transport</p> <p>Intensive tourist use of formerly protected or untouched landscapes and natural resources</p> <p>Imbalance on the real estate market causing the sprawl of housing into protected areas (suburban areas)</p>



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4. GENERAL PROGRAMME STRATEGY

4.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this programme for the cross-border cooperation is to contribute to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Austrian-Slovak border region by providing support to joint projects, initiatives and public interventions. The CBC-programme will focus on the building of an integrated, open region by utilising the endogenous development factors of the border region and support development strategies effectively responding to new global challenges and opportunities.

The programme attempts to define the most suitable development strategies for the border region by taking into account:

- The heterogeneous social and economic conditions in the programme areas' sub-regions,
- The identified disparities and factors determining the development potential of the border regions that can be addressed by the cross-border actions/interventions in order to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants,
- Experiences and lessons learnt from the previous and still running cross-border cooperation programmes: INTERREG IIA, PHARE CBC and INTERREG IIIA (1995-2006); particularly experiences and recommendations for the 2007-2013 programming presented in the Mid-term and Updated Mid-term evaluation of the SK-AT programme 2000-2006 (see Annex),
- Relevant strategies and policies defined on the EU, national and regional levels in order to achieve coordination, complementary development impulses and synergy effects in the border region,
- Legal provisions setting out the implementation framework for Structural Funds' co-financed programmes, especially the cross-border cooperation programmes under the "European territorial cooperation" objective,
- Conclusions from the working sessions of the bilateral programming group, responsible authorities/bodies and relevant social and economic partners.

The cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and the Slovak Republic for the programming period 2007-2013 is the first programme with participation of regions from both countries as EU member states for the whole programming cycle. This represents an additional challenge for the strategic orientation of the programme in order to significantly contribute to increasing the economic competitiveness and social cohesion of the border region. The ultimate objective is to ensure further improvement in quality of life of all inhabitants of the border region.

4.2 New challenges for cross-border regional development strategies

The accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union on May 1st, 2004 was the key factor influencing the framework for cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia, leading to a CBC-programme for the shortened period 2004-2006. The renewed and strengthened partnership, in a new setting of instruments and in a joint space for economic and social development, will play an important role for the next programming period.



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The main challenges for cross-border cooperation in the coming years (2007-2013) are to contribute to the development of a socially, economically and environmentally integrated, attractive border region. This contribution shall be based on:

- the intensification and enhancement of the interactions between the stakeholders from both sides of the border, using existing and newly established links (networks),
- the support and implementation of projects with a distinctive cross-border dimension and sustainable effects,
- the improvement of links between the urban centres and rural areas across the border
- the promotion and support of the principle of sustainable development,
- the enhancement of cooperation in the field of research, development and innovation including the transfer of and access to knowledge,
- the inclusion of all social groups in the region (primarily those at risk of social exclusion), based on the openness and tolerance as guiding principles
- the continuous professional dialogue and exchange of know-how on strategies for the development of the border region through its integration reflecting the existing needs.

Along the border line between the old and new member states of the EU, no other CB-cooperation region includes two major capitals at such proximity. There is a great development potential for both metropolitan regions and the AT-SK border region as a whole, to contribute to the rebuilding of Europe's political and economic landscape by building an integrated cross-border region.

4.3 Programme strategic objective

The overall strategic objective of the SK-AT cross-border cooperation programme 2007-2013 is to build border region with vital, knowledge-based regional economies, socially and environmentally attractive, playing a significant role among European metropolitan regions.

The border region has the potential to become one of the economically fastest growing regions in the European Union, including two capitals at close proximity. With the highest concentration of headquarters, universities and research centres of both countries, the AT-SK-region has the potential and the means to build a knowledge and economic power base for central Europe. By the effective support of these key features, the CBC-programme 2007-2013 for the Austrian-Slovak border region shall contribute to the process of *building a cross-border learning region*.

The further implementation of the knowledge based economy in the border region will require paying specific attention to the following **specific objectives of the programme**:

- **Intensifying and enhancement of the quality of cooperation** between programme-partners, in order to create and maintain the suitable and flexible cooperation networks, structures and clusters
- **Mobilisation of relevant actors from private and public sectors**, coordination of their efforts and resources to ensure that supported interventions are targeted to the accomplishment of the defined objectives
- The promotion of **rapid economic growth while pursuing a socially inclusive development path and** putting emphasis on **environmental quality**



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- **Full exploitation of processes and approaches leading to advanced learning capacity** of individuals, organisations, communities and regions through transfer of know-how and experience.

Sustainable cooperation networks as central part of the future programme's interventions and important feature of the knowledge-based economy, represent a specific horizontal objective of the programme. The geographical scope of the cooperation is widened also to the border regions of the Czech Republic and of Hungary **as the option of multilateral projects**. The promotion of the multilateral cooperation aims at providing a basis for better exploitation of the potential of the wider region in the Central Europe, which goes behind the territory of the Austrian-Slovak border region. The multilateral actions will be implemented, in compliance with Article 21 (1) of the Council regulation on ERDF no. 1080/2006, in fully justified cases when the multilateral projects can bring a significant added value by involving partners from the outside of the SK-AT programme area.

The cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and Slovakia consists of **two thematic priorities** contributing to the accomplishment of the strategic programme objective:

- **1. Learning region and economic competitiveness**
- **2. Accessibility and sustainable development**

Priority 3 – Technical Assistance – has a horizontal character and is primarily focused on the effective and sound management of the programme for the whole programming period.

4.4 Correspondence with the key EU strategies and principles

The following policies and principles provide the main regulatory framework for the preparation and implementation of the cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and Slovakia in the programming period 2007-2013:

- Lisbon strategy and its objectives, reinforced 2005,
- Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (reflected in the National Reform Programmes 2005-2008 of Austria and Slovakia as bellow),
- Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (reflected in the National Strategic Reference Frameworks of Austria and Slovakia as bellow),
- Gothenburg Council conclusions – the European strategy for sustainable development 2006,
- Strategies for rural development and fisheries (reflected in the Strategic Frameworks for Rural Development and National Strategic Plans for Fisheries),
- Principles and rules for implementation of assistance from the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in the programming period 2007-2013 defined in the relevant regulations,
- Guidelines for National regional aid for 2007-2013,
- Directive no. 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive),
- Equal and non-discriminatory treatment, equal opportunities,
- Lead Partner Principle – as a new mandatory feature for actions being implemented under the cross-border cooperation programmes in 2007-2013 in order to ensure the genuine



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cooperation. The Lead Partner principle has significant implications on the preparation, implementation as well as structures carrying out the cross-border cooperation projects (in comparison to 2000-2006 period).

4.5 Coherence with other EU and national programmes

Structural fund policy 2007-2013 can be characterized by a strengthened strategic approach, with two new elements: the “Community Strategic Guidelines“ at European level and the “National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)“ at the level of the Member States. Both elements, as presented in the draft Council Regulation from 14 July 2004, are aimed at a better integration of Community priorities into national and regional development programmes. Therefore, the NSRFs give the general orientation, objectives and strategies, which are relevant also for Cross-border-programmes. The territorial cooperation programmes are complementary to the “mainstream“ programmes implemented under the “Convergence“ and “Regional Competitiveness and Employment“ objectives seeking to achieve synergies. With this respect, a specific attention will be paid to preventing any possible double financing of the interventions (actions) from the Structural Funds.

4.5.1 Austria

Austrian National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (NSRF)⁴

In Austria, the “National Strategic Reference Framework“ (NSRF, in Austria named **STRAT.AT**), was drafted in an intensive dialogue process which included all relevant partners at the Federal and the *Länder* level. According to the federalistic structure of regional policy in Austria, the platform for this process has been provided by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz, ÖROK).

The **STRAT.AT** provides the goals and the basic strategic framework for the 8 operational programmes on the objective “Regional competitiveness and employment“, one “Convergence-Phasing Out“-programme for Burgenland⁵, one national programme on “Employment growth“ and for several regional programmes on “European territorial cooperation“ objective. It also includes the links to the national programme for the development of rural areas, particularly with its axis no. 3⁶.

General objectives and strategic approaches for regional economic policy and employment policy in Austria are:

Widespread regional foundation of an innovation- and knowledge based economy:

- Strengthening of the regional knowledge base and innovative capacities of enterprises, research facilities and educational with a wide approach, including all sectors of the economy, e.g. in production-oriented services, transport and logistics, tourism and leisure industries, social services; Strengthen and support cross-border economic activities, esp. for

⁴ As approved by the European Commission by April 4, 2007.

⁵ Burgenland (Objective 1 region in the 2000-2006 period); in the years 2000 – 2002, GDP per capita in Burgenland reached 74,4% of the EU-15 average (in PPP).

⁶ Axis 3 = Diversification of the rural economy and quality of life in rural areas (EAFRD-Programme).



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small enterprises and with focus on the borders to the new member states (with link to the programmes for territorial co-operation)

Develop attractive regions and competitive enterprise locations:

- Develop attractive business locations with view at a well diversified spatial structure, with a good mix of economic functions and social structures in all regions. Reduce regional economic disparities and provide for a polycentric development with close ties between cities and their hinterland (see ESDP). Integrated, sustainable spatial development policies by using both, spatial planning as well as innovation-and process-oriented instruments of regional development; Improvement of traffic routes and logistic infrastructures to reduce environmental damage and create better access to regions in new member states; Increase resource- and energy-efficiency in society, strengthen the use of renewable energy sources; Protect and use of natural resources and particularly of renewable raw materials with innovative methods; protection and utilisation of natural and cultivated landscapes through environmental management and guidance measures

Increase adaptability and qualification of the work force

- As general objective is – in harmony with the European employment strategy – the increased adaptability and qualification of employed. This objective includes directly and indirectly the adaptability and qualifications of self-employed and entrepreneurs. Overall, the increased requirements of a knowledge-based economy are in the centre of this strategy; based on the approach of Life Long Learning (LLL), access to employment for unemployed shall be supported, with a special focus on older and female unemployed, people with handicaps
- Develop knowledge and career potential for both genders, with a thorough implementation of the equal opportunity principle in all regions, in the preparing and implementing of operational programmes and aid schemes and by developing innovative equal opportunity projects.

SF-relevant priorities are, therefore, **“Regional competitiveness and innovation (P1)“**, **“Attractive regions and quality of location (P2)”** and **“Adaptability and qualification of the labour force (P3)”**.

“Territorial co-operation (P4)“, is intended to include most of the strategic approaches of P1 to P3 and P5 and therefore can be characterised as a horizontal priority. It encompasses the three tiers of territorial co-operation, namely cross-border, trans-national and interregional co-operation.

The horizontal priority “governance (P5)“ is designed to support this overall strategic trajectory through a set of modern governance strategies, which are tailored to individual regional contexts and shall strengthen the learning and innovative capacities of regions and their population.

Regional Competitiveness Programmes, Phasing Out Programme Burgenland 2007-2013 (ERDF)

As outlined in the NSRF above, the Operational Programmes Regional Competitiveness 2007-2013 are now covering Austrian territory in full. They are focusing strongly on the Lisbon Agenda, with particular emphasis on RTD, developing regional knowledge base and the formation of business networks. In a joint effort of cooperation between actors on Federal and Länder levels, the Competitiveness programmes are geared to strengthening the innovative capacities of the



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regional economy. Supporting the connections to the neighbouring regional economies (here: Western Slovakia) is one of the complementing functions of the CBC-programmes.

Rural Development Programme (EAFRD)

The cross-border co-operation-region also overlaps with the target area of the EAFRD -financed Rural Development Programme 2007-2013; this implies that coordination is necessary and that complementary measures may be implemented also in this field. Generally, double funding, even in project areas in which the basic objectives of the ERDF and EAFRD are relatively similar, is prevented by the fact that the same authorities are involved in the consultation and project approval procedures of projects potentially eligible under cross-border co-operation or the Rural Development Programme (or the Phasing Out Programme for Burgenland).

Austria will bundle its efforts and set priorities in the Programme for Rural Development. One of them will be to spur the competitiveness of agricultural holdings. In axis 1 Austria's priorities are incentives for investment aids in innovative farms, priority aids for human resources and the promotion of education, training, and know-how management. Another priority is forestry.

Seeing axis 2, the subsidies for mountain areas are to be ensured also in the new programme. ÖPUL will remain a priority, but is to be simplified as regards administration.

Manifold measures which go far beyond agriculture, like cross-sectoral initiatives for the development and diversification of branches and regions are provided for through the integration of the former LEADER+ programme (in axis 3). Starting from local development strategies, which are worked out in a bottom-up approach, initiatives supported in axis 3 will be implemented by local action groups.⁷

Cross-border co-operation has to be seen as a subsidiary strategy complementing priority 3 of the NSRF (STRAT.AT) which covers in principle basic structural labour market problems. Especially in the field of **labour markets** the active pre-accession strategies require numerous new approaches, particular challenges emerge for example due to the formation of cross-border co-operations.

Austrian National Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs 2005-2008 (NRP)

The Austrian Federal Government has identified in its National Reform Programme seven strategic core areas for promotion growth and employment but also for improving competitiveness:

1. Sustainability of public finances
2. Labour market and employment
3. Research and development, Innovation
4. Infrastructure (including broadband)
5. Competition and SME action plan
6. Education and further training
7. Environmental technologies and efficient management of resources

⁷ source: lebensministerium.at, based on the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013



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In the programme it is pointed out that account will be taken besides of the specific regional characteristics at provincial level and of differences between urban and rural areas also of special characteristics in the border regions.

This shows the complementary role of the cross-border co-operation programme applied especially to efforts encouraging entrepreneurship and education and training. In these fields of action cross-border co-operation assists active supporting measures for an enlarged Europe.

Austrian ESF Programmes

The ESF Programme at National level as part of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective includes the following priorities:

- Increasing adaptability of the workforce and employers
- Prevention of unemployment
- Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people
- Life-long-learning
- Territorial Employment Pacts (see below in a separate section)
- Technical Assistance

Priorities within the ESF Programme as part of the Phasing-Out Programme Burgenland under the Convergence Objective concentrate on increasing adaptability, pathways to integration for disadvantaged people, access to knowledge and qualification and finally strengthening of cooperation and reform among labour market institutions.

With a view to the interventions intended in the Cross Border Programme Slovakia-Austria it is important to stress that the term integration in the sphere of ESF interventions is clearly oriented towards the needs of marginalized groups whereas in the context of this programme the emphasis is on the policy development for the increasingly integrated labour markets of the border region. Also all actions targeting education and qualification are marked by different approaches under both types of programmes. ESF interventions mainly focus on developing and strengthening the national measures of labour market policies. Only a small fraction of ESF interventions includes transnational or cross-border aspects and here the coordination within the administrative bodies in charge is ensured. MA and CA for the ESF interventions under Objective 2 as well as the Unit in charge of ERDF financed Human Resource Development actions are part of the Labour Market Department of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour and cooperate on a daily basis.



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Territorial Employment Pacts (TEP)

Territorial employment pacts as a form of cooperation between actors on federal, Länder and local level have been established and expanded in order to promote the implementation of the national action plan's objectives in Austria.

Within the frame of the cross-border co-operation it will be one of the objectives to use the TEPs as a supporting infrastructure for the development of cross-border networks. The main objective of the employment pacts is the synergetic use of various actors and initiatives. Thus the TEPs can provide valuable know-how inputs for the neighbouring countries since structural change is happening there at an even more rapid pace and funding for labour market policies is comparatively lower.

4.5.2 Slovakia

National Strategic Reference Framework of the Slovak Republic⁸

The National Strategic Reference Framework defines a complex strategy for the development of the Slovak Republic and efficient use of the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in relation to the selected priorities for the programming period 2007-2013. It covers "Convergence" and "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objectives. "European Territorial Cooperation" objective including the cross-border cooperation programmes are not part of the NSRF of the Slovak Republic.

The vision of the NSRF

- The overall convergence of the Slovak economy to EU 15 average through sustainable development.

The strategic objective of the NSRF

- Significantly increase the competitiveness and performance of the regions and the Slovak economy and employment till 2013 while respecting the sustainable development.

The strategy of the NSRF

The selected strategy is a result of the thematic and territorial concentration, which aims at achieving the synergy effects as a precondition for ensuring maximum efficiency and effectiveness in use of the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund.

⁸ As approved by the European Commission by August 17, 2007



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Strategic Priority 1 – Infrastructure and regional accessibility

- Provide sustainable mobility through development of transport infrastructure and transport services; complete environmental infrastructure in the Slovak Republic according the EU standards and increase efficiency in the environmental component of sustainable development; Improvement of accessibility and quality of public infrastructure.

Strategic Priority 2 – Knowledge based economy

- Growth in competitiveness of the industry and services through technology and process innovation; Increase competitiveness of the economy and regions through development of information society; Modern and efficient system of support to research and development contributing to increase of competitiveness of the Slovak economy and regions; Improvement of the infrastructure of universities; Increase in quality and efficiency of health care services through modernisation of Health sector.

Strategic Priority 3 – Human resources and education

- Improve quality and accessibility to the life-long learning with emphasis on the transformation of content of education toward acquiring basic skills and key competences reflecting the current and future requirement of knowledge-based economy; Increase in employment, growth of quality on supply side of the labour market, increasing the social inclusion of risks groups and capacity building in public policy.

Strategic Priority 4 – Technical assistance (horizontal)

- Ensure the coordination and strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions co-financed from the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund by high quality and sound management on the national level.

Horizontal priorities

- Marginalised Roma communities
- Equal opportunities
- Sustainable development
- Information society

The National Strategic Reference Framework does not cover the “European Territorial Cooperation” objective; therefore has no direct relevance to the cross-border cooperation. CBC programmes are submitted to the Government for approval separately.



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The overview of the programmes to be implemented under the “**Convergence**” and “**Regional Competitiveness and Employment**” objective in the Slovak Republic in 2007-2013:

CONVERGENCE		
	Operational Programme	Fund
1	Regional	ERDF
2	Environment	ERDF + CF
3	Transport	ERDF + CF
4	Information Society	ERDF
5	Research and Development*	ERDF
6	Competitiveness and Economic Growth	ERDF
7	Health sector	ERDF
8	Employment and Social Inclusion*	ESF
9	Education*	ESF
10	Technical Assistance	ERDF
REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYMENT		
11	Bratislava Region	ERDF

* Multi-objective OPs covering also “Regional Competitiveness and Employment” objective

National Strategic Plan for Rural Development in the Slovak Republic 2007-2013

It aims at the improvement of competitiveness of agro-food sector and forestry through increasing efficiency and quality of production while respecting the principles of sustainable development and more ecological management in rural areas. The emphasis is, together with modernisation, innovation and support to education put also on environment protection and biodiversity of rural areas ensuring sustainable use of its resources and activities, which will contribute to reduction of regional disparities in rural areas in Slovakia.

The overall objective is defined as: Multifunctional agriculture, food sector, forestry and sustainable rural development. The strategy consist of four axis with a defined corresponding priority.

Axis 1: Improvement of competitiveness of agriculture and forestry

The objective is to improve competitiveness of agro-food industry and forestry industry.

Axis 2: Improvement of environment and landscape (country)

The overall aim is to create the multifunctional agricultural and forest systems with positive impact on environment, nature and landscape.

Axis 3: Quality of life in the rural areas and diversification of rural economies

The defined priorities under the axe will contribute to the increase in employment in rural areas and support of the municipalities.



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Axis 4: Leader

The objective is defined as support to building and development of local partnerships and utilisation of endogenous development potential of rural areas.

National Reform Programme of Slovakia for Growth and Jobs (NRP 2005-2008)

The document represents a comprehensive response of the Slovak Republic to the Lisbon agenda focusing, which indicates priority fields of interventions for the period 2005-2008. The National Reform Programme is based on two main pillars:

- Completion of the structural reforms and maintenance of their results,
- Development of the knowledge-based economy.

It puts emphasis on the areas (fields) that are crucial for supporting the development of creative potential of the Slovak economy:

1. Education
2. Employment
3. Information Society
4. Science, research and innovations
5. Business environment

In general, financial allocations from the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in the Slovak Republic in the programming period 2007-2013 should be corresponding to the priority areas set out in the NRP including the transport infrastructure.

National Strategy for the Sustainable Development

The National Strategy sets out the long-term priorities for the sustainable development in Slovakia:

- Developed democratic country
- Modern state and system of public administration
- Mature civil society
- Social solidarity and social protection
- Balanced spatial development
- High quality of human and societal resources
- New model of economy
- High quality of environment, protection and rational use of natural resources.



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4.5.3 Other programmes at European level

Proposal for 7th Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (2007-2013)

It is foreseen that it will be organised in four specific programmes corresponding with the major objectives of European research policy:

- Cooperation – will support wide range of relevant activities with international dimension
- Ideas – the programme will focus on support to investigator driven “frontier research” covering all scientific and technological fields
- People – the support will be oriented on the training and career development of researchers, also in connection to the national systems
- Capacities – key aspects of the European research and innovation capacities will be supported: research infrastructures, research of the benefit for SMEs, regional research driven clusters, unlocking the full research potential of “Convergence” objective regions, “Science and Society” issues, horizontal activities for international cooperation.

Integrated Community Programme in the field of Life-long Learning

The Community programmes in the field of education and life-long-learning will be in 2007-2013 implemented through the Integrated Programme will consist of sectoral programmes:

- Comenius – will address the teaching and learning needs of those in the pre-school and school education up to upper secondary education, and institutions providing such an education
- Erasmus – will focus on formal higher and vocational education and training at tertiary level
- Leonardo da Vinci – will support activities addressing the needs in vocational education and training including initial and continuing vocational training, other than advanced vocational education and training at tertiary level
- Grundtvig – will deal with all forms of adult education, and institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such a education

Additionally, the Integrated Programme will contain the Transversal programme covering the following activities: i) policy cooperation in life-long learning within the Community, ii) promotion of language learning, iii) development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for life-long learning as well as the Jean Monnet Action.

NATURA 2000

It represents a network of protected areas within the European Union aiming at protection of natural heritage. The network consists of two types of networks:

- Special Protection Areas – established in line with the directive on birds
- Special Areas of Conservation – established in line with the directive on biotopes.



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INTERACT II

Special attention shall be given to the services provided by the INTERACT II programme. This EU-wide programme focuses on the good governance of territorial cooperation and provides needs-based support to stakeholders involved in implementing programmes under the European Territorial Co-operation objective. The target groups for INTERACT are primarily the authorities to be established according to Council Regulations No. 1083/2006 and No. 1080/2006 as well as other bodies involved in programme implementation. In order to ensure maximum benefit from the INTERACT programme for the implementing bodies of this programme, the use of INTERACT services and documentation as well as the participation in INTERACT seminars will be encouraged. Related costs are eligible under Technical Assistance.



5. PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

The strategic objective of the Operational Programme for Cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia in the period 2007-2013 was defined as *building the border region with vital, knowledge-based regional economies, socially and environmentally attractive, playing a significant role among European metropolitan regions*. Two thematic priorities of the programme have been defined to directly contribute to the accomplishment of the overall strategic programme objective both based on forming and development of sustainable cooperation networks:

- **Priority 1:** Learning region and economic competitiveness (“Lisbon oriented”)
- **Priority 2:** Accessibility and sustainable development (“Gothenburg oriented”)

As horizontal field of activity, it is foreseen to support Sustainable Cooperation Networks, which may be cross-cutting to the thematic priorities 1 and 2. Activities in support of professional management of the whole operational programme including monitoring, evaluation, publicity, control and financial management will be carried out under the priority 3 – Technical Assistance.

There will be an **option** for implementation of **framework projects** under the OP CBC SK.-AT

Figure 1: **Structure of priorities for the OP CBC SK-AT 2007-2013**

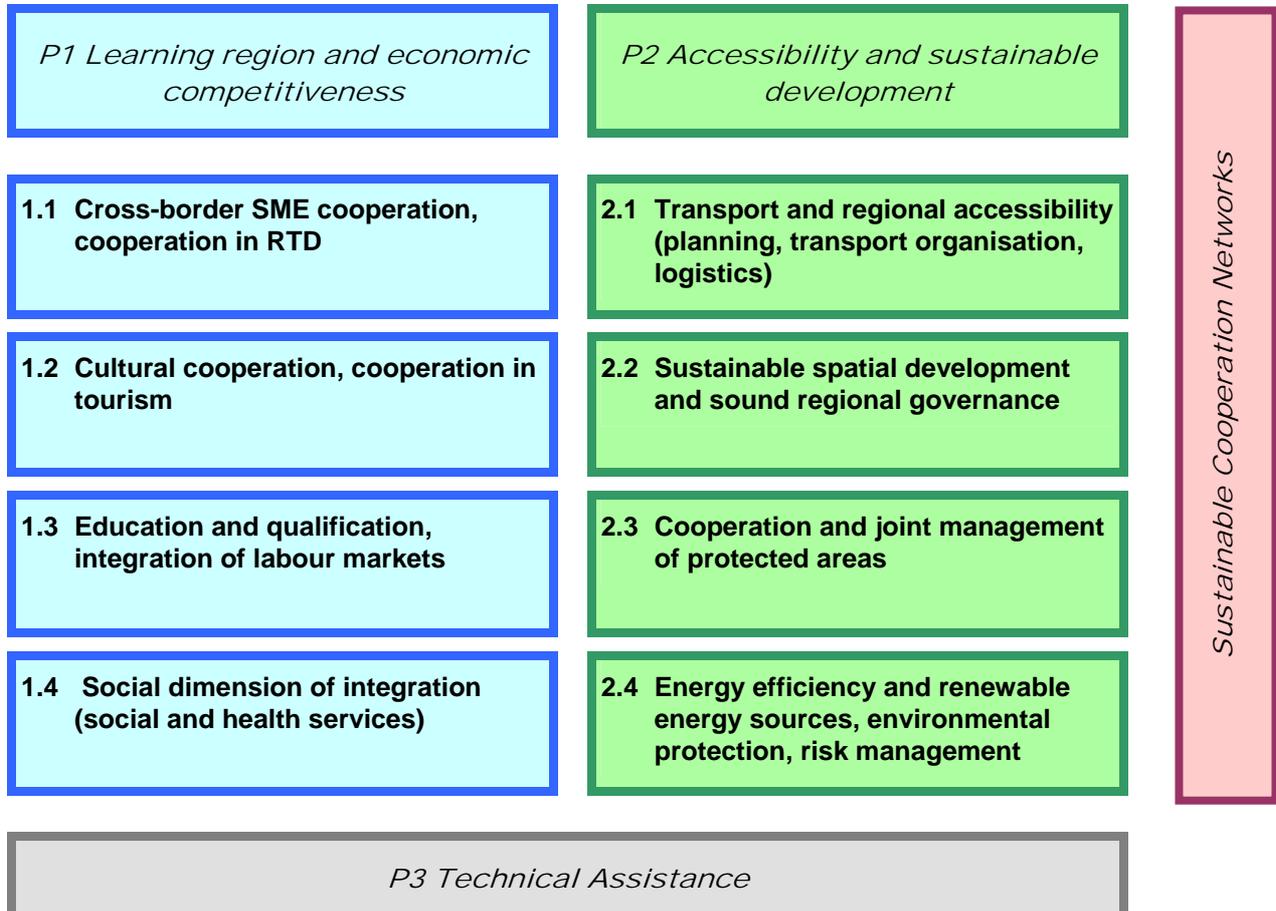
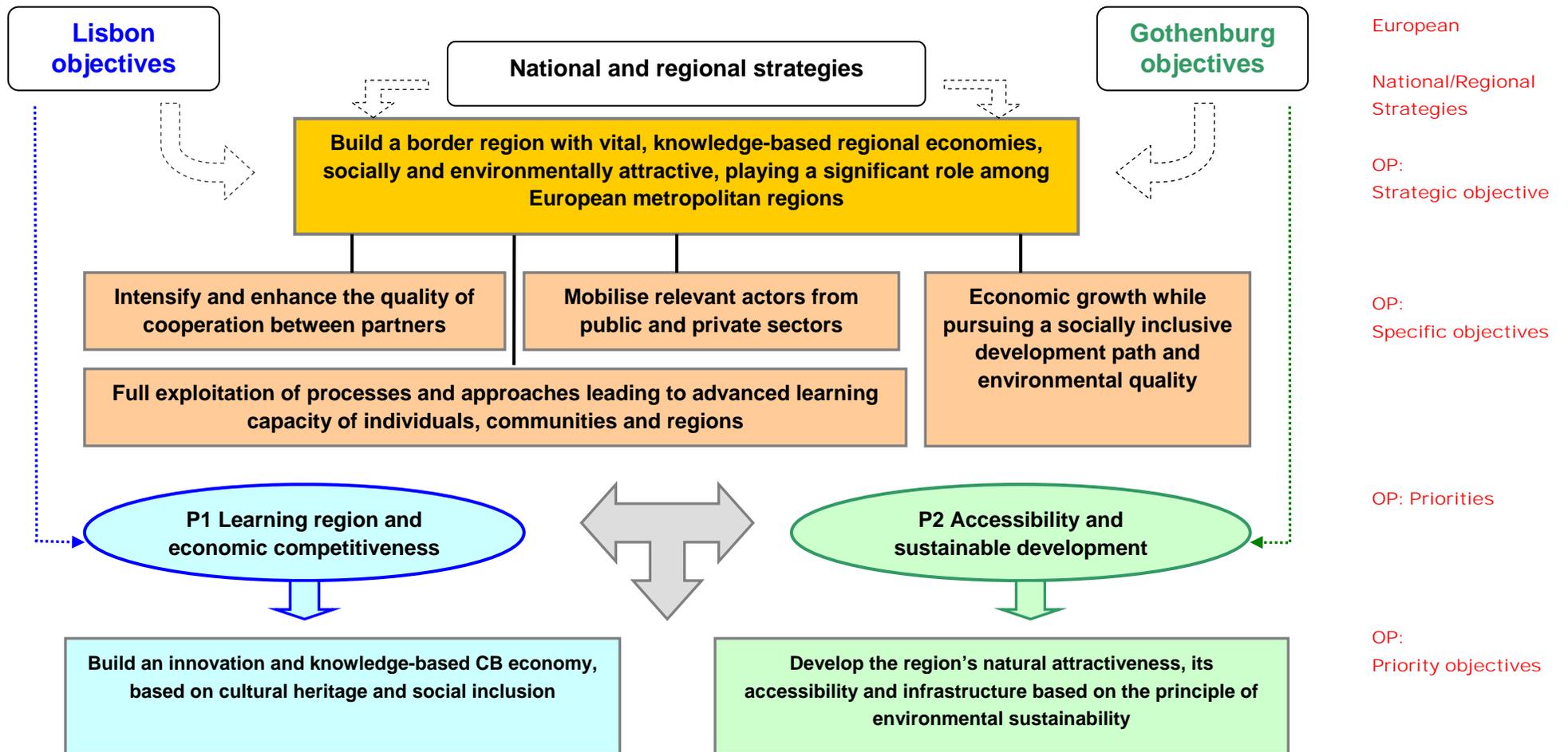


Figure 2: Objective tree of the Austrian-Slovak cross-border cooperation for 2007-2013





5.2 Priority 1: Learning region and economic competitiveness

The objective of Priority 1

- **Build an innovation- and knowledge-based CB-economy, based on cultural heritage and social inclusion**

The strategy of the priority 1 is focusing on the development of an internationally orientated, innovation and knowledge-based regional economy, which stimulates learning, cooperation and innovation as the most effective factors to respond to the process of globalisation. Overcoming the barriers to intensification of cooperation in the field of research, development and innovations raised by the existence of national innovation systems will enable in long-run to create a cohesive learning region with its own innovation system and its own identity. The flexible and at the same time sustainable cooperation networks should contribute to the achievement of synergy effects. The creation of integrated cross-border labour markets, in which the supply match with the demand of the regional labour market determined by new skills and competences will need an enhancement of the adaptability and the qualifications of labour force in the region. Promotion of the knowledge based economy brings new requirements toward human resources/human capital therefore a special attention is paid to early identification of the changing needs of the labour market. Since educated and competent population is able to better exploit the advantages of knowledge-based society, the access to quality education must be provided to all age and social groups of the society to allow them equally participate in the economic and social life.

The border region provides good opportunities to utilise the concentration with the critical mass of the research and development facilities, universities, education centres, technological and commercial expertise and innovation oriented/innovative SMEs and turn it into its comparative advantage.

The **strategic profile** of the main interventions in **priority 1** can be summarized as follows:

- Strengthen the innovative capacity of SMEs in all economic sectors
- Support the expansion of RTD-infrastructure and activities (inside and outside of universities), and the increase of the regions' innovative capacity
- Effectively link the various elements of the CB-regional innovation-system and provide for knowledge transfer
- Promotion of information society, effective use of information and communication technologies
- Develop strategies and instruments for the integration of cross-border labour markets
- Focus on the human resource development on innovation strategies with respect to knowledge resources from both sides of the region
- Increase female participation in economy and social/political life
- Strengthen CB-cooperation in cultural and social projects
- Intensify the cooperation in cross-border tourist development and marketing
- Establish and strengthen existing CB-cooperation networks and structures

The quantified targets of the priority are presented in the chapter 7.

The indicative list and description of actions to support development in the AT-SK border region (as included in fig.3, above) under the priority 1 – Learning region and economic competitiveness can be described as below:

A1.1 Cross-border SME cooperation, cooperation in RTD

The aim is a creation of favourable environment for business activities of SMEs and support to effective cooperation as important preconditions to establishment of well functioning regional structures of SMEs. Improvement of the production, dissemination and use of new knowledge by small and medium enterprises is instrumental to increasing their competitiveness in the national and global markets.

The services offered to SMEs located in the border region will respect the characteristics of the regional economy, individual sectors on one hand and the specific needs of companies in the wider international context on other. The identification, establishment of working relations and development cooperation of complementary companies will be promoted. The ultimate objective is to support development and strengthening of existing networks, structures and clusters of small and medium enterprises contributing to enhancement of regional innovation system. The access to higher quality information, counselling and advisory services specifically related to active involvement in the innovative processes taking place in the region and uptake of innovations provided to small and medium enterprises will also improve their competitiveness of SMEs.

The capacity of private and public organisations to successfully engage in the learning process is considered as one of the most crucial components to enhancement of the economic performance in the knowledge based economy. Therefore, activities bringing together the relevant actors (private sector, universities, research institutions, innovations centres, technology transfer centres, science and technology parks and local/regional authorities) oriented on integrated problem solving and organisational learning will be supported.

The aim of the activities concerning RTD-cooperation and business innovation is to promote cooperation in the various fields connected with knowledge and innovation, as there were: R&D, technology, education, culture, design, etc.

Cross-border activities and international economic activities should be supported and facilitated in order to respond more effectively to the technological changes. Strengthening these activities will increase the international scope of small and medium-sized enterprises and improve their competitiveness in the global economy.

In order to be able to operate with the fast-growing operational fields within the new Europe the knowledge base and innovative capacity of enterprises, research and educational institutions has to be strengthened through a closer interaction (with a special focus on the requirements of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises). Networks and clusters represent efficient instruments to increase the competitiveness of SMEs and provide a relatively high flexibility in terms of actual form and composition.

They shall strengthen and support co-operation in growth markets by the initiation of co-operation, establishing networks of existing expertise and support on the development of projects by information, marketing and co-operation services. Additionally the strength of clusters lies in bringing together enterprises of divers, potentially symbiotic fields and sectors. Both, networks as well as

clusters in order to function properly, must bring together not only all relevant partners, but also ensure favourable quality of relations and interactions.

A1.2 Cultural cooperation and cooperation in tourism

Culture has become an increasingly relevant factor with respect to the development of employment, urban restructuring and as impulse for various sectors of production and services. Activities in this field are meant to support the role of the cultural field as part of a democratic development of the EU, enabling the creation of common cultural initiatives but also critical public forums. This involves a proactive approach to (cultural) diversity, tolerance and conflict prevention and actively dealing with issues of social change, knowledge society, education, migration and globalisation. The area of culture also provides a wide range of opportunities for increasing the cooperation in the border region and is closely related and complementary to interventions in other fields, e.g. education, human resources development, and tourism.

The aim is to bring the communities from both sides of the border closer through discovering other's culture and cultural values. It is expected to foster the mutual tolerance, principles of multiculturalism and acceptance of minorities as important components of knowledge-based and open-minded society dealing with cultural diversity. The emphasis will be put on the intensifying the cooperation and links between the organisations actively working in the field of culture addressing the wide range of target groups of the border region. Specific attention deserves the creation of sustainable cultural networks and platforms including public, semi-public and private institutions able to provide high quality products and services in the long-term perspective.

The exchange of information, experiences and transfer of know-how (in the field of management, competences and innovative approaches, etc.) between the cultural organisations and operators has an important role in the development of capacities in this sector. The existing needs of the organisations can be also addressed through complex information and advisory services offered to the organisations and institutions active in the field of culture. The emerging integrated (cohesive) Austrian-Slovak border region evokes the need for formulation of common strategies and policies to effectively respond to the challenges of the global economy also in culture. The main criterion should be the sustainability of the operations based on the well defined concept.

Referring to the importance of tourism within the region and the broad range of existing tourist and leisure facilities, **cooperation in tourism** is seen as a basis for developing cross-border activities. However, the border region still provides opportunities for better exploitation of the tourism potential, which represent an important challenge from perspective of the cross-border activities.

The vertical and horizontal extension (widening and deepening) of the cooperation will bring new opportunities to offer new and higher quality products meeting the changing needs and requirements of the clients. The close cooperation and networking will be central to development of common strategies for promoting the border region and its locations as attractive destinations. The common destination marketing will be oriented to potential clients outside of the border regions as well as inhabitants of the region.

The complementary activities will focus on the further development of tourist and leisure facilities in the region (e.g. interregional cycle routes, boating activities). Additionally, the promotion of cultural heritage including the sites renovation will be supported, however the activities will have a pilot character and should demonstrate its compliance with the respective development strategy.



A1.3 Education and qualification, integration of labour markets

The building of a CB-learning region as a key element on the way to integrating cross-border labour markets and economic relations should be promoted with special emphasis on

- the establishment of intensive exchange linkages, as well as
- preparatory strategies for the suspension of the transitional provisions for the new Member States in Austria.

The innovation and quality-oriented economic development strategy also requires a significant increase in the operative qualification of the labour force. Additionally the development of the knowledge potential of both genders has to be taken into account, meaning the regional implementation and consistent application of the principle of equality between women and men as a resource for economic development.

The situation on the regional labour markets, with an expiring of the transition provision for the new EU member states (2009 or 2011), is marked by a high overall sensitivity. Related issues, like a joint labour market policy (including social insurance), require an intensive cooperation in preparing common labour market policies. The attempted smooth integration of labour markets without unfavourable major imbalances on supply and demand side of the border labour market calls also for close cooperation in the field of education and qualification. The following factors need to be taken into account:

- high concentration of the economic activities in the capitals surrounded by less economically active areas (agricultural/rural areas),
- remaining high wage differences (gaps),
- mobility of the labour force, close distance and good accessibility.

The gradual integration of the labour markets will require a functional system of monitoring and assessment of the labour market needs (current and future) and impact assessment on the removal of barriers.

Human capital is an important component of the learning region/knowledge-based region. Only permanently learning population will be able to effectively respond to the requirements of innovation oriented companies that operate in highly competitive environment. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation in field of education and qualification. It should result in identification of barriers to closer cooperation in this field and strategies to removal of barriers as well as development of appropriate forms of cooperation in the relevant fields (e.g. content-curricula, strategies and methods, competence profiles, desired skills, etc.) contributing to promotion of knowledge-based border region. Within the supported activities, the priority should be given to cooperation between tertiary education institutions and between these institutions and relevant partners (business associations, trade unions, other education and qualification providers), however including also secondary schools. In turn, it is expected that access to a quality education, mainly on tertiary level, will have a positive effects on the economic performance and growth, but also on promotion of entrepreneurship.

A1.4 Social dimension of integration (social and health services)

The field of **social cooperation** is assumed to be of increasing importance, especially in terms of the development of health care cooperation, but also referring to the cooperation of institutions for



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childcare, schools and universities. Economic and social integration of the border region puts emphasis on intensive social co-operation in a wider context, also including cross-border activities for and by ethnic minorities such as Roma and all other minorities living in the border area. The objective is to support co-operation and exchange of information and best practices between the relevant partners.

To encourage cross-border cooperation it is necessary to establish structures, know-how and organisations facilitating the activities of enterprises, local governments, NGOs and other non-profit organisations who want to be active with respect to both parts of the border region.

The co-operation and organisational structures serve as a backbone to the initiation, development and maintenance of cross-border co-operations and initiatives. The purpose is to establish demand-driven organisational structures which support the strengthening and further development of already existing and well functioning institutional structures into a cross-border dimension.

5.3 Priority 2: Accessibility and sustainable development

The objective of Priority 2

- **Develop the region's natural attractiveness, its accessibility and infrastructure based on the principle of environmental sustainability**

The phenomenon of globalisation increases pressures on the locational qualities of regions. Integrated development strategies focus on the need for cooperation of key stakeholders of the regions and on critical factors for regional competitiveness (attractiveness) such as transport infrastructure, protection of environment and landscape, risk prevention, etc.

The improved (internal and external) accessibility of the SKAT-CB-region through planning and project development in transport infrastructure is an important precondition for its further economic integration and development. To achieve this objective, increased capacities and effective management of the transportation infrastructure will be vital. In a mid-range perspective, the improvement of regional accessibility also will provide the basis for substantial re-orientation for info-structures in the future.

There are strong links and interconnections between the quality of environment and the economic development, therefore the emphasis within the second priority will be given to achieving synergies. There is evidence that sustainable development – balanced economic, social and environmental development – is a common feature of those regions which are most effectively utilising knowledge and (technological) innovations.

The strategy of priority 2 therefore is focused on the development of competitive locational qualities in the newly forming European CB-region. The strategic profile of the activities in priority 2 can be summarized as follows:

- Contribute to the creation of attractive living conditions and a high quality environment
- Improve CB-accessibility, transport organisation, sustainable logistics
- Implement the polycentric model of urban-rural-development as guiding principle
- Create attractive, compact business locations with excellent transport access



- Increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production
- Protect important elements of a joint natural and cultural heritage, co-operation in the management and use of natural resources
- Improve regional cooperation processes and structures and CB-regional governance

The quantified targets of the priority are presented in the chapter 7.

The suggested activities in priority 2 – Accessibility and sustainable development are supposed to bring about the strategic development of the SK-AT border region (as included in fig.3, above) can be described as follows:

A2.1 Transport and regional accessibility (planning, transport organisation, logistics)

These activities contain the organisation and harmonisation of the planning of transport infrastructure and logistics in order

- to promote the improvement of environmental qualities and
- to provide improved traffic links within the region and with other Member States.

The common activities should improve the overall management and organisation of the transportation within the concerned region.

The improved accessibility of the cross-border region will facilitate:

- intensification of economic relations
- better connection and access to results of R&D activities
- involvement of additional partners in the networks, clusters and development structures
- reach out of the “spread out” effect of knowledge-based economy
- transfer of innovations and know-how
- increased mobility of the labour force.

The common approaches in the field of logistics aim at the more efficient use of existing capacities and the exploitation of new opportunities in the border region.

The supported activities in the field of transport concern the planning and design of roads and bridges, railway and water transport infrastructures in joint, CB-procedure. Ultimately, if financial resources are available, the support of pilot projects and important construction activities may be included.

In addition to the cooperation in the field of planning and organisation of transport infrastructure, particular attention with regard to the overall programme objective will be given to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), since the appropriate use of ICTs are a powerful lever to improving productivity levels and competitiveness of regions. The building of a learning cross-border region provides new opportunities for the better use of ICT and for common development of activities (even strategies) in the transformation process.



A2.2 Sustainable spatial development and sound regional governance

In accordance with the model of polycentric development, which is supported by the European Spatial Development Plan (ESDP), the development of attractive business locations, research and technology facilities etc. will be a contribution to the compensation or adjustment of existing regional economic disparities.

This aim should be reached by a common cross-border perspective of spatial planning, to enable the integration of cities and regions across the border as well as better connection of the urban centres with peripheral areas. The intensified links between the centres of economic activities and surrounding rural areas in many cases still with significant importance of agriculture is also an instrument to a more effective spreading and distribution of gains (benefits) of the knowledge-based economy. Such an approach can have a preventive function in terms of deepening the social disparities between the urban and rural areas and contributes to increase of quality of life of all inhabitants of the knowledge-based region.

This requires a close cooperation of the representatives of cities and regions as well as professionals in order to formulate a common development perspective of the region. The side effect of the supported activities is the development and promotion of identity of the (learning) border region. The cities play a vital part in the overall development of the regions, therefore cooperation will be supported.

It is envisaged to come to a commitment to a policy of integrated and sustainable spatial planning through the close linking of regulatory policy approaches (spatial planning) and innovation and process-oriented instruments of regional development. To enable a fruitful and proactive further regional development it is seen as essential to develop and implement modern governance strategies in a cross-border/international context.

A2.3 Cooperation and joint management of protected areas

To enable a simultaneous protection and utilization of natural resources, the preservation and utilization of cultural landscape values it is necessary to develop or to provide management concepts and steering measures concerning cross-border/international planning and harmonization.

The trans-national character of the environment (not respecting the state borders) and cross-border impacts of economic activities call for cooperation between relevant partners on both sides of the border in order to develop a sound system for management of natural resources.

The supported activities should in general focus on the strengthening the cooperation and creation of sustainable networks responsible for protection of the protected areas within the border region. However, the existing international treaties and specifically EU legislation in the field of environment serves as basic regulatory framework for both countries, there are still significant differences in the applied approaches, instruments and methods. The challenge of building cohesive border region with its own development strategy calls also for more tight cooperation in this field in order to ensure the common standards in management of the protected areas. Therefore, the cooperation should be organized around:

- exchange of relevant information and data, comparative studies
- exchange of good practices and approaches proven to be effective,



- support in implementation of the new standards and instruments into the practice,
- assessment of cross-border impacts on environment, specifically protected areas and development of common approaches to minimize the negative impacts,
- identification of further opportunities for coordinated actions and their exploitation,
- common management, monitoring, reporting, marketing of protected areas,
- environmental infrastructure of the protected areas,
- increasing the public awareness.

The specific attention need to be paid to the network of NATURA 2000 areas including the Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation as the environmentally the most precious areas.

A2.4 Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, environmental protection, risk management

The economy of the border region is, however with substantial differences between individual parts of the region, still highly dependent on the traditional energy sources. The intensive use of the energy and dependency on it can be significantly reduced by the improvement of energy efficiency and by the development of renewable energy sources. With exception of pilot actions it is envisaged that actions will be mostly targeted at the promotion of research and business knowledge transfer and cooperation in the action fields such as:

- actions focused on improvement of energy savings,
- actions supporting the use of advanced technologies focused on energy efficiency,
- actions supporting the reduction of dependency on traditional resources,
- actions leading to increase of the use of renewable energies,
- actions towards pollution control and strategies to counteract the adverse effects of climate change,
- actions in the field of water and waste water and waste management.

The protection of environment plays an important role in the process of transformation the border regions into competitive region based on the knowledge, information and learning. The bad situation of the environment reduces attractiveness of the region, negatively influences the quality of life of its inhabitants and in the end can prevent the region from the further economic development. Therefore, activities in favour of cooperation and common approaches in the field of environment with visible cross-border dimension and added value should be supported.

The improved protection of settlement structures and business areas from natural hazards is regarded an important general objective of the CB-programme. It should be reached through both, anticipatory planning and measures for risk prevention and risk reduction. The focus is on existing settlement areas and on harmonizing methods and measures of risk prevention in a cross-border context.



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5.4 Priority 3: Technical Assistance

The objective of Priority 3

- **To ensure sound management of the OP CBC SK-AT throughout its lifecycle in line with EU and national legal provisions**

The main areas of the interventions financed under the Technical Assistance priority are supposed to provide a support to effective delivery of the programme including programming, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation as well as exchange of the relevant information between relevant partners. The financial allocation for the Technical assistance respects maximum 6% ceiling of total amount allocated to the operational programme. Indicatively, the interventions focus on:

- Preparation of the Operational programme for Cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia for the period 2007-2013 in line with the formal requirements for cross-border cooperation programmes implemented under European Territorial Cooperation objective
- Efficient and effective management of the programme including close cooperation and communication of the bodies involved in the programme implementation in order to ensure accomplishment of the defined objectives
- Performing high quality monitoring and evaluation of actions implemented under the operational programme and the programme as a whole, as an integral part of the sound management of the programme (respecting requirements defined in the respective regulations)
- Carrying out/commissioning thematic evaluations, studies, reports and surveys that can contribute to a higher relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the operational programme or/and are of public interest
- Information and publicity activities aimed at increasing the awareness of the potential beneficiaries, target groups and wider public on the operational programme and eligible activities that can be co-financed from ERDF as well as the results of the programme
- Setting up, maintenance and upgrading of the computerised systems used for monitoring, management and exchange of information between the programme authorities
- Information, technical support and advisory services provided to potential beneficiaries in project preparation and final beneficiaries in the process of project implementation including promotion of partnership and genuine cooperation between partners
- Capacity building of the relevant actors in the border region, so they can fully participate in the cross-border cooperation actions under the Lead Partner Principle, which has a number of serious implications on project preparation and implementation
- Dissemination of the good practice examples.



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6. PUBLICITY

Based on Art. 69 of General Guidelines (EC) No. 1083/2006 Member State and the Managing Authority of the OP will provide information on co-financing of the Programme as well as guarantee its publicity. The main goal is to inform transparently the citizens as well as beneficiaries on the cross-border cooperation and on the role of the European Union in the development of the Austrian-Slovak border areas.

In informing general public as well as potential beneficiaries the Managing Authority will co-operate closely with Joint Technical Secretariat, Regional Bodies and Euroregions.

Information and publicity on the whole Programme will be provided by:

- Publishing of full information on the Programme at relevant websites including the programme official website
- Publishing of short information on the Programme and its objectives in brochures and leaflets
- Writing Annual and Final Report for the Commission
- Implementation of information activities related to management, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme.

Information will be provided to different categories of potential applicants at local or regional level.

Relevant information on the OP (such as information on main OP documents, contacts on all institutions involved in the programme implementation, updated information on the OP, list of supported projects including the value of grant, calendar of planned events including dates of Joint Monitoring Committee meetings, references to other websites related to the EU and its activities, response to frequently asked questions about the OP, etc.) will be provided on websites of institutions responsible for the OP publicity. Media, information leaflets, brochures, billboards, flags and other EU-publicity products will also support the OP.

Beneficiaries are informed correctly and fully on the publicity regulations. Attention is given to visibility rules during the monitoring of project implementation.

The Communication Plan will be elaborated in accordance with Art. 2 of the Implementing Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 and submitted to EC for information within four months of the adoption of the operational programme. The implementation of the Communication plan will be regularly monitored and information presented to the Monitoring Committee.

The bodies involved in the implementation of the programme are responsible for ensuring that final beneficiaries carry out the information and publicity measures on the ERDF co-financed activities in line with the publicity guidelines.



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7. PROGRAMME INDICATORS

The programme indicators have been identified by the bilateral working group for OP CBC SK-AT. They have been selected as the most relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation purposes, based on the experience gained in the programming period 2004-2006.

The sample of indicators at hand is based on the legal framework for setting up the system of programme indicators to be used, specifically for the cross-border cooperation programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation objective.

The Draft Working Paper on "Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation: a Practical Guide" suggests concentrating on the following features of the system of indicators:

- *sufficient coverage (scope),*
- *balance,*
- *manageability.*

Further, there were formulated minimum quality criteria for the individual indicators: relevance, sensitivity, availability, costs.

Another important aspect reflected in the system of indicators is the assessment of the prevailing information needs of relevant stakeholders toward indicators (system of indicators) and the experience gained during the previous programming period.

There are no substantial changes in the levels of indicators to be monitored during 2007-2013 programming period in comparison to the previous programming period. The Operational Programme will contain indicators on programme (its specific objectives) and priority/priority axis levels⁹.

The aim of the indicators is to measure the progress made compared to the initial situation (targets) and to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the chosen intervention. Therefore the achievement of specific objectives of the programme will be measured by **specific impact, result and output including the cooperation indicators**.

- **Output indicators** relate to activity. They are measured in physical or monetary units (e.g., length of railroad constructed, number of firms financially supported, etc.). They are linked to operational objectives/results of the programme.
- **Result indicators** relate to the direct and immediate effects on direct beneficiaries brought about by a programme. They are quantified primarily on priority axis level. They provide information on changes to, for example, the behaviour, capacity or performance of beneficiaries. Such indicators can be of a physical (reduction in journey times, number of successful trainees, number of roads accidents, etc.) or financial (leverage of private sector resources, decrease in transportation cost, etc.) nature. Result indicators are linked to specific objectives/purposes.

⁹ As the content of the Programme Manual has not been defined yet in detail, it is expected that indicators will be introduced on project level (activity field). The use of certain indicators also as selection criteria will be addressed in the OP as well as in the Programme Manual, which will provide more detailed information on the selection criteria.



- **Impact indicators** refer to the consequences of the programme beyond the immediate effects. Impact indicators are linked to global/overall objectives. Two concepts of impact can be defined: Specific impacts are those effects occurring after a certain lapse of time but which are, nonetheless, directly linked to the action taken and the direct beneficiaries. Global impacts are longer-term effects affecting a wider population. Their own nature explains the need to quantify impact indicators at Programme level.

Independent from the type of indicator base lines will be drawn, in order to see what level of improvement has been reached as effect of the projects/programme. By concentrating on a set of basic indicators a basis for the qualitative evaluation of projects and the programme impact as a whole should be possible.

7.1 Indicators for programme monitoring

7.1.1 Context indicators for the cross-border cooperation SK-AT

No.	Context indicator (proposal) – definition	To be collected on level
1	GDP per inhabitant in PPS of the cross-border region	NUTS III
2	Unemployment rate of the cross-border region (M/F/Total)	NUTS III – based on Labour Force Survey (Eurostat)
3	Total Employment of the cross-border region (activity rate) (M/F/Total)	NUTS III – based on Labour Force Survey (Eurostat)
4	Employment in technology and knowledge-intensive sectors (share in % of total employment)	Only on NUTS I and II level
5	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D in % of GDP	Only on NUTS I level
6	Number of border crossings (rail, road, pedestrian)	Number of lanes, tracks etc.
7	Export-import value in EUR	NUTS 0, from annual reports
8	Foreign direct investment in EUR	NUTS 0, from annual reports

General: Data should be provided on NUTS II level; some indicators exist only on NUTS 0 or NUTS I level, but give a good picture of the context, in which the regional efforts to co-operate take place (e.g. R&D expenditures). Comparisons between various parts of the CB-region shall be possible.

Impact of the OP CBC SK-AT on the context indicators is not measurable, therefore no target values defined.

* If available, the actual situation will be defined based on 2004 data. The common statistical and information sources will be used (EUROSTAT) Quantified Programme Indicators



No.	Indicators ^{10, 11}	Units	Target 2013
1	Share of operations with cooperation in 2 phases	%	100
2	Share of operations with cooperation in 3 phases (eligible project costs borne on both sides of the border)	%	75
3	Share of operations with cooperation in 4 phases (joint staffing – persons employed by joint organisations*)	%	4
4	No. of operations aimed at enhancement of innovative capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)	number	32
5	No. of initiatives aimed better cooperation and capacity building of employment services, education institutions, training providers, employers and other relevant stakeholders	number	38
6	No. of joint cultural actions (activities, Initiatives, studies) and joint tourism products and destination marketing activities	number	11
7	No. of operations aimed improvement of transport system and technical infrastructure for information society (planning, infrastructure, management and services)	number	21
8	No. of operations for common management and support of cross-border natural resources (e.g. NATURA 2000) including studies	number	13
9	No. of operations aimed at energy efficiency, renewable energy production and preparation of technical infrastructure for risk prevention	number	19
10	No. of operations in capacity building for smaller institutions to generate sustainable cooperation networks	number	10

* Joint organisation – based on common legal basis (EGTC) or joint entity with participation of partners of at least 50%

7.1.2 Impact indicators for the cross-border cooperation SK-AT

No.	Impact indicator
1	Strengthen innovative capacities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
2	Improvement of learning processes and skills
3	Improved visibility of the joint region in the context of tourism and cultural activities
4	Better integration in European markets due to improved accessibility
5	Higher effectiveness in the protection and utilisation of natural resources
6	Increased energy efficiency and renewable energy production
7	Stimulation of a broad range of sustainable cross-border networks

¹⁰ the baseline "O" has been agreed as a common baseline for all defined indicators,

¹¹ further indicators such as the quantity of saved energy can be delivered for individual investment projects upon request



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8 Jobs created in the joint organisations

7.1.3 Result indicators for the cross-border cooperation SK-AT

No.	Result indicator
1	Number of organisations participating in the innovation, RTD related activities
2	Number of services for SMEs introduced or developed
3	Number of visitors of cultural events and tourist destinations
4	Number of common strategies for integrated labour market, human resources development, education and training
5	Number of organisations benefiting from common education and training initiatives
6	Number of initiatives promoting social and cultural aspects of border area integration
7	Number of persons benefiting from improved health and social services
8	Number of studies, plans and concepts produced
9	Number of municipalities/inhabitants involved in cooperation for better regional governance
10	Total area covered by the common management initiatives
11	Number of activities encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of the environment, including energy



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7.1.4 Output indicators for the cross-border cooperation SK-AT

No.	Output indicator
1	Number of operations aimed at enhancement of innovative capacity of SMEs
2	Number of networks and clusters, including RTD, public sector and business linkages
3	Number of common cultural actions (activities, initiatives, studies)
4	Number of joint tourism products and joint destination marketing activities
5	Number of operations focused on better monitoring and identification of cross-border labour market needs
6	Number of initiatives aimed at better cooperation between employment services, education institutions, training providers, employers and other relevant stakeholders
7	Number of joint education and training programmes and courses developed
8	Number of health and social projects (including studies)
9	Number of operations aimed at improvement of transport systems (planning, infrastructure and management/services)
10	Number of common integrated development strategies elaborated and implemented
11	Number of activities for common management and support of border natural resources (e.g. NATURA 2000 areas) including studies
12	Number of operations aimed at energy efficiency and renewable energy production
16	Number of common risk prevention plans developed and measures implemented

* Joint organisation – based on common legal basis (EGTC) or joint entity with participation of partners of at least 50%

7.2 Indicators for Priority 3

No.	Output indicator
1	Numbers of applications received by the Joint Technical Secretariat
2	Number of approved applications out of the total applications received by the JTS
3	Number of trainings and events for Lead Partner and Project Partner
4	Number of trainings and information events for implementing bodies (e.g. Regional Bodies, Controllers)
5	Number of evaluations linked to OP implementation, studies and surveys
6	Number of circulated PR materials (e.g. newsletter, brochures)



7.3 Indicators for horizontal (cross-cutting) issues

No	Output indicator– definition	Relevant theme
1	Project activities promoting sustainable development principles	Sustainable development
2	Project activities aimed at improvement of environment	Sustainable development
3	Number of jobs created (F/M) – takes into account joint organisations with staff	Equal Opportunities
4	Number of participants of educational activities (F/M)	Equal Opportunities
5	Project activities directly promoting equal opportunities principles	Equal Opportunities
6	Project activities contributing to higher efficiency in use of ICT	ICT

Note: Information about these issues is to be included in the Application form and in the project final report.

Additional information on the focus of the project (only one to be selected):

- Urban area
- Rural area
- Urban-rural areas relations/connections

Project typology

No	Types of projects	Units	Target 2013
1	Number (share) of investment projects	%	15
2	Number (share) of “soft” projects and measures - studies	%	10 – 15
3	Number (share) of “soft” projects and measures - methods and tools	%	70 – 75
4	Number of joint organisations (e.g. EGTC) and pilot projects	number	Not quantified



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8. PROJECT SELECTION

The selection of projects to be co-financed and implemented will be based on the pre-defined **minimum eligibility and selection criteria**. Each type of the criteria (eligibility and selection) has a specific purpose. However together should create a **coherent, transparent and functional system** for identification of the highest quality actions eligible for co-financing offering a good value for money to the border region.

Minimum eligibility criteria

The set of the eligibility criteria serves for elimination of the projects that do not meet the minimum formal requirements for receiving an assistance under the OP CBC SK-AT (Structural Funds and national co-financing). The key feature of the eligibility criteria is a clarity. Only the projects passing the eligibility check will be further assessed using the selection criteria.

	Eligibility criterion	Yes	No
1	Standard application form was used and respected		
2	Application is complete and includes the required annexes		
3	Application is filled in bilingual		
4	There is at least one partner from Austria and one from Slovakia		
5	The Lead Partner Principle is respected (minimum 2 joint actions out of: preparation, implementation, financing and staffing are demonstrated)		
6	The activities are implemented in the programme area/for the benefit of the programme		
7	The lead partner and direct project partners are eligible beneficiaries (under the specific priority and activity field)		
8	ERDF co-financing does not exceed the maximum co-financing rate set for the corresponding priority		
9	The partnership statement(s) is presented in the given format and signed by all direct project partners		
10	The co-financing statement(s) is presented		
11	The project is to be implemented between January 1 st , 2007 and 30 th of June, 2015		



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Selection criteria

The quality of the projects found eligible for assistance under the programme will be assessed against the defined selection criteria. The following types of the selection criteria will be used:

- **Consistency with the programme objectives** – extent of the projects' contribution to the programme and priority objectives,
- **Project maturity** – is the project ready to start after its approval and produce sustainable outcomes during its lifetime,
- **Compliance with efficiency and effectiveness principles** – does the project provide reasonable outputs and results for the assistance it receives, does it respond to the actual demand.

The list of the minimum selection criteria will be presented in the Programme Manual after its approval by the Monitoring Committee.



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9. INDICATIVE FINANCING PLAN

In accordance with Article 53(3) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the contribution from the ERDF to eligible expenditures incurred by Lead partners and project partners located in Austria and Slovakia shall be up to 85% in priorities 1 and 2.

In accordance with Article 46 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the limit for Technical Assistance is set at 6% of the total ERDF amount allocated to the programme Slovakia – Austria 2007-2013.

The ERDF co-financing rate for Technical Assistance (priority 3) is 50% and the national co-financing rate from the Member States is 50%. The Member States will contribute to the Technical Assistance budget in proportion to their individual share of total ERDF funding.

The total budget for technical assistance is EUR 7,188.762 Mio.

Financing plan of the programme – annual commitments from ERDF (in EUR)

Year	Structural Funding ERDF
2007	8,002,358
2008	8,135,987
2009	8,322,909
2010	8,538,046
2011	8,758,464
2012	8,967,402
2013	9,181,189
Total 2007-2013	59,906,355

Financing plan of the programme – total financial allocations for the whole programming period (in EUR)

	Community funding (a)	National public funding (b)	National private funding (c)	Total funding (d) = (a)+(b)+(c)	Co-financing rate (e) = (a)/(d)	EIB contributions	Other funding
Priority axis 1 ERDF	27,193,987	4,798,939	-	31,992,926	85%	-	-
Priority axis 2 ERDF	29,117,987	5,138,468	-	34,256,455	85%	-	-
Priority axis 3 ERDF	3,594,381	3,594,381	-	7,188,762	50%	-	-
Total	59,906,355	13,531,788	-	73,438,143	82%	-	-



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10. JOINT STRUCTURES OF CO-OPERATION AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBC-PROGRAMME SLOVAKIA-AUSTRIA

References to new Structural Funds Regulations included in this chapter are related to the following Regulations:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, hereafter referred to as **General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006**;
- Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999, hereafter referred to as **ERDF Regulation (EC) 1080/2006**;
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund, hereafter referred to as **Implementing Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006**;
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2035/2005 of 12 December 2005 amending Regulation (EC) No 1681/94 concerning irregularities and the recovery of sums wrongly paid in connection with the financing of the structural policies and the organisation of an information system in this field.

10.1 Organisational structures of the programme implementation (functional organisation)

10.1.1 Administrative structures (Implementing Bodies)

Monitoring Committee	Representatives of all regions and relevant federal institutions involved in the programme
Managing Authority	City of Vienna, Department for EU Strategy and Economic Development
Certifying Authority	Federal Chancellery Austria; Division IV/4 supported by ERP-Fund
Joint Technical Secretariat	Staff integrated in the institutional structure of the Managing Authority
Regional Bodies	Regional representatives of Bratislava, Burgenland, Lower Austria, Trnava, Vienna
Audit Authority	Federal Chancellery Austria; Division IV/3 (in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic)



Monitoring Committee (MC)

In accordance with Article 63 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Member States participating in the programme shall set up a joint Monitoring Committee, in agreement with the Managing Authority, within three months starting from the date of the notification of the Commission's decision approving the programme to the Member States. The Monitoring Committee shall be chaired by the Managing Authority. Decisions by the Monitoring Committee shall be made by consensus among the Monitoring Committee members and may be taken via written procedure.

The Monitoring Committee shall satisfy itself as to the effectiveness and quality of the implementation of the operational programme according to Article 66(1) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and provide all tasks laid down in Article 65 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Furthermore the Monitoring Committee shall

- approve the Application Package before the first Call for Proposals is launched. Any amendments to the application package shall be prepared by the Joint Technical Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee;
- be informed of the annual and final reports and of any relevant comments the Commission may make after examining that report;
- select operations for funding (according to Article 19(3) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006);
- decide on operation changes;
- decide on the introduction of thematic Calls for Proposals in case that one priority is not used well and innovative ideas and inputs for operations in specific fields are needed;
- if needed set up additional working groups for specific tasks.

Responsibility of Member States

According to Article 70 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Member States are responsible for the management and control of the Programme, in particular through ensuring that management and control systems are set up in accordance with Article 58 and 62 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and in accordance with Article 13 to 17 of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 and function effectively.

They lay down rules governing their relations with authorities located on their territory and being involved in implementation of the programme. For the Cross-border Co-operation Programme Slovakia-Austria 2007-2013 the Member States are represented by the following authorities on national level:

Slovak Republic
*Ministry of Construction and
Regional Development
Prievozská 2/B
825 25 Bratislava 26*

Austria
*Federal Chancellery
Division IV/4
Ballhausplatz 2
1014 Wien*



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The Slovak Ministry of Construction and Regional Development will be responsible for the preparation of the contracts for national co-financing of the Slovak Lead Partners and Project Partners.

The Member States will ensure that the below mentioned authorities will have access to all information required to discharge their responsibilities. The Member States – based on an agreement in partnership between the participating authorities in the Slovak Republic and in Austria designate the following authorities for the implementation of the programme according to Article 59 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Article 14 of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006:

Managing Authority (MA)

In line with Article 59(1) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Article 14 of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, the Member States agreed that the responsibility of the Managing Authority is carried out by:

*Amt der Wiener Landesregierung,
MA27 - EU-Strategie und Wirtschaftsentwicklung
Schlesingerplatz 2-4, A-1080 Vienna
Austria.*

According to Article 15 of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 the Managing Authority shall be responsible for managing and implementing the operational programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and fulfil the tasks laid down in Article 60 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Furthermore the Managing Authority shall:

- lay down the implementing arrangements for each operation (ERDF subsidy contract with the Lead Partners with a standard frame contract) in agreement with the Lead Partner according to Article 15(2) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006;
- inform the Monitoring Committee of the comments made by the Commission after the annual examination of the programme as defined in Article 67 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;
- collect the interim and final reports of the certified statement of expenditure from the Lead Partners and submit the payment claims to the Certifying Authority.

In accordance with Article 59(3) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Managing Authority shall carry out its tasks in full accordance with the institutional, legal and financial systems of Austria.

Although the Managing Authority bears overall responsibility for the programme, specific tasks related to the operative management of the Joint Technical Secretariat and Technical Assistance (i.e. employment, contracting, payments) can be delegated to a subsidiary body of the City of Vienna.

Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)



According to Art. 14(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 the Managing Authority shall set up a Joint Technical Secretariat for support to the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee, and, where appropriate the Audit Authority.

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall be incorporated in the institutional structure of the Managing Authority and located at the same place, that is Vienna. In order to ensure presence for Slovak Lead Partners and Project Partners as well as for Slovak Regional Bodies, staff of the Joint Technical Secretariat shall have regularly presence in Slovakia. Therefore a working place shall be set up within the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava. All staff of the Joint Technical Secretariat shall be contracted by the Managing Authority.

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall be responsible for the following day-to-day operational tasks:

- (a) Assisting the Managing Authority to organise the Monitoring Committee and provide it with the documents required to permit the quality of the implementation of the operational programme to be monitored in the light of its specific goals by:
 - organising the Monitoring Committee meetings;
 - bearing overall responsibility for the assessment of applications and for this they can consult the experts/regions;
 - making proposals to the Monitoring Committee on applications based on own assessment and experts'/regions' assessment if consulted;
 - preparing the documentation before and minutes after the meetings;
 - informing the LPs on the results of the Monitoring Committee decisions;
 - confirming the fulfilment of conditions and fulfilling the administrative management of external tasks and services, e.g. interpreting and translation services;
- (b) Assisting the Managing Authority and Monitoring Committee to ensure that proposals are selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme and that they comply with applicable Community and national rules for the whole of their implementation period by participating in the evaluation of the applications along defined eligibility and selection criteria;
- (c) Providing technical support to selected Lead Partners during the whole operation implementation process;
- (d) Assisting the Managing Authority to ensure that there is a system for recording and storing accounting records in computerised form for each operation under the operational programme and that the data on implementation necessary for financial management, monitoring, verifications, audits and evaluation are collected by administrating and updating the Central Monitoring System ;
- (e) Assisting the Managing Authority to set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of Article 90 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 by:
 - collecting progress reports from the Lead Partners;
 - assessing the implementation of operations;
 - drawing up reports on the programme implementation;



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- (f) Assisting the Managing Authority to draw up and, after approval by the Monitoring Committee, submit to the Commission the annual and final reports on implementation by providing financial and statistical data;
- (g) Assisting the Managing Authority to ensure compliance with the information and publicity requirements laid down in Article 69 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 by:
 - running and updating a programme website;
 - organising information events promoting the programme, including the implementation of a coherent PR-strategy together with the Managing Authority;
 - preparing an Application Package and standardised ERDF subsidy contracts, and
 - organising joint cross-border partner search forums, regional info events etc..

For the fulfilment of the above mentioned tasks, the Joint Technical Secretariat may consult the Regional Bodies.

Further, the Joint Technical Secretariat shall assist the Audit Authority:

- in organising Financial Control Group meetings;
- by sending the relevant documents before and the minutes after the meeting to the Financial Control Group.

Tasks and responsibilities of the Joint Technical Secretariat will be laid down in Rules of Procedures in agreement with the Managing Authority.

The Regional Bodies participating in the programme are:

Austria

*Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH
Technologiezentrum Eisenstadt
Marktstraße 3, A-7000 Eisenstadt*

*Amt der Wiener Landesregierung
MA 27 – EU-Strategie und Wirtschaftsentwicklung
Dezernat Internationale Kooperationen
Schlesingerplatz 2, A-1080 Wien*

*Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung
Abteilung Raumordnung und Regionalpolitik, Geschäftsstelle für EU-Regionalpolitik
Landhausplatz 1, A-3109 St. Pölten*

Slovakia

*Úrad Bratislavského samosprávneho kraja
Sabinovská 16, 820 05 Bratislava*

*Úrad Trnavského samosprávneho kraja
Starhájaska 10, 917 01 Trnava*

The specific tasks of the Regional Bodies could include the following:

- (a) Assisting the Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat in assuring the compliance with the information and publicity requirements laid down in Article 69 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 by:



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- organising joint cross-border information events promoting the programme, including the implementation of a coherent PR-strategy together with the Managing Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat;
 - contributing to the development of an Application Package developed by the Joint Technical Secretariat;
 - disseminating the outcomes of the operations (overview on regional operations, operation results according to cross-border and regional objectives, awareness raising of EU-funding etc.);
- (b) Providing advice to the Lead Partners and Project Partners regarding eligibility, content, national co-financing etc.;
- (c) Participation in a cross-border Regional Body network for information exchange and discussion on the upgrading of the operation quality of operations in preparation;
- (d) If consulted, contributing to the process of assessment of submitted applications under the responsibility of and coordinated and monitored by the Joint Technical Secretariat by giving inputs concerning regional strategies, cross-border impact and adequacy of the partnership (in terms of fulfilment of organisational and legal requirements as well as technical and economic capacity);

Certifying Authority (CA)

According to Article 14 of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 the programme partners agreed that the function of the Certifying Authority within the meaning of Article 59(1) lit. b of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 shall be carried out by

*Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria
Division IV/4 – Coordination Spatial Planning and Regional Policy
Ballhausplatz 2, A-1014 Vienna
e-mail: iv4@bka.gv.at*

The functions and responsibilities of the Certifying Authority are laid down in Article 61 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. The Certifying Authority is additionally responsible for:

- according to Article 14 (1) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 it receives payments made by the Commission and, as a general rule, shall make the payments to the Lead Partner;
- according to Article 17 (2) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 ensures that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Partner;
- at the latest by 30 April every year, sending the Commission a provisional forecast of its likely payment applications for the current financial year and the subsequent financial year (according to Article 76(3) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006);
- posting any interest generated by the pre-financing (according to Article 83 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006) to the programme, being regarded as resource for the Member States participating in the programme as national public contribution. It shall be



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declared to the Commission at the time of the final closure of the programme (according to Article 84 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006);

On behalf of the Certifying Authority the above listed operative tasks are performed by

ERP Fund
Ungargasse 37, A-1031 Wien
E-mail: monitoring2007@awsg.at

Towards the European Commission the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria keeps fully responsible and represents the Certifying Authority amongst others by signing the certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment.

Audit Authority (AA)

Within the meaning of Article 62 of General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and according to Article 14 (2) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 the function of the Audit Authority responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system shall be carried out by:

Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria
Division IV/3 – Finanzkontrolle des Europäischen Fonds für Regionalentwicklung (EFRE)
Ballhausplatz 2,
A-1014 Vienna
e-mail: iv3@bka.gv.at

In close cooperation with the relevant body on the Slovak side:

Ministry of Finance of Slovak republic
Štefanovičova 5
817 82 Bratislava
Slovakia

The responsibilities of the Audit Authority are laid down in Article 62 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Within the meaning of Article 14 (2) of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 the Audit Authority of the operational programme shall be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative of each Member State participating in the operational programme and carrying out the duties provided for in Article 62 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. The group of auditors shall be set up at latest within three months of the decision approving the operational programme. It shall draw up its own rules of procedure and be chaired by the Audit Authority of the operational programme.

The Audit Authority ensures that the audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards. The Audit Authority is functionally independent from the Division IV/4 of the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria acting as Certifying Authority. Furthermore the Audit Authority is neither involved in programme management nor in the implementation of any single operation.



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Central Monitoring System (CMS)

Within the meaning of Article 60 lit. c of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 the Managing Authority shall ensure that there is a system for recording and storing in computerised form accounting records for each operation. For the collection of data a Central Monitoring System has been established at the

ERP Fund

Ungargasse 37, A-1030 Wien

E-mail: monitoring2007@awsg.at

Each individual operation will be mapped by the IT-system according to a specific data set. This set of data, which has to be collected at the level of individual operations, will be agreed between programme partners before implementation of the programme starts. It will not include only obligatory information according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 but additionally provide information in order to support optimal implementation of the operational programme and for evaluation purposes.

Data will be reported to the CMS by the JTS. The reporting Regional Bodies and the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of SR shall support the JTS with relevant information related to national co-financing. The integration of data into the CMS and their maintenance and updating is done by the JTS. The MA confirms the correctness of data that is reported to the CMS.

Data sent by JTS to the CMS shall be considered as official data used for certificate and statement of expenditure, application for payment, annual reports on implementation, evaluations, audits of operations etc. Monitoring data shall be made available by the CMS to the MA, Member States, CA, AA, RBs and the European Commission. By means of CMS the necessary information for electronic data transfer will be generated as well.

10.1.2 Financial control

Considering the value of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality the Member states involved in the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Slovakia-Austria shall have the primary responsibility for the control of the interventions. In order to ensure the effectiveness, legality and sustainable impact of ERDF co-financed operations within the time period and the area of the cross-border programme, the members of the programming group agreed on setting up a proper functioning control system. In light of sound cooperation both with the Commission and between the bodies involved in the programme, uniform quality standards for the certification of expenditures and of payments shall be guaranteed and will contribute to a smooth management of the programme.

Validation of expenditure

According to Article 16(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 each Member State shall set up a control system making it possible to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared for operations or parts of operations implemented on its territory, and the compliance of such expenditure and of related operations, or parts of those operations, with Community and its national rules.



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For this purpose each Member State designates controllers responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each beneficiary (Lead Partner or Project Partner) participating in the operation.

The responsibility is given to:

- in the Slovak Republic

*Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of Slovak Republic
Regional Development Support Agency
Prievozská 2B
825 25 Bratislava 26
E-mail: interreg@build.gov.sk*

- in Austria

According to a Federal Constitutional Act, based on Art. 15a B-VG – the responsibility is taken over by the following authorities in the Länder:

*Controlling Department of the Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH
Technologiezentrum Eisenstadt
Marktstraße 3, A-7000 Eisenstadt*

*Amt der Wiener Landesregierung,
MA 27 EU-Strategie und Wirtschaftsentwicklung,
Dezernat Ausgabenkontrolle
Schlesingerplatz 2-4, A-1080 Wien*

*Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung,
Gruppe Raumordnung, Umwelt und Verkehr
Landhausplatz 1, A-3109 St. Pölten*

In exceptional cases, the control according to Article 16 of ERDF Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006 can be delegated to another experienced authority – based on the provisions of the Federal Constitutional Act of the Republic Austria according to Art. 15a B-VG.

It shall be agreed during the application process which of the regional financial controllers are responsible for the Lead Partner and Project Partners. This decision shall be laid down in the ERDF subsidy contract.

Taking into account that

- a) according to Article 15(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 the Managing Authority shall satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been validated by the controller referred to in Article 16(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 and that
- b) there will be only one ERDF-subsidy contract for each operation between the Managing Authority and the Lead Partner (“Lead Partner Principle”).

The controllers ensure validation of expenditure in terms of delivery of the products and services co-financed, soundness of the expenditure declared, compliance of such expenditure with Community and national rules as set out in Art. 16 (1) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006.

The controllers ensure, amongst others, that for each interim or final report of an operation, detailed and consistent reports are made available, which allow a clear identification of and consistency with the related certifications of expenditure.

According to Art. 20(1)(d) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006 the Lead Partner shall verify that the expenditure declared by the Project Partners participating in the operation have been validated by the controllers as laid out in the subsidy contract and that the expenditure presented by the Project Partners correspond to the activities agreed between the Lead Partners and Project Partners.

Each Project Partner (Lead Partners and Project Partners) participating in the operation assumes full responsibility in the event of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared (Article 20(2)(a) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006).

Regional bodies shall support the operative framework of controllers in data collection related to national co-financing which is necessary for financial management, verification and audit.

Further details specifying the certification of expenditure including bilingual standardised forms and information on eligible expenditure and reporting requirements will be laid out in audit guidelines.

The Managing Authority sets out written standards and procedures for the controllers, in order to comply with the requirements as described in Article 16 (1) of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006. By means of these standards and procedures should be ensured that the programme's control system could verify whether

- the expenditure declared is real,
- co-financed products and services have been delivered in accordance with the ERDF contract,
- applications of reimbursement by the beneficiary are correct,
- operations and expenditures comply with community and national rules (e.g. public procurement, state aid),
- double financing of expenditures with other Community or national schemes and with other programming period is avoided,
- verifications follow the procedures as they will be laid down in an audit guideline.

A detailed description of the control system will be provided through the description of the management and control system as requested by Article 71 of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

With reference to Article 3 (1) of Regulation (EC) No 2035/2005 all relevant Programme bodies will provide quarterly reports on irregularities occurred to the Audit Authority, which will submit a report to the European Commission.

The Member States will set up a formalised procedure to deal with irregularities in compliance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 2035/2005. This procedure will – amongst others – set out detailed rules and responsibilities for reporting obligations, joint controlling standards, recovery of unduly paid funds, liabilities and coordination between the responsible authorities on either side.



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Recovery of ERDF funding

Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities and for recovering amounts unduly paid (according to Article 70(1)(b) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006), the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Partner. The Project Partners shall repay the Lead Partner the amounts unduly paid in accordance with the agreement existing between them (according to Article 17(2) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006).

If the Lead Partner does not succeed in securing repayment from a Project Partner, the Member State on whose territory the relevant Project Partner is located shall reimburse the Certifying Authority the amount unduly paid to that Project Partner (according to Article 17(3) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006).

10.1.3 Evaluation of the Operational Programme

In order to support the monitoring of the operational programme it has been agreed that evaluation of the programme shall be carried out during the programming period according to Article 47 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

The Evaluation System of the OP will be based on the Ex-Ante Evaluation (including the Strategic Environmental Assessment) as well as an ongoing Evaluation during implementation, according to Art. 48 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. The Final Report according to Art. 67 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 will be provided by the Managing Authority. Moreover, the Managing Authority will cooperate with the Commission in relation to the Commission's responsibility to carry out an Ex-Post Evaluation as set out in Art. 49 of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Evaluations will be based on the system of indicators as described in the Chapter 7 and information as provided by the CMS (according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006. Evaluations will also assess impacts, undertake qualitative research and focus on capitalisation of programme results as well as optimisation and evolution of the programme. To these ends further data which is not available through the monitoring system can be gathered by the evaluators through supplementary methods (e.g. interviews, research, etc.).

Evaluation results will be presented to the MC and Commission, with reference to Art. 48 (3) of General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. Evaluations shall provide support to the MC in order to monitor the programme continuously, to assess the state of implementation and to timely detect needs for adoptions.

Evaluations executed during the programming period 2007-2013 will be of:

- Strategic nature (strategy related) – aiming at examination of the evolution of the programme in relation to the Community and national priorities,
- Operational nature (performance related) – should be linked with the programme monitoring focusing on the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the assistance.

Activities in the field of evaluation will comply with following principles:

- Proportionality – reflecting the financial allocations and scope of the programme,



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- Independence – functional independence from certifying and audit authorities, and preferably from Managing Authority,
- Partnership – consultation and involvement of relevant partners including regular communication with EC,
- Transparency – making evaluation results publicly available.

The detailed evaluation plan will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee (presented in the Programme Manual).



10.2 Procedural regulations governing the programme implementation with relation to operation (procedural organisation)

10.2.1 Co-ordination at programme level

	Monitoring Committee	Managing Authority (JTS)	Regional Body	Regional financial controller	Certifying Authority
Consulting the potential project holder			X		
Operation Application		X			
Operation Assessment					
– compatibility with Community policies/regulations		X			
– compatibility with cross-border and regional strategies		X	O		
Operation documentation to the Monitoring Committee		X	O		
Approval of operations	X				
Information to the Lead Partner on decision in Monitoring Committee		X	O		
ERDF Subsidy Contract		X			
Administration of the Central Monitoring System		X			O
Operation monitoring (evaluation of the progress)					
– Implementation according to Community policies/regulations		X			
– Implementation according to cross-border and regional strategies			X		
Operation Changes					
– preparation		X	O		
– decision	X				
– legal implementation		X			
Public Relations activities					
– communication		X	O		
– dissemination			X		
Financial Control					
– Validation of expenditure			O	X	O
– Control System and audit trail		X			
Payment system					
– Application for reimbursement		X			O
– Payment of ERDF					X

x ... responsibility, o ... assistance/co-ordination



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10.2.2 Administration of the programme at operational level

During the operation cycle different implementing bodies are involved. They shall support and monitor the Lead Partner and Project Partners during the whole lifetime of the operation.

Lead Partners and Project Partners

The term “Lead Partner” used in this programme shall be a synonym for the term “lead beneficiary” as defined in Article 20(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, the term “Project Partner” shall be a synonym for the term “other beneficiary” as defined in Article 20(2) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006.

Taking into account both Article 2(4) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, whereby the term “beneficiary” is defined as “an operator, body or firm, whether public or private, responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations” and the definition of “public expenditure” and Article 2(5) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the following legal entities may be funded by the programme as Lead Partners of an operation:

- a) National (governmental), regional and local authorities;
- b) Bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 1(9) of Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004 on the co-ordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts. This means any body
 - established under public or private law mainly for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest,
 - having legal personality,
 - financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those bodies; or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law;
- c) Associations formed by one or several regional or local authorities;
- d) Associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law as defined under b).

Organisations not falling in one of the categories a) – d) are welcome to participate in operations. Specific conditions will be formulated in the application package.

For each operation as defined in Article 2(3) of the General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Lead Partner shall be appointed by the Project Partners among themselves. The Lead Partner shall assume the following responsibilities (according to Article 20(1) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006):

- It shall lay down the arrangements for its relations with the Project Partners participating in the operation in an agreement comprising, *inter alia*, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- It shall be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation;



- It shall ensure that the expenditure presented by the Project Partners participating in the operation has been paid for the purpose of implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between the Project Partners participating in the operation;
- It shall verify that the expenditure presented by the Project Partners participating in the operation has been validated by the controllers according to the ERDF Subsidy Contract;
- It shall be responsible for transferring the ERDF contribution to the Project Partners participating in the operation.

Each Project Partner participating in the operation shall:

- assume responsibility in the event of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared (according to Article 20(2)(a) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006);
- repay the Lead Partner the amounts unduly paid in accordance with the agreement existing between them (according to Article 17(2) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006);
- in case the Project Partner is located in a Member State outside the programme area, i.e. in case of application of Article 21(2) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006; inform the responsible authorities of this Member State about its participation in an operation (according to Article 20(2)(b) of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006).

Operation life cycle

The administrative work related to the procedures for granting assistance to the individual operations under the Operational Programme Slovakia-Austria will be managed according to the following rules, which may be further specified by rules of procedure¹² between the Managing Authority/Joint Technical Secretariat, and, if applicable, will be approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Project development and Application

Potential project holder will be adequately informed by the Joint Technical Secretariat on behalf of the Managing Authority, on the programme objectives, the criteria for obtaining ERDF and the application and implementation procedures to be followed. The provisions of information to the potential beneficiaries are laid down in the communication plan drafted by the Managing Authority and approved by the Commission.

Application Forms shall be submitted to the Joint Technical Secretariat in electronic form (for uploading into the Central Monitoring System) and in signed hard copy version (for evidence of authenticity and legality of the applicant) by the Lead Partner. The Application Form consist of a standardised application form, a Letter of Intent of all participating partners and a signed Co-financing Statement for national funds.

Assessment of Application

The organisation of the assessment process of submitted applications is done under the overall responsibility of the Joint Technical Secretariat and the Regional Bodies can be consulted. The latter can contribute to the assessment in terms of compliance with cross-border and regional interests by dealing with these topics:

¹² To be summarised in the Programme Manual.

- Regional relevance and accordance with regional strategies;
- Adequacy and quality of the Partnership;
- Avoiding the overlap with already existing operations (double funding);
- Gender Mainstreaming.

The Joint Technical Secretariat has the overall responsibility for the assessment regarding the compliance with EU and programme requirements as well as ensuring fulfilment of MA tasks related to operations:

- Eligibility of operation (checking the minimum eligibility criteria);
- Completeness and correctness of relevant documents;
- Accordance of the operation objectives with objectives of the programme;
- Assessment of quality of operations according to the selection criteria with the particular view on the cross-border dimension;
- Accordance of the operation design with EU regulations (geographic area, duration, eligibility of Project Partners and cost categories);
- Coherence of projected budget and activities;
- Correct selection of indicators;
- Correct application of Art. 21 of the ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 related to eligible geographic area and availability of budget within 20% rule.

In case of additional requirements in the evaluation phase the Lead Partners gets informed by the Joint Technical Secretariat.

Decision on Application

On basis of the assessment of JTS as well as inputs received in the context of the consultation of regions and/or experts, the JTS forwards the bilingual summary together with its recommendation to the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Each application will be approved by consensus of all Monitoring Committee members.

The Lead Partners get informed on the results of the Monitoring Committee by the Joint Technical Secretariat. In case of conditions formulated by the Monitoring Committee the Lead Partners should submit a revised application form to the Joint Technical Secretariat complying with the conditions set by the Monitoring Committee.

Contracting

The bilingual ERDF subsidy contract including the Application form is prepared by the Joint Technical Secretariat and issued under the national law of the Managing Authority.

If applicable, the contracts on national Co-financing is closed between the Lead Partner/Project Partner and the co-financing public institution(s). A signed copy of this contract is sent to the Joint Technical Secretariat for registration into the Central Monitoring System.

The Partnership Agreement laying down the mutual responsibilities within the partnership according to Article 20 of ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 is signed by the Lead Partner and the Project Partners. A signed copy of this document is sent to the Joint Technical Secretariat for registration into the Central Monitoring System.



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Financial Control

The financial controllers of the Lead Partner and Project Partners will be stated in the contract. Each Project Partner has to submit its declared expenditure including the relevant documents to the respective financial controller for validation. The Lead Partner coordinates the process of validation of expenditure of each Project Partner in order to keep the set deadline for reporting according to the subsidy contract.

The responsible financial controller validates the expenditures of its Project Partners and the Lead Partner collects the declarations on eligible expenditures from its Project Partners. The Lead Partners adds a summarised financial report and submits it to the financial controller of the Lead Partner. The financial controller of the Lead Partner verifies that declarations of expenditure for all involved Project Partners have been filed correctly and that the expenditure correspond to the activities agreed between the Lead Partner and Project Partners.

The financial report as a part of the progress report is submitted to the Joint Technical Secretariat.

Payment

The Joint Technical Secretariat checks the completeness and correctness of the progress report and the statement of the financial controller of the Lead Partner. If regarded satisfactory, the Joint Technical Secretariat informs the Managing Authority, which after following its audit trail, asks the Certifying Authority for reimbursement.

The Certifying Authority checks the correctness of the audit trail and disburses the expenditures to the Lead Partner who distributes the incoming ERDF according to the contract and certified costs.

Changes in operations

Despite the good functioning of sound management and control systems changes in operations seem to be inevitable and happen in nearly every operation. The approval and processing of changes in operations follow specific rules that shall be agreed between the MC, MA and JTS. The changes of operations together with rules of procedures for acceptance and/or refusal of proposed changes will be described in detail in the Programme and Implementation Manual (further "PM/IM") serving as guidance for the applicants. The detailed description in the PM/IM will state the handling of minor and major changes of the operations. It is expected that when handling major changes of operations defined in the PM/IM written approval of the Managing Authority/Monitoring Committee will be required.

The operation life cycle is shown in the scheme below:



Figure 3: Operation life cycle (page 1)

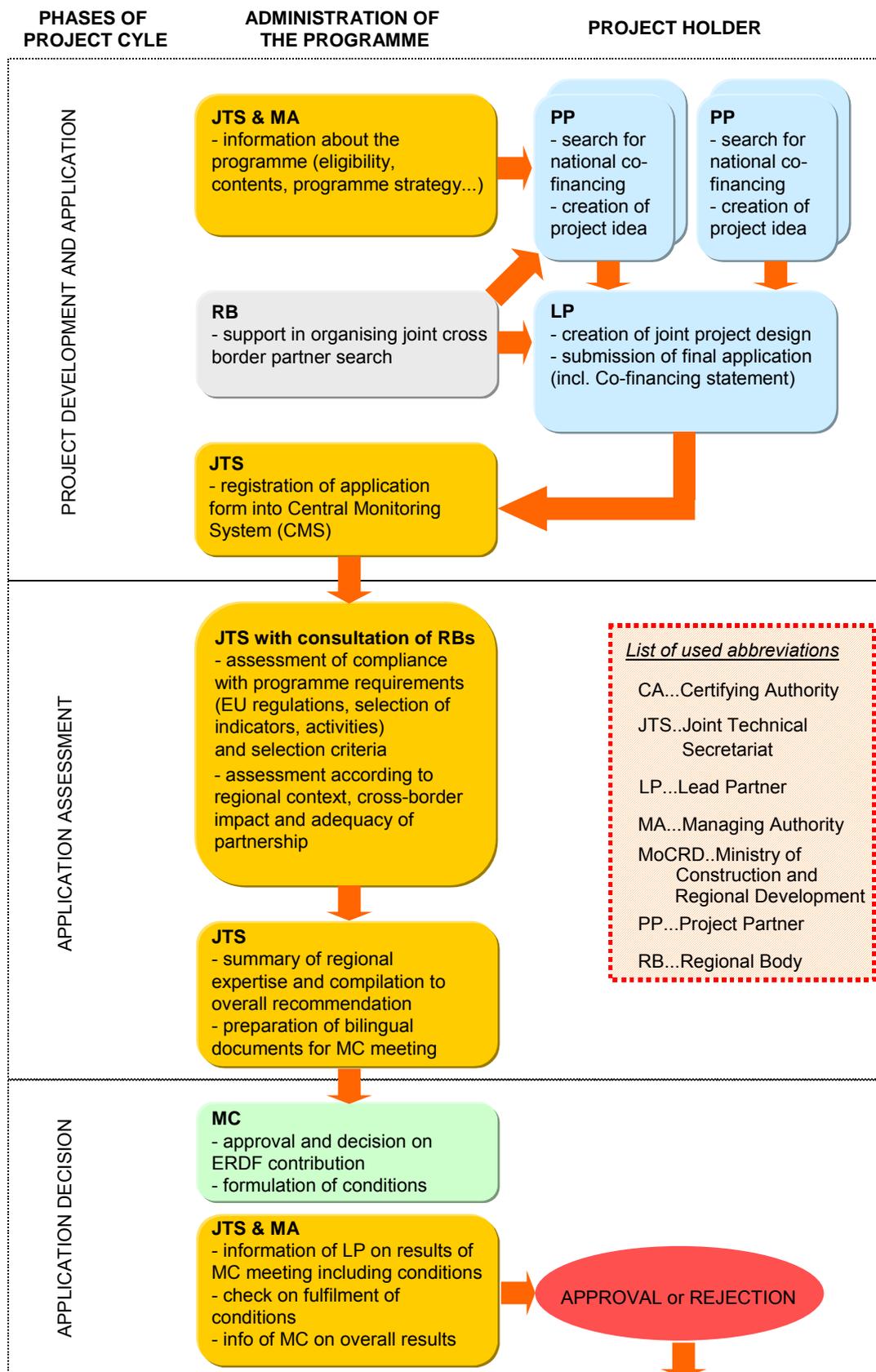
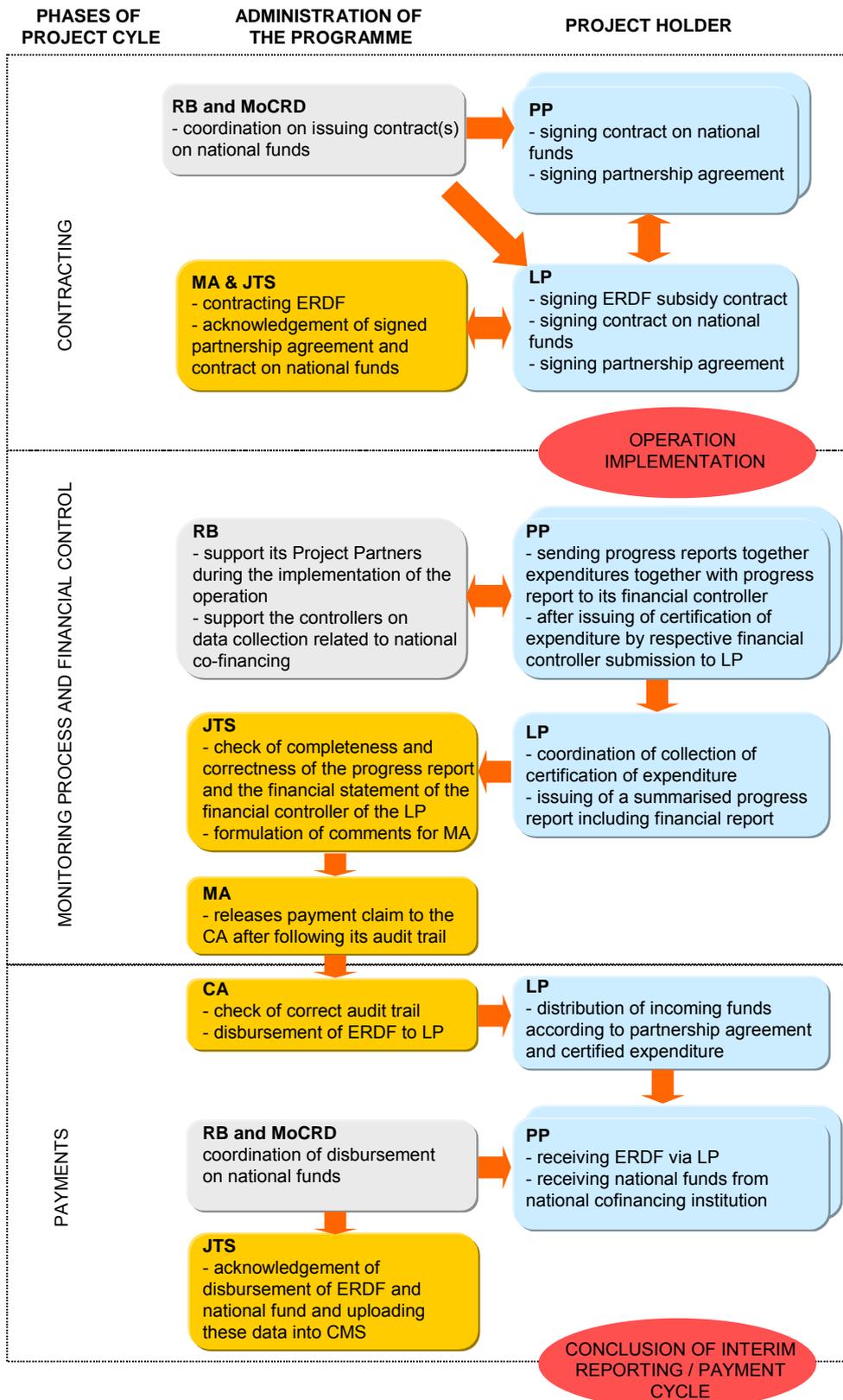




Figure 4: Operation life cycle (page 2)



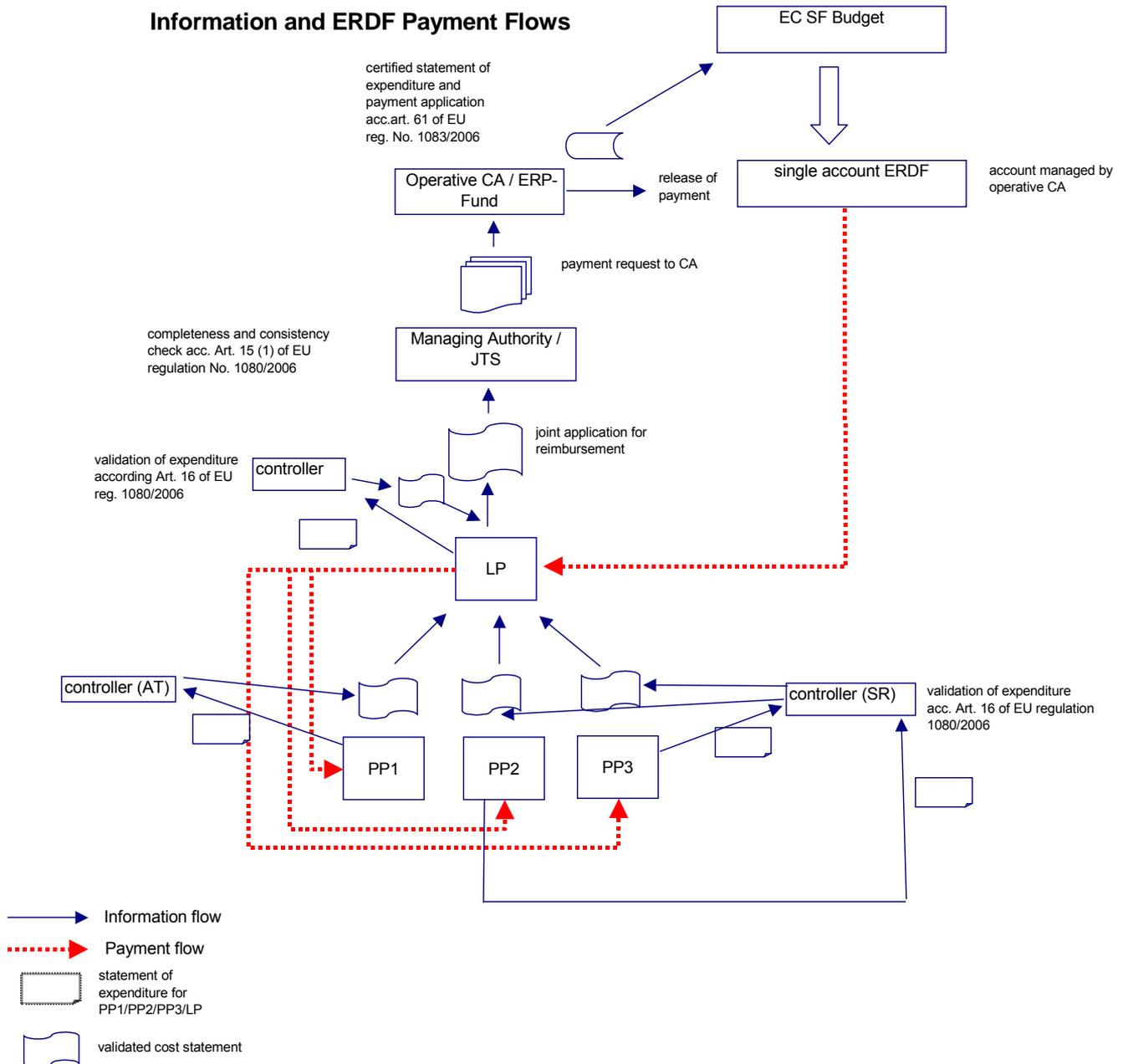


10.2.3 Information and payment flows

Figure 5: ERDF Financial Flows

Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Austria - Slovakia 2007 - 2013

Information and ERDF Payment Flows





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11. MAJOR PROJECTS

No major projects within the meaning of Article 39 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 are expected during the programming period under the OP CBC SK-AT.



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ANNEX



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A1 Additional tables

Table 7: Area, inhabitants and population density

Regional unit	Area in km ²	Inhabitants 2005 (AT)/2004 (SK)		Density (inh./km ²)
		Total	Women	
Nuts III region				
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	3,357	239,225	121,073	71.3
Niederösterreich-Süd	3,367	249,900	128,032	74.2
Sankt Pölten	1,230	145,315	74,340	118.1
Waldviertel	4,615	222,255	113,183	48.2
Weinviertel	2,412	123,366	62,699	51.1
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	2,722	286,489	146,326	105.2
Wiener Umland-Südteil	1,475	303,046	156,467	205.5
Mittelburgenland	701	37,505	19,144	53.5
Nordburgenland	1,793	143,196	73,283	79.9
Vienna	415	1,626,440	851,857	3,922.4
Niederösterreich	19,178	1,569,596	802,120	81.8
Burgenland	3,965	278,215	142,310	70.2
AUSTRIA (border region)	22,086	3,376,737	1,746,404	152.9
AUSTRIA (total)	83,871	8,206,524	4,220,228	97.8
Bratislava	2,052	601,132	316,734	292.5
Trnava	4,147	553,198	283,855	133.3
SLOVAK REPUBLIC (border region)	6,199	1,154,330	600,589	186.2
SLOVAK REPUBLIC (total)	49,034	5,384,822	2,771,332	109.2

Source: Statistics Austria, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 2005 (for Slovakia the information relates to end year data)



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Table 8: Population structure in 2001 and population trend 1991-2005

Regional unit	Population trend (change in %)				Share of under-15-year-olds		Share of over-60-year-olds	
	1991-2001		2001-2005 (AT), 2001-2004 (SK)		2001 (AT)/2004 (SK) in %			
Nuts III region	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	3.1	2.6	0.7	0.6	18.9	18.2	20.7	23.7
Niederösterreich-Süd	3.9	3.8	1.5	1.3	16.7	15.8	22.6	25.8
Sankt Pölten	3.6	2.8	2.0	1.8	17.1	16.2	21.7	24.8
Waldviertel	0.2	-0.8	-1.0	-1.1	16.8	16.0	24.4	28.1
Weinviertel	1.5	0.4	-0.3	-0.6	16.3	15.6	24.6	28.7
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	11.0	10.5	3.0	3.0	17.1	16.3	21.2	23.8
Wiener Umland-Südteil	7.7	7.3	3.3	3.4	16.3	15.4	21.5	24.1
Mittelburgenland	-1.0	-1.4	-1.6	-1.9	14.9	14.7	26.1	30.1
Nordburgenland	6.3	5.8	1.6	1.5	15.6	14.9	23.3	26.7
Vienna	0.7	-0.8	4.9	4.0	14.7	13.6	21.7	25.4
Niederösterreich	4.9	4.3	1.5	1.4	17.1	16.2	22.2	25.3
Burgenland	2.5	2.0	0.2	0.1	15.2	14.6	24.1	27.6
AUSTRIA	3.0	2.5	2.2	1.8	16.8	15.9	21.1	24.2
Bratislava	-1.2	-	0.3	0.4	13.5	6.6	16.9	10.3
Trnava	1.7	-	0.4	0.5	15.8	7.7	16.2	9.8
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	2.0	-	0.1	0.2	17.1	8.3	16.0	9.7

Source: Statistics Austria, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SO SR), Regional Comparisons in the Slovak Republic 2001, 2004 (SO SR), Population Age Composition 2004 (SO SR)

Table 9: Level of economic development (GDP (PPS)/Inhabitant)

Regional unit	GDP (PPS) per capita 2002	
	Index national = 100	Index EU25 = 100
Nuts III region		
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	72.3	87.3
Niederösterreich-Süd	73.8	89.1
Sankt Pölten	103.3	124.8
Waldviertel	66.3	80.1
Weinviertel	52.2	63.1
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	77.7	93.8
Wiener Umland-Südteil	108.5	131.1
Mittelburgenland	62.5	75.5
Nordburgenland	76.8	92.7
Vienna	143.2	172.9
Niederösterreich	80.6	97.3
Burgenland	67.4	81.5
AUSTRIA	100.0	120.8
Bratislava	225.8	115.4
Trnava	99.8	51.0
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	100.0	51.1

Source: Eurostat



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Table 10: Economic structure of the Austrian part of the region (employees by sectors 2004)

Regional unit	Total	Agri- culture	Share of employees in %			
			Manufacturing/Production of physical goods		Services	
Nuts III region			Total	Construction	Total	Tourism
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	63,127	1.7	46.3	11.9	52.0	6.0
Niederösterreich-Süd	67,521	1.5	46.6	11.3	52.0	6.4
Sankt Pölten	72,396	0.9	23.4	8.3	75.7	3.1
Waldviertel	57,981	4.0	39.9	11.5	56.2	7.2
Weinviertel	21,069	6.0	35.5	14.2	58.5	5.3
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	68,663	6.3	34.0	9.8	59.6	6.1
Wiener Umland-Südteil	132,104	1.3	25.3	6.0	73.3	5.5
Mittelburgenland	8,779	5.3	43.8	21.3	50.9	6.9
Nordburgenland	44,287	5.9	28.0	10.4	66.1	8.1
Vienna	747,515	0.4	22.6	11.7	76.9	6.3
Niederösterreich	506,966	2.4	32.8	9.4	64.8	5.2
Burgenland	81,400	4.3	32.8	12.7	62.9	7.6
AUSTRIA	3,052,336	1.3	29.5	8.6	69.2	7.5

Source: Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger

Table 11: Economic structure of the Austrian part of the region – Women
 (share of female employees by sectors 2004)

Regional unit	Total	Agri- culture	Share of female employees in %			
			Manufacturing/Production of physical goods		Services	
Nuts III region			Total	Construction	Total	Tourism
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	25,441	1.5	27.2	4.5	71.3	11.0
Niederösterreich-Süd	29,125	1.1	28.0	3.8	71.0	10.2
Sankt Pölten	37,216	0.6	9.5	1.9	89.9	4.0
Waldviertel	24,313	3.3	24.1	3.6	72.5	12.3
Weinviertel	9,264	4.3	19.2	5.1	76.4	8.2
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	26,625	5.7	21.1	3.3	73.2	9.2
Wiener Umland-Südteil	52,529	1.1	14.6	1.7	84.3	7.3
Mittelburgenland	3,268	5.3	28.4	7.0	66.3	12.6
Nordburgenland	20,231	4.5	15.0	2.8	80.5	10.0
Vienna	341,663	0.3	10.2	1.7	89.4	6.8
Niederösterreich	219,278	1.9	17.9	2.8	80.2	7.8
Burgenland	37,173	3.4	18.9	3.3	77.8	10.3
AUSTRIA	1,396,110	1.0	15.4	2.3	83.6	10.0

Source: Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger



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Table 12: Economic structure of the Slovak part of the region (share of employees by sectors 2004)

Regional unit Nuts III region	Total	Agriculture and forestry	Share of employees in %		
	absolute		Industry	Construction	Services
Bratislava	370,283	1.3	16.3	6.0	76.4
Trnava	204,670	7.5	30.3	9.5	52.6
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	2,003,577	5.2	27.7	7.5	59.5

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Employment in SR, Regions and Districts 2004

Table 13: Economic structure of the Slovak part of the region – Women
(female employees by sectors 2004)

Regional unit Nuts III region	Total	Agriculture and forestry	Share of female employees in %		
	absolute		Industry	Construction	Services
Bratislava	152,470	0.9	11.4	3.0	84.8
Trnava	83,508	4.9	4.6	12.4	78.1
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	828,504	3.3	23.9	3.8	69.0

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Employment in SR, Regions and Districts 2004

Table 14: Employment trends in the Austrian-Slovak border region

Regional unit Nuts III region	Absolute 2004	Women in % 2004	Dependent employees change in %					
			1995-1999			1999-2004		
			Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	63,127	40.3	6.3	7.8	5.3	5.4	7.3	4.2
Niederösterreich-Süd	67,521	43.1	2.3	3.6	1.5	1.2	6.2	-2.2
Sankt Pölten	72,396	51.4	5.2	7.2	3.6	-	-	-
Waldviertel	57,981	41.9	5.2	5.6	5.0	-1.0	1.4	-2.7
Weinviertel	21,069	44.0	9.7	11.4	8.4	-7.1	-3.0	-10.0
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	68,663	38.8	5.4	8.2	3.7	4.9	5.3	4.6
Wiener Umland-Südteil	132,104	39.8	13.9	14.7	13.5	-	-	-
Mittelburgenland	8,779	37.2	5.0	2.0	6.8	8.5	8.2	8.7
Nordburgenland	44,287	45.7	11.5	14.1	9.5	1.0	1.9	0.3
Vienna	747,515	45.7	6.3	1.4	10.7	-2.9	-1.1	-4.4
Niederösterreich	506,966	43.3	8.1	11.2	5.9	-1.0	0.7	-2.2
Burgenland	81,400	45.7	8.9	10.3	7.8	1.8	2.8	1.0
AUSTRIA	3,052,336	45.7	2.7	5.1	0.9	3.6	5.5	2.1

Source: Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger



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Table 15: The labour market situation in the Slovak part of the region

Regional unit	Employed persons		1999-2004, change in %		
	Total	Women in %	Total	Women	Men
	2004	2004			
Nuts III region					
Bratislava (region)	370,283	41.2	7.3	4.0	9.8
Bratislava (city)	327,797	39.9	5.0	1.8	7.4
Trnava	204,607	40.8	8.7	5.5	11.0
Rest of Slovak Republic	1,428,687	41.5	1.0	-1.2	2.6
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	2,003,577	41.4	2.9	0.4	4.7

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Employment in SR, Regions and Districts 1999, 2004

Table 16: Unemployment in the Austrian-Slovak border region (based on LFS-data)

	Number of unemployed 2004		Unemployment rate 2004, in %		Number of unemployed, change 2000-2004 in %		
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Men
Austria border region	86,800	-*	7.3	-*	49.1	-*	-*
Slovak border region	63,500	33,800	10.3	11.6	-8.1	-1.2	-14.9
Border region total	150,300	-*	8.3	-*	18.1	-*	-*
Austria	194,600	96,700	4.9	5.4	43.0	49.2	37.3
Slovak Republic	483,000	231,800	18.2	19.2	-0.5	5.5	-5.4
EU 25	19,770,300	9,685,000	9.2	10.1	-*	-*	-*

Source: Eurostat (*: at the moment no data available)

Table 17: Structure of the unemployment (based on LFS-data)

	Long term unemployed, 2004 (share in %)		15-25 year-old unemployed persons (share in %)	
	Total	Women	Total	Women
Austria border region	-	-	-*	-*
Slovak border region	-	-	25.4	
Border region total	-	-	-*	-*
Austria	27.5	-	27.5	27.1
Slovak Republic	64.7	-	23.8	20.9
EU 25	44.5	-	23.8	22.6

Source: Eurostat (*: at the moment no data available)



Table 18: Unemployment in the Austrian part of the region

Regional unit	Number of unemployed, 2005		Unemployment rate 2005, in %		Number of unemployed, change 1999-2005 in %		
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Men
Nuts III region							
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	4,972	2,194	5.1	5.4	21.6	17.9	24.8
Niederösterreich-Süd	7,875	3,271	7.3	6.9	15.5	15.7	15.3
Sankt Pölten	4,361	1,901	7.0	6.8	22.9	19.9	25.3
Waldviertel	6,439	2,789	7.2	7.2	8.0	-0.9	15.9
Weinviertel	3,353	1,412	6.6	6.4	24.7	16.2	31.6
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	6,750	2,995	5.4	5.3	28.8	28.6	29.0
Wiener Umland-Südteil	8,765	3,808	6.6	6.2	21.3	18.4	23.6
Mittelburgenland	1,102	494	7.3	8.0	3.8	-3.8	10.8
Nordburgenland	3,851	1,679	6.4	6.4	26.9	22.3	30.6
Vienna	81,436	32,810	11.2	9.4	19.1	14.2	22.6
Niederösterreich	42,600	18,409	6.4	6.2	19.5	15.9	22.4
Burgenland	8,412	3,641	9.0	8.4	15.5	7.7	22.4
AUSTRIA	252,654	108,415	7.2	6.9	13.9	8.1	18.6

Table 19: Unemployment in the Slovak part of the region

Regional unit	Number of unemployed 2004 in thousands		Unemployment rate 2004 in %		Number of unemployed 1999-2004, change in %		
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Men
Nuts III region							
Bratislava	27.0	14.8	8.2	9.3	9.8	18.4	9.8
Trnava	36.0	18.8	12.5	14.4	9.8	10.6	8.2
Slovak Republic	480.7	230.9	18.1	19.1	15.3	21.3	10.3

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: Regional Comparisons in the Slovak Republic 1999, 2004

Table 20: Main indicators – Research and experimental development (R & D)

	Gross domestic expenditures for R&D in % of the GDP 2003	Employed persons in R&D	Gross expenditures for R&D (in %)			
			Enterprises	Universities	State	Private non-profit -sector
Austria	2.20	38,893	67	27	6	0.4
Slovakia	0.58	13,353	56	13	32	0.0
EU25	1.85	2,047,499	63	22	14	1.2

Source: OECD, Statistik Austria

Table 21: Level of education/qualification (ISCED97) in the Austrian-Slovak border region (EUROSTAT)

Regional unit	Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education		Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education		Tertiary education	
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Nuts III region						
Austria	16.7	18.6	64.3	64.6	19.0	16.8
Slovak Republic	5.1	6.5	79.8	77.2	15.1	16.3
EU 25	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Eurostat (no regional data available)

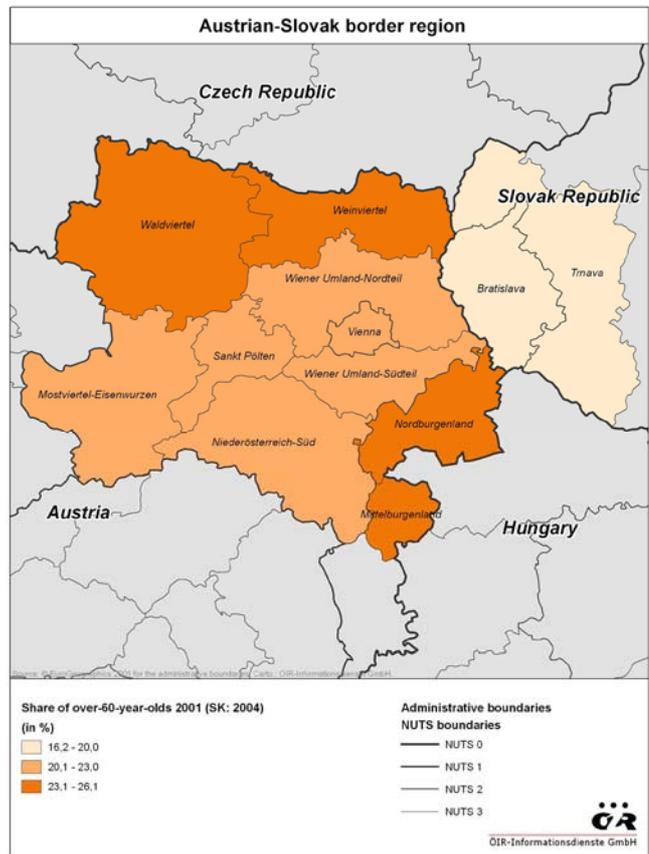
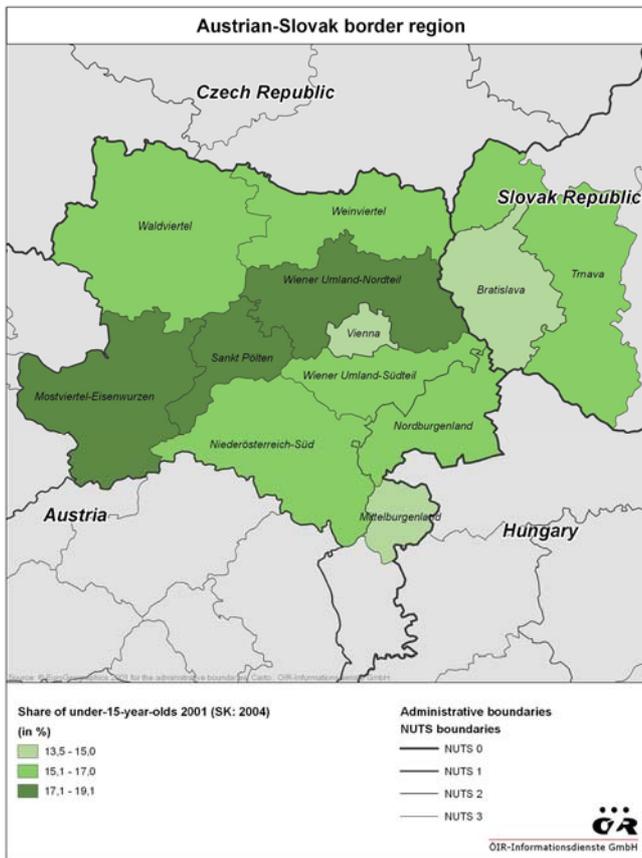


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A2 Additional maps

Map 6: Age structure

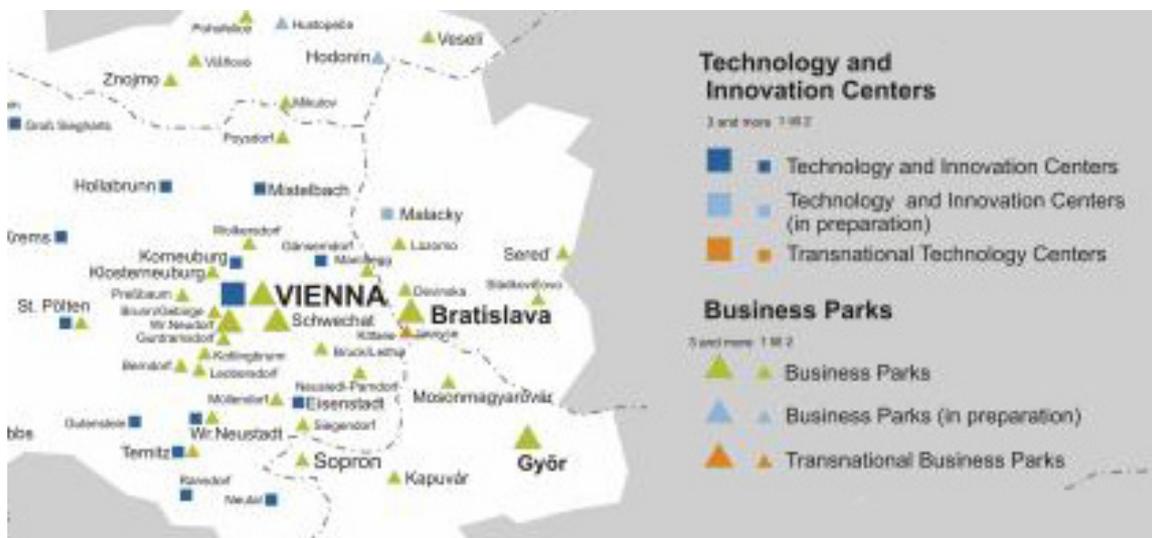
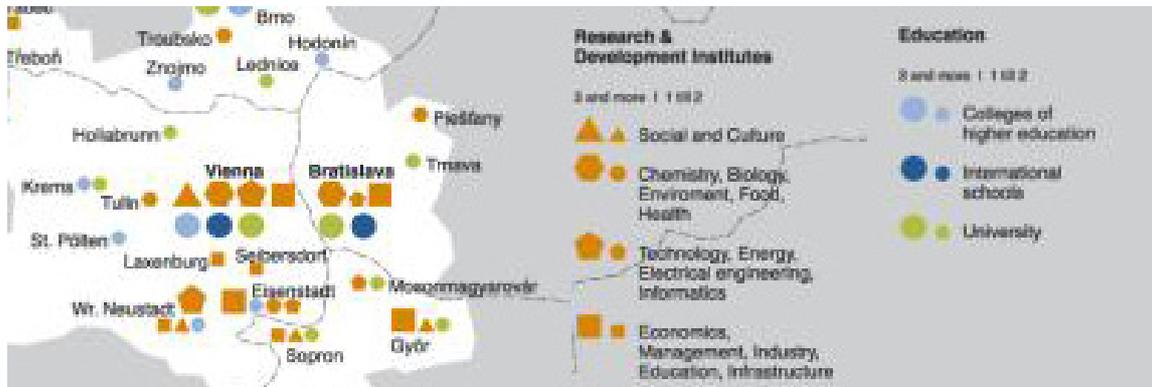




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Map 7: R&D institutes, education, technology and innovation centers, business parks





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Map 8: **Infrastructure of the border regions** (new map in preparation including: road, rail, airport, ports, terminals and logistic centres)





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A3 Detailed SW-Analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Demographic structure and dynamics	<p>Dynamic development of the population due to intra and interregional migration esp. in the regions close to the public transport network</p> <p>International structure of the population in the urban regions</p> <p>Favourable education level of the population and skilled labour force</p>	<p>Low natural growth of the population in the whole border region,</p> <p>Increasing shares of elderly people – aging of the population</p> <p>Social tensions caused by (international) migration flows esp. in urban areas/Social tensions in the suburbs of agglomerations due to migration from abroad</p>
Economic structure and trends – Regional competitiveness	<p>Urban agglomeration are the economic centres and location of international enterprises and headquarters</p> <p>Dynamic economic activities/high economic growth</p> <p>Dynamic development of foreign investment (in Slovakia)/Attractive locations for the foreign direct investments (in Slovakia)</p> <p>Diversified economic structure and high competitiveness</p> <p>Existing industrial traditions and positive climate for industrial activities,</p> <p>Industrial “lead enterprises” and the establishment of enterprises in highly-qualified (high-tech) industries as drivers (e.g. automotive, biotech, agro-industrial complex, machinery...)</p> <p>Growth of economic and export performance</p> <p>Important high-qualified service sector in major cities</p> <p>Dynamic growth of employment in services</p> <p>Intensive agriculture (vegetables, grain , corn, animals) close to urban markets and food industry</p> <p>Special agricultural production (fruits, wine,), esp. wine’s rising international market shares</p> <p>Potential for ecology-oriented agriculture and production, and quality production</p> <p>Development of regional and specific priorities of tourism with partly high qualitative standards</p>	<p>High dependence on the urban labour markets</p> <p>Rural parts of the border region are regions with weak economic structures, high share of agriculture and high share of commuters (great distances)</p> <p>Structural changes and crises lead to rationalisation, reduction of employment</p> <p>Lacking development of cross-border regional competencies and of locations</p> <p>Unequal allocation of the industrial basis</p> <p>Low density of technology and promising production industries, very poorly equipped with qualitatively high production-related services in the rural regions, insufficient international competitiveness of the rural regions</p> <p>Unfavourable structure of the service sector in Vienna (high share of industries in the low-skill job segment such as tourism, commerce)</p> <p>Low intensity of (production-oriented) services in the rural parts of the border region</p> <p>Insufficient level of cooperation in the field of innovations, research and development</p> <p>Partly unfavourable structure and economic situation of farms, high share of sideline farming and commuters</p> <p>Low degree of co-operation between tourism and agriculture to form new offers</p> <p>High pressure regarding competition and adjustment – significant changes in the structure of agricultural production with negative consequences on the regional labour markets</p> <p>Insufficient adaptation of the tourism supply structure to changing trends in demand</p> <p>Lack of joint marketing/strategies in tourism</p> <p>In less developed regions, structural problems in the tourism sector (small hotels, B&B)</p> <p>No existing cross-border destination development and management, and tourism organisation (marketing of the cross-border region)</p>



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	Strengths	Weaknesses
SMEs	<p>High share (AT) and positive development of SMEs with positive effects on employment</p> <p>Gradually involved in the networks and clusters emerging around the large companies</p> <p>Orientation on the sectors with higher added value</p> <p>Implementation of the quality management systems</p>	<p>Low intensity of research and innovation of SMEs, cooperation with R&D centers</p> <p>Few existing co-operation structures of SMEs (technology, innovation, internationalisation)</p> <p>Low intensity of cross-border trade of SMEs, insufficient instruments for support</p> <p>Limited supply of space suitable for business activities (SK)</p> <p>Lack of finances provided by monetary and bank institutions for the short-term needs of SMEs; (limited access of SMEs to a risk capital)</p>
Research and development	<p>Cities are main location of universities and other (national and regional) research centres and other educational facilities</p>	<p>Access of SMEs to support in the fields of technology transfer, few co-operation activities of SMEs with innovation and research institutions, are not highly developed</p> <p>Insufficient integration of SMEs in research and development activities</p> <p>Insufficient co-operation of all innovative actors (production, services, research, education and qualification institutions) in the sense of establishing an "innovative milieu"</p> <p>Brain drain in some regions (SK)</p>
Human resources: labour market, education	<p>Highly developed education and qualification infrastructure (schools, universities, adult education) and wide range of specialisation</p> <p>Supply of highly-qualified labour force and employees</p> <p>Low unemployment rate in the rural parts of the border region (AT)</p> <p>Dynamic employment development (esp. women)</p> <p>High flexibility of the labour market – can rather quickly respond to the needs of knowledge and innovation intensive emerging sectors</p> <p>Increasing public awareness of the equal opportunities principles and their gradual application</p>	<p>Low orientation on the new framework (intensification of the neighbourhood) in education supply</p> <p>Disparities (wages, social systems, job opportunities) between the Austrian and the Slovak border region</p> <p>One-way economic migration: Bratislava and the region of Bratislava to Austria, brain drain</p> <p>Pressure on the urban labour markets caused by immigration and/or unqualified workers with direct consequences on the regions with a high percentage of commuting</p> <p>Problematic structure (long-term, people with handicaps, spatial and social restrictions to mobility)</p> <p>High percentage of seasonal unemployment (construction, tourism, agriculture)</p> <p>Few employment opportunities esp. for highly-qualified persons in the rural regions</p> <p>Missing strategies for the development of cross-border labour markets (e.g. monitoring, co-operation of institutions...)</p> <p>Still remaining pay and position gaps between men and women</p>



	Strengths	Weaknesses
Infrastructure: transport and technical infrastructure	<p>Highly developed transport infrastructure and good accessibility in the urban agglomeration</p> <p>Danube as international transport route</p> <p>Favourable geographical location and related development of transport infrastructure of over-regional and international importance (highway, gas pipelines, railway)</p> <p>Increase of logistic centres</p> <p>Planning and implementation of projects with significant cross-border impacts</p>	<p>High traffic volumes in the urban agglomeration – overcrowded traffic routes</p> <p>Low intensity of co-operation and co-ordination in the means of transport</p> <p>In peripheral regions, an insufficient supply of public transport</p> <p>Need to adjust technical infrastructure in specific parts and regions (renewable energy, flood protection, water supply)</p> <p>Geographical conditions restrict the development of the transport system (rivers Danube and Morava and mountain massif of Malé Karpaty)</p> <p>Development of telecommunications lags behind (SK)</p> <p>Insufficient development of sewerage infrastructure, especially in the rural areas (water supply, sewage, waste etc.) (SK) and backlog with respect to renewable energy technologies</p> <p>Lacking border crossing points especially in Záhorie</p>
Environment and natural resources	<p>National Park Donau-Auen and cross-border national park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel</p> <p>High-quality in nature and landscape</p> <p>High quality of environment and life standards</p> <p>Sufficient resources of water and reservoirs of underground waters</p> <p>Existing management systems for protection of natural resources</p>	<p>Increase in urban, transit and cross-border traffic with consequences on environmental situation (noise, emissions..)</p> <p>Increase of waste</p> <p>Slow increase in the use of renewable energy</p> <p>Damaged forest roughs caused by air pollution in the surroundings of Bratislava</p> <p>Low energy efficiency and marginal share of renewable energy on overall energy supply due also existing legal framework (SK)</p>

A4 Experiences and Recommendations from the Mid-Term Evaluation

Experiences from the Interreg IIIA programme 2000-2006

In the last programme period, the main focus was on the development of first joint projects and the process of building up cross-border contacts. The common objective defined in the strategic concept of the Joint Programming Document (JPD) INTERREG IIIA/PHARE CBC 2000-2006 is to develop an economically and socially integrated border region with a joint consciousness.

The key issue for the period up to 2006 will be “to prepare the common border regions for the most effective use of new opportunities brought by the accession of Slovakia to the European Union “. Hence the programme should focus on those cross-border co-operation issues and potentials, which can either most effectively, support Slovakia’s integration in the EU or are most affected by these changes.

The elaboration of the Joint Programming Document (JPD) INTERREG IIIA – PHARE CBC Austria-Slovakia was carried out jointly by the responsible Austrian and Slovakian authorities, starting in the summer of 1999.

Recommendations for future programming

The legal framework for the period 2007-2013 has not been approved yet, so many conditions are not clarified yet. Nevertheless the programming for the next period has started in autumn 2005. Following recommendations therefore can not cover all aspects of the future programme but highlight experiences of the recent programme in the light of known new programme conditions.

a) Maintain/improve attractiveness of INTERREG funding

Projects funded in INTERREG IIIA focussed (not only, but prevailingly) on “soft” measures to establish better cross-border cooperation and make better use of potential synergies for the benefit of the respective border regions. Compared to PHARE CBC and other programmes focussing prevailingly on “hard” (large infrastructure investment) measures it shall not “only” enable this measures by additional funds but shall in first place motivate and activate institutions in the border regions to start and intensify cross-border activities. Conditions will be more difficult for project holders in the upcoming period (see Lead Partner Principle), therefore efforts are necessary to reduce barriers and restrictions whenever feasible to keep up the activating character of INTERREG:

- Assure transparent implementation processes and not so administrative demanding (however standardized on both sides) formal requirements for project applicants (e.g. application forms, contracting, reporting, financial control)
- Apply the principle of proportionality (less financial control requirements for smaller projects, reduce administrative burden)
- Introduce cross-border SPF with bilateral assessment procedure, possibly implemented only at regional level.



b) Prepare for sound implementation of Lead Partner Principle

The Lead Partner Principle will be a new condition in the upcoming programming period. It will be challenging for project holders (as lead partners) who should be supported by information and training as well by transparent and smooth programme implementation:

- Organise joint training for project owners (e.g. on partnership development, project management)
- Prepare joint application forms (bilingual) for the new programme period, which also include partnership agreements
- Elaborate common guidelines for applicants by screening and/or merging existing guidelines and defining common eligibility rules for future INTERREG projects
- Prepare templates for joint contracting
- Clarify details for administering the LPP (contracting authority, legal basis, responsibilities and procedures for first level control, language issues)
- Consider the introduction of project coaches (within the JTS or IB) who follow closely the implementation of projects and assist pro-actively the Lead Partner of a project in administrative and also general (CBC) management issues.
- Clarify data entry to Monitoring System (level of detail, inclusion of partner projects)

These measures could also reduce potentially negative consequences of the Lead Partner Principle. However additional measures might be needed to secure sufficient programme outreach (enable also smaller projects, private lead partners, SPF with less demanding requirements, etc).

c) Assure efficient programme management

The programme management has proven effective, successful elements should therefore be maintained. However in the light of new possibilities (genuine joint programme implementation from the very beginning) some improvements are necessary:

- Collaborative decentralised management structures have proven to be effective, however cross-border information flow (especially between IBs) are to be improved.
- Support for project applicants in the phase of project development was feasible and useful for project (and thus programme) quality. Thus same level of support to project applicants on both sides of the border shall be assured.
- Joint, efficient project assessment procedures shall be organised. With both the Lead Partner Principle and the general dedication of programme partners to increase the share of comprehensively joint projects the need for structured joint assessment will clearly increase. Different practices on Slovak and Austrian side shall be combined to a joint approach enabling both transparent (independent) assessment of expected project impacts and cooperation quality as well as the possibility to improve project applications' quality in an ongoing project development process.
- Minimise time lags in programme implementation (especially in contracting, financial control and payment processes)
- To facilitate trilateral projects in the upcoming period, adjacent cross-border programmes have to be harmonised (eligible actions, target groups) and co-ordination between the concerned programmes has to be assured.



- Re-design tasks between IB – JTS (division of work, installation of a common bilingual JTS)
- Further use and development of CMS, because of considerable investments on both sides

d) Differentiate mechanisms for project generation

There are different practices and cultures in project generation in Austria (and also within Austria) and Slovak Republic. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. The evaluation team recommends making use of both sides' experiences in combined mechanism for project generation:

- On one hand proactive "top – down" project development by the programme partners shall be implemented in jointly agreed strategic areas. Key actors from both sides have to be involved in this process (à bilateral thematic working groups)
- On the other hand calls for project ideas with subsequent screening and regrouping of ideas shall be carried out in selected areas.
- A third mechanism recommended are cross-border SPF with calls for proposals (not necessarily applying the Lead Partner Principle)

e) Monitoring and reporting

Based on the experience of the current programme following recommendations are provided by the evaluation team:

- The Common Monitoring System (CMS) has been widely appreciated and proven useful. It is recommended to base a future joint system on the existing database and procedures.
- Improvements of the CMS shall be implemented in the project monitoring. For this purpose joint standards of project reporting shall be applied and also regularly exchanged across the border. With up-date of monitoring data based on these reports project monitoring can be supported by the CMS.



A5 Indicative breakdown by categories ¹³

Code	Priority theme	P1	P2	P3
Research and technological development (R&TD), innovation and entrepreneurship				
01	R&TD activities in research centres	1,800,000		
02	R&TD infrastructure (including physical plant, instrumentation and high-speed computer networks linking research centres) and centres of competence in a specific technology	799,739		
03	Technology transfer and improvement of cooperation networks between small businesses (SMEs), between these and other businesses and universities, post-secondary education establishments of all kinds, regional authorities, research centres and scientific and technological poles (scientific and technological parks, technopoles, etc.)	2,379,608		
04	Assistance to R&TD, particularly in SMEs (including access to R&TD services in research centres)			
05	Advanced support services for firms and groups of firms	2,939,739		
06	Assistance to SMEs for the promotion of environmentally-friendly products and production processes (introduction of effective environment managing system, adoption and use of pollution prevention technologies, integration of clean technologies into firm production)			
07	Investment in firms directly linked to research and innovation (innovative technologies, establishment of new firms by universities, existing R&TD centres and firms, etc.)			
08	Other investment in firms			
09	Other measures to stimulate research and innovation and entrepreneurship in SMEs	3,399,739		
Information society				
10	Telephone infrastructures (including broadband networks)		511,010	
11	Information and communication technologies (access, security, interoperability, risk-prevention, research, innovation, e-content, etc.)		711,010	
12	Information and communication technologies (TEN-ICT)	1,000,000	400,000	
13	Services and applications for the citizen (e-health, e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, etc.)	2,274,299	333,225	
14	Services and applications for SMEs (e-commerce, education and training, networking, etc.)	399,869		
15	Other measures for improving access to and efficient use of ICT by SMEs			
Transport				
16	Railways		1,239,524	
17	Railways (TEN-T)			
18	Mobile rail assets			
19	Mobile rail assets (TEN-T)			
20	Motorways			
21	Motorways (TEN-T)			
22	National roads			

¹³ This list is based on the results of the Working groups in Workshop 3 of the AT-SK-Programming Group, held October 18th in Orth and on the Task Force meeting on January 29th 2007 held in Vienna.



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Code	Priority theme	P1	P2	P3
23	Regional/local roads		2,600,000	
24	Cycle tracks		841,010	
25	Urban transport		411,010	
26	Multimodal transport		1,071,010	
27	Multimodal transport (TEN-T)			
28	Intelligent transport systems		1,084,404	
29	Airports		155,505	
30	Ports		248,808	
31	Inland waterways (<i>regional and local</i>)		548,808	
32	Inland waterways (TEN-T)			
Energy				
33	Electricity			
34	Electricity (TEN-E)			
35	Natural gas			
36	Natural gas (TEN-E)			
37	Petroleum products			
38	Petroleum products (TEN-E)			
39	Renewable energy: wind			
40	Renewable energy: solar		222,150	
41	Renewable energy: biomass		2,722,150	
42	Renewable energy: hydroelectric, geothermal and other			
43	Energy efficiency, co-generation, energy management		1,714,299	
Environmental protection and risk prevention				
44	Management of household and industrial waste		1,094,299	
45	Management and distribution of water (<i>drink water</i>)		222,150	
46	Water treatment (<i>waste water</i>)		222,150	
47	Air quality			
48	Integrated prevention and pollution control		522,150	
49	Mitigation and adaptation to climate change		1,450,000	
50	Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land			
51	Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (<i>including Natura 2000</i>)		2,889,869	
52	Promotion of clean urban transport			
53	Risk prevention (<i>including the drafting and implementation of plans and measures to prevent and manage natural and technological risks</i>)		997,150	
54	Other measures to preserve the environment and prevent risks		325,000	
Tourism				
55	Promotion of natural assets	553,277		
56	Protection and development of natural heritage		1,893,029	
57	Other assistance to improve tourist services	1,453,277		
Culture				
58	Protection and preservation of the cultural heritage	495,518		
59	Development of cultural infrastructure	694,312		
60	Other assistance to improve cultural services	698,795		



Code	Priority theme	P1	P2	P3
Urban and rural regeneration				
61	Integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration		1,144,299	
Increasing the adaptability of workers and firms, enterprises and entrepreneurs				
62	Development of life-long learning systems and strategies in firms; training and services for employees to step up their adaptability to change; promoting entrepreneurship and innovation	568,703		
63	Design and dissemination of innovative and more productive ways of organising work	200,000		
64	Development of specific services for employment, training and support in connection with restructuring of sectors and firms, and development of systems for anticipating economic changes and future requirements in terms of jobs and skills	624,352		
Improving access to employment and sustainability				
65	Modernisation and strengthening labour market institutions	1,138,703		
66	Implementing active and preventive measures on the labour market			
67	Measures encouraging active ageing and prolonging working lives			
68	Support for self-employment and business start-up			
69	Measures to improve access to employment and increase sustainable participation and progress of women in employment to reduce gender-based segregation in the labour market, and to reconcile work and private life, such as facilitating access to childcare and care for dependent persons	534,352		
70	Specific action to increase migrants' participation in employment and thereby strengthen their social integration	366,580		
Improving the social inclusion of less-favoured persons				
71	Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people; combating discrimination in accessing and progressing in the labour market and promoting acceptance of diversity at the workplace	277,720		
Improving human capital				
72	Design, introduction and implementation of reforms in education and training systems in order to develop employability, improving the labour market relevance of initial and vocational education and training, updating skills of training personnel with a view to innovation and a knowledge based economy	230,000		
73	Measures to increase participation in education and training throughout the life-cycle, including through action to achieve a reduction in early school leaving, gender-based segregation of subjects and increased access to and quality of initial vocational and tertiary education and training	1,243,703		
74	Developing human potential in the field of research and innovation, in particular through post-graduate studies and training of researchers, and networking activities between universities, research centres and businesses	1,118,702		
Investment in social infrastructure				
75	Education infrastructure			
76	Health infrastructure			
77	Childcare infrastructure			



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Code	Priority theme	P1	P2	P3
78	Housing infrastructures			
79	Other social infrastructure			
Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion				
80	Promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through the networking of relevant stakeholders	855,000	888,599	
Strengthening institutional capacity at national, regional and local level				
81	Mechanisms for improving good policy and programme design, monitoring and evaluation at national, regional and local level, capacity building in the delivery of policies and programmes.	1,148,000	2,655,369	
Reduction of additional costs hindering the outermost regions development				
82	Compensation of any additional costs due to accessibility deficit and territorial fragmentation			
83	Specific action addressed to compensate additional costs due to size market factors			
84	Support to compensate additional costs due to climate conditions and relief difficulties			
Technical assistance				
85	Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection			3,594,381
86	Evaluation and studies; information and communication			



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Code	Form of finance	P 1	P 2	P 3
01	Non-repayable aid	x	x	x
02	Aid (<i>loan, interest subsidy, guarantees</i>)			
03	Venture capital (<i>participation, venture-capital fund</i>)			
04	Other forms of finance			

Code	Territory type	P 1	P 2	P 3
01	Urban	x	x	
02	Mountains	x	x	
03	Islands			
04	Sparsely and very sparsely populated areas			
05	Rural areas (<i>other than mountains, islands or sparsely and very sparsely populated areas</i>)	x	x	
06	Former EU external borders (<i>after 30.04.2004</i>)	x	x	
07	Outermost region			
08	Cross-border cooperation area	x	x	x
09	Transnational cooperation area			
10	Inter-regional cooperation area			
00	Not applicable			

Code	Economic activity ⁽²⁾	P 1	P 2	P 3
01	Agriculture, hunting and forestry			
02	Fishing			
03	Manufacture of food products and beverages			
04	Manufacture of textiles and textile products			
05	Manufacture of transport equipment			
06	Unspecified manufacturing industries	x		
07	Mining and quarrying of energy producing materials			
08	Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply			
09	Collection, purification and distribution of water		x	
10	Post and telecommunications	x		
11	Transport		x	
12	Construction			
13	Wholesale and retail trade			
14	Hotels and restaurants			
15	Financial intermediation			
16	Real estate, renting and business activities			
17	Public administration	x	x	
18	Education	x		
19	Human health activities	x		
20	Social work, community, social and personal services	x		
21	Activities linked to the environment		x	
22	Other unspecified services			
00	Not applicable			



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A6 Documents related to the Ex ante Evaluation

The evaluation procedures respect the standards for evaluation published by the European Evaluation Society. The standards comply with the Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods, in particular for ex-ante evaluations as stated in DG Regio's Working Document No. 1.

The ex-ante evaluation is based on the so-called Delphi methodology, which focuses on the contributions of several experts and the subsequent aggregation of cross-cutting analytical results.

The ex-ante evaluation was based on the following set of evaluation questions:

- Appraisal of the socio-economic analysis and the relevance of the strategy with a view to the needs identified in the context of the interventions,
- Evaluation of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency, including:
- Appraisal of the coherence of the strategy with regional and national and EU policies
- Evaluation of expected results and impacts
- Appraisal of the proposed implementation systems

The Context of the Intervention

The Austrian-Slovak border region comprises large agglomerations (Vienna, Bratislava), cities with national and regional importance and a wide area of rural countryside. It is the basis for a wide range of economic and social activities. The region is very heterogeneous from an economic, social as well as cultural perspective.

Sub-regions with higher economic performance are more concentrated in the Austrian part of the region. On the Slovak side the urban parts with a relatively high economic performance are concentrated in Bratislava region. The agglomerations of Vienna and Bratislava are important national and transnational growth poles with significant dynamics and strong growth potential. These parts of the region have almost completed the transformation of economic structures and are characterised by a high density of Foreign direct investment (FDI) and a growing share of knowledge intensive sectors. Together with Hungary the „Central Danube Region” ranks among the highest developed parts of Central Europe. The north-eastern parts, especially in Slovakia but also the northern parts of the Austrian border region are strongly affected by economic conversion. In these parts the economic performance and dynamics are quite low in comparison to EU respectively the country averages.

Over the last years, Slovakia, and partly the Austrian regions have seen the emergence of clusters in several industrial sectors. The clusters are concentrated mostly in the western and the central part of the CB region. Significant FDI inflows in the last years provide a joint regional platform for a broad range of economic activities such as automotive, IT, electronics, logistic, construction, consumer goods & furnishings industries but also health and environmental technologies, offers in higher education etc.

The main challenge for the development of CB region in the programming period 2007-2013 is

- to achieve a stronger conversion in the eastern part of the CB area, and
- to accelerate economic performance and increase competitiveness in the entire CB area.

Through efficient CB cooperation regional clustering of technological industries and services (incl. tourism) and their better performance and effectiveness should be supported. The CB region is in need of more direct investments which can be promoted by better accessibility of public cross-border infrastructure (transport, tourism, environment) and public services (education, health, labour market, tourism, culture, e-services, governance, ...).

The Relevance of the Programme

The analysis describes the context of interventions and correctly identifies the main resources, consequences and trends of sustainable development. The analysis concentrates on the main socio-economic needs such as cross border labour market, social services, innovation system, and infrastructure as well as on the major environmental needs of the CB region. The SWOT analysis divides the context of interventions into 4 main strategic drivers: economic development, regional competitiveness, development of labour market and environmentally sustainable development. This comparison of the strengths and weaknesses reflects the major structural conditions along the Austrian-Slovak border and points out the opportunities and risks. The link between the analysis of the context and the identified needs is clear.

According to the evaluator's opinion the strategic part of the programme includes a clear vision¹⁴ and a sufficiently ambitious yet achievable mission¹⁵ which might be attained during the implementation of the programme. The vision of the programme reflects all critical challenges for cross-border regional development for the programming period 2007-2013. The overall objective of this cross-border cooperation programme is to build an attractive, economically vital, knowledge-based region which would play a significant role among the European metropolitan regions. The key driver of its strategy are well functioning cross-border cooperation networks which integrate stakeholders and decision-makers in business, social, environmental affairs in an open region. The approach seeks to utilise the endogenous development factors of the border region.

The programme's notion of integrated development is complex and covers socio-economic, institutional and physical aspects:

- Socio-economic aspects cover a wide range of factors from cross-border cooperation of local businesses to educational/cultural links.
- The institutional aspects of cooperation can vary in intensity: from contacts/forums/working committees between corresponding bodies such as public authorities, professional chambers, schools/universities to the establishment of permanent cross-border structures. There are various forms for cooperation between public institutions, private business and other interest groupings from either side of the border that are partly integrated or closely coordinated also as regards the management of cross-border cooperation programmes.
- Finally, the absence of physical links can represent a fundamental shortcoming in cross-border integration, e.g. in terms of missing links in cross-border transport, energy and other infrastructure networks. In some of these fields the current degree of integration is insufficient.

¹⁴ Represented by the programme's strategic objective

¹⁵ Represented by programme specific objective



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The Coherence of the Programme

The programme's strategic objective represents and adopts a consistent and transparent albeit flexible strategic approach. Against the background of the overall programme objective, the objectives and priorities as well as the horizontal implementation principles, the cooperation programme is understood as a 'learning system'. The programme's strategy will adjust gradually to external and internal needs, corresponding to the priorities of the Community Strategic Guidelines. In the CB area the process of the establishment and deepening of relations is most challenging. The integration of the region may take advantage of an extraordinary great diversity in economic, social, ecological, cultural and territorial terms. The diversity is a key factor in the integration of the developed and underdeveloped as well as the highly accessible and hardly accessible parts of the programme area. Both metropolitan regions as well as the small- and medium-sized cities will play a crucial role as catalysts for development. Building up a strong polycentric network and the sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural heritage will help to strengthen the overall integration process and are essential for cohesion and competitiveness.

The interventions are concentrated into 2 thematic priority axis (+1 for technical assistance). Priority axis 1 should support the dynamics of economic growth and social development. Priority axis 2 should promote environmental sustainability and better accessibility of CB infrastructure in transport, tourism and environment in such areas, where the physical conditions for intensive CB cooperation reveal certain gaps.

Territorial cohesion, internal integration and competitiveness are interlinked goals. The Gothenburg Sustainable Development Strategy claims that the economic, social and environmental effects of all policies should be examined and coordinated in order to strengthen the synergies between sustainable development and growth.

The proposed strategy covers some important issues regarding sustainable development and environmental protection. It addresses in detail the main areas of development like water management (including flood and disaster prevention), air quality and reduction of air pollution (including long-term negative impacts on biodiversity and forest health due to emissions from energy production and expansion of the transport network), promotion of protected areas and biodiversity conservation, soil erosion, waste management (e.g. to promote Austrian experiences with recycling in Slovakia). This requires also to capture cross-sectoral linkages and thus to address the consequences of development initiatives on the economy, social structures and the environment.

Although the identified strategy is consistent with the national development strategies of both countries it is important to add that the rather general definition of the strategy does not allow to explore all impacts on the quality of environment at this stage.

It is important to see the opportunities for shared learning between the two countries. Slovakia can strongly benefit from learning from the experiences of the Austrian regions in introducing the local initiatives and measures in all areas of environmentally sustainable development.

The Programme's Added Value

From the analysis of the programme context and the programme's characteristics one can conclude that the border region has the potential to become one of the fastest growing regions of the EU in a mid-term perspective. Through shared knowledge and growth in knowledge based branches the programme can significantly support the convergence of the less developed parts of the CB region¹⁶.

Cross-border cooperation gives an opportunity – especially for Slovakia – to learn and benefit from the experience of the innovative Austrian regions and to promote the development of a joint vital region of European importance. The cooperation of the urban axis between Vienna and Bratislava is a significant asset in this process. The increasing contacts to an emerging and fast growing market are an important opportunity for Austria.

The provision of adequate financial resources is

- on the one hand of great importance for the continuation and expansion of promising existing cooperation networks
- on the other hand a challenge due to the need for the development of new types of innovative operations which imply certain risks.

The added value of the programme for the Lisbon Strategy derives from the fact that cross-border co-operation always adds value to national measures. This added value results, first of all, from:

- additionality of cross-border programmes and operations,
- synergies through cross-border co-operation,
- joint research and innovation,
- cross-border networking,
- exchange of best practices and know-how,
- spin-off effects by overcoming borders,
- efficient cross-border resource management.

The strategy is characterized by a “long run” movement from the current to the desired state. It should be more focused on Lisbon objectives for 2007-2013. The implementation of such longer-term strategies will be partly demand-oriented (concentration on operations which have seen significant demand in 2000-2006) and partly supply oriented (concentration on more sophisticated new innovative operations¹⁷). The advantage of the demand-oriented approach is the higher financial absorption, at the same time the approach bears the risk of low levels of efficiency and effectiveness as regards the Lisbon objectives. Supply-oriented interventions can contribute to a higher value-added of the programme, the inherent risks are longer preparation time and the subsequent lower absorption of funds. But the latter risk can be reduced with intensive information, publicity and advisory services in the first phases of the project cycle.

¹⁶ They are allocated more in SK part of CB region

¹⁷ Such as CB clustering of innovative sectors, CB eGovernment, specific public services in education and social integration, etc.



Indicator System and Programme Monitoring

The definition of key indicators is a logical step in the preparation process of the Operational Programme. The system of indicators is one of the most important elements for the smart implementation of the programme. A well prepared set-up and the user-friendly handling of indicators are critical factors for the programme management and the reporting to the Commission.

One of the most important challenges for programme management is to ensure the joint monitoring of operation's implementation, especially in terms of cross-border impact and cooperation indicators. In order to map the added-value of the programme the system has to focus on this type of indicators. At the same time it is crucial to foresee clear-cut workflows in data collection, to develop and use standardized documents in order to safeguard the inter-operability as well as the analytical¹⁸ functionality of the monitoring system.

The system of indicators for the new programme period is sufficiently structured: it distinguishes between output, result and impact indicators. The system contains a unique set of all required types of indicators, which are fully relevant for the supported interventions and coherent with the programme objectives.

Implementation system

There is clear evidence that Cohesion Policy in the previous period has contributed to improved regional innovative capacities. In border regions, the programmes have tended to be demand-led and focused on technology transfer, networking and clustering initiatives. The options to focus on shared strategy development and evaluation, including coordination between national and cross-border policy making were quite limited. The following bottlenecks for the efficient absorption of funds and effective outcomes of innovative measures were identified:

- The dominance of supply-side measures with poor linkages to regional innovation systems;
- An administrative rather than strategic management of innovative measures leading to a lack of synergies with other initiatives;
- The lack of expertise and capacities at national and regional levels in managing innovative measures;

The establishment of operational systems of regional innovative governance is the main challenge for an effective and efficient programme implementation. On the level of operation the Lead Partner Principle is the most important novelty. Project holders (as lead partners) should be supported with comprehensive information and training as well as by transparent and smooth programme implementation routines.

The Programme defines the implementation system for the programming period 2007 – 2013. The document provides information on the designation of bodies, the procedures for implementation and project life cycle, publicity and project selection criteria. The implementation system is well-defined. Certain aspects of the system should be elaborated in more detail in procedures' manuals.

According to the evaluator the most critical part of implementation is planning the project life cycle. Therefore, it is necessary to set up an effective advisory system for applicants. At the same time it

¹⁸ OLAP



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is important to provide Calls for Proposals of high quality which reflect a certain balance between the demand-driven and the supply-driven approach towards operations. Project life cycle management should be subject to quality control and learning cycles in order to improve management capacities continuously. The standardization of the application package as well as of the procedures is necessary at all management levels, i.e. on level of Managing, Certifying and Audit Authorities, Regional Co-ordinators and the Joint Technical Secretariat.

Concluding Remark of the Programme Authorities

We understood that according to the ex-ante evaluation the Operational Programme complies in terms of consistency, coherence and relevance with the requirements for the programming period 2007 to 2013.

It is evident that an assessment of the programme's results and impacts at this stage is difficult. However, we would have expected to obtain some more information at least from a rough and aggregated view on the achievements of the previous programme.

The appraisal of the implementation system addresses the set-up of the project life cycle under the Lead Partner Principle as one of the major challenges for the period 2007 to 2013. We share this view and we also think that the elaboration of a comprehensive Application Package is one of the crucial next steps in programme preparation.

To a certain extent we do regret that our understanding of the ex-ante evaluation as an ongoing support in the programming process did not materialise. The dialogue between the evaluator and some of the programme partners was restricted to mere technical issues such as clarification of content, revision needs and timing. In our view contracting of the evaluation has happened at an early stage of the programming process and our intention to enter a dialogue-oriented process was quite clear. However, at a certain moment we had to acknowledge that the evaluation work was done from a distance without regular communication to all future programme stakeholders.



A7 Documents related to the Strategic Environmental Assessment

I. Non-technical summary of provided information

The Operational Programme of cross-border cooperation Slovakia-Austria 2007-2013 addresses the priority areas of interventions and types of suggested activities to the specific needs of the involved area in the context of economic sectors and financial resources. The document outlines priorities based on relevant EU regulatory documents for the programming period 2007 – 2013, and also on results of analysis of context of interventions.

Financial allocation for the cross-border cooperation within the European cooperation area¹⁹ is less than 1% of the overall allocation from EU funds in the programming period 2007-2013 in the targeted region. Respect to the relatively low level of available financial support, direct impacts of projects co-financed from the cross-border program between Slovakia and Austria on environment will be low, measurable on both NUTS 3 level as well as on lower levels LAU1 and LAU2. Major benefits of the program are given by indirect and synergic effects based on developing and implementing common cross-border strategies and measures, which can be effectively linked to initiatives financed from other public and private resources.

On one hand, the both involved member states are differing in socio-economic development determining different development strategies that will be applied under cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, there are many similar challenges and opportunities in enhancing sustainable development strategies²⁰ for both areas in the cross-border region. From the sustainable development perspective, the most important aim is to maintain and increase the high level of environmental quality that can be sustained in long-term strategies while socio-economic development is promoted.

The suggested strategy covers some important issues regarding the sustainable development and environmental protection through addressing in detail the main areas of development like water management (including flood and disaster preparedness), air quality and air pollution (including long-term negative impacts on biodiversity and forest health, emission for energy production and expansion of the transportation network), protected areas and biodiversity conservation, soil erosion, waste management (applying Austrian experiences with recycling in Slovakia) and climate change impact, adaptation and mitigation.

This also requires capturing cross-sectoral linkages and by this way addressing the consequences of development on environment. Moreover, it requires addressing the question how the needs of different level of environmental protection including air, soil and water will shape future development in other sectors outside environment. The identified strategy is consistent with national development strategies in both countries. Also, more linkages and synergies between the suggested objectives can be identified. In accordance with directive 2001/42/EC will supported projects, by which realization will promote measures for lowering, elimination or compensation significant unfavourable impacts on environment quality.

¹⁹ EU Resolution – K(2006) 3473, no 2006/609/ES)

²⁰ Revised sustainable development strategy, adopted by the European Commission on 15-16 June 2006, published under No. 10917.06.



It is important to address the opportunities for shared-learning between the two member states. Slovakia can benefit from learning from experiences of Austrian region in introducing the local environmental initiatives and measures. The document states that Austria can provide 'models environmentally-friendly city'; this needs to be developed further in particular strategies to support penetration of the environmentally-friendly technologies, policies and best-practices to Slovak regions in economic development, R&D, innovations and trainings for industry, policy-makers and students.

The proposed strategy is consistent with the outcomes of the assessment. The SWOT analysis correctly identifies the major areas for the programme interventions that are the core part of the document. The proposed objectives are consistent with identified priorities and in accordance with the needs and opportunities of the cross-border region.

The major weakness of the strategic document is a lack of sufficient interest spent on ensuring efficiency and transparency of the listed potential interventions. Minimize of these potential negative criteria for projects' selection can be based on transparent and objective criteria that define the supported activities in a way enhancing the region's opportunities on the project scale.

Critical factors of success of projects depend mainly on the following:

- Supported activities should be selected on the basis of demand reflecting the needs of the region and should promote principles of sustainable development in the whole area and not only within growth poles areas (sophisticated types of business, IT, knowledge based economic activities)
- Cooperation between the key actors in projects targeted towards economic, social and environmental actors in the cross-border region, cooperation also between actors needs to be ensured to explore synergic effects between project supported form the cross-border programme
- Sectoral priorities will be not well-balanced with the needs to maintain and improve the quality of the environment.

During implementation of the programme, it is possible to expect mainly positive, indirect, and secondary as well as direct impacts on the environment and the quality of life of people in the region mainly in the following areas:

- Improvement, development and increase of the quality of shared management systems of environmental conversation, protection of nature (including habitat protection), minimizing air and water pollution and monitoring and assessment of impacts of development activities based on the cooperation of stakeholders in the involved region;
- Support of penetration of clean technologies and technologies minimizing the impact of industrial and domestic processes on environment and furthermore support of educational and research activities in order to create opportunities for shared learning and knowledge dissemination;
- Direct impacts on fauna, flora, soil, land-use change and management, property, water quality and hydrology, air quality, climate change, change in noise levels, landscape protection, cultural heritage and interaction between these components;
- Address emerging environmental issues and concerns including climate change adaptation, risk management and emergency preparedness



- As regards impacts on human health, the programme will have indirect positive effects on improvement of major death effects in the region (heart diseases, cancer and related diseases linked to the quality of environment), due to the above-discussed outcomes.

The objective of the programme is in coherence with other relevant documents both at the national level as well as at the EU level. Major impact of the programme in relation to other documents is in improving the cross-border cooperation, interaction between the key stakeholders, addressing the major issues and challenges in order to enhance the quality of life in the region, which can serve as a basis for larger-scale national and international initiatives and increasing efficiency of other EU funded initiatives.

II. Ad-hoc document on the consultation process

Both documents, the Operational Programme and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) were conducted with an ongoing collaboration between members of both national teams, national and regional environmental authorities, representatives of a sustainable development community, experts involved in the ex-ante evaluation process and finally the members of the SEA-developing team. The table below provides an overview of the important steps in the SEA process with regard to main components of the programming document and consultation process outlined in a chronological timeline.

Time frame	Cross-boarder cooperation program	SEA process	Consultation
March – June 2006	CBC programming document	Analyzing key environmental issues that should be considered in SEA	Consulting with local decision and policy-makers to obtain information about local-specific issues and impacts in relation to identified objectives and strategies in the programming document
June – October 2006	Conducting Regional Analyses	Assessing linkages and impacts between objectives and strategies of the document and identified environmental issues and environmental concerns	
	Identifying Program objectives		
November 2006 – February 2007	Defying Priorities	Evaluating proposed indicators to monitor impact and effectiveness of projects	Consulting with representatives of the Ministry and with developers of the programming document to address emerging issues
March – June 2007	Selecting Activities	Compiling the environmental report	
	Indicators Monitoring	Providing the report for consultation	



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Guiding principles of the consultation process

During the development of the both documents, the collaborative process was ensured by a number of workshops, formal and informal consultations between representatives from Slovakia and Austria. Outcomes and on-going feedback provided from both sides helped to strengthen the Operational Programme and also provided continuous challenge for the work on SEA.

During this collaborative process the major guiding principles were to:

- Ensure long term and strategic goals identified in EU, national and regional documents; and
- Aim for balanced efforts to promote sustainable development in the region in order to increase well-being and quality of natural environment.

The process started with the early draft of the programming document on May 2006 and continued till February 2007. During this process involved experts commented the earlier drafts, provided access and information about regional specific data and reports and provided contact for experts that should be involved in the development process as well.

Participants in the consultations

Based on the principles outlined in the SEA-Directive 2001/42/EC environmental authorities, experts and the general public had the opportunity to express their views, concerns and opinion on the Operational Programme and on the SEA Evaluation Report.

There were two key stages of consultation within the SEA-process:

- Stage 1: Expert assessment – This step includes consultation and discussion with environmental and regional developed authorities in order to identify the focus and the depth of the Environmental Report to create a balanced structure between the content and support for arguments within the report
- Stage 2: Public consultation - Environmental Report and Draft Operational Programme were provided for public consultation.

Both stages of consultation were done simultaneously in Slovakia and Austria. Before starting the public consultation of the Environmental Report and the draft Operational Programme information for the public about the ongoing planning process was provided on the website <http://eia.enviroportal.sk> starting in March 2006 till the end of the process.

The programming document was constantly up-date based on the outcomes of the consultations.

Consultations – Expert assessment

This step included consultations and dialogue with environmental experts and experts working on regional and rural development. The consultation and the provided experts assessment support identified environmental issues and concerns as well as the time-scale incorporated in the SEA Evaluation report to provide a sufficient frame for an evaluation of the impacts on environment.



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During this process the consultation was done with the following list of experts:

- Milan Gál, (Head of unit of cross-border programmes management and implementation, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic);
- František Parišek, (Division of environmental impacts assessments, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic);
- Bernhard Schausberger (Joint Technical Secretariat of the Programme Interreg IIIA AT-SK, Austria);
- Martin Hutter (Department for EU Strategy and Economic Development, City of Vienna, Austria) and
- Jan Dictus (Department for Environment, City of Vienna, Austria).

Public consultations

The public consultations were convened according to guidelines presented national legal document no. 24/2006 focused on environmental impact assessments and its amendments. Invitations for the consultations were published in the national newspaper. The Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic also advertised the consultation through their webpage within the section 'news'. Furthermore, it was placed on the webpage of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, where also the national portal providing timely information about the environmental situation in the country were used for dissemination. Invitations for consultations were also sent to Austrian partners. In accordance with the requirements of the SEA-directive 2001/42/EC, the Environmental Report and the Draft Operational Programme were made available to the public from November 2006 to February 2007.

Besides above listed dissemination about the on going consultation process, the information was accessible on the following web-site:

- <http://eia.enviroportal.sk>
- <http://www.build.gov.sk>
- www.oegut.at
- <http://www.enviro.gov.sk>

Incorporating consultation in the Programmes

The development of the programming document and the SEA Evaluation report were closely related. Furthermore, the recommendations by SEA experts were taken into account during the whole programming process and were partly integrated into the programming document. The collaborative process was supported from the both sides and it also involved experts' mainly on the environment to ensure that the impacts are assessed accurately. During the continuous exchange of emails, personal communication and meeting, both teams worked closely together to ensure that the recommendations are taken into account in the programming document.



III. SEA statement according Article 9 of Directive 2001/42/EC including monitoring measures

This document aims to fulfil the requirements outlined under Article 9 of the Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. The focus of this document is to provide information on decision that reflects on how environmental considerations have been integrated into the operational programme objectives, how the environmental report of SEA was prepared, how the consultation was conducted and how their results were included and finally the reasons for choosing the programme objectives as adopted. This document also contains the measures decided concerning monitoring of the impacts of the programme objectives materialized through operations that will be supported.

The SEA-process ends with this summarising statement and the adoption of the final draft of the Operational Programme by the programming group (in the meaning of the decision on the programme acc. to Article 9 of the SEA-Directive) before its official submission to the European Commission. Therefore, final adjustments to the Operational Programme due to comments by the Commission will very likely take place until the official approval of the Operational Programme by the Commission.

A Summary of SEA process

The objective of the programming document is to create an attractive, vital region recognized at the European level by focusing on knowledge economy through specific priorities strengthening cooperation between key stakeholders of economic and social development of the region, increasing the competitiveness by respecting the principles of sustainable development and transferring the knowledge and know-how in the region. Building on these aims, the focus of the Strategic Environmental Assessment was to estimate the potential environmental impacts of projects that are seeking for this objective in a way that they will promote long-term sustainability in the region.

In order to assist in promoting these aims the SEA is focused on determining and analyzing issues need to be considered during elaboration of the programming document, evaluation of specific objectives of the document and proposing recommendation and indicators to minimize long-term cumulative effects on environment as an outcome of projects implemented under cross-border cooperation (CBC). During the SEA process, we identified key environmental issues and concerns that should be considered, assessed linkages and impacts between objectives and strategies of the document, evaluated proposed indicators to monitor impact and effectiveness of projects, compiled the environmental report, and finally provided the report for consultation.



This chapter outlines important steps in the SEA process with regard to main components of the programming document and consultation process outlined in a chronological timeline.

Details about the SEA development process

Time frame	Cross-boarder cooperation program	SEA process	Consultation
March – June 2006	CBC programming document	Analyzing key environmental issues that should be considered in SEA	Consulting with local decision and policy-makers to obtain information about local-specific issues and impacts in relation to identified objectives and strategies in the programming document
June – October 2006	Conducting Regional Analyses Identifying Program objectives	Assessing linkages and impacts between objectives and strategies of the document and identified environmental issues and environmental concerns	
November 2006 – February 2007	Defying Priorities Selecting Activities	Evaluating proposed indicators to monitor impact and effectiveness of projects	Consulting with representatives of the Ministry and with developers of the programming document to address emerging issues
March – June 2007	Indicators Monitoring	Compiling the environmental report Providing the report for consultation	

B Environmental Report – content and main results

The SEA Environmental Report for the Operational Programme was prepared by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic with involvement of external experts from Economic Consulting (Bratislava) and Úrad Bratislavského VÚC (Office of Bratislava self-governing region), Úrad Trnavského VÚC (Office of Trnava self-governing region), Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and City of Vienna, Department for EU Strategy and Economic Development.

The SEA concluded that the programming document covers most important issues regarding the sustainable development and environmental protection and it identifies correctly the major areas for the program interventions that are the core part of the document. The proposed objectives are consistent with identified priorities and in accordance with the needs and opportunities of the cross-border region. The environmental report of SEA outlines expected environmental impacts of potential project activities conducted under the programming document by seeing environment as a cross-cutting issue that may be impacted on diverse scales both spatial and temporal with different levels of their seriousness and by diverse opportunities to minimize the negative effects.

From environmental point of view, the expected results of this strategy will probably provide scattered initiatives focused different principles of sustainable development. The document incorporates principles of environmental protection and sustainable development into its priorities and also identifies instruments to achieve them. It captures only environmental protection and biodiversity conservation, the impacts of options such as flood protection and adaptation to climate change, and soil and water conservation are not discussed in a sufficient manner. The presented priorities focused on strengthening social capital, educational activities are too complicated to assess; however these activities have a huge potential in the region that can be based on the experiences of Austrian partners. It will be beneficial, if priorities such as cooperation in Research & Development and business innovation, which are consistent with national strategies, will be further elaborated. Attention needs to be spent to link them with other strategic goals and with sustainable development issues. This requires investing in networking activities that are the basis for successful regional development; however they do not always create measurable outcomes (in quantitative terms). The partnership and networking initiatives need to be linked to already existing networks from previous programming period of the cross-border cooperation.



Content of the Environmental Report acc. Article 5 and Annex I of the SEA-Directive

Directive provision	Chapter in Environmental Report	Comments
Lit. a) outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Chapter 2	
Lit. b) relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation	Chapter 3	
Lit. c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Chapter 3	<p>The SEA involves both top-down and bottom-up approaches to address this aim. Top-down approaches include identification and evaluation of EU and national level policies and development documents. Through their objectives they provide guidelines for regional scale activities addressed in the programming document. Top-down approaches are also followed in evaluating the environmental issues and concerns. This is based on national documents of Austria and Slovakia including reports on the state of the environment.</p> <p>Bottom-up approaches in the assessment are ensured through the involvement of regional and local development documents and data, and through consultation with local experts.</p>
Lit. d.) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	Chapter 4	
Lit. e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	Chapter 4	
Lit. f) the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Chapter 4	
Lit. g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	Chapter 5	



Directive provision	Chapter in Environmental Report	Comments
Lit. h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling	Chapter 6	Taking into account the purpose of the document as well as the methodological approaches applied during its preparation strongly centred on the principle of partnership, it is possible to describe the strategy as a coherent strategy. After addressing the identified suggestions and comments, the strategy will provide a clear guideline for project developers and decision-makers.
Lit. i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10	Chapter 7	
Lit. j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	Chapter 9	

The Environmental report of the SEA outlines the list of indicators for a monitoring of environmental impacts of the policies, plans, and projects and they need to be regarded as a part of an overall monitoring and reporting framework. This includes monitoring of risks factors and assessing causes and consequences of environmental quality in the region.

From the viewpoint of non-technical measures key importance has the promotion of education activities concerning to nature protection and conservation of natural wealth, promotion of partnerships between representatives of industry and authorities for protection and monitoring of environment and cultural heritage including municipalities with aim to coordinate interests of various participants in early stages of projects preparing. It can contribute to extension of positive consequences also to spheres, which directly are not part of a project and can also lead to stimulating of economic activities in the region. Although the programming document proposes a list of indicators, we recommend extending the applied indicators by monitoring impacts of key environmental issues and concerns that include monitoring negative impacts of development initiatives on population through increased level of noise, air pollution, changes in water quality, land-use change and impacts on biodiversity.

The suggested list of indicators also creates opportunities to monitor achievements of the projects by monitoring changes in renewable energy production, recycling and accessibility of developed services. We identified these indicators as crucial source of information on potential negative impacts of the development initiatives especially as regards to human health.

During the implementation of the program, it is possible to expect mainly positive, indirect, and secondary as well as direct impacts on the environment and the quality of life in the region mainly by improvement, development and increase of the quality of shared management systems of environmental conversation, minimizing air and water pollution and monitoring and assessment of impacts of development activities based on the cooperation of stakeholders in the involved region; support of penetration of clean technologies, direct impacts on fauna, flora, soil, land-use change and management, water quality, air quality, climate change, addressing emerging environmental issues and concerns including climate change adaptation, risk management and emergency preparedness.



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The Objective of the programme is in coherence with other relevant documents both at the national level as well as at the EU level. Major impact of the programme in relation to other documents is in improving the cross-border cooperation, interaction between the key stakeholders, addressing the major issues and challenges in order to enhance the quality of life in the region, which can serve as a basis for larger-scale national and international initiatives.

C Taking account of environmental considerations in the programme

Influence of the SEA process during programming and influence of the Environmental Report

Both documents, the Operational Programme and the SEA was conducted with an ongoing collaboration between members of both national teams, national and regional environmental authorities, representatives of a sustainable development community, experts involved in the ex-ante evaluation process and finally the members of SEA-developing team. The collaborative process was ensured by number of workshops, formal and informal consultations between representatives from Slovakia and Austria. Outcomes and on-going feedback provided from the both side help to strengthen the operational document and also provided continuous challenge for the work on SEA.

During this collaborative process the major guiding principles were to:

- Ensure long term and strategic goals identified in the EU, national and regional documents; and
- Aim for balanced efforts to promote sustainable development in the region in order to increase well-being and quality of natural environment

The process started with the early draft of the programming document on May 2006 and continued till February 2007. During this process involved experts commented the earlier drafts, provided access and information about regional specific data and reports and provided contact for experts that should be involved in the development process as well.

Identification and evaluation of reasonable alternatives of the programme

One of the purposes of SEA is to develop alternatives that can be utilized to overcome negative and undesirable impacts on environment and sustainable development in general, that might occur if the alternative outlined in the programming document is implemented. Taking into account the purpose of the document as well as the methodological approaches applied during the SEA preparation strongly centred on the principle of partnership and collaboration, it is possible to describe the strategy as a coherent strategy. Based on the assessment of the current state of the environment in the region and anticipated future trends of each environmental issue including air quality and climate change, water, soil, biodiversity, fauna and flora, landscape, and cultural heritage and areas of environmental concerns such as noise, energy efficiency and renewable, waste, adaptation to climate change and transportation we developed a baseline scenario. Comparing this alternative with expected impacts of the projects that will be pursued under the programming document we identified alternatives that outcomes have minimized negative impact

on the environment. After addressing the identified suggestions and comments, the strategy will provide a clear guideline for project developers and decision-makers.

The programme was drafted in one alternative which reflects new challenges for cross-border regional development which are based on:

- Socio-economic conditions, main disparities and key factors of economic growth (identified in analysis)
- Legal provisions setting out the implementation framework for programmes co-financed from the Structural Funds
- Coherent EU, national and regional strategies
- Empiric experiences from the programming period 2004-2006.

By using a collaborative process, the programming document was optimized to ensure reduction in negative environmental impacts and exploring the benefits of a coherent strategy. This complies with the request of the SEA directive to identify, present and assess reasonable alternatives (SEA Directive, Art. 5).

D Consultations

Based on the principles outlined in the SEA-Directive Art. 5 and 6 environmental authorities, experts and the general public had the opportunity to express their views, concerns and opinion on Operational Programme and on the SEA Environmental Report.

There were two key stages of consultation within the SEA-process:

- Stage 1: Expert assessment – This step includes consultations and discussions with environmental and regional developed authorities in order to identify the focus and the depth of the Environmental Report to create a balanced structure between the content and support for arguments within the report
- Stage 2: Public consultation - Environmental Report and Draft Operational Programme were provided for public consultation.

Both stages of consultation were done simultaneously in Slovakia and Austria.

Information for the public about the ongoing planning process was provided on the website http://eia.enviroportal.sk_starting in March 2006 till the end of the process.

The programming document was constantly up-date based on the outcomes of the consultations.

Consultations – Expert assessment

This step included consultations and dialogue with environmental experts and experts working in the sphere of regional and rural development. The consultation and the provided experts' assessment helped to identify environmental issues and concerns as well as the time-scale



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incorporated in the SEA Environmental report to provide sufficient frame for an evaluation of the impacts on environment.

During this process the consultation was done with the following list of experts:

- Milan Gál (Head of unit of cross-border programmes management and implementation, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic);
- František Parišek, (Division of environmental impacts assessments, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic);
- Bernhard Schausberger (Joint Technical Secretariat of the programme Interreg III A AT-SK, Austria);
- Martin Hutter (Department for EU Strategy and Economic Development, City of Vienna, Austria) and
- Jan Dictus (Environmental Department, City of Vienna, Austria).

Public consultations

The public consultations were convened according the guidelines presented national legal document no. 24/2006 focused on environmental impact assessments and its amendments. Invitations for the consultations were published in the national newspaper. The Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic also advertised the consultation through their webpage within the section 'news'. It was also on the webpage of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, where also the national portal providing timely information about the environmental situation in the country were used for dissemination. Invitations for consultations were also sent to Austrian partners. In accordance with the requirements of the SEA-Directive the Environmental Report and the Draft Operational Programme were available for public from November 2006 to February 2007.

Besides above listed dissemination about the on going consultation process, the information was accessible on the following web-site:

- <http://eia.enviroportal.sk>
- <http://www.build.gov.sk>
- www.oegut.at
- <http://www.enviro.gov.sk>

Summary of public consultations

The public consultation of the Evaluation Report for SEA for Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Austria - Slovakia 2007-2013 was realised on 8 February 2007 at the Ministry of construction and regional development of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava. The public consultation was carried out in accordance with competent legislation in the presence of



representatives of the Slovak and Austrian side. It was pointed out that in the time period (8-30 January 2007) for sending of public comments to the Evaluation Report for SEA for the Operational programme of the cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovak Republic, no comments have been received. Comments and recommendations concerning to improvement of the Evaluation Report, were subsequently incorporated into the final version of this document.

E Taking account issues raised during consultation in the Environmental Report

The following table lists the key issues brought up during the consultation process and outlines how the questions and comments were addressed.

Comments in Austria:

Issues discussed	Information on how the issues were addressed
Environmental Department, City of Vienna, Austria	
Include detailed methodological approaches in order to define how one can move from the narrowly focused objective of the document to region-wide impact assessments	Comment acknowledged. The chapter 2 of the Environmental report outlines the methodological approach in details and also focused on how to up-scale and down-scale the expected outcomes. Furthermore, each chapter has its detailed methodology as well.
According the EU water framework directive a river basin management plan including program of measures should be finalised in 2009. On page 29 a reference to this obligation and the framework directive is missing.	Comment acknowledged and the reference is added
We suggest to divide categories such as "Air quality", "noise", and "climate change" into separate sections in order to more provide detailed assessment on potential impacts	Comment addressed and in the current version of the Environmental report. It includes environmental issues such as air quality, climate, water, soil, biodiversity, fauna and flora, landscape, and cultural heritage. It also identifies areas of environmental concerns are noise, energy efficiency and renewable, waste, adaptation to climate change and transportation
Joint Technical Secretariat of the programme Interreg III A AT-SK, Vienna, Austria	
In the current state of the environment in the region the chapter focused on "Nature and Landscape" is only a brief reference to the programme and limited further description of environmental developments or current trends are presented	Chapter was expanded; data about the "Nature and Landscape" were included. It also includes a description of current and anticipated future trends.
Department for EU Strategy and Economic Development, City of Vienna, Austria	
It is to be expected that economical development of the region will also have negative effect on the environmental situation, especially regarding soil, fauna, flora and the health situation if no compensative measurements will be taken. The environmental report should identify such compensative measurements, or to identify activities that could reach the same goal without negative effects on the environment.	Comment acknowledged and the report includes detailed information about how to overcome potential negative impacts from activities mainly centred on economic development. This information is presented in chapter 5 with direct references to each priority of the programming document.



<p>The strict legal protection of the national parks, like Donauauen, is a limiting factor for tourist developments and for traffic in the region. This should have been mentioned in the report</p>	<p>The report presents recommendation on how to focus on sustainable tourism, that create opportunities to explore benefits of highly valuable protected areas in the region and advocates for balanced perspective, in which not only economic principles are put forward.</p>
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Comments in Slovakia:

Issues Raised	How it has been addressed/Further remarks
Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava	
<p>In description of the environmental issue and concerns on the Slovak and Austrian side it would be beneficial to mirror the analysed data and included table to make the report more comprehensive</p>	<p>Environmental issues on the Slovak side are selected from the national and international strategic documents. In comparison with Austrian environmental issues the Slovakian side is more detailed and extensive, because of the higher number of occurring environmental issues. But, we tried to balance the depths and the character of the data and description in both regions</p>
<p>Overview of possible environmental effects of activities in the different priority areas of the program document is too specific for some of the priorities and less for the rest. It would be beneficial to balance this part of the report.</p>	<p>Comment acknowledged, same structure of the chapter describing the effects is used in the whole report</p>
<p>In the section presenting climate change also include adaptation to climate</p>	<p>Remark acknowledged. Adaptation to climate change is included is one of the environmental concerns and this focus is kept during the whole report</p>
Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava	
<p>Formally covered by Chapter V, although the goal of this chapter is to make recommendations that can prevent or avoid possible negative effects of the program. Some of the recommendation included in the mentioned chapter are to general to guide programme selection, please specify the recommendations</p>	<p>Comment was taken into consideration and detailed recommendations directly linked to each priority are included in the chapter 5 of the report.</p>
<p>The recommendation that the principles of sustainability should be applied as a basic criterion for project selection is a rather general one and can be interpreted in many ways.</p>	<p>The recommendation was specified and added as a targeted measure referring to each priority in order to avoid general statement as listed in the comment</p>
Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava	
<p>The content of the description of the state of the environment in the region seems most of the time plausible, although conclusions regarding the water demand projections are not motivated or supported with data</p>	<p>Remark acknowledged and data for the both region in Austria and Slovakia are added. They include information about water consumption, water treatment plants and sewage system development</p>



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F Taking account of issues raised during consultation in the Programme

As indicated in the chapters A, B and C of this document and as being described in the Evaluation Report for SEA, the development of the programming document and the report were closely related. Furthermore, the recommendations by SEA experts were taken into account during the whole programming process and were integrated into the programming document. The collaborative process was supported from the both sides and it also involved experts' mainly on the environment to ensure that the impacts are assessed accurately. During the continuous exchange of emails, personal communication and meeting, both teams worked closely together to ensure that the recommendation are taken into account in the programming document.

G Reasons for choosing the programme

Promoting sustainable development and minimizing negative impacts on environment were the most important principles during the whole SEA process. As it is stated in the Evaluation Report, the programming document and its priorities have no significantly negative impact on the environment after implementing the programme through projects in the region. However, the SEA provided recommendations for improving the Operational Programme to improve the benefits of the programme from the environmental point of view.

The following suggestions were by SEA considered as significant and they are included in the Operational Programme:

- Support of penetration of clean technologies and technologies minimizing the impact of industrial and domestic processes on environment and furthermore support of educational and research activities in order to create opportunities for shared learning and knowledge dissemination;
- Develop shared monitoring systems specifically targeted towards emerging environmental issues and concerns including climate change adaptation, risk management and emergency preparedness;
- Explore and support activities aiming for promoting environmentally friendly transport and mobility systems which are built on the principles of sustainable mobility systems;
- Develop shared activities to provide learning opportunities through workshop and capacity building sessions to promote knowledge exchange in clean technologies;
- Promotion of partnerships and networking between representatives of industry and authorities for nature protection and conservation, organizations working in the field of cultural heritage protections including municipalities in order to explore opportunities for environmentally-friendly regional tourism development



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H Monitoring the environmental impacts of the programme

The SEA-Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the programme needs to be carefully monitored to explore opportunities of identifying and mitigation negative impacts in early stages of projects' implementations.

SEA Recommendations

The SEA recommends that the monitoring of the significant environmental impacts should be an integrated part of the mid-term and ex post evaluation of the programme. It will be important when preparing the mid-term and ex post evaluations to include an explicit requirement on assessing the significant effects of activities and projects on the relevant environmental key objectives elaborated further below.

Review of current monitoring system

The monitoring model to assess the environmental effects of structural funds programmes employed in the past programming period offers monitoring framework as well as methodologies for monitoring the impacts of projects under this programming document. However, the environmental assessment of projects in the 2000-2006 programming period was restricted to three mainly nominal categories for each project, namely:

- “environmentally neutral”,
- “positive environmental effects” and
- “very positive environmental effects” or as an alternative formulation “environmentally oriented”

It seems be reasonable to improve the current monitoring system in one of the two ways outlined in the chapter.

Proposals for improvements of the monitoring system

During the SEA process, the potential impact of the objectives of the Operational Programme and its priorities on the environmental and natural resources objectives applied in the both countries as well on EU level were analysed and evaluated.

Option 1. Monitoring of impacts with negligible adjustments of the monitoring system

Monitoring and evaluation of impacts should be conducted at the project level as well as on the programme level using the standardized processes and guiding documents such as ex-ante, interim, ex-post, annual evaluation and monitoring reports of the programme, thematic monitoring

reports, and requests for allocations, which contain assessment of environmental effects of the programme interventions as integral part of standardized reports.

During the evaluation, including the final evaluation, we recommend to extend the applied indicators through the following areas: pollution level in air, water soil, noise pollution, waste generation, energy efficiency and biodiversity and landscape protection. We identified these as crucial areas that can be important source of information on potential negative impacts of the development initiatives on environment.

Each project should provide in their reporting documents information about the impacts on the above listed six major areas. We suggest that the documentation will state if the project has no impacts (neutral) or positive impacts (helps in conservation of environmental resources and involves clean technologies) or negative impact. In case of negative impact, it should be specified the amount, character and timeframe of the impacts. To monitor these impacts available regional monitoring system and technical specification of the technologies involved in the project implementation can be used to monitor the impacts.

Option 2. Monitoring of impacts with adjustments of the monitoring system

In order to conduct detailed monitoring of the impacts, SEA outlines a list of indicators under each area of potential impacts including units of their measurement. These indicators can be employed to create a comprehensive picture of the environmental impacts. However, majority of the projects that will follow the objectives of the operational document will have lesser negative impacts, because they are focused on capacity building, knowledge exchange and small scale educational and tourist activities. If the extensive environmental impact monitoring will be implemented, the existing system will be able to provide needed information. But this information will need to be directly enquired from the monitoring agencies, mainly because they are not an usual part of the published data. Even more, systematic and detailed assessment of this kind of information will be needed. That need could be conducted by experts.

Decisions on the monitoring programme

The recommendation of SEA that the monitoring of the significant environmental impacts should be an integrated part of the mid-term and ex post evaluation of the programme was taken into account.

Decision about monitoring has not been made yet. However, based on the assessment of the available data on state of the environment and also of the current monitoring system the proposed option 1 should provide satisfactory results. Furthermore, it is based on the similar system that was used in the previous programming period and that can easily integrated into already developed structures.



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I Information for the public

The environmental authorities and the public are informed that the programme was adopted by the programming group in March 2007. According to Art. 9 of SEA-Directive 2001/42/EC the results of the SEA process are made available to the involved environmental authorities and the general public. Information was published on the web-site of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic.



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A8 List of target groups

Priority 1 – Learning region and economic competitiveness

Activity field 1.1: Cross-border SME cooperation, cooperation in RTD

Main target groups:

- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- Innovation, science and technology centres (parks, incubators)
- Research institutions
- Universities

Activity field 1.2: Cultural cooperation and cooperation in tourism

Main target groups:

- Public and private cultural institutions
- Education and training institutions
- Regional and local authorities
- Border-region communities
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in tourism
- Tourist operators
- Tourist information centres (points)
- Regional and local authorities

Activity field 1.3: Education and qualification, integration of labour markets

Main target groups:

- Labour market institutions
- Education and training institutions
- SMEs
- Students

Activity field 1.4: Social dimension of integration (social and health services)

Main target groups:

- Health service providers
- Social services providers
- Childcare institutions, primary and secondary schools and universities



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Priority 2 – Accessibility and sustainable development

Activity field 2.1: Transport and regional accessibility (planning, transport organisation, logistics)

Main target groups:

- Public transportation authorities
- Environmental authorities
- Research institutions, universities
- Transport alliances

Activity field 2.2: Sustainable spatial development and sound regional governance

Main target groups:

- Local and regional authorities
- Regional development organisations
- Non-governmental organisations
- Interest groups

Activity field 2.3: Cooperation and joint management of protected areas

Main target groups:

- Organisations responsible for management of protected areas
- Local and regional authorities
- Regional development organisations
- Non-governmental organisations
- Owners of the land in the protected areas

Activity field 2.4: Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, environmental protection, risk management

Main target groups:

- Energy producers and users
- Local and regional authorities
- Authorities responsible for the risk prevention (civil protection)
- Non-governmental organisations
- Interest groups



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A9 Agreement on extension of programme area

BUNDESKANZLERAMT  ÖSTERREICH

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COORDINATION - SPATIAL PLANNING AND REGIONAL POLICY
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Mr Colin WOLFE
EC – DG REGIO – D.1

Colin.Wolfe@cec.europa.eu

16.02.2007

**Subject: Territorial Cooperation Austria–Slovakia 2007-2013;
Proposed extension of the programme area**

Dear Mr. Wolfe,

According to Article 21(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 it is possible, in exceptional cases as agreed between the Commission and Member States, to spend up to 20% of the ERDF budget allocated to an Operational Programme in the NUTS-II area in which the core programme area (delimited at NUTS III), referred to in Article 7(1) of Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 is located.

The Member States Austria and Slovakia would like to make use of this extended flexibility and enlarge the programming area of the future Operational Programme Territorial Cooperation (cross-border) Austria–Slovakia on the Austrian side to the entire NUTS II region Lower Austria (this would mean to include the NUTS III region Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen). The region Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen covers 3,357 km², its population total amounts to 239,000.

The key motivation for the extension of the programming area is that

1. The integration of the region would be a major step towards the transparent and uniform delimitation of eligible areas in Lower Austria.
2. Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen could provide important inputs for the programme area in research and development as well as the formation of innovative clusters and networks

Ad 1.) Transparent and uniform formation of eligible areas in the SF-Programmes for *Regional Competitiveness and European Territorial Cooperation*

With the Lower Austrian Programme for Regional Competitiveness 2007 to 2013 as the successor of the Objective 2 Programme 2000-2006 the previously rigid geographical delimitation of eligible areas has come to an end: in most parts of Lower Austria the eligible areas had been restricted to very small, hardly contiguous areas. The new period opens the option for a more transparent formation of eligible areas since a uniform definition of the Areas for several programmes might be accomplished. This would be a major achievement in particular from the perspective of applicants resp. project owners as the main players in Structural Funds: the areas of these two Objective programmes would be better accessible and understandable due to its clear-cut and uniform delimitation. This would considerably ease and facilitate the communication towards applicants.



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A second major aspect in favour of congruent eligible areas between the Programme for Regional Competitiveness and the programme for cross-border cooperation are the similarities in the Activity Fields of both programmes, i.e. for example strengthening innovative capacities of SMEs, support to cluster initiatives and business networks, actions for urban renewal, risk prevention.

With uniform eligible areas in both programmes potential applicants seated in Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen could participate in innovative networking and cluster initiatives in the regional as well as the cross-border context. This would support the development of interfaces and synergies between both programmes and would allow for the participation of project-owners from the region in both programmes. It is important to note that in some parts of Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen as well as in the adjacent regions the density of potential actors is very small and stimulation and generation of development initiatives is a challenging task. In particular for such parts of the region the uniform definition of eligible areas would also support the formation of a critical mass of regional players without being restricted by geographical delimitations.

Ad 2.) The significance of Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen for the programming area in terms of RTDI, cluster initiatives and networking

The NUTS-3 region Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen has an important role in clusters and networks. In case of integration in the programme for cross-border cooperation with the Slovak Republic the impact of these initiatives could be significantly increased and thus could improve the strategic profile of the programme.

Lower Austria has launched a series of initiatives in economic and regional development policies in order to develop clusters with major importance in terms of competitiveness at interregional and European levels. For Lower Austria - with its economic structure being based on SMEs - the formation of flexible networks is crucial to strengthen regional competitiveness in a global economy. Such networks integrate firms with complementary profiles as well as centres for research, development and qualification and support the development of close cooperation patterns and customer relations

The most important examples of clusters which include the region and might lead to important innovative cross-border initiatives with Slovak partners are:

- The *Timber Cluster* is a very active network in the region; it includes wood processing industries, architects and planners as well as qualification centres. The Cluster supports its partners in qualification, internationalisation, public relations and of course in the development of business cooperation. The initiative has been successful in numerous project and activities. With a view on wood and timber industries the similarities and potential synergies between Slovak and Austrian partners are striking: both countries are marked by a dominant share of forested areas and wood processing as an important economic factor: the sector is challenged by globalisation, the development of energy markets, the importance of forested areas as natural asset. One of the key options is the generation of regional added value based on quality products and services.
- The *Cluster for Ecological Construction* is one of the largest and most successful initiatives of Lower Austria – it has initiated and clustered numerous innovative projects in energy efficiency. Energy efficiency is one of the key future agenda for all regions in the EU. INTERREG IIIA has shown that Slovak partners have considerable interest in such innovative projects. The competent partners in Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen could contribute to know-how transfer and in turn internationalisation of smaller economic players would be supported.



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Summary

The harmonisation of programme areas for the programmes *Regional Competitiveness* and the *Territorial Cooperation Programme Austria-Slovakia* as well as the significance of the region Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen for the programme area in terms of innovation and competitiveness are key arguments in favour of an extension of the programme area to the NUTS II level.

All regions participating in the programme, i.e. Burgenland, Vienna as well as Bratislava and Trnava are supporting the extension of the programme area: the partners at regional and national level acknowledge the potential role of Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen in the future programme. Thus in our view the extension would create a significant value added for the effectiveness of the Operational Programme and for the economic future of the programme area. We kindly request the representatives of the Commission to consider these arguments in favour of an extension.

Best regards

Wolf HUBER
Head of Division

Copy to :

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Ms Laila Østergren, DG REGIO (e-mail: laila.oestergren@ec.europa.eu)



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL POLICY

Territorial co-operation, urban actions and outermost regions

The Director

Brussels, 15.03.2007* 02624
DG REGIO.D1/LO (2007) D/230229

**Subject: Cross-border co-operation programme Austria – Slovakia 2007-2013
Application of Flexibility rule governing the location of operations**

Dear Mr Huber,

Thank you for your letter of 16 February relating to your request to apply the flexibility rule for the NUTS II area of Niederösterreich (and specifically within this area, the NUTS III area Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen) to the eligible areas for the Austria-Slovakia cross-border programme for the next programming period.

As you know, Article 21 of the EC Regulation 1083/2006 states that the ERDF may finance expenditure incurred in implementing operations or parts of operations up to a limit of 20% of the amount of its contribution.

In the context of cross-border cooperation and in duly justified cases, the ERDF may finance expenditure incurred in implementing operations or parts of operations up to a limit of 20 % of the amount of its contribution to the operational programme concerned in NUTS level III areas adjacent to the eligible areas for the programme referred to in Article 7(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 or surrounded by such adjacent areas. In exceptional cases as agreed between the Commission and Member States, this flexibility may be extended to the NUTS level II areas in which the areas referred to in Article 7(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 are located.

In this context, it should be noted that in the draft Operational programme you have already suggested including the following NUTS III adjacent areas: Waldviertel, Sankt Pölten, Niederösterreich-Süd and Mittelburgenland under the first part of the above paragraph. While the inclusion of these areas calls for no specific comments from the Commission services, it appears that a justification for these areas has as yet not been provided to the Commission services as required by the first line of the paragraph

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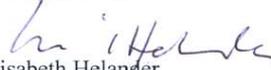
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Secondly, your request regarding the involvement of the NUTS III area Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen in the programme clearly falls under the second sentence of the above paragraph. It is clear that the programme partners consider the inclusion of Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen necessary to ensure coherence and continuity of the cooperation action and see the inclusion of the region as creating a significant value added for the effectiveness of the Operational Programme and for the economic future of the programme area. Further more it is stated that the Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen region has an important role in clusters and networks which could lead to important innovative cross-border initiatives with Slovak partners.

Based on the arguments provided by programme partners the Commission services can accept the request and agree to the inclusion of Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen in the programme. I would be grateful if you could include the written justification in the Operational Programme as well.

Yours sincerely,



Elisabeth Helander

Copies: C. Wolfe, M. Gilland, L. Oestergren