

# CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION PROJECTS IN THE HUNGARIAN-SLOVAK BORDER AREA

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## Abstract

Nowadays, efficient development of regions and settlements is unimaginable without utilization of opportunities from tender or project sources. This is especially true for settlements in border areas, which regarding to their location near to the border and far from centralized industry and community in the centre of the state are mainly featured by bad economic and social situation. In order to support the development of borderlands, cross-border co-operation programmes were founded by the European Union and its predecessor organization in 1990s. In this study, the theoretical issues of cross-border co-operation are introduced, focusing on the Hungarian-Slovak border region. Also discussed are projects (and their applications and outputs) which were implemented in that area. It is focused on successes and also difficulties during the implementation process of CBC programmes in general and especially in the project level. The paper discusses the above mentioned themes on the regional (NUTS III) and district (NUTS IV) levels and in some cases on the settlement-pairs or very small areas, it also deals with the differences of the successful applicants and projects with their reasons and temporal changes, especially focused on regional disparity. Another way for analysing the Hungarian-Slovak CBC programmes is comparing all that were concerned with our border area during the pre-access programme PHARE CBC, and after joining the EU the Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine Neighbourhood Programme and also Hungary-Slovakia CBC Programme 2007-2013, which is implementing today. In the paper, according to the previous I seek an answer to the question of which part of the examined NUTS III and IV level regions were the most active in submission of project proposals and in successfulness in tendering and also in implementation of CBC projects subsidised by the EU funds.

**Key words:** Hungary, Slovakia, cross-border co-operation (CBC), border, region, districts, EU funds, PHARE CBC, Interreg IIIA, Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine Neighbourhood Programme, Hungary-Slovakia Cross Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013, NUTS IV.

## INTRODUCTION – DETERMINATION OF INVESTIGATED AREA

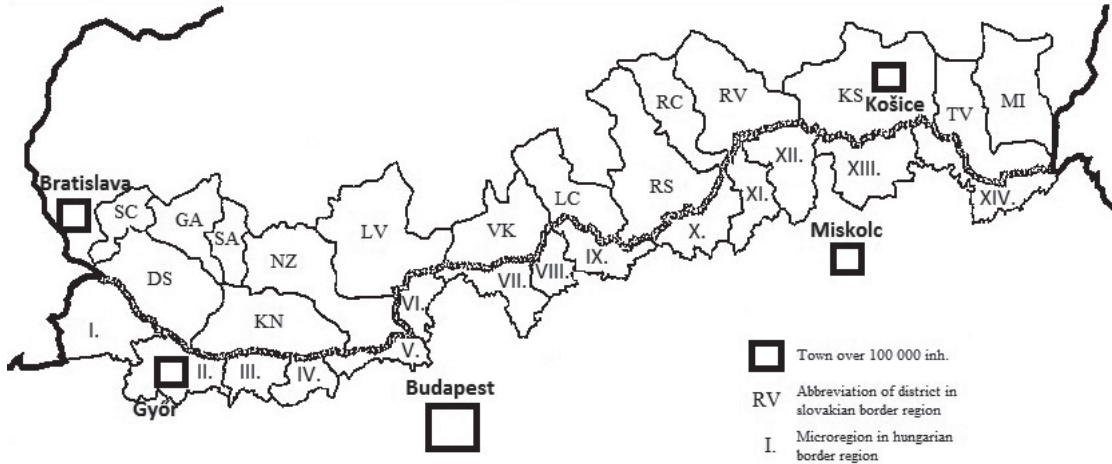
In this study we focused on the 679 km long<sup>1</sup> border region between Hungary and Slovakia. This mutual border is both for Hungary and Slovakia their longest border in comparison to other

neighbour states<sup>2</sup> (i.e. in the case of Hungary this border takes 30% from all his borders, and in the case of Slovakia it is almost 40%).

The range of border area could be determined differently depending on given definitions. Optimal would be defining it on the level of settlements,

<sup>1</sup> In the programming document of Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013. Other sources provide lengths between 654.8 and 679 km.

<sup>2</sup> The second longest border section of Hungary is with Romania (453 km) and the second longest of Slovakia is with Poland (541 km). (Sources: Statistics 2009; Wikipedia 2013.)



**Figure 1** NUTS IV regions (districts in Slovakia and microregions in Hungary) along the border. Source: own construction based on Mezei (2010:146). *Note:* The Hungarian microregions were replaced by the districts (járás) since January 1, 2013, in line with administrative reform.

for example by an imaginary line drawn in distance 25 km from the border on both sides. This method would also enable to resolve the question of those settlements which could occur at the edge of border area, if they are concluded or not in the border region. Such settlement would be included into the border region based on location of its centre – if its centre is inside the area defined by the drawn imaginary line, it should be taken into the border region. Another method to determine the settlement affiliation would be related to its area inside the border region. If it is over 50%, it belongs inside the investigated border region. However, this determination of investigated area by an imaginary line of constant distance from the border would not be perfect due to diversity of settlement structures, population densities, geographical differences (e.g. hills, mountains, rivers) which could lead to practical difficulties at data evaluation. Due to practical reasons it would be more sensible and simple to analyse data from regional areas. Therefore, in practical analysis we work with NUTS III or NUTS IV aggregated data. This means that the investigated area in this study includes the districts of Slovak Republic (Figure 1) and their respective self-governing regions (counties) (Figure 2) close to the Hungarian border and a general overview of the Hungarian side of border, too. In the case

of counties, our study deals with counties of Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Košice, more specifically with their 13 districts close to and directly along the border in direction from west to east. There are also included those districts in which the most activities were done regarding to the three development programmes<sup>3</sup> (e.g. district of Michalovce) or which are for some substantial social or geographical aspect also considered as borderlands or they are part of the Danube region<sup>4</sup> (district of Galanta) (Figure 1; see also Mezei 2010:146 fig. 23).

In the paper, according to the previous we seek answer for the question that which part of examined NUTS III and IV level regions were most active in submission of project proposals and in successfulness in tendering and also in implementation of CBC projects subsidised by EU funds.

<sup>3</sup> PHARE CBC, Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine Neighbourhood Programme and Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013.

<sup>4</sup> The immediate Danube catchment area, i.e. the districts along the Danube and Little Danube, is considered to be the Danube-region. Share of Hungarian inhabitants in all of above mentioned Slovak border districts (for details see Figure 1) is over Slovak average (Statistics 2013).

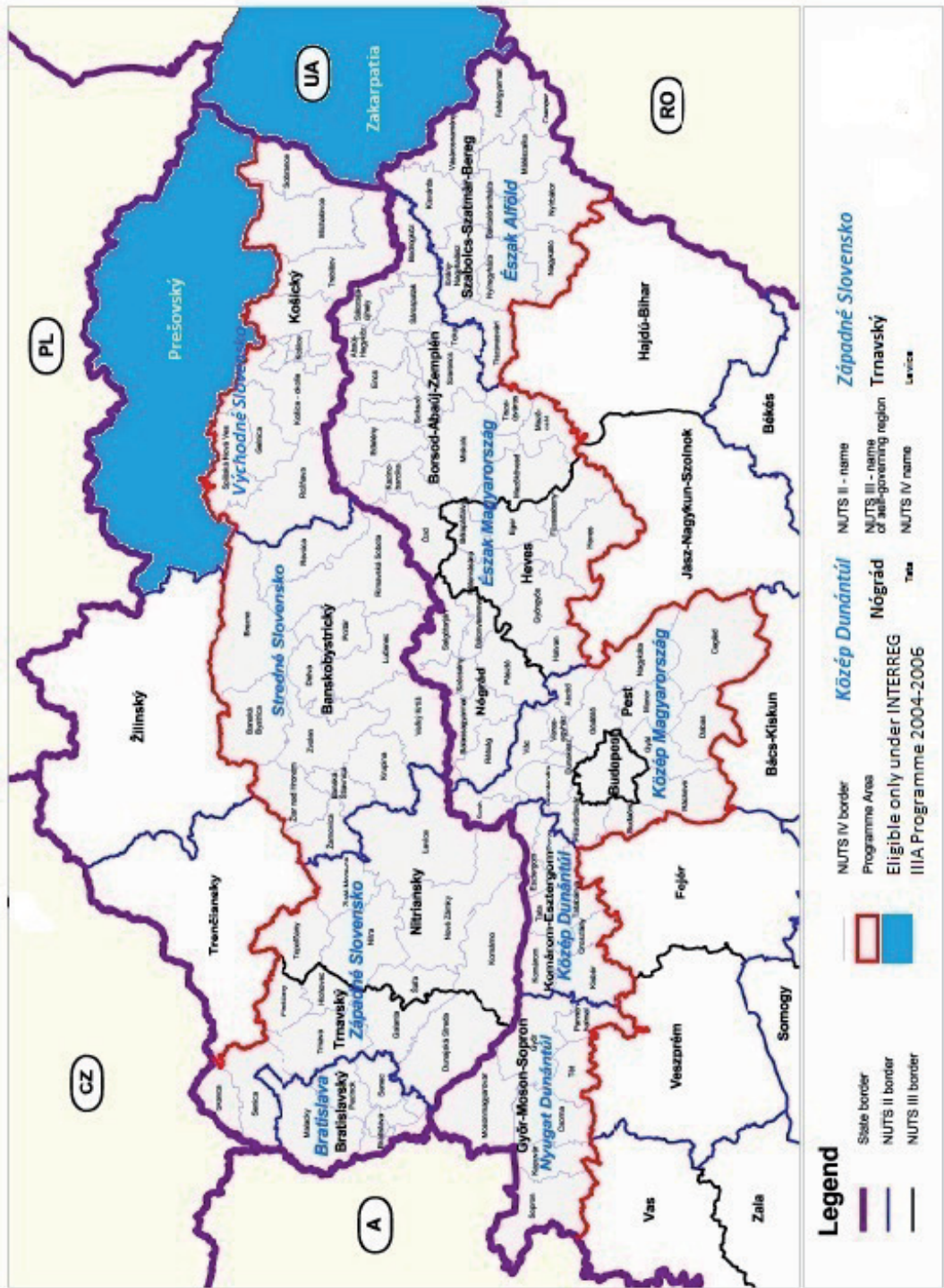


Figure 2 Eligible area for Hungarian – Slovakian Cross-border Co-operation programmes. Source: HU-SK CBC Programme (2007:125) and own construction.

## MEANING OF BORDER

### The definition of border and the theory of border research

The conceptual meaning of a border has various interpretations in the literatures we refer to. Its meaning was interpreted differently in particular eras depending on the geographical and political situation, i.e. during communist regime attributed to them different roles than in western democracy. Its meaning and importance also changed by time having different importance in our countries (e.g. 30 years ago and recently in the Schengen zone). Also various scientific disciplines deal differently with border thematic. A geographer, an economist, a lawyer or a sociologist and a political scientist have different aspect of view on it and conceptual interpretation; thus, it can be said that the issue of borders is not only in interest of geographers - regionalists, but it would be interested also by above mentioned other disciplines. Primarily, the field of border and/or border-lands research and study belongs to the political geography; however, due to big interest of other scientific disciplines, how many disciplines are interested in this field, that many definitions and interpretations of border are available.

The definition of the border in the geographical science commonly refers to the state border which means the most trivial practice is the dividing line between the states. The border is generally considered as the end of something, its existence implies some interruption or obstruction of the social processes.

From geographical aspect of view the border can be defined from physical geographic, social geographic and political geographic approaches. Thus, the borders could be not only realizations of political and economic realities but also can realized by physical geographic borders as it was captured by Lösch in 1962 in the topic of the historical borders dividing territories.

Rechnitzer defines the state borders as imaginary lines separating the areas of states or the territories

out of their sovereignty, i.e. the two separated parts are characterized by different international law. He pointed out that the international law has no rules specifying where the border lines could be. The border is a kind of symbolical sign the states are separated by, marking the start and the end of their authorities protecting also the national functions and citizens. So the borders are the symbol of the national sovereignties that over the centuries had more dividing than connecting function. This situation changed only after the World War II in Western Europe and worldwide only after the 1970s, due to the globalization accelerating the minimization of the border's dividing role (Rechnitzer 1999:10).

Nemes Nagy many times emphasizes the territory - dividing function of the borders (Nemes Nagy 1998, 2009) determining it as dividing lines, edges and/or margins. He expounds that mathematics provide the precise definition of the border that sounds: "a border of some region (set) is the set of points, where in the point of the region is inside or outside within the optional small area is (the border itself do not necessary belongs to the region)" (Nemes Nagy 2009:168), so it emphasises that the border divides the two sets. Thus, the border forms the outer edge of a given area.<sup>5</sup>

The Czech geographer Šindler gives definition of the state border as a kind of map and land-line fixed in agreement dividing the sovereign states from each other or from territories out of any authorities (i.e. open sea; see also Šindler 1997). Then again the scientist admits defining the border as a strict line is misleading and inadequate at the same time. In practise, the border is a kind of frontier having a zone that starts somewhere inside the country and ends in the fixed border line.

According to Kovács (2009), border can be defined in the case of one spatial element as an outer dividing line, in the case of two or more

<sup>5</sup> The four different meanings of the border concept by prof. Nemes Nagy (1998:141): *a* – border as a dividing spatial element (barrier); *b* – border as a filter zone with gates (filter); *c* – border as a margin an buffer zone (frontier); *d* – border as adjoining element (contact zone).

spatial elements as an inner dividing line which separates them. Bezák (1995) defined border as a dividing line which cuts a geographical area into two-dimensional bounded territories.

The renowned professor Hagett uses the term of border describing and bordering the so called territories, where the territory refers to an area that falls under proprietary rights (see Hagett 1975). Thus, the Earth is practically a planet covered by a net of borders. According to Hagett borders create pressure zones in their near surrounding, where the strength of this pressure decreases with increasing distance from the border; e.g. see Iron Curtain, which had very strong influence on its near surrounding. However, not only the progression of the regions alongside the low permeability borders of the Eastern Block were behind of the progression of inner territories in most of the cases, but also the borderlands of most of the capitalist countries had slower progressions to inner regions. In those eras the proximity to the closed borders necessarily entails a disadvantageous and peripheral situation, at that time the border meant the end of the known world, where the unexplored and inaccessible world was on the other side (Illés 1994). This situation, besides its economic effect, also led to a psychologically hard and very negative pessimistic lifestyle, generating the so called “villages at the end of the world” from which many broke off economically and got into disadvantageous situations, see for example some of the villages in the regions of “Cserhát” or “Bodrogköz”.

After the change of the regime (1989) the administrative conditions of the border-crossing became significantly easier and also many new checkpoints were opened. However, it can be emphasised that if the easier administration of border crossing not follows the increasing of the checkpoints, the two sides of the border will also stimulate less. Some of such examples of bad co-operation (namely in relation with the Hungarian-Slovak borderline, e.g. bridge-reconstruction projects failed due to political reasons at the lower reaches of the Ipoly) are described in this publication as the main topic of our study.

### **The function of the borders**

Generally, the border can be described with its dividing function between two areas having checkpoints that function as a kind of doors. We also cannot miss the frequently quoted classical classification of the 5 functions of borders by Guichomet and Raffestin: legal function, fiscal function, supervisory function, military function, ideological function.

The importance of the above mentioned functions or even their existence has been varied for 90 years on the investigated border section since its establishment. At the beginning the ideological function, i.e. the “we-they” consciousness, was completely missing. It has changed over the years due to the strong influence of the other four functions, so the dividing character has gradually occurred.

Currently the most permanently existing function is the legal one according to our opinion inasmuch as even in the EU this is the way for the national states to define their authorities and can use the instruments of governance and maintain power.

The fiscal function involves the control over state tax revenues and export trade, while the first one is significantly limited in case of states joined to the monetary union. The last restriction is practically forbidden in all EU countries, inasmuch as it would limit free trade. However, it can be said that both components were historically important from the beginning that is from the establishments of borders.

The control duty of the border was always present – disregarding the time of the World War II – from the establishment of Czechoslovakia with weaker intensity. Passing a checkpoint was under strict control in order to check the passports and custom clearance while keeping a record at the same time, on the other hand the borders prevented unauthorized crossing of the frontier. The first above was valid until accession to the EU, respectively to the Schengen Agreement; the strictest controls were applied after the World War II, later the border crossing between Czechoslovakia and Hungary

became gradually easier, but the still limited 2 border crossing were permitted until 1989. In 1989, at the time of the regime change only 12 road and 8 railway (1 peage-line with 2 border intersections) checkpoints were on the examined border line.<sup>6</sup> More closed checkpoints opened gradually after the change of regime.

Recently the situation on the Hungarian-Slovak border line has changed radically compared to the situation described above due to the fact that both countries are members of the EU border control agreement, i.e. the Schengen System. As a result of it is the abolition of the border checks at the common borders which is a radical change considering the earlier circumstances and comparing it with for example the Hungarian-Ukrainian border where border crossing is still not easy (see also Kovály 2012). At the same time we should mention that the number of border crossing possibilities has not risen significantly since that time on the examined border section, especially if we compare our border section with those joint to the Schengen Area. This fact concerns particularly to the western section where the Danube forms the border line; no new crossing points have been opened here since 1989.

The defending, i.e. military function of the border was important particularly in the time of the world wars, which importance fell after joining to

<sup>6</sup> It can be said that in the era of socialism in our border section there were only a very few connecting bridge or doors were available; the crossing was difficult the border's barrier role hindered the flow of production agents over it. More detailed research of sociological streaming dynamics of the borders can be found in Böröcz József's study (Böröcz, 2002) in which he analyses the borders impact on economic, social, cultural, technical trends. He attaches a bridge or door role to them where the bridge accents the border (crossing) institutional attraction role while the door with its opening/closing indicates the border's permeability, so how much it permits or not the flow of trends, currents directed through. According to Böröcz a border is a bridge equipped with doors, where the doors can be either open or closed, imagine a protected border with lot of paths through from which only some are permitted to be used for crossing others cannot be used at all or with limitations, for example to enable farming or forestry (to get to some locations with difficult access) or small local traffic permitted border crossings – see for example some of the Hungarian-Ukraine borderland crossing points (Kovály, 2012).

the different international military alliances. On the examined Hungarian-Slovak border line the Warsaw Pact membership (1955-1991) also decreased the above mentioned function, but especially since the NATO membership duty has completely lost its significance.

### Types of border

The classification of borders after its characteristics can be carried out in different ways. The borders can be of natural, administrative, mental etc. character, bordering ethnical, natural formations (e.g. an island), defined by a biogeographic etc. aspect of view. The borders in many cases cannot be defined unequivocally, for instance in a biogeographical case of the transition from the deciduous forest zone through the mixed one to the coniferous woods.

Henk Van Houtum operated with antonyms, defining four groups of extreme border types: 1. natural-artificial; 2. functional-affective; 3. concrete-abstract; 4. open-closed (Van Houtum in Kovács 2009).

Under the definition of natural border we should understand a border which was formed by some natural factor where crossing is hampered, e.g. a higher mountain range, river, lake or the sea itself can often form a border in case of a seaside country. The artificial or anthropogenic border is often formed in case of administrative borders e.g. as a result of political decision. Many historical geographical works (see e.g. Pounds 2003) underline the fact that in medieval time mostly the natural formations (rivers, mountains) represented the borders. However Kovács with Hardi (2001), Böröcz (2002), Leimgruber (1980, 2005), Newman (2009) and other authors argue against the "natural-artificial" border contrasts, maintaining the fact that all borders were established artificially during the history. It is reasonable to agree with, inasmuch as we can claim all borders are of anthropogenic origin.

We speak about functional, i.e. legally existing border when e.g. a process is the condition of crossing the border; it is necessary to wait on the both

side because of border checking. As the opposite is the subjective i.e. mentally defined affective border, which exists in people's mind resulting the fact that everyone has different mental space in his mind what he is surrounded by. The state borders are usually legally existing and also mentally defined borders, e.g. Czech-German border, where have people different mentality on the Czech and German sides of border but theirs regional identity compared with "inland" inhabitants can be slightly different too (Chromý-Skála 2010).

Some of ethnographical and anthropological researches are carried out on examining affective borders, but describing and defining projection, so map making is the task first of all of geographical science. In Hungarian relation it is necessary to mention the scientific achievement of Hardi, who examined the notion formed about each other in residents' mind first of all on the both sides of the Hungarian-Austrian border respectively together with the sociologist Nárai researched the mental map of the inhabitants in four Hungarian settlements along the Austrian border with special regard on the border character specifications of the settlements (Hardi 1999, 2001).

The concrete-abstract border characterization is close to the functional-affective analogue, inasmuch as the functional border is always concrete while the affective is always an abstract one (Kovács 2009:12). The concrete, functional borders in legal meaning are commonly used in geographical resp. regional science, while the abstract borders are researched by anthropology and ethnography, pointed out professor Kürti (2006).

### Political borders

The border types above can be applied usually on different borders, but on the other hand the frequently changing political borders are worth classifying according to its formation. The authors Ante (1981), Schwind (1972), Šindler (1997) agreed on setting up four groups from genetic aspect of view: subsequent, antecedent, overlapping and relict kinds of political borders (see also Dokoupil 2004:49).

The subsequent border: as the result of the separation of regions forming a united area before; e.g. the new borders formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The border between USA and Canada is an antecedent one, because the assignment (alongside a certain line of longitude) had already been made before the area was populated.

The third type is the so called overlapping, which refers to a border the original areas are overlapped due to a political action. The last type is the relict border, which already does not exist, but still can be found in practise. A good example of it is the border between Western and Eastern Germany. According to Dokoupil these kinds of borders are in the most of cases not only dividing from historical-geographical aspect of view, but still play a real role in cases e.g. the border between two regions can be defined according to this relict-border as it was in case of Germany where the borders of "new alliance" were outside of the old internal borders of Germany not forming common regions and as a result of it the differences between the regions alongside the previous border still exist. The funds pointing these areas are optimal and advantageous form the aspect of regional development.

## CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATIONS ON THE HUNGARIAN-SLOVAK BORDER SECTION

Recently the effective development of the settlements is unimaginable without the possibilities ensured by the financial resources of tenders. The fact is relevant especially for border settlements with an accumulative disadvantage from location, accessibility, having bad economic and social conditions; see for example Řehák's publications (Řehák 2001, 2004). In 90s the predecessor institution of the European Union founded the cross-border co-operation programme for emphasized and appropriate development of the border settlements and areas. So far three programmes have had the development of our examined border area in view: PHARE CBC, Interreg IIIA and CBC 2007-2013.

## PHARE CBC PROGRAMME

The countries of the region joint to the Union in the first decade of 21st century could meet the PHARE CBC preparation of joint programmes, which objective was to prepare the east – middle European countries to receive the resources of INTERREG programming. The Hungarian-Slovak PHARE CBC programme had the amounts of 2-2 mil. EUR of European Union support between 1999 and 2003, which was the lowest sum amongst the all PHARE programmes in relation with the Slovak border lines. In case of Hungary it was the second smallest programme after Slovenian programme (Mezei 2008). In the first years the money could be expended on large projects. Within large projects were those ones were carried out which were spent on solving a complex problem of a small region. That was the case of the problem related to the sewage cleaning of the Tokaj region and also the first section of road between Plešivec and the border built in order to open up the Slovak / Gömör - Torna karst region. (For more projects see Mezei 2008 and PHARE CBC 2005.) Besides the big projects the smaller ones also gained ground launching the so called small project found with total amount of 200,000 EUR (10% from allocation), from which 5 – 50,000 EUR were spent on projects with human resource development resp. building relationship objectives.

Since the programme year 2002 the so called large and small projects forming an alloy of grant schemas have also appeared. The realization of the programme years 2002 and 2003 were between 2004 and 2005, according to the “*n*+2 rule”<sup>7</sup> (see more: Phare programmes 2007). In the previous year the Environmental grant scheme was announced. Here small settlements’ sewage disposal and treatment investments respectively its documentation and also projects of environmental awareness supporting investments were subsidized. Altogether 10 projects (4 investment and 6 not construction related ones) were successfully realized. The

<sup>7</sup> The *n*+2 rule is a rule according disbursement deadline for allocated financial amounts, when allocated sums for the year *n* should be disbursed up the end of year *n*+2. (Note: for the programming period 2007-2013 the rule *n*+3 is also applied.)

Economic development grant schema supported the economic development instruments e.g. facilitates the establishment of industrial parks resp. foundation of new enterprise incubator houses and providing also its equipment. Within the non-construction related projects mainly the trainings, flow of information and other human resource development programmes resp. the completion of design documentations were in focus. Here 12 projects were successfully realized. In case of grant schemas the applicants of Rožňava district in Eastern Slovakia were the most successful (Table 1).

The increased activity of the eastern regions can be noticed also in the PHARE CBC projects. The number of the submitted project proposals was highest from region Banská Bystrica and the number of successfully realized projects are the highest in Košice self-governing region<sup>8</sup>, within that the organizations from Rožňava district were the most active.

## INTERREG III A PROGRAMME

After joining the EU the regions along the border could latch on to the INTERREG III A programme within the first, shortened three years long programming period. In the examined Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine Neighbourhood Programme two Calls for Proposals<sup>9</sup> were completed. The programme was different from the previous one territorially inasmuch as it was trilateral (three sided) the Zakarpattia/Kárpátalja region from Ukraine, respectively the organizations of the bordering Prešov county were entitled to apply too (HU-SK-UA, 2004).

The INTERREG IIIA programme was far more popular than the PHARE CBC HU-SK programme thanks to the fact that it was possible to submit for a larger amount than in case of preparatory joining programmes and on the other hand as the programme so the available promotional tools were proportionally more effective (see also data in Table 1 and Table 2). In consequence of it the number

<sup>8</sup> Self-governing region (samosprávny kraj) – the official term for a Slovak county, e.g. higher territorial unit (HTU) or NUTS III level region; we are using them in this paper as synonyms.

<sup>9</sup> see also as CfP.



**Table 1** The HU-SK PHARE CBC Programme financial memoranda 2001-2003 summary – regional (NUTS III) and district (NUTS IV) level. Source: own calculation based on internal data of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic.

Region / District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<b>Region of Bratislava</b>	<b>599,015</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>0.17</b>
Senec	51,825	16.8	7	1	14.3	13.51	1.93
<b>Region of Trnava</b>	<b>551,003</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>0.73</b>
Dunajská Streda	112,384	10.0	13	1	7.7	11.57	0.89
Galanta	94,533	31.0	5	2	40.0	5.29	2.12
Piešťany	63,928	76.0	2	1	50.0	3.13	1.56
<b>Region of Nitra</b>	<b>713,422</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>7.29</b>	<b>0.98</b>
Komárno	108,556	3.2	21	2	9.5	19.34	1.84
Levice	120,021	6.3	14	4	28.6	11.66	3.33
Šaľa	54,000	36.3	2	1	50.0	3.70	1.85
<b>Region of Banská Bystrica</b>	<b>662,121</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>9.06</b>	<b>1.66</b>
Banská Bystrica	111,984	65.0	7	3	42.9	6.25	2.68
Detva	33,514	38.0	3	1	33.3	8.95	2.98
Lučenec	72,837	9.0	25	3	12.0	34.32	4.12
Rimavská Sobota	83,124	12.9	8	2	25.0	9.62	2.41
Veľký Krtíš	46,741	9.8	12	2	16.7	25.67	4.28
<b>Region of Košice</b>	<b>766,012</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>7.44</b>	<b>2.09</b>
Košice town	236,093	17.5	9	1	11.1	3.81	0.42
Košice surroundings	106,999	5.9	15	4	26.7	14.02	3.74
Rožňava	61,887	9.7	17	10	58.8	27.47	16.16
Trebišov	103,779	4.4	10	1	10.0	9.64	0.96
<b>Eligible region-total/5 region</b>	<b>3,291,573</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>6.44</b>	<b>1.18</b>

*Note:* A – number of inhabitants in 2001  
 B – average air distance of project proposals from border line (km)  
 C – number of project proposals  
 D – number of successful project proposals  
 E – success ratio (D/C, in %)  
 F – number of project proposals per 100,000 inhabitants  
 G – number of successful project proposals per 100,000 inhabitants

**Table 2** Regional distribution of successful project proposals of HU-SK-UA programme – district (NUTS IV) level. Source: own calculation based on data from MCRD SR.

District in Slovakia	1st CfP	2nd CfP	Sum
Košice city	4	9	13
Komárno	4	3	7
Košice surrounding	5	1	6
Prešov	3	3	6
Michalovce	4	1	5
Lučenec	0	3	3
Veľký Krtíš	1	2	3
Rožňava	0	3	3
Nitra	1	2	3
Nové Zámky	2	1	3
Dunajská Streda	1	2	3
Senec	0	2	2
Trebišov	0	2	2
Levice	0	2	2
Revúca	0	1	1
Galanta	0	1	1
Other districts	3	10	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>75</b>

of the received project proposals was extra high and the average level of the tenders also hit the bar. In the first CfP 314 applications arrived from the programming area, the majority of it (165) with Hungarian main applicants, 143 Slovak and the rest 6 organizations were Ukrainian. In the first CfP the success rate was almost 15%, so altogether 47 projects were signed, from which 24 Hungarian, 21 Slovak and 2 Ukrainian organizations. So the number of applicants as the number of the realized projects was the highest in eastern regions. (Table 2) The evidence of the projects' good quality is the fact that only a few of the signed projects were not realized. As of the number of the submitted project proposals and also the amount of the applied money the leader was the Szabolcs-Szatmár–Bereg County, on the second place it was the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County which was followed by the Eastern Slovak Košice County. As of the number of the approved applications the leader was the eastern region in both countries, so much so that

the two – fifth of the realized projects came from Košice county, where the success rate (the rate of the approved projects to the submitted project proposals) is over 25%, the Košice region is followed by another Eastern Slovak one, by Prešov county with over 20% of success rate. The other extreme value belongs to the most passive applicant western regions of Bratislava and Trnava counties, the first one did not reached even the 10% of success rate while the last one had just 10% success rate.

The second CfP was announced together only for the Slovak and Hungarian applicants (Lados et al., 2008) because of managerial problems of the first CfP, still it was even more popular except that it become already known mainly due to the fact that all of the priority components were announced. There were 489 submitted project proposals until the deadline, now with more submissions from Slovakia (277 main applicants) than from Hungary (212), but the Hungarian partners applied for higher

sum, the 57.5% of this CfP total financial demand of 86,329,809 EUR. In total 64 projects were contracted and then completed in this CfP from which 37 were in Hungary and 47 in Slovakia. In year 2008 in Slovakia another 6 queued projects were contracted due to significant increase in strengths of the Slovak crown and some not fully used-up amounts from the completed projects, thereby the disbursement rate of allocated EU funds for HU-SK-UA Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006 was in Slovakia practically in 100% level (INTERREG 2011). In regional distribution of the second CfP applications Košice county is still in the lead with almost the third of them, the second went to Nitra county which emerged stronger in this stage with almost quarter of applications, followed by in past not very active Banská Bystrica county, than with a smaller drop (primarily in the requested amount) county of Prešov. The setback of this last county neighbouring Ukraine with significant Ruthenian populations (Statistics, 2013) can be found also in a fact that the eastern neighbour did not participated in this Call for Proposal. Another later CfP was opened for them, which is not included in this paper. Bratislava and Trnava self-governmental regions are at the tail-end again with 9% and 7% of the applications. The most popular measure in this CfP was the newly opened 1.3 measure, which covers the promotion of human networking development micro projects. Regionally it was the most popular between the all-round active Košice and Banská Bystrica counties' participants. Above average was the number of applicants from the least active counties of Trnava and Bratislava focusing on the institutional co-operation (measure 1.2) (see more Priorities, 2005), because these have the strongest public institution network, respectively research base. The distribution of applicants for the business co-operation measure (1.1) generally fit to the average distribution, similarly the environmental related 2.1 measure except the Prešov county. Inexplicably applicants of this region full of natural values ignored the 2.1 and the 2.2 (nature conservation) measures. As for the small scale telecommunication and transportation infrastructure development promoting 2.3 measure the Nitra county applicants were above average active in opposition to Banská Bystrica, Košice, Bratislava and particularly the Trnava county.

Comparing the first and the second CfP the number of projects increased while their average size significantly reduced nearly to its one-third as the result of the introduction of the 1.3 measure in the second CfP, for which one could apply only with projects of maximum 50 000 EUR. There was a very large oversubscription in each CfP. The requested amount was sevenfold of the available resource already in the first call further increasing to nearly eightfold in the second one.

The success rate spread shows relatively large spread also in regional comparison. The success rate of submitted project proposals were close to 20% in the first and 17% in the second one. There is a clear linear correlation in the first CfP between the number of submitted applications and their success rate. The most successful was the most active region of Košice with more than one-quarter of projects having been accepted. The least, only one project each, were contracted from Trnava (10%) respectively Bratislava (8,3%) counties. The situation slightly changed in the second CfP, while Košice kept its above average success rate the neighbouring Prešov county became the strongest backslider region. In the same time in this CfP the firstly unsuccessful Trnava and Bratislava regions applied with the highest efficiency of 26% and 20% success-rate.

District level comparison (Table 2) shows as most successful in first stage the Košice-surroundings district with 5 accepted applications. The winner of the second stage and also in total was the town of Košice with 13 completed projects managed by the town's entitled organisations. A balanced good performance came also from Komárno and Prešov districts' organisations, joined in the first CfP by Michalovce district; in second call by Lučenec and Rožňava districts. We have to highlight the luck of success of the Southern Slovak Šaľa and Rimavská Sobota districts. Especially the passivity of the last one, which is lying directly along the border, can bring questions. Theoretically this very underdeveloped district (see also Halas 2008 – Map 2) which is permanent leader of unemployment lists for many years (UPSVAR 2013) with very long state-border is predestined for realisation of borderland co-operation projects.

## Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013

We would like to inform the readers also about the on-going Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Co-operation Programme: with its results from the first, second<sup>10</sup> and partly of third and fourth calls for proposals. The latter two are currently in contracting phase, some of them are also in realisation phase now, or they will start in the near future.

The „HU-SK” programme is one of the five in this programming period running cross-border co-operation programmes in Slovakia and one of seven in Hungary. Its budget is the highest from the borderland co-operation programmes in both cases, about 207 million EUR from which the ERDF contribution is more than 176 million EUR, its share for each project is 80-85%, depending on the applicant organisations type. The state contribution taking 10-15% and the applicants own contribution being usually 5%<sup>11</sup>. The resources are distributed between the particular priorities by 41%, 53% and 6% (HU-SK CBC Programme 2007).

The programme's geographical area changes in two locations comparing to its predecessor 2004-2006 programming period's Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine Neighbouring Programme thus covering 8 counties in Hungary and 5 one in Slovakia (Figure 2; Priorities HU-SK, 2007). Ukraine is the part of another programme; therefore Kárpátalja region and the Slovak county of Prešov without a border with Hungary was dropped out. Territories bordering Ukraine are covered by the newly created four-sided HU-SK-RO-UA ENPI programme. Expect dividing the programme area other explicative changes happened in order to improve the real work and tighten the project organizations co-operation. We think the most substantial is that in 2007-2013 programming period only mutual projects can be supported. This is good news in every account to those who are supporters of real, stable and sustainable co-operation. This way beside the clear economic

advantages the programme by its projects can be a real catalyst of the Hungarian-Slovak co-operation – thinking together and development of each-other understanding, respectively in rising awareness of our interdependence high level as well.<sup>12</sup>

### The four HU-SK 2007-2013 Calls for Proposals

**The 1st Call for Proposals** was announced relatively lately in October of 2008, compared to other similar programmes, for more than 37% of ERDF resource, a 63.5 million EUR. 246 project proposals were received to the deadline from which two-third, 167 were from Hungary and 79 from Slovak applicants. 106 projects were accepted from which exactly 100 were contracted. Lot of these projects had more than the two required partners, therefore there were 127 partners from Slovakia in total which received financial support.

The regional distribution of main partners among the submitted project proposals shows the following picture. It can be said that similarly to the Interreg programme in both countries the eastern counties remained active. The utmost project proposals, 41 pieces, came from Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, followed by Pest county (27) and Komárom-Esztergom county (22). The least project bids (10) from the authorised regions came from Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county entitled by the three borders crossing programme. In Slovakia the most active was the Košice county with 28 project proposals, the second was Nitra (16) followed by Banská Bystrica county. The least project bids, only eight, came from the Trnava region which was also entitled by the three borders crossing programme. There is also the highest number of projects in realisation; meaning contracted, in Košice county, 36% of all projects from here.

**The 2nd Call for Proposals** was launched in 2009 and it was the most complete from the programme's CfP-s, because it was announced for the all measures. There was the second highest EU financial

<sup>10</sup> The projects from 1st and 2nd CfP are in realisation phase or just terminated their implementation.

<sup>11</sup> Excepting the governmental or state owned organisations, where the own contribution is not required.

<sup>12</sup> Objectives and priorities of programme can be find in details: HU-SK CBC Programme, 2007, pp. 49-67 and their summary is in the following webpage: [http://www.husk-cbc.eu/hu/kozos\\_hataron\\_atnyulo\\_fejlesztési\\_strategia\\_programcelok](http://www.husk-cbc.eu/hu/kozos_hataron_atnyulo_fejlesztési_strategia_programcelok)

**Table 3** Regional distribution of project partners (grant beneficiaries) of the HU-SK 2007-2013 programme – district (NUTS IV) level. Source: own calculation based on internal data of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

Region	District	Call for Proposals				Sum
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
KE	Košice	17	13	4	15	49
BA	Bratislava	11	15	3	18	47
NR	Komárno	10	12	1	17	40
TT	Dunajská Streda	9	14	2	12	37
KE	Košice-okolie	8	18	0	5	31
BB	Banská Bystrica	9	1	2	16	28
NR	Nové Zámky	8	7	4	5	24
BB	Lučenec	13	7	0	2	22
KE	Trebišov	10	7	1	4	22
NR	Nitra	2	9	0	5	16
BB	Veľký Krtíš	5	4	3	2	14
KE	Rožňava	4	5	0	4	13
NR	Levice	3	6	0	4	13
BB	Rimavská Sobota	4	3	1	3	11
TT	Trnava	1	6	0	3	10
BB	Zvolen	1	3	2	2	8
BB	Brezno	1	1	0	3	5
KE	Michalovce	1	3	0	1	5
KE	Spišská Nová Ves	3	2	0	0	5
BA	Senec	0	2	1	1	4
NR	Šaľa	3	0	0	1	4
TT	Galanta	0	3	0	1	4
BB	Revúca	0	0	1	2	3
TT	Piešťany	0	2	0	1	3
	Other districts	4	3	1	5	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>431</b>

*Note:* BA – Bratislavský, BB – Banskobystrický, KE – Košický, NR – Nitriansky, TT – Trnavský.

resource available, almost 50 million EUR. There were 270 applicants, from which 107 project proposals were accepted during the evaluation process. It is one more than in first Call, although smaller in its scale. A few applicants declined also this time due to various reasons, therefore 101 projects in total were contracted at the end. Both in submitted project proposals and contracted projects were the number of main applicants similar from Hungary and Slovakia. The number of Slovak applicants

which received financial aid increased by almost twenty compare to the first CfP.

The second CfP in regional aspect was again dominated by project proposals from eastern counties. One third of the contracted projects, 34 were from Košice county, the second highest number of successful projects from Nitra county followed by the Trnava one. The least number of projects were implemented from the counties of Banská Bystrica

(13 pc.) and Bratislava (12 pc.). However in the case of the last mentioned region we could record a big increase as the number of contracted projects was 25% up to those in the first CfP.

In district level break-down Košice town has got the highest number of project partners which received support, in the first Call 17, although slipped back with its 13 partners to a fourth position in second CfP. However in total it is still the location of the most projects in realisation. The second most projects have equally Bratislava town and Košice-surroundings district with 26 partners in total in the two calls. The last mentioned district with 18 project partner tipped all nine in the second CfP. Except these districts three other ones along the border: Dunajská Streda, Komárno and Lučenec have got 20 or more partners in total. The first two achieved better results in the 2nd CfP and the third one in the first CfP. Four districts have 10 to 17 project partners from which two (Nové Zámky and Trebišov) are immediately next to the border, the other two, Banská Bystrica and Nitra districts are located further in a distance. Mainly educational, research and other governmental institutions applied successfully in these two districts, where are the capitals of the respective counties. Similarly to the previous programmes the borderland districts of Central-Slovakia did not performed well, even the district of Rožňava which was relatively active in past clearly fall back, there are only 9 partners in total from here. We can mention the activity of Trnava, Spišská Nová Ves and Zvolen districts from those further in a distance from the borders with 7, 5 and 4 partners (Table 3). All three districts applied successfully by the institutions in their administrative seat towns.

**The 3rd Call for Proposals** was announced at the end of 2010 experimentally first time by electronic way and in English language, which was the reason to include only five measures: the cross-border business co-operation support measures non-investment component, also the 2.1 environmental and the 2.5 cross-border communication channels development measure's components. There were in total 65 project proposals received in the third CfP for the five measures announced, from which

42 were Hungarian and 23 with Slovak lead partner. There are 11 Hungarian and 9 Slovak lead partners from the 20 successful project proposals. Except the lead partners other 13 Hungarian and 14 Slovak project partners can receive grants. In this case is the most proportional of the regional distribution of the successful project proposals, as there are all regions presented equally in general. The process of contracting the successful project proposals is on-going and also the implementation of projects in most cases started.<sup>13</sup>

**The 4th Call for Proposals** was announced on June 23, 2011 and again the most of the measures are present in tender conditions, except some of those, where the available financial funds were already depleted in the previous calls. This CfP is also done by electronic tendering, but the English language introduced in the previous CfP was changed back by the managing authority to the well-tried bilingual Hungarian-Slovak as a result of the objection of the participants. The available ERDF fund limit is 49 855 581 EUR, which is similar to the fund available for the second CfP. The deadline for submissions finished at the end of October 2011. The number of received project proposals, 372, was the highest from all the calls. Recently, the submitted project proposals are in administrative and entitlement evaluation, where 365 applications got to after the evaluation of completeness and eligibility. The 1.7.1 (People for the people) and the 1.6.1 (Human resources mutual usage and development) human resources development related priorities were the most popular (Priorities HU-SK, 2007). The 2.3.2 Small scale road, bicycle paths and public transportation planning and the 2.4.2 for facilitating of better border crossing on the border rivers were the least popular, both being also non-investment related measures. Here the requested amount was less than the available fund.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> By the collection process of this paper. The data according the numbers of project partners in Table 3 in case of 3 and 4 CfP are preliminary now – until the termination of contracting process.

<sup>14</sup> On March 29, 2012 there were 99 project proposals selected (max. number 19 – measure 2.2.1 and min. 2-2 under measure 2.3.2 and 2.4.2), the contracting process is in progress nowadays.

## A COMPARISON OF THE THREE PROGRAMMES, CONCLUSION

It can be said, that by comparing the three programmes, in each one the eastern part of the country was more active, especially it applies for Košice and its surroundings, it is positive, because the eastern parts of both countries are less developed (the neighbouring Hungarian Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county too) and quality of life is also low (Hardi, 2008; Székely, 2010). The central part of the country after a stronger start (PHARE) felt down significantly, while in the PHARE CBC programme the Lučenec and Rožňava districts were the most active participants, during the 2007-2013 programming period they were at the back end. In Western-Slovakia the most active in all the programmes was the Komárno district joined by Dunajská Streda district in 2007-2013. However here, mainly in the period of PHARE, it was not prevalent that many submitted project proposals are associated with many successful ones as in the region of Košice. Košice county is over-represented in INTERREG and also in the HU-SK 2007-2013 programmes, which even increased its share in successful applications by 10%. The second and the third are Nitra and Banská Bystrica regions which are also increased their shares. There were a priori a small number of project proposals in first CfP from Banská Bystrica, Bratislava and Trnava counties and even from these only very few proved to be capable of funding. There were significantly more submittals from these counties in the second CfP, however it was still the least number comparing to other counties. An exception is the Banská Bystrica county which has beaten Prešov region both in number of project proposals and success rate while the last one was lot more successful in the first CfP with the same number of project proposals. The Banská Bystrica county kept its prominent position in 2007-2013 HU-SK programme first CfP yet, although in the second Call it was already the second least in number of realised projects right after the permanently less active Bratislava county. We can say about the Bratislava county that in the current programming period all the projects hosts come from the organisations of the Slovak capital but two partners from Senec and

one from Malacky. The accepted project proposals of the 3rd and 4th CfP, which realisation phase started in recent months or just going to start in the fore coming weeks, are distributed in regional aspect proportionally between the large-regions.

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<http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovensko>

## Résumé

### Projekty cezhraničnej spolupráce v maďarsko-slovenskej prihraničnej oblasti

Efektívny regionálny rozvoj v dnešnej dobe nie je predstaviteľný bez využívania zdrojov z Európskej únie. Platí to obzvlášť pre sídla, ktoré ležia v prihraničných oblastiach a majú veľakrát znevýhodnenú ekonomicko-spoločenskú situáciu z dôvodu, že majú polohu mimo hlavných dopravných tepien a sú vzdialené od hlavných ekonomických centier. Predchodca EÚ zriadila na eliminovanie rozvojových nevýhod týchto oblastí v 90-tych rokoch programy cezhraničnej spolupráce. V tomto článku sa zameriavame na teoretické aspekty definovania hraníc a hraničných regiónov s medzinárodným výhľadom a následne otázkam cezhraničnej spolupráce v slovensko-maďarskej prihraničnej oblasti z ekonomicko-geografického hľadiska.

V tomto príspevku sa zaoberáme taktiež s výzvami a s konkrétnymi projektmi v maďarsko-slovenskej prihraničnej oblasti, ktoré boli realizované v rámci

predvstupovej pomoci (program PHARE CBC) a po vstupe do EÚ v rámci jednotlivých operačných programov počas 2 programových období 2004–2006 a 2007–2013. Štúdia sa zaoberá s projektmi nielen na regionálnej úrovni (NUTS III) ale aj na subregionálnej, na úrovni okresov (NUTS IV) príp. aj menšími mikroregiónmi alebo s dvojicami miest, pretože je potrebné vzat' do úvahy to, že na Slovensku nie vždy korešponduje vymedzenie vyšších územných celkov s prirodzenými regiónmi.

Štúdia analyzuje rozdiely v alokácii prostriedkov v rámci jednotlivých výziev, taktiež porovnáva počet projektových návrhov s počtom úspešným a realizovaných projektov podľa jednotlivých väčších a menších územných jednotiek a skúša hľadať odpovede na to, že v čom spočívajú dôvody regionálnych rozdielov. Ďalším aspektom je porovnanie jednotlivých programov, ktoré boli implementované v skúmanom regióne, teda programu PHARE CBC a postupových operačných programov INT-EERRERG IIIA – Program susedstva Maďarsko-Slovensko-Ukrajina a Program cezhraničnej spolupráce HU-SK, ktorý sa implementuje aj teraz, v programovom období 2007–2013.

Príspevok na základe vyššie uvedených hľadá odpoveď na otázku, že ktorá časť predmetného programového územia bola najviac aktívna počas jednotlivých programových období v predkladaní projektových návrhov ako aj na to, že ktorý bol najúspešnejší v uchádzaní sa o podporu v rámci vyššie uvedených programov EÚ a v realizácii týchto projektov.

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