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Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives

1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Annex of public utility 2016

Introduction of the association

CESCI was founded in 2009 by private persons to help lighten borders and to provide professional support for and stimulate cross-border cooperation in Hungary and in the Central European region.

With over 50 members, the association pursues its activities in the following four areas to reach the above goals:

- it conducts research in border studies in specific border regions, takes part in international scientific life, issues publications, organises conferences and seminars, and carries out research projects;
- it designs cross-border integrated strategic plans, takes part in EU programming, and develops its own related methodology;
- it prepares, develops, and supports cross-border institutions;
- it functions as a mediator between actors at different levels in order to foster cross-border cooperation initiatives, by reviewing policy papers, conducting dissemination activity (brochures, films, events, workshops), taking part in the work of EU-level professional networks, and providing information and consulting services for local stakeholders.

Our association predominantly carries out charitable activities, and our business activity mainly consists of programming, planning, and institution building.

The members of CESCI are primarily municipalities at different levels with an interest in cross-border cooperation, but it is also joined by private persons and professional organisations. Geographically, most of its members are Hungarian, but Slovak, Romanian, Serbian and French entities too have taken membership in the association.

Our honorary President is dr. Szilveszter E. Vizi, former president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The president of the association is dr. Tamás Tóth, agricultural economist and vice-rector of Szent István Univeristy.

Members of the board in 2016:

- Zsolt Borkai, mayor of the city of Győr
- dr. András Levente Gál, attorney office manager, former secretary of state for administration (Budapest)
- dr. Jože Gričar, professor emeritus of economics at the University of Maribor (Slovenia)
- Judit H. Kovács, economist, president of the Society of Christian Leaders and Businessmen

- dr. Péter Szegvári, lawyer, political scientist, senior municipal advisor to the mayor of Budapest
- Alena Vachnová, lawyer, political scientist, project manager, board member of CESC Carpathia (Slovakia).

2016: the year of renewal

2016 has been in many aspects a year of renewal in the history of CESCO.

Our association moved to a new office on 30 May 2016 and is now operating under significantly improved conditions in a large and bright office by the bank of the Danube on the Pest side. This change has not resulted in additional costs since the Esztergom based European Institute has been relocated as well. This year, nine full-time and two half-time colleagues worked in the new office. Furthermore, 13 students participated in our successful internship and scholarship programme.

As regards organisational renewal, we launched a Facebook page and began to build the new image of the association. By the end of the year, we finished the image management guidebook, which is to be used for website development in 2017.

The new image is partly related to the networking process of CESCO. Two subsidiaries, CESCO Balkans in Novi Sad and CESCO Carpathia in Košice, each founded in 2015, became operational in 2016. As a result, our network now includes three Central European think tanks with Slovak and Serbian partners, and has an increasing presence on international stage. At the same time, the roles our association takes in Budapest have been under change, too.

After we earned professional prestige at European level and created high-standard operating conditions, one of the major innovations of 2016 was the development of services provided for our members. To this end, they were invited to fill in a questionnaire, which helped us launch a newsletter that mainly provides practical information for them. It is issued in two languages every 2–3 months, with dynamic professional content.

The questionnaire served as a basis for the service development to be launched in 2017: we created a comprehensive on-line funding map, prepared trainings and study visits, and began to process our special library, which we would like to make available to all the members. Providing a wider range of services: this is how we would like to increase access to our professional achievements.

Our General Assembly meeting was held on 19 May in Budapest.

In the following, we will give an overview on our professional activity in 2016, based on the four areas of activities of CESCO.

Scientific research

CESCO conducts comprehensive research in border studies with the involvement of external experts within the framework of the European Institute, with a focus on theoretical issues as well as the

analysis of processes within specific border areas. Through research our aim is to provide a scientific base for our planning and development activities.

Research studies and publications

- **Crossing the borders**

The closing conference of the project of 2014 on cross-border cooperation in the Danube basin was held in 27 February 2015 at the Institut français in Budapest. During the 18 months following the conference, we collected the related studies to prepare a synthesis study and edited the whole material for publication, led by dr. Péter Balogh (Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Economic and Regional Studies). The two-volume document and the related statistic database have been available on our webpage since June 2016. The volumes contain three comprehensive analyses and 14 case studies, amended with the greetings of István Joó, State commissioner of EU Strategy for the Danube Region (MFA, Hungary) and Rudolf Schicker, the Austrian priority area coordinator of the EUSDR PA10. The collection gives the most comprehensive picture that is so far available on cross-border cooperation in the Danube region.

- **Overview of the EGTCs around Hungary**

Of all countries, Hungary has the most experience in the field of European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTCs). The study volume we presented at the Open Days (new name: European Week of Regions and Cities) in October aims to share this experience at European level. The English volume gives a comprehensive picture on the provisions affecting the establishment and operation of Hungarian EGTCs, the past and present of the relevant government policy, the social and economic conditions of the operation of the groupings, their role in spatial development, and their results achieved so far. Furthermore, the study evaluates these experiences and makes proposals for the further development of the EU tool.

The study edited by Sara Svensson (visiting professor of CEU) and our secretary general Gyula Ocskay (available on our website) was elaborated by many of our colleagues. On its book launching event in Brussels, Jean Peyrony, director general of MOT delivered a greetings speech, and Martín Guillermo Ramírez, secretary general of AEBR introduced the volume.

- **Phantom borders**

The study on the changes to the space usage of inhabitants, conducted following the inauguration of Mária Valéria bridge in the region of Esztergom and Štúrovo, has been in progress since the spring of 2016. The multidisciplinary project, with particular importance for impact assessment of cross-border programmes, is to be published in 2017. The volume is edited by dr. Zsolt Bottlik (Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Sciences), former director of our European Institute.

- **Cross-Border Review 2016**

Similarly to 2015, the scientific yearbook of the European Institute was again edited by *James W. Scott*, one of the best known experts of border studies. Further members of the drafting committee: *Martin Barthel* (Comparative Research Network, Berlin, Germany), *Henk van Houtum* (Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands), *Jarosław Jańczak* (Europa-Universität Viadrina, Germany), *Jussi Laine* (Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland), *Iwona Sagan* (University of Gdansk, Poland), *Christophe Sohn* (Luxembourg Institute for Socio-Economic Research, Luxembourg).

Besides the group of noted international experts, we also have to mention our colleague *Teodor Gyelník's* study and his and *Márton Pete's* book reviews in the 2016 yearbook.

- **Articles for the journal Falu, Város, Régió**

Three of our articles were published by the journal *Falu, Város, Régió (Village, Town, Region)* in early 2016: on the internal cohesion and development challenges of the Danube region by *Mátyás Jaschitz*, on Hungary-related EGTCs, and on CESC as a think tank of planning, both written by *Gyula Ocskay*.

Our colleagues had been asked by the journal to write two more articles in the second half of the year, to be published in early 2017. The results of the *Crossing the borders* project have been summarized in *Geographic and Structural Characteristics of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Danube Region* by *Teodor Gyelník* and *Márton Pete*; while *Two Cities – One Plan* by *Kitti Dubniczki* presents the analysis of the management plan of *Komárom* and *Komárno*, written by *Lilla Szilágyi K.* and published by CESC.

- **Our associates' further publications**

Gyelnik, T. (2016): Cross-border Health Care Cooperation in the European Union: an Effective Strategy of Mitigating Regional/Local Limitations through Cooperation. In: *Scott, W. J.* (eds.): *Cross-Border Review 2016* European Institute of Cross-Border Studies, Budapest, pp. 85-112.

Gyelnik, T. (2016): Koloniálna štruktúra teórií medzinárodných vzťahov po studenej vojne: hegemónia a liberálny paternalizmus. In: *Horký-Hlucháň, O., Profant, T.* (eds.): *Mimo Sever a Jih. Rozumět globálním nerovnostem a rozmanitosti. Ústav medzinárodných vzťahů*, Praha, pp. 170-185.

Gyelnik, T. (2016): Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube. In: *Scott, W. J.* (eds.): *Cross-Border Review 2016*. European Institute of Cross-Border Studies, Budapest, pp. 85-112.

Illés, T. (2016): *Meusburger, P., Freytag, T. and Suarsana, L.* (eds.): Ethnic and Cultural Dimensions of Knowledge. *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 65:(3) pp. 306-309.

- Illés, T. (2016): Unitarians in the counties of Szeklersland – a religious geographic analysis (1850-2011) . *Földrajzi Közlemények* 140:(2) pp. 152-167.
- Jaschitz M. (2016): Cohesion and transnational development challenges of the Danube region. *Falu Város Régió*, No. 1, pp. 105-115.
- Jaschitz, M., Ocskay, Gy. (2016): Cohesion Potentials of the Slovakian-Hungarian Borderland. In: Elisabeth Károlyi (szerk.): *Régiók Európában. Adminisztratív struktúrák és területi identitás.* Konferenciakötet, Károlyi József Alapítvány – L'Harmattan, pp. 219-237.
- Pete, M. (2016): On the specific characteristics of the evolution of today's national state territories in Central and East Europe. *FÖLDRAJZI KÖZLEMÉNYEK* 140:(1) pp. 13-25.
- Pete, M., Bottlik, Zs. (2016): The analysis of social cohesion along the Slovak-Hungarian border – as the local people consider. In: Károlyi E (szerk.) *Régiók Európában. Adminisztratív struktúrák és területi identitás.* Konferenciakötet, Károlyi József Alapítvány – L'Harmattan, pp. 238-259.
- Pete, M. (2016): Border-making Identities, Identity-making Borders in the post-soviet Eastern Europe. *FÖLDRAJZI KÖZLEMÉNYEK* 140:(4) pp. 296-311. (2016)
- Pete, M. (2016): Border-making old-new identities in the post-soviet Eastern Europe. In: Pajtókné Tari I., Tóth A. (szerk.) *Magyar Földrajzi Napok 2016: Absztraktkötet : VIII. Magyar Földrajzi Konferencia : XVI. Geográfus Doktoranduszok Országos Konferenciája : Oktatás-módszertani és Földrajztanári Konferencia.* 159 p.

Participation in scientific events

We participated in several scientific events in 2016. We have also been asked by the University of Vienna and the Faculty of Humanities of Eötvös Loránd University to assist in the organisation of the world conference of the *Association of Borderlands Studies* (ABS, the world's leading professional association dedicated to border studies), to be held in 2018. We accepted the proposal with pleasure; the works began in 2016.

- **BRIT: Border Regions in Transition (Hamburg-Sønderborg, 17–20 May)**

The 15th BRIT conference *Cities, States and Borders: From the Local to the Global* was held in the German–Danish border area. The scientific–professional conference was attended by hundreds of scientists and practitioners in border studies from all over the world. Our association was represented by Mátyás Jaschitz and Márton Pete with a lecture on our *Phantom border* project. Our director of planning analysed the economic processes in the Esztergom–Štúrovo region, and researcher Márton Pete examined the socio-political context of the institutionalisation of the cooperation.

- **Romanian–Bulgarian–Hungarian–Serbian Conference of the Lower Danube (Vidin, 16–17 September)**

The honour of the invitation to the geographic conference held the fourth time in Vidin, Bulgaria was of our secretary general, who had been asked to hold a plenary session lecture on cross-border cooperation in the Danube Basin, and to say a greetings speech at the beginning of the conference.

- **Further major scientific events**

12 May: participation in the *Semantic Operability Community* conference (Rome)

12–13 May: participation in the *CEE e-Dem and e-Gov Days* conference (Budapest)

7 June: participation in the *Instability on our doorstep? A conference on the Balkans* conference of the Danube Institute (Budapest)

7 July: participation in *Sécurité et développement: comment gérer la frontière?* international conference held by the MOT - as part of the the *Borders in Globalization* (BIG) project (Paris)

11–12 October: participation in the European Week of Regions and Cities event and the book launching event of our EGTC study (Brussels)

30 November: participation and a lecture held at the conference titled *Challenges of spatial structure and potential spatial development responses in Hungary in the 2010's* held by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest (Mátyás Jaschitz).

Programming, strategic planning

In the past years, the staff of CESCO have developed a scientifically based planning methodology, which has been used to prepare a large number of strategic documents. This methodology, under continuous development, was introduced at several professional events in 2016. To ensure the success of planning, supported by (internationally recognized) high-quality applications in geoinformatics, we are constantly developing our territorial database, built upon the NAVTEQ database.

Methodology development

- **Publications and background material on methodology**

CESCI's new cohesion-based planning methodology (leaflet)

We had planned to publish a methodological manual on-line in 2016, but due to the lack of capacities, it has not been carried out. In connection with the symposium of the Association of European Schools of Planning in September in Kaiserslautern, we issued a leaflet to give a brief overview on our methodology.

Territorial cohesion as the key factor of cross-border territorial impact

In collaboration with CESCI Balkans, we prepared a background material for the Serbian EU Integration Office to present the basic principles of our methodology. The brief summary links cross-border territorial impact assessment with the measurement of territorial cohesion. The document gave rise for the professional visit in Belgrade on 15 April.

Joint spatial planning in Komárno and Komárom

Our former landscape architect intern Lilla Szilágyi K. had started her research on joint spatial planning in Komárno and Komárom during her internship. The work was supervised by director of planning Mátyás Jaschitz, and finished in early 2016. The English study was published on our website last summer.

- **Participation in professional events**

There were several international professional events in 2016 where we were given the opportunity to present our integrated planning methodology. In addition, we used the opportunity to broaden our professional relationships in this field.

15 April: consultations in Belgrade on the assessment of cross-border programmes, attended by AEBR and CESCI and organised by Balkan offices (Sanda Šimič, assistant director at Serbian EU Integration Office, Department for Cross-border and Transnational Cooperation Programmes; Elisabeta Sartorel project manager, EU delegation to Serbia; Vasileios Vasilatos and Enrique Aguado Asenjo, coordinators of the EU project titled *Cross-Border Institution Building+*)

2–3 June: participation and a lecture held at the *Local self-government in planning and regulation of space and settlements* symposium in Vršac (SRB), organised by the Serbian Spatial Planners Association and the University of Belgrade (Éva Gangl)

9–10 June: participation in the *Council of Europe Landscape Award Forum of National Selections* international conference of the Council of Europe, in Budapest

15–17 June: participation in the ESPON presidency conference in Amsterdam

19–20 September: participation and a lecture held at the *Transboundary spaces, policy diffusion and planning cultures: new challenges – ways forward* symposium of the Association of European Schools of Planning in Kaiserslautern, Germany (Mátyás Jaschitz)

20–21 October: participation in the CESS2016 (*Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders*) conference held by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) in Budapest

7–8 December: participation and a lecture held at the ESPON presidency conference in Bratislava (Mátyás Jaschitz)

8–10 December: participation and a lecture held at the *Strategic plan 2050: Between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River* conference, held by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Roland Hesz)

14–15 December: participation and a lecture held in Warsaw at the conference on cross-border tourism cooperation and territorial brands, held by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland (Roland Hesz).

Planning and programming

- **The integrated development strategy of Tisza EGTC**

The top-priority planning project of 2016 was related to the first EGTC with a non-EU partner: Zakarpattia Oblast, in Ukraine. Elaborating a comprehensive fieldwork-based development document was a demanding task, given that the administrative border of the region remains hardly permeable in the long run. The planning process began in spring and lasted until autumn. A ceremonial presentation of the strategy is due in the spring of 2017.

- **The integrated development strategy of Mura Region EGTC**

Our association has prepared the development strategy of the Hungarian-Croatian Mura Region EGTC which was registered in spring 2015. The planning process was launched in 2015 and finalised in the spring of 2016.

- **The development strategy of the Slaná-Rimava EGTC**

The elaboration of the development strategy of the Slaná-Rimava EGTC was finalised in early 2015. It was followed by a one-year socialisation process, which was closed in February 2016, after having recorded the feedbacks we had received.

- **The development strategy of the Gate to Europe EGTC**

Upon the request of the management of the Hungarian–Romanian EGTC, and in line with the launch of the Romanian–Hungarian INTERREG V-A programme, we updated and actualized the grouping's development strategy.

- **The 'Via Carpatia' study**

To the call of the self-government of Košice county, we completed our analysis of the expected socio-economic effects of the planned Via Carpatia North-South Transport Corridor, running along the eastern EU borders in the Polish–Slovakian–Hungarian border area, by February 2016. The study, with policy recommendations in the conclusion, was developed in cooperation with CESCO Carpathia. As a result of the study, we were invited to the Visegrad 4 conference held by the Hungarian Chamber of Engineers (MMK) on 7 October. Upon request of the Chamber, we have also issued a non-paper, which was in part published in their journal (*Mérnök Újság*). Furthermore, we have prepared a background material for the request of Košice county to sum up TEN-T requirements.

- **Slovak–Hungarian action plans for employment**

Upon request of Széchenyi Program Office, we have been assisting in preparing the background documentation of the call for action plans for employment (TAPE), to be published in 2017 as part of the Slovakia–Hungary INTERREG V-A programme. The work includes the preparation of the documents of the call and the eligibility and the assessment grids.

- **The development concept of Esztergom**

Our association was asked by Pál Völner, state secretary at the Ministry of Justice, to compile the economic development concept for Esztergom. The first version had been ready by October, and the concept was furthered in November, following the discussion of the Strategic Cabinet of the Hungarian government.

- **Esztergom CLLD**

We supported the drafting of the Local Community Development Strategy of the CLLD of Esztergom through providing not-for-profit services.

- **Municipality level base map of Zakarpattia**

The preparation of the Tisza EGTC strategy shed light on the absence of a reliable base map at settlement level in Zakarpattia. We could not plot a settlement level map, either, but we eventually designed and issued to the Prime Minister's Office a base map at municipality level.

- **The gravitational analysis of Makó**

Upon request of Szeged based Euro-Mérték Ltd., we had prepared an analysis on the functional influencing zone of the industrial park in Makó, which was used for the strategic development of the facility.

- **The evaluation of macro-regional strategies**

Together with the Finnish Karelian Institute, we have submitted a tender document to a call of Interact targeting the assessment of macro-regional strategic projects (to be assessed through the value added by the macro-regional approach). The application was unsuccessful.

Institutional and project development

Providing assistance for Hungarian cross-border cooperation has always been a significant part of our association's activities. It includes professional support for the institutionalisation of sustainable cross-border development cooperation, as well as the support for the realisation of territorial strategies developed with scientifically based methods, by preparing funding maps and assisting in project designing. In this regard, our activity has exceeded the scope of the "cross-border" frames and now covers the whole range of territorial cooperation.

Institutional development

- Expertise offered to the foundation of EGTCs

Euro-Côntrole Route EGTC

The transport authority network of 14 Member States aims at taking their cooperation to a higher level by applying the EGTC instrument. To this end, our association provides expertise for the foundation of the EGTC. In this framework, we prepared a comprehensive background study on the founding procedure and the legal framework, with proposals on the organisational structure of the EGTC and a benchmark on its potential headquarters. The study was introduced and discussed on 2 May in Brussels. For the sake of clarity, we have also prepared a short excerpt of the study. The drafting of the statutes and the convention began at the meeting of the Executive Committee on 15 June in Vilnius.

MURABA EGTC

The foundation of this EGTC was a decision reached at a Hungarian–Slovene joint cabinet meeting, aimed at creating a common development organisation of Hungarian minorities living in Slovenia and Slovenian minorities living in Hungary. The foundation procedure, supported by the two ambassadors, began at the seminar in Szentgotthárd in 2016. The EGTC, named after the Mura and Rába rivers, is to be established by the cities of Szentgotthárd and Lendava and the organisations representing national minorities, based on the statutes and convention drafted by CESCI. In the course of the year, we had several consultations on its foundation and drafted the founding documents of the grouping.

Danube Transnational Programme EGTC

Upon request of the managing authority of the Danube Transnational Programme working at the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, we have compiled a professional background material for the creation of a programming EGTC, based on a proposal by the Monitoring Committee.

Project development

- Project preparations

CECICN – Europe for Citizens project

In collaboration with the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), and the Mediterranean Cities Network (MedCities), we had initiated for CECICN (see in chapter 'Mediation') to submit a Europe for Citizens project named CBCity. The borders-related project application which has been compiled in the summer, was unsuccessful.

Danubian tool-kit

We prepared a project proposal for the next call of the Danube Transnational Programme, on the assessment and commercialisation of territorial potential of cross-border areas. As part of the planning process, we organised a workshop for the partners of the cooperation on 6–7 September in Budapest to settle content issues. Due to unexpected changes to the priorities of the DTP, we cannot submit our application for the current project call.

Social innovation

We drafted a comprehensive background material for the social innovation programme of the University of Miskolc, to provide a theoretical framework as well as an overview on previous EU projects, partnerships, and future project calls. The document may serve as a basis for a programme of multiple years.

Slovak–Hungarian border crossings

Since the beginning of the preparation of the INTERREG V-A programme, we have constantly been providing assistance in the consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the National Infrastructure Development Co. on the border crossings to be financed by the programme. We also prepare background materials upon request on the issue. Our aim is to provide professional background for road construction projects that are to be realised beyond the road construction-related priority axes.

Related Events

12 January: a meeting on cross-border investments at the Hungarian Transport Administration Centre (Budapest)

14 June: a meeting on Slovak-Hungarian border crossings (Tatabánya)

27 June: a meeting on Slovak-Hungarian border crossings (Miskolc)

9 September: inauguration ceremony of the freight ferry between Esztergom and Štúrovo (Esztergom)

Câmpie Region development action plan 2017

In collaboration with the Cabinet Office of the Hungarian Parliament and with the involvement of local stakeholders, we designed a development action plan for Câmpie Region in Transylvania to identify top priority developments. The document contains a demographic analysis and 20 specific projects concerning the Hungarian communities of the region.

Erasmus+ projects

We joined the preparation of three Erasmus+ projects in 2016: two applications coordinated by AEBR and CESCO Balkans, and one by the Czech EuroSchola Institute, but none of them were successful.

V4 applications

We regularly submit applications for the calls of the Visegrád Fund, but without any success so far. Both applications in 2016 (V4+ call on Western Balkans and Strategic Grant call with Ukraine) concerned knowledge transfer on cross-border cooperation.

Project development workshops

Our association provides assistance in preparing cooperation projects in several cross-border areas by organising workshops and providing information, with a view to ensuring successful long-term cross-border cooperation.

Related events

- 19 January:** the last project development workshop of BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- 27 January:** technical meeting on the cyclist tourism project of Ister-Granum EGTC (Esztergom)
- 2 February:** project development workshop of the Development Partnership along the Lower Ipol-Ipel' (Ipolydamásd)
- 18 February:** logistic project development workshop of Ister-Granum EGTC (Esztergom)
- 25 February:** project development workshop of RDV EGTC (Bratislava)
- 2 March:** a lecture on the Slovak–Hungarian programme at the General Assembly meeting of the Ister-Granum EGTC (Esztergom)
- 20 April:** local product development workshop of RDV EGTC (Búč, Slovakia)
- 11 May:** project development workshop of the Development Partnership along the Lower Ipol-Ipel' under the auspices of RDV EGTC (Chlaba, Slovakia)
- 7 June:** participation in an Interreg Europe project development workshop with the representative of the Ister-Granum EGTC on cross-border industrial parks (Düsseldorf)
- 8 July:** technical meeting with the representatives of the Development Partnership along the Lower Ipol-Ipel' on the projects to be submitted to the Slovak–Hungarian call (Ipolydamásd)
- 24 July:** technical meeting with the management of the Ister-Granum EGTC and the representatives of the Development Partnership along the Lower Ipol-Ipel' on the projects to be submitted to the Slovak–Hungarian call (Esztergom)
- 29 August:** meeting with the management of the Hungarian Chamber of Engineers to give information on the tender system of the Slovak–Hungarian programme (Budapest)
- 8 November:** technical meeting with BTC EGTC on the planned transnational energetic project (Mórahalom)
- 5 December:** meeting at the self-government of Košice county to give information on the third priority axis of the Slovak–Hungarian programme (Košice)
- 6 December:** a technical meeting with BTC EGTC on the planned transnational energetic project (Mórahalom)

- **Fund coordination**

We are keeping constant track of the open tenders and regularly inform our members in our newsletter. We have also created a matrix to design a funding map that meets the needs of the given partner.

Upon request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, we were coordinators of the development of a funding map and the relevant projects in the Hungarian–Serbian–Croatian tri-border area in late 2015. The document was refined and developed further in January and February 2016.

We have designed a separate funding map for the Bihor County Council (Romania) on potential European and US tenders. We also assisted in the communication between the Council and the coordinators of Via Carpatia North–South Transport Corridor, which the Council has undertaken to represent on behalf of Romania. Another funding map was designed for Košice county for the development of the Corridor itself.

Finally, we also provided funding maps for the Municipality of the city of Győr and for the participants of the universities' workshop at the Szentgotthárd seminar.

Mediation

A major part of our public utility activities constitutes of mediating between stakeholders of cross-border cooperation, by transferring reliable information to local actors (e.g. via our on-line newsletter, printed publications, and professional events) and by communicating the particular aspects of cross-border cooperation at national and EU level professional and decision-making forums (through professional background materials, studies contributing to decision-making, by assisting in the work of national and EU-level professional networks, and by participating in international conferences and workshops).

CESCI's international networking activities on border issues

Our association is performing an extended international networking activity in cooperation with organisations and institutions with similar objectives. We are members of the EGTC Platform¹ managed by the Committee of the Regions, the AEBR², and have been fulfilling

¹ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/Platform/Pages/welcome.aspx>

² <http://www.aebr.eu/en/index.php>

secretarial tasks at CECICN since the end of 2014. As legal entities cannot gain membership, CESCO is represented in ABS³ by our director of planning.

- **Participation in EU initiatives**

'Cross-Border Review' Project

The aim of the project, launched in the autumn of 2015 by the regional commissioner of the European Commission, is to identify legal administrative barriers between Member States and to draft proposals to eliminate them. One of our colleagues had also been invited to join the expert group of the project, established by DG Regio. Last year, we attended three workshops in Brussels and sent a summary on the *Legal Accessibility* project to their competent department.

The Future of Cohesion Policy

The professional works on the future of Cohesion Policy with the coordination of the Committee of the Regions began in 2015. Our association had been invited to join the stakeholder group and prepared a position paper to promote the aspects of territoriality. We also attended the closing conference on 3 March.

The Luxembourg Working Group

The Luxembourg presidency had put forward a legal proposal to promote cross-border cooperation. The *European Cross-border Convention* (ECBC) initiative would ensure the relative independence of regions from the respective countries through particular provisions with temporary and spatial limitation, which would provide a solution for specific regional problems (e.g. a cross-border tram line). Luxembourg would like to submit this proposal to EU bodies; to this end, they set up a working group, which is coordinated by the MOT, and which CESCO has been invited to join as well. The preparatory meeting was held in April in Brussels, and the aspects of the initiative were further discussed with public sector stakeholders in July in Vienna. At the meeting of the working group in December, our associate Kitti Dubniczki held gave a presentation on the results of the *Legal Accessibility* project.

³ <http://www.absborderlands.org/>

On the cross-border aspects of tourism

As part of the on-line survey of the Committee of the Regions on the paper *Tourism as a driving force of regional cooperation across the EU*, we prepared and issued a separate position paper in May on the role of tourism in cross-border cooperation. Our associates filled in the survey as well, and enclosed a policy document on the importance of tourist developments in the view of the permeability of borders.

Evaluation of the 7th Cohesion Report

At the end of the year, we began the evaluation of the draft of the 7th Cohesion Report. In the brief study, we will make proposals for the EU document from the aspect of cross-border cooperation.

- **Related events**

28 January: participation in the expert group meeting of the *Cross-Border Review* project (Brussels)

28 April: workshop on the legal proposal of the Luxembourg presidency (ECBC) and the setting up of a working group (Brussels)

5 July: participation in the meeting of Luxembourg working group (Vienna)

27 September: participation in the expert group meeting of the *Cross-Border Review* project (Brussels)

28 September: participation in the meeting of Luxembourg working group (Brussels)

14 December: participation and a presentation at the meeting of the Luxembourg working group (Brussels, Kitti Dubniczki)

15 December: participation in the expert group meeting of the *Cross-Border Review* project (Brussels)

- **Cooperation within international networks**

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)

Since its foundation, French MOT – playing a major role in our establishment and EU level introduction – has been the main professional partner of CESCO. In the past years, the cooperation between the two organisations has been enhanced, with a mutual presence on various platforms and similar initiatives (sometimes even without having any prior consultations).

In 2016, we attended the general assembly meeting of MOT, where we introduced our *Legal Accessibility* project. We were active participants of the Luxembourg working group coordinated by the French organisation. We also attended the conference of the BIG project in Paris, as well as the MOT panel discussion during the European Week of Regions and Cities. Furthermore, CECICN is another framework of our cooperation where CESCO fulfils administrative tasks and MOT is responsible for professional coordination.

Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)

We have also developed a close cooperation with the Association of European Border Regions, which has been a key actor of the area since 1971. The Balkans office, under the joint operation of AEBR and CESCO, plays an important role in the regional promotion of the two organisations. It helped conclude a cooperation agreement with the minister of economy of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and establish relations with the EU delegation in Serbia and the SEIO, Belgrade-based coordinator of cross-border cooperation.

Together with AEBR and CESCO Carpathia, we held an international conference in October on the future of Eastern Partnership, where a proposal on the creation of an expert platform has been accepted.

CESCO was represented at the AEBR annual conference and general assembly in Görlitz, at the conference of External Borders Task Force in Saint Petersburg (with a lecture), and at the Youth Forum in Belgrade.

Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia (ISIG)

Our cooperation with the Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia began at the professional workshops of the Council of Europe. It is primarily based on the Balkans we both take interest in, but we often meet in various European platforms.

Besides the joint attendance at a seminar in Dubrovnik, together with CESCO Balkans we submitted a proposal to the Council of Europe in 2016 on the implementation of the Madrid Outline Convention promotion and training programme, whose Serbian ratification we also contributed to.

Karelian Institute

Our collaboration with the University of Eastern Finland (Joensuu) began in 2015, thanks to James W. Scott, an expert at the Institute as well as the chief editor of our yearbook, and to Sarolta Németh, a geographer at the Institute. In 2016, we submitted a joint application with the Institute to a call of Interact on macro-regional strategies. Jussi Laine, assistant professor of the Institute, held a plenary session presentation at our conference in Košice, and we were partners in their application submitted to the Finnish Academy of Science.

Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks (CECICN)

Our association has been holding active membership for three years at CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks), a network of over 500 regional and urban municipalities. Since 2015, we have been responsible for fulfilling its secretarial tasks as well. At the political board meeting held in Brussels in June 2016, vice-president of our association András Levente Gál was elected as vice-president of CECICN. At the meeting, we discussed our methodological proposal on the report on cross-border cooperation, and the Europe For Citizens application, which was submitted in late August. We have also proposed the surveying of members with a view to better designing the portfolio of the network. At the end of the year, we began to develop the network's webpage to create a platform where all the best practices and solutions of the member municipalities are available to public.

Council of Europe

In the past years, CESCO has developed enhanced cooperation with the Council of Europe. We took an active role in their first seminar in the spring of 2016 on the cooperation to be developed in the border region of Croatia, Bosnia, and Montenegro. Through CESCO Balkans, we continue to take part in the development of this cooperation.

CESCI Network

The establishment of CESCI headquarters in Novi Sad and Košice requires efforts of our local partners as well as of their 'parent company' in Budapest. We provide assistance in organizing events (see the Eastern Partnership conference held in Košice), we join their tenders for applications (as a gestor of two Erasmus+ applications of CESCI Balkans in the second half of 2016), and support them financially, too (for both centres in 2016, including webpage development in the case of CESCI Balkans).

Representatives of the network held a consultation in November on their plans to enhance and better coordinate cooperation within the network.

Related events

27 February: participation in the MOT conference on European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (Paris)

8 March: consultation and the signing of a cooperation agreement between Zlatan Klokič, minister for business relations and regional cooperation (Republika Srpska) and CESCI, CESCI Balkans, AEBR and AEBR Balkans (Banja Luka)

23 March: participation and a lecture held at the seminar of the Council of Europe on the cross-border cooperation of Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia (Dubrovnik)

25 April: the annual general assembly of CESCI Carpathia (Košice)

24–25 May: participation at the annual general assembly and conference of MOT, and presentation of the *Legal Accessibility* project (Paris, Gyula Ocskay)

15 June: executive and political board meeting of CECICN (Brussels)

30 June: participation and a presentation held at the conference of INFH (Association for French-Hungarian Initiatives) (Budapest, Gyula Ocskay)

21–24 September: participation in the general assembly and conference of AEBR (Görlitz, Germany)

24 October: a lecture held at the meeting of the AEBR Task Force "External Borders" (Saint Petersburg, Mátyás Jaschitz)

28 November: the strategic meeting of CESCI Network

2–3 December: participation in the AEBR Youth Forum (Belgrade)

- **Our international events**

Szentgotthárd Seminar (11–12 April, Szentgotthárd)

In the last few years, our association has developed fruitful relations with several Slovene partners. Especially good cooperation has been established with the Slovenian Ambassador to Budapest and the Hungarian Ambassador to Ljubljana, and the membership of professor Gričar in the presidency has remarkably increased our role in developing Hungarian-Slovene relations. Developing such relations between organizations, institutions, and enterprises, and the preparation of specific projects are the objective of the Szentgotthárd seminars, a joint initiative launched in 2015.

The success of this seminar is shown by the increasing number of participants. The number of participants increased from 60 in 2015 to more than 100 in 2016. The seminar programme included multiple thematic sessions (bilingual education, tourism, cooperation between universities, investors' round table), the exchange of professional experience, and prototypes' market, where project ideas were introduced on environment protection, municipal cooperation, education, and forestry, to be joined by partners from both sides of the the border. The seminar provided contacts and the opportunity to discuss specific applications, and some present partners even started the development of certain projects. The Slovene TV's Hungarian programme later reported on the event.

A CESCO Panel at the 6th DeRC Conference (19–20 September, Domžale)

Similarly to previous years, we attended the Danube eRegion Conference organized by professor Gričar, which was in 2016 held in the Jable Castle of Domžale. Our own panel was dedicated to civil societies' activities supporting cross-border cooperation. Presentations were held by our secretary general, Ana Nikolov (AEBR Balkans), and Hynek Böhm (EuroSchola Institute, Czech Republic).

Eastern Partnership Conference (3–4 October, Košice)

Our first conference on Eastern Partnership was held in Košice in association with CESCO Carpathia and AEBR. It resulted in several highly interesting discussions, thanks primarily to the participants who are all noted experts of the field.

The future of cooperation along the Eastern borders of the EU was analyzed in three aspects: global geopolitical framework, macro-regional context, and local cooperation (with specific examples). The concluding lines of secretary general of AEBR Martin

Guillermo Ramírez suggested the establishment of an expert platform, to be managed by CESCO Carpathia.

Oradea Seminar (6 October, Oradea)

For the third time in 2016, the event was organized in cooperation with the Oradea Metropolitan Area and the Association for French-Hungarian Initiatives, to promote cross-border cooperation along the Hungarian–Romanian border. It is regularly joined by French speakers as well so that they highlight some “Western” examples.

The seminar of 2016 was centred around short supply chains and the operating of local markets, from a “cross-border” point of view. Relating to the topic, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Prime Minister's Office were involved in the organization of the event. Experience with local products and their involvement in public catering were discussed by Hungarian and Romanian experts. Further speakers were Daniel Wathelet, president of the International Urban Food Network (IUFN), and Benoît Bavouset, director of the French Institute in Cluj-Napoca, who also welcomed the participants.

CESCI's activities at national level

Participation in policy development

The Legal accessibility project

In parallel with the EU level Cross-Border Review initiative and following an unsuccessful EU project proposal, we implemented our *Legal accessibility* project with the support of the Ministry of Justice to unfold the legal and administrative obstacles that hinder cross-border cooperation around Hungary. Within the framework of the project, we held 10 workshops, where we invited local stakeholders from the concerned border area. As regards the obstacles that they mentioned, we sought for western European solutions for adaptation (Best Practice compilation); furthermore, with a view to unfolding the legal background of the given obstacle, we conducted more than 50 personal and phone call interviews with experts of the given field of expertise.

The project was finished by drafting a comprehensive compilation of amendments to the relevant legal provisions and proposals. We also delivered the closing report to the experts of the DG Regio so that they are included in the EU communication under wording process. AEBR was our partner during the project.

Border town programme

In the second half of 2016, we started to draft a comprehensive policy concept on border towns. To underpin the study, we reviewed and analysed the integrated town development strategies of the cities concerned, focusing mainly on cross-border aspects thereof. As a follow-up of the project, we initiated to set up a platform of urban policy experts, which can provide professional support to the border towns as part of the new urban policy, beyond 2020. Beside this, we are planning to elaborate a concept that may be beneficial for policymakers at governmental level.

Professional assistance to the Hungarian EGTCs

One of the major missions of CESCO is providing professional support for the EGTC network set along Hungarian borders. It is a manyfold task, which in 2016 included the followings:

- upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFA), we drafted a background document related to a government decree endowing the EGTCs with a special status in cross-border economic development;
- we took part in the annual EGTC forum in the MFA;
- we compiled model provisions of the mandatory rules guaranteeing the legally sound operation of the EGTCs; and an excel sheet that facilitates the financial reporting of the state subvention;
- we regularly inform EGTCs on EU events, news, and open calls that are relevant for them;
- within the framework of our public utility service contract signed with the RDV EGTC, we helped them with web page development, in the organization of their Danube conference held in Komárno, in the preparation of coordinating the Slovak-Hungarian small project fund, and in the project development works of the EGTC. Upon request of the management, we drafted the amendment of the Statutes based on the enlargement of the membership network;
- we plotted a new map on members for the Arrabona EGTC;
- an obligation occurred towards the Romanian authorities concerning the declaration and amendment of the Statutes related to the opening of the

Romanian office of the Gate to Europe EGTC, which we provide professional support for.

The coordination duties of the EGTC workshops that had been organized by CESCO since July 2012, were transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in June 2016. The ministry finances these professional and network building meetings within the framework of a KÖFOP (Public Administration and Services Operational Programme) project. Nevertheless, the task of drafting the memos and the refreshing of the internal forum of the EGTCs remained our duty and we assist in the preparation of the professional content of the meetings. In 2016, three EGTC workshops were held: in springtime, the Hungarian EGTCs gathered in Komárno (this meeting was organized by CESCO and Pons Danubii EGTC); and two further meetings took place: in Mórahalom (BTC EGTC) in June, then in September in Košice (Via Carpatia EGTC).

Participation in the activities of the EUSDR interministerial working group

Since its foundation, we are members of the working group of the EUSDR coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We participate at its meetings and – upon request – we used to report on our activities related to the Danube region. This way, WG members were informed on the publication of the results of *Crossing the Borders* project.

We endeavour to actively being involved in the international initiatives concerning the macro-regional strategy (e.g. we are a member of the Urban Platform thereof and we participate in several professional events) where we can represent Hungarian priorities.

Related events

10 February: participation at the annual EGTC forum in the MFA

31 March–1 April: EGTC workshop organized by CESCO (Komárno, Slovakia)

18 May: participation and presentation at the RDV Danube conference (Komárno, Gyula Ocskay)

2 June: professional meeting on the small project fund at the RDV EGTC (Tatabánya)

8–9 June: EGTC workshop (Mórahalom)

22 September: participation and presentation at the working group meeting of the EUSDR PA8 (Osijek, Enikő Nyerges)

22–23 September: participation and presentation at the annual conference of EGTC approving authorities (Budapest, Gyula Ocskay)

28-29 September: EGTC workshop (Košice)

11 October: participation at the interministerial working group meeting of the Danube Strategy

3–4 November: participation at the annual forum of the Danube Strategy (Bratislava)

11 November: participation at the workshop on EGTCs organised by the Széchenyi István University (Győr)

22 November: professional meeting on the small project fund at the RDV EGTC (Tatabánya)

Full-time employees of CESCO in 2016:

Kitti, DUBNICZKI: strategic planner, landscape architect

Éva GANGL: strategic planner, GIS analyst, geographer

Teodor GYELNIK: senior research fellow, political scientist

Roland HESZ: strategic planner, geographer

Enikő HÜSE-NYERGES: project manager and strategic planner, economist

Dr. Norbert JANKAI: special legal adviser, lawyer, MBA

Mátyás JASCHITZ: director of planning, geographer

Gyula OCSKAY: secretary general, political philosopher, economist

Annamária VAS: head of office, economist, human resource manager

Basic information on our association

Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések Közép-európai Segítő Szolgálata

1067 Budapest, Teréz krt. 13.

Postal address: 1406 Budapest, Pf. 7

Basic data needed for defining a public utility status

1) Contribution to fulfilling common social and individual needs

According to the data of the Public Utility Annex of the year 2016 related to target groups, the association's services are equally available to persons other than the association's board members, employees or volunteers.

2) Proper resources at disposal in respect of the former two closed business years (2014, 2015)

The following alternative conditions apply:

- a) the annual average budget surpasses HUF 1 million (de facto in 2015-2016: 107.400 thousand HUF)
- b) overall taxed outcome of the two years(baseline year) is not negative: 18.532 thousand HUF
- c) personal charges (expenses), without taking into consideration officials' allowances, are at least a quarter of all charges (expenses) (de facto in 2015-2016: 59,36 %)

3) Account of appropriate social support after the two previously closed business years

The following alternative condition applies:

- b) all expenses related to public utility activities make up at least half of all expenses on a two-year average (de facto in 2015-2016: 76,35 %)

Account of allocations by objectives

Our association has donated an amount of HUF 4.600 EUR in 2016 to the CESC I Carpathia.

Allocation to senior officers

No allocations were provided for senior officers in 2016.

Account of assets used for public utility activities

Equity: 7 946 thousand HUF

Aim of utilization: public utility activities

Resource supply and social support indicators

Resource supply indicators	Fulfilment of indicator	Value
Ectv.32.par.(4) a) $(B1+B2)/2 > 1.000.000$ Ft	Yes	107.400 th. HUF
Ectv.32.par.(4) b) $K1+K2 > = 0$	Yes	18.532 th. HUF
Ectv.32.par.(4) c) $(I1+I2-A1-A2)/(H1+H2) > = 0,25$	Yes	0,5936
Social support indicators	Fulfilment of indicator	Value
Ectv.32.par.(5) a) $(C1+C2)/(G1+G2) > = 0,02$	No	0,00
Ectv.32.par.(5) b) $(J1+J2)/(H1+H2) > = 0,5$	Yes	0,7635
Ectv.32.par.(5) c) $(L1+L2)/2 > = 10$ fõ	No	7 persons

Basic data needed for defining a public utility status

	Previous year	Base year
B. Total annual income:	109.550 th. HUF	105.250 th. HUF
D. Public utility income:	79.120 th. HUF	96.606 th. HUF
E. Normative grant:	0 th. HUF	0 th. HUF
F. Support from EU structural funds and Cohesion Fund	0 th. HUF	0 th. HUF
G. Adjusted turnover	0 th. HUF	0 th. HUF
H. Total expenditure	99.080 th. HUF	97.188 th. HUF
I. Personal charges HUF	56.516 th. HUF	59.996 th.
J. Public utility expenditure	74.736 th. HUF	75.112 th. HUF
K. Profit/Loss after taxation	10.470 th. HUF	8.062 th. HUF
L. Number of volunteers assisting the association's operation (in accordance with regulation LXXXVIII/2005 on public utility volunteer activity) (persons)	9	5

Personal expenses

	1000 HUF	Previous year	Base year
A.	Personal charges	56 516	59 996
A.1.	Wage charges	39 709	41 909
A.1.A.	out of it: commissions	680	1 402
A.1.B.	out of it: honorarium	0	0
A.2.	Other personal charges	5 026	5 513
A.3.	Wage contributions	11 781	12 574
B.	Allocations by the association	0	0