

HUNGARY-CROATIA IPA CROSS-BORDER
COOPERATION PROGRAM 2007-2013

**PROJECT PARTNER:
PÉCS DEVELOPMENT
NONPROFIT ZRT.**

Cross-border Bike Project



ECOTOURISM ALONG
THE BICYCLE ROUTE
DESIGNATED BY IPA
CROSS-BORDER BIKE
PROJECT

HUHR/1101/1.2.2/1004

Development of Pécs-
Osijek-Antunovac-
Ivanovac biking route



The Programme is co-financed by the
European Union

Contents

Contents	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. The description of ecotourism	6
3. Ecotourism.....	12
3.1. Ecotourism worldwide	12
3.2. Ecotourism along the borders.....	15
3.3. Ecotourism in the framework of IPA projects	18
3.4. Ecotourism in Baranya and Pécs	21
3.5. Ecotourism in the Baranja-Triangle.....	26
4. The development of ecotourism.....	31
4.1. The opportunities of the developing ecotourism in relation to the project	31
4.2. Connecting and joint development of ecotourism and bicycle tourism.....	36
5. Conclusion	43

1. Introduction

The Pécs Development Non-profit Company submitted a tender application within the framework of the Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program in May 2012, entitled „The development, creation of the Pécs-Osijek-Antunovac-Ivanovac cycling route” („Cross-Border Bike Project” for short). The Main Beneficiary of the project is Antunovac District, the other partners are the Green Osijek Touristic and Environmental Association, the Geoscience Regional Development Research Centre, and the South-Transdanubian Bicycle Tourism Association.

The aim of the project is the creation of a new touristic product, a new cross-border cycling route, and the development of cycling and eco-tourism in the region along the border. The unconcealed aim of the bicycle road is to present the natural, cultural values that are located along the bicycle road.

The track of the project starts from the city centre of Pécs. In the framework of the present project an authorisation plan will be prepared for the route starting from the centre of Pécs (probably from the Zsolnay Quarter) to the administrative boundary of Pécs (Nagyárpád). From this point a green way bicycle road will be designated, passing through Pogány, Kistótfalu, Vokány, Nagytótfalu, Kisharsány, Nagyharsány, Beremend settlements. On the Croatian side the designated bicycle road would reach the Drava following the route of the Drava Bike Tour then it would run on the Drava flood dam to Osijek. From Osijek the designated route will be replaced by a constructed cycling road through Antunovac to Ivanovac. On the Croatian side two further green ways will be designated.

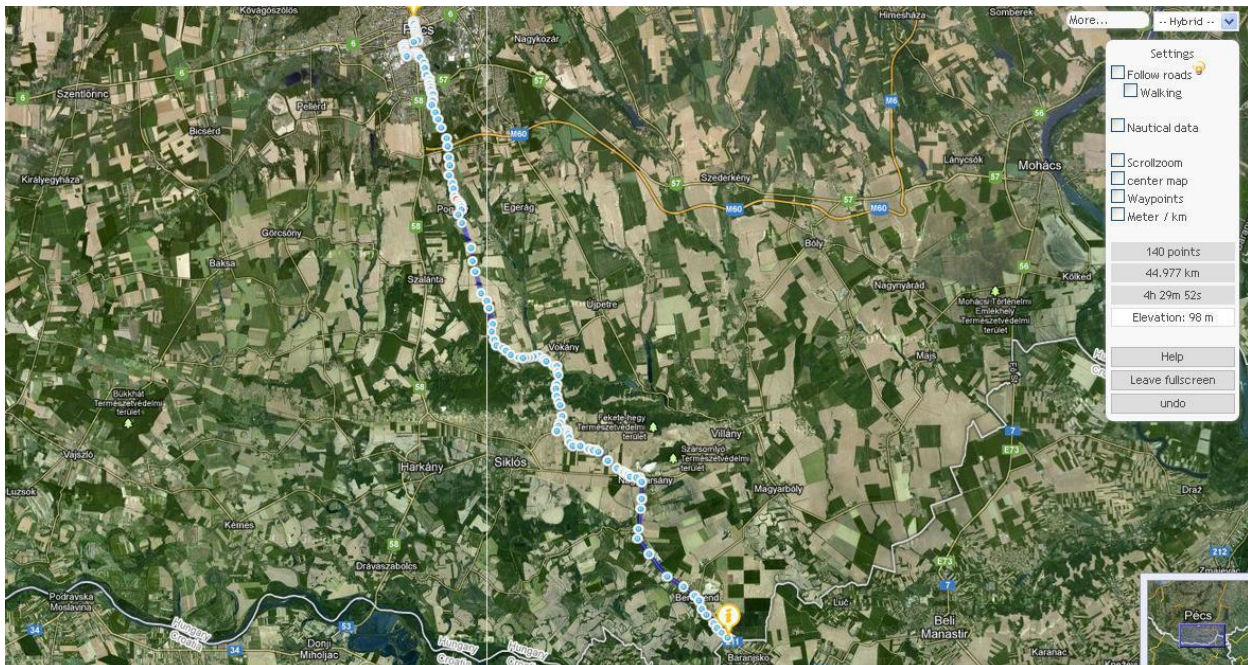


Image 1. – The route of the designated bicycle road on the Hungarian side

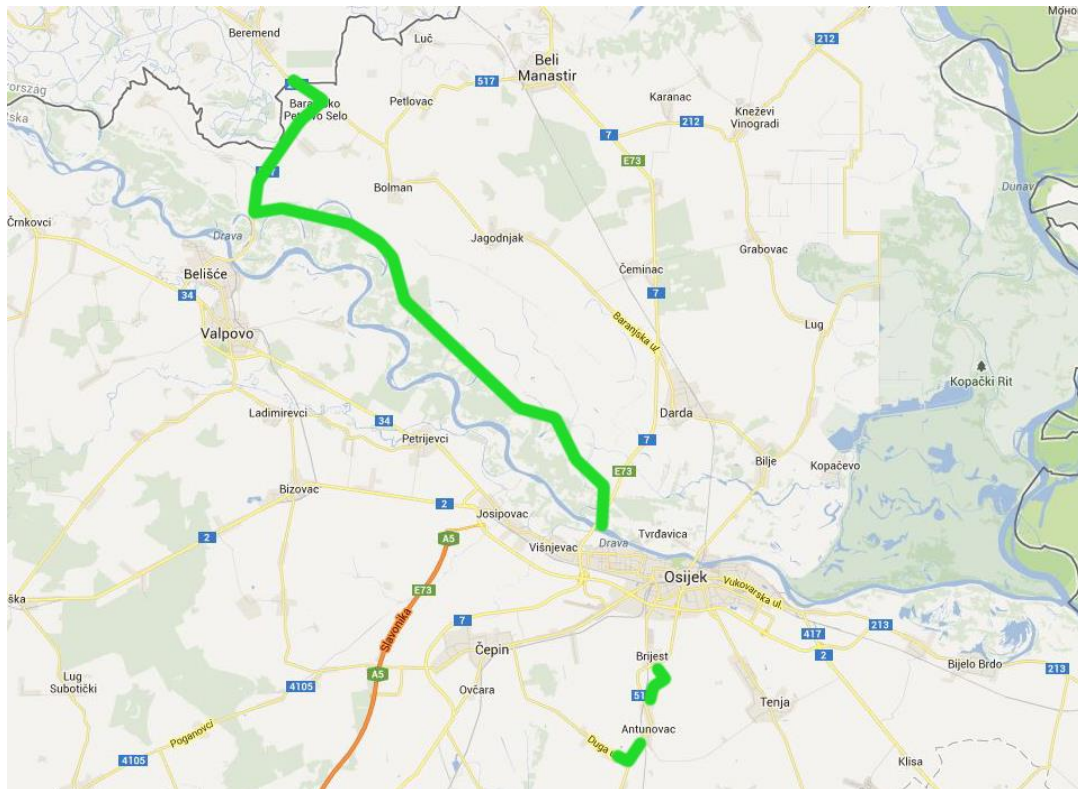


Image 2 – The route of the designated bicycle route on the Croatian side

In case of ecotourism the main motivation of tourists who take responsibility for the environment is to visit protected natural and cultural values. They wish to marvel at the beauty of the landscape, learn about wildlife and vegetation and also protect it at the same time. This can happen in the course of hiking, cycling or horse-riding, thus ecotourism is closely connected to active tourism.

According to the World Tourism Organisation of the UN, ecotourism „is a form of tourism when the main motivation of the tourist is to observe, appreciate nature, and to contribute to the conservation of cultural heritage and natural environment, while minimising the negative impact.” Ecotouristic trips are characterised by a longer stay than the average, seasonality is less present and the tourists contribute to the development of local economy, as they are likely to consume local products and use local services.

Hungary is extremely rich in natural values, and the nearly completely intact plains, marshes, swamps, flood areas, meadows, forests, lawns, that are home to ancient vegetation and wildlife, have remained present in several places.

One of the four highlighted touristic products that should be developed in accordance with the regional development strategy is ecotourism. The Drava represents an outstanding natural value, similarly to the Danube-Drava National Park, the smallest in the country. One of the programme package elements of the ecotouristic offer are hiking trips, for which the conditions are already given in the region. However, the state of the hiking routes must be improved, similarly to the related infrastructure. The promotion of hiking trips (e.g., through online advertisements, brochures, etc.) is also an important task, which is included in each regional tender. An already implemented project in the National Park area is the “Drava Kapu” Visitor Centre and the improvement of the Mohács

Historic Memorial Grounds, which provides several opportunities for every generation to become familiar with natural and cultural historical values. The special attractions include the program offers of the Zselic “Starry Skies” Reserve.

Among the present developments, the Ancient Drava project and the ecotouristic visitor centre implemented within this project deserve to be highlighted. The currently forming regional green way network, which is currently in progress, strengthens the position of the product even further.

The aim of the present study is to provide the Reader with an overall picture of the current situation of ecotourism worldwide, along the borders, within the IPA project, in Baranya and Pécs, in the Baranja-Triangle, and to present the opportunities of development, and the possibilities of connecting eco- and bicycle tourism in the areas affected by the Cross-Border Bike Project.

In the course of preparing this study we used the content of personal interviews with ecotourism experts.

2. The description of ecotourism

The reasons of the development of ecotourism

The development of world tourism is continuous. As for its economic importance, the tourism still holds the third place behind oil and military industry, but if the tendencies of the past one and half decade continue, the „industry of peace” can become the most important economic activity of our world in a few years.

By the end of the 20th century it became clear that the direction of the development of tourism that can be experienced today, leads to the destruction of those natural values which constitute the basis of touristic products. The negative impacts resulting from travel, stay and the various forms of spending free time lead to the pollution and diminishing of natural resources, threats to the undisturbed and diverse nature of wildlife, and to the destruction of the natural landscape in several places. Finally, the target areas previously preferred by tourists lose their attractiveness. As a result, more and more participants of one of the most dynamically developing industries recognise the seriousness of the situation and have begun to search for solutions that can serve as the basis for the long-term sustainable development of tourism. The demand side puts increasing pressure on tourism, as in case of the majority of tourists, intact landscape, diverse wildlife and unpolluted environment have become the most important touristically attractive factors.

As a result of increasingly strengthening environmentally responsible behaviour, the number and attendance of the world’s national parks and other protected natural areas are gradually increasing. From the point of view of environmental protection it is a global aspiration to preserve the areas in each country that are richest in natural and landscape values by pronouncing them national parks, and not only protect them for themselves but for future generations as well. The increased interest and the basic function of preservation may lead to conflicts unless it is prevented through appropriate precautionary measures. It is essential to create a form of symbiosis, since through their operation, the national parks play an important role in laying the foundations for the social-economic

changes necessary for spreading the form of behaviour that takes responsibility for the environment and nature.

In addition to the burdens laid on the natural environment by tourism, the positive or negative effects regarding the residents and communities of the receiving area must also be taken into consideration. The development of tourism greatly contributes to the economic development of an area, for example through the creation of workplaces; however, an adverse process occurs when the income resulting from it is not invested in the development of the given area. The appearance of great numbers of tourists can disturb the everyday life of the local residents, and the encounter of different cultures can become the source of deeper conflicts. Thus, the principle of the sustainable development of tourism requires active participation from the residents in the given receiving area, and also the guaranteeing of advantages provided to them in the course of the developments.

A similar relationship can be observed in the attitude of the local communities to the protected natural areas. In the protected areas, as a result of the practical realization of sustainable usage of nature and rational landscape use, the aspects of nature conservation must be put into effect in harmony with other sectors. In the course thereof, several legal and legislative limitations and restrictions must be observed, which, as opposed to the residents of non-protected areas, place the residents of a national park and its vicinity in a disadvantageous situation. Thus, it is understandable that if no appropriate compensation or alternative solutions are provided to them, they will confront the interests of nature protection, and their resistance will finally make exercising the function of protection impossible.

Preservation and presentation, the controversy which might seem irreconcilable in the course of the practical realization of tourism, can be shaped into symbiosis, where ecotourism offers complex solution possibilities for the managers of protected natural areas to keep tourism within controlled framework in a way that in addition to the organisations of nature protection, the local communities also receive a share of the advantages resulting from the development, to the mutual satisfaction of the parties.

With the growth of urban population and the increasing popularity of healthy lifestyle, there is a growing interest regarding ecotourism worldwide. Its development became necessary due to the following factors:

- all economic activity is based on the use of resources, thus the usage of renewable resources are preferred, and ecotourism emphasises frugality, and creating closed cycles in the course of usage;
- it does not encourage and prefer such usage of areas and resources that results in consumption and the increased production of waste and rubbish related thereto;
- with the development of tourism, there is opportunity for involving additional resources in case the receiving area and the local population is able to serve the special demands of tourism in the long-run.

The diverse interpretations, definitions of ecotourism

The new type of tourism, the alternative tourism that aimed at decreasing the negative impacts of mass tourism that developed in the second half of the 20th century, was the „green tourism” that focused on natural values. The concept of ecotourism was first defined in the late 1970s, early 1980s, but a uniformly accepted definition still does not exist today.

In order to define this form of tourism accurately, ecotourism, sustainable tourism and sustainable development must be differentiated. The essence of sustainable development is to satisfy our needs by using the available resources to such extent and in such quality that the needs of future generations of at least the same scale can also be satisfied. Sustainable tourism thus means a form of tourism by which we can make the attractions, landmarks available for our future descendants as well. Ecotourism can assist in this, as its main elements are the protection, preservation and presentation of natural and cultural resources and attractions.

One of the frequently mentioned, short, but accurately phrased definitions of ecotourism was published by the Ecotourism Society of the United States. ***„Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the local natural and cultural values and improves the well-being of local people and to the conservation of values.”***

The definition given by the [Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources \(IUCN\)](#) provides a similar, although more detailed interpretation. ***„Ecological tourism, or ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visit to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples.”***

The Ecoclub, which was founded on 1999 and is based in Athens, interprets ecotourism in an entirely different way, as a process. ***„We should not see ecotourism as a segment of the tourism industry, but rather as a movement that changes tourism. In details, ecotourism can be defined as the ideal state of tourism, that:***

- ***minimizes its own environmental impact;***
- ***funds environmental conservation;***
- ***provides financial funds for different projects, thus promotes equality, reduces poverty in local communities;***
- ***increases the knowledge of the environment and cultures, the understanding between different cultures, it is available and open for everyone.”***

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) summarises the definition of ecotourism with the following characteristics:

1. ***All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and conservation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas***

2. *It contains educational and interpretation features.*
3. *It is generally, but not exclusively organised by specialised, local tour operators for small groups*
4. *It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.*
5. *It supports the maintenance of natural areas by:*
 - *generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;*
 - *providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;*
 - *increasing awareness towards the importance of the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.*

The controversies are mainly apparent in and mostly arise from the phrasing of the definitions, which in most cases lies in the different, possibly wrong interpretation of connections. However, after overcoming the conceptual phrasing, all definitions agree concerning the content, conditionality, and operational circumstances of ecotourism. The expressions used the most frequently, sometimes wrongly as synonyms of ecotourism are: responsible tourism, environment-conscious tourism, ethical tourism, soft tourism, hiking tourism, backpacking tourism, etc.

The elements of the conditionality of ecotourism

In accordance with the resolution of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) the main motivation concerning ecotourism is nature, and the minimization of negative impacts. On the basis of this definition, the following aspects constitute the elements and conditionality of ecotourism:

- Protection of nature
- Special policies, programmes
- Systems that can be used in practice
- Strict conditions, requirements
- Minimization of negative impacts
- Reduction of pollution by means of transportation
- National parks
- Legislative and organisational mechanisms
- Financial mechanisms
- Profit
- Costs
- Certification system
- Education and training
- Special information for tourists
- Promotion material
- Marketing / promotion

In the course of the planning and development of ecotourism, the appreciation of natural values, the reduction of poverty, the creation of peace and security have priority, the basis of which is developed tourism. It is also important that economic development, sustainable development, the support of human rights and the protection of natural and cultural resources should be closely connected to the process.

Meanwhile, the fact that ecotourism requires continuous regulation must be highlighted as a threat. Interest in ecotouristic trips is steadily increasing. Consumption increases significantly, biodiversity can become endangered, the consumption of water and the amount of waste increases. The involvement of local communities is missing in several places. A further negative aspect is that ecotourism does not receive sufficient attention in several places, and its role and significance is undervalued. The reason thereof is that currently it does not bring a large profit on the long run, although its potential is significant. At present, multinational companies are not interested, today improvements are mostly initiated by medium-size businesses and experts. Future challenges include technology transfer, community-based ecotourism and the coordination and promotion of investments. In Europe the standards of ecotouristic products and rural tourism projects are also of special importance. In the future the development of ecotourism and the ownership of land areas must be given special attention, and the involvement of host communities in the development processes is also necessary. The highly protected areas and cultural traditions have to be given priority.

The advantages of ecotourism

Today's modern environmental protection cannot be imagined without ecotourism, and this close connection lies in the following causes:

- state funds are decreasing;
- the population often regards the regulations as self-serving;
- people have a need to know protected natural values;
- it can be difficult to convince farmers to accept the protection of animal species that might cause harm.

Thus, life today requires the existence, development of ecotourism, but in addition to the protection of animals and plants it can create advantages such as the following:

- it means income for the manager of the area;
- it mean indirect or direct income for local residents (hospitality, accommodation, sale of local specialities or handcrafted products, etc.);
- the social acceptance of restrictions increases;
- it plays an important role in the dissemination of knowledge;
- the economic advantages can promote and facilitate the designation of new areas for protection;
- the infrastructural provision, and employment in the region can improve.

The characteristic products of ecotourism

The ecotouristic products are extremely diverse and their scope is very wide, as nature or culture practically plays a certain role in the majority of travels, and an increasing number of tourists consider nature and the acquisition of knowledge to be the main appeal

The most characteristic products are those focusing on natural and cultural attractions, and they aim at those tourists, whose motivation is to get to know these values in person. These include such activities as national parks and other areas of nature protection, a photo safari, study trips, bird-watching, fishing, hunting, horse-riding, camping, hiking in nature, non-motorised water sports, cycling, skiing, agro-tourism, rural tourism, alternative tourism, visiting archaeological sites, folklore tours. Each form has its characteristic product, target audience and – consequently – its marketing is characteristic as well.

The target groups of ecotourism

- The potential target groups involved in ecotourism are diverse, as mainly tourists aged 30-50 years, arriving from Western European countries are interested in unique natural features. Among the foreign visitors of National Parks, the number of German, Dutch and Austrian tourists is the most significant. We have to acknowledge with regret that tourism in Hungarian National Park involves a much smaller clientele than international ecotouristic centres with similar features.
- The second place among the target groups is taken by those attending schools, who, however, represent a low remunerative and seasonal demand. In spite of this, this branch of youth tourism should be made appreciated and should receive more significant support. Mainly because they realise the highly important tasks of environmentally conscious education that also emphasizes the protection of nature.
- In addition, ecotourism can become a complementary programme for the participants of international business and medical tourism.

The characteristics of ecotourists

- They are mainly interested in natural and cultural attractions and experiences;
- They usually connect gaining experiences with exercise;
- They minimise the environmental impact (disturbance) caused by their presence;
- They mostly use local services, thus increase the income of local residents, improve local economy;
- They adapt to local circumstances, respect traditions, do not seek special attention, rather prefer to blend into the environment.

3. Ecotourism

3.1. Ecotourism worldwide

Ecotourism has different content in each region of the world, and it is closely connected to other forms of tourism. As a result it is quite complicated to measure the significance and market share of ecotourism. According to estimates, the market share of this segment is between 1 and 9 %, which in itself means a wide range. Tourism experts however agree on that ecotourism has an outstanding role today, and its popularity is growing.

2002 was the year of ecotourism, as the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and the UN (United Nations) Environmental Program organised an Ecotourism Summit in Québec, Canada, with the participation of the public and private sector and the civil society, where the Québec Declaration was accepted.

The participants of the meeting emphasized that the sustainable development of tourism as a leading branch of economy must have priority, as tourism can contribute to the catching up of economically disadvantaged areas, and to the protection of endangered ecosystems. They were aware of the limitations of the consultation, thus the primary aim of the event was to coordinate the inputs of those involved in ecotourism.

The Québec Declaration

The document was phrased on the basis of the preparatory events and of the debates and discussions that took place at the Ecotourism Summit. Its main aim is to state recommendations, which serve the development of ecotourism in accordance with sustainable development.

The declaration emphasizes that ecotourism accepts the principles of sustainable tourism, taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. Ecotourism is characterised by the following features, which differentiate it from the wider interpretation of sustainable tourism:

- it actively contributes to the conservation of natural and environmental heritage;
- it involves local communities in planning, development and operative activities, thus contributing to the development of local communities;
- it presents the natural and environmental heritage of the destination to visitors;
- it pays more attention to individual travellers and smaller groups.

Ecotourism outside Europe

In **North America** intact nature, which requires protection and conservation, means the basis of ecotourism. This conservation involves the complete exclusion of human intervention in some cases. National parks can be visited by tourists keeping strict rules, even if they have appropriate knowledge. In the United States and Canada successful management systems already operate, where

the natural areas are protected on the basis of the cooperation of the public and private sector. The distribution of resources and tasks is focused on the transfer of technology, the relationship of public and private sectors and the so-called Visitor Management Systems.

In **Latin America** ecotourism primarily focuses on the mountain range of the Andes, and on the forests of inland areas. These areas are not predominated by the large number of tourists arriving from the United States of America, unlike in case of Mexico and the Caribbean, as in addition to the tourists arriving from the USA, a large number of European visitors can be expected. Brazil has special importance, where environmentally friendly attitudes are becoming increasingly significant, continuing the traditions of the Conference of Rio in 1992.

In case of **Africa**, the majority of the continent awaits the visitors with vast open spaces, exotic wildlife, and tribal culture. The wildlife of East Africa, the safaris, the huge national parks of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are probably the most well-known, but the countries of South Africa also treat the intact national parks – which are more effectively protected, more attentive to the habitat needs of animals than their counterparts in East Africa – as central elements. Both regions successfully attract tourists from the largest touristic markets of the world (USA, Great Britain, Germany) even though in East and Central Africa serious social and economic problems make market sales more difficult.

The vast, scarcely populated continent of **Australia** has intact coastal, desert, and mountainous areas and a political stability that also mean significant appeal in ecotourism, and its market opportunities are constituted mainly by the countries of the Pacific Ocean area, within it the USA and Japan.

In **Asia** primarily India and Nepal can be mentioned as significant international ecotourism markets. The touristic market of India includes the large sending countries of Europe (United Kingdom, Germany, France), the United States of America, but a significant number of tourists also arrive from the Middle East and Japan as well. The average length of stay is remarkably long, 28 days, but this also includes visits paid to emigrant relatives who moved here from the United Kingdom and the Middle East. The proportion of backpackers is high, who spend 21 days in the area on average. This subcontinent possesses a wildlife and vegetation that is the second most diverse after Africa, and only Africa can rival it concerning the proportion of protection as well; since 1911, over 70 national parks and 330 game reserves have been established. In case of Nepal, the mountain range of the Himalayas constitutes the major attraction, apart from China, the highest peaks of the world, Mount Everest and the Annapurna can be reached from here. The visitors are mostly mountaineers, adventure tourists, but white-water rafting and mountain biking are also available. Among these the most popular – attracting one quarter of the visitors – is hiking in the mountains, where the tourists can hike in probably the most spectacular mountains of the world, far from any human settlements, with the help of local porters and guides.

Ecotourism in Europe

In Europe nature and culture are closely connected, as a result rural tourism is often connected to ecotourism, or the two forms of tourism cannot be clearly separated from each other. In Europe, humans, local communities are always linked to natural landscapes. Among the motivations for

tourism nature appears in the highest proportion in Europe, thus ecotourism can play an outstanding role on the continent.

The European Union does not have a tourism policy at present. According to the EU resolution in connection with tourism, competitiveness, quality, sustainability and the interests of tourists are considered to be important factors. The most important measures have to be in harmony with a competitive, quality, sustainable tourism, which the organisations of the public sector must be made aware of.

In the future closer cooperation is necessary within tourism, however, at present, the individual organisations, institutions, businesses and associations have their own policy and concept. Their synchronization can fill a key role in future cooperation, but it is important that it should be realised not only at organisational level but at the level of destinations.

Ecotourism is a concept that presents the exploration of nature in a way that at the same time adapts to nature. First, overseas destinations created this touristic product representing a small market segment, which was later introduced by tour operators - with increasing success – on the European market. Travels to areas near nature carry the largest growth potential. Ecotourism actually provides an opportunity for development for those poorer countries which are rich in natural values, and possess a big biodiversity and thus can benefit from the relative advantage of their „backwardness“.

The European visitors of ecotouristic destinations expect socially responsible and environmentally-friendly ecotouristic products in each country. In order to achieve this, the technology transfer is necessary – which is significant in Europe – as the concept of sustainable tourism is closely connected to several nature-based touristic forms that were developed and are exercised in practise on the continent.

In the marketing of ecotourism – similarly to most other areas of tourism – the significance of word of mouth is the greatest. The individual target groups must be approached through special channels of promotions, and there is a need for special eco-tour operators as well, and for eco-tour guides in the receiving areas.

The high level of development, decentralised state organisations operating in several places, the existence of intact village communities and economic structures consisting of small enterprises provide a good basis for the growth of tourism. However, existing human and scientific resources must be used in a better way and developed further in nature-based tourism.

The potential of the development of ecotourism must be examined while bearing in mind the regional and local sustainable development (in the fields of regional development, economy and society). Welfare and the associated consumption of leisure societies, the liberalization of agricultural markets, and the competition of increasingly attractive cities pose significant challenge for sustainable forms of ecotourism. As opposed to new overseas destinations – some of which show explosive development – European tourism has a slow growth rate due to its stable currency, high income and price standards, and several self-created weaknesses. There frequently are inequalities between the different forms of tourism.

There are successful projects that have been tested by tour operators and hotel industry, and which originate from the environmentally friendly programs of the UN. One of the necessary bases of nature-based tourism is environmentally-friendly mobility. Those experiences should be highlighted, which are the results of ecotouristic quality standards developed and realised in Europe and in mountainous areas. It is also important that ecotourism requires the sustainable forms of mobility. The trends of transportation related to leisure time and tourism – which show a strong growth – however do not progress in an environmentally friendly direction. The sustainable development of tourism requires the environmentally-friendly form of transportation system, which satisfies the needs leisure- and tourism-related transportation in a way that does not jeopardise health, safety, and environment. Mobility-related creative touristic offers provide the possibility of holidays without cars.

The first results of the research carried out by the WTO in European countries indicate that the market of ecotourism is interesting and cannot be ignored. Apparently primarily the economically active classes of the population are interested in ecotourism, who possess purchasing power. With the help of the study it can be proved that a large scale of creating values can be targeted, to contribute to the conservation of endangered natural areas and of those that are worth to be saved.

3.2. Ecotourism along the borders.

Ecotourism in neighbouring countries – Austria as a good example

„Distant plains, gentle hills, vineyards and orchards, Lake Neusiedler, grasslands, river valleys, fields, palaces and castles, pretty towns and graceful, one-street villages”. This is the slogan that Austria uses to attract tourists to its easternmost region, Burgenland, which is only a stone’s throw from Hungary

There is nothing so special in the touristic package that could not be found in Hungary as well, Burgenland can offer tourists what we also have: grapes, wine, plains, delicious dishes, friendly hospitality. However, it is important to highlight that in the field of tourism, including ecotourism, they are further ahead, and offer a remarkably attractive, complex package for visitors arriving to the country, who can indeed receive good quality product and service for their money.

Recently Hungarian journalists got a taste of the natural, gastronomic and cultural values of the area in the course of an organised tour. The programmes focused on the Seewinkel (Fertőzug) area that had been isolated for decades. The event aspired to present how residents can live and farm in a protected natural environment in a way to preserve the values for future generations. More and more hotels, restaurants and producers place environmental-consciousness in the focus of their philosophy. This makes the region unique and also interesting as a tourist destination.

An apple orchard and processing plant in Mosonszentandrás are good examples of living together with nature, of organic farming and of the modern approach. The building that resembles an apple crate, located next to the road, demonstrates its owners’ attitude from afar. When designing and constructing the hall that functions as a processing plant and also as a retail outlet, ecological and sustainability factors were given priority. As a result, recyclable and renewable raw materials were preferred. The energy system of the building works in accordance with the principles of „passive

houses". In Burgenland more and more people recognise the opportunities offered by direct sale from the producer. They offer fresh organic products of reliable quality to the residents of the vicinity and to tourists. Young owners rely on customers who pay attention to the place of origin of food, and who have an environmentally-friendly approach, similarly to themselves.

Thus, the new approach is spreading throughout Burgenland. The region however does not leave success to chance. Organic farmers receive funding of one thousand Euros per hectares a year, thus an increasing number of local residents convert to this form of production, and they can sell their products to the arriving „ecotourists”, as for the enthusiasts of this form of tourism being able to buy fresh product of reliable quality that was produced in an environmentally conscious way, is highly important.

Ecotourism along the borders of the country

Órség National Park – creation of an Ecotourism Information Centre

As a result of the touristic infrastructural quality improvements implemented in the area of the Órség National Park, such touristic potential shall be created that will strengthen its position on the regional, national and also on the international tourism market. As a result of the improvements, the number of registered Hungarian and foreign guests increases, and the number of recorded guest nights also rises, which means significant income from tourism.

The basis of the internationally recognised, rapid improvement of the Órség National Park as tourist destination is the continuous quantitative and qualitative development of touristic services. The touristic developments in the area of the subregion of Órszentpéter and Szentgotthárd, based on hitherto unexploited potential, contribute thereto.

The existing touristic infrastructure of the national park and the area served as a basis for the creation of an ecotouristic system, and the needs of the participants of the local touristic system were taken into consideration.

Its aim is the sustainable presentation – in accordance with the principles of modern ecotourism and destination management – of natural, landscape and folklore values, traditional farming and folk crafts through experiences, based on various forms of getting to know them, and organised into touristic program packages.

The „Gate to the West” area at the triple border, cornered by the Slovenian and Austrian borders would be created in the Vendvidék region that possesses unique natural, folklore and cultural values. It will be the Hungarian part of a uniform ecotouristic presentation system, which, together with the naturparks along the border (Raab in Austria, and Goricko Naturpark in Slovenia), will contribute to the well-conceived conservation and high-quality presentation of local natural values. A great emphasis shall be placed on the development of hiking routes around the symbolic area of Hármashatár-hegy mount connecting the three countries, as well as on the improvement of the conditions of presentation, and on creating tourist-friendly service units, and modern information units based on multilingualism.

The „Gate to the East” area would be created in the eastern part of the Órség National Park, in the vicinity of the settlements around the popular, touristically well-established Vadása Lake. Touristic developments aim at the creation of tourist-friendly conditions of reception, the presentation of the natural values of the area through experiences, and also the creation of modern informational units based on multilingualism, corresponding to the style of the improvements of the Vendvidék area.

An Ecotourism Information Centre and its service units would be created by converting the the former border guard barracks located in the village of Apátistvánfalva.

The investment is realised in the central settlement of the Vendvidék area bordered by the Triple Border. This location creates connections between the Órség and the Vendvidék area, it is the starting and calling point of several hiking paths, and its location, as well as its natural and cultural historical values, tourist attractions justify the implementation of the planned investment. The site of the investment inside the settlement is located near the centre, along the incoming roads and tourist paths. The functional elements of the planned investment serve the needs of regional soft tourism in a forward-looking way (modern provision of information, rest area, satisfying active touristic needs).

The cooperation of Ipeľská únia and the Ipoly Union

The association named **Ipeľská únia** was founded in December 1992 in the Ipolyság area (SK) on the initiation of 4 Slovakian and 3 Hungarian environmentalists. The creation of the association was inspired by the inappropriately thought-out and often brutal aspirations often harming nature. The Ipeľská únia is an independent association which does not carry out political or economic activity. Its members are natural persons, legal entities and groups who feel obliged to participate in the protection of natural and cultural values located in the catchment area of the Ipoly River. The association currently has 57 members.

The aim of the Ipeľská únia is to preserve and revitalize the natural and cultural values of the Ipoly Valley, contribute to the solution of the ecological problems in the region, and participate in the development and implementation of the regional strategy of a long-term sustainable development. The Union is active in the complete catchment area of the Ipoly (5150 km²), in close cooperation with its sister organisations in Balassagyarmat seat, with the Ipoly Union, which was created at the same time as the Ipeľská únia. The mission and aims of the two organisations are identical. The common philosophy of the two organisations is that the catchment area of the river must be regarded as a single, continuous area, and the problems must be solved together in a complex way. The motto of the Union expresses the same idea: „The river simply should be considered to be a river that connects, rather than a border that separates us!”

The activity of the Ipeľská únia can be ranked into 4 main categories:

1. The organisation of and participation in such research activities that aim at providing a basis for the development of alternative plans serving the ecological rehabilitation of the Ipoly area.
2. Providing assistance to and cooperation with other civil organisation operating in the Ipoly catchment area.

3. Improving the environmental consciousness of the residents in the region through the means of environmental education.
4. Facilitation and practical application of sustainability in agriculture, forestry, rural tourism and ecotourism, and the facilitation of the introduction of alternative energies and ways of transportation.

3.3. Ecotourism in the framework of IPA projects

The Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program has been implemented with the support of the European Union. The two countries, by common decision, have formed the institutional structure of the Program in the so-called „shared management system”. In the framework of the Program, a European Union fund of €52.433.025 is available, which provides wide opportunities for potential beneficiaries within the area of the two priorities – **Sustainable environment and tourism**, and Cooperative economy and inter-community human resource development.

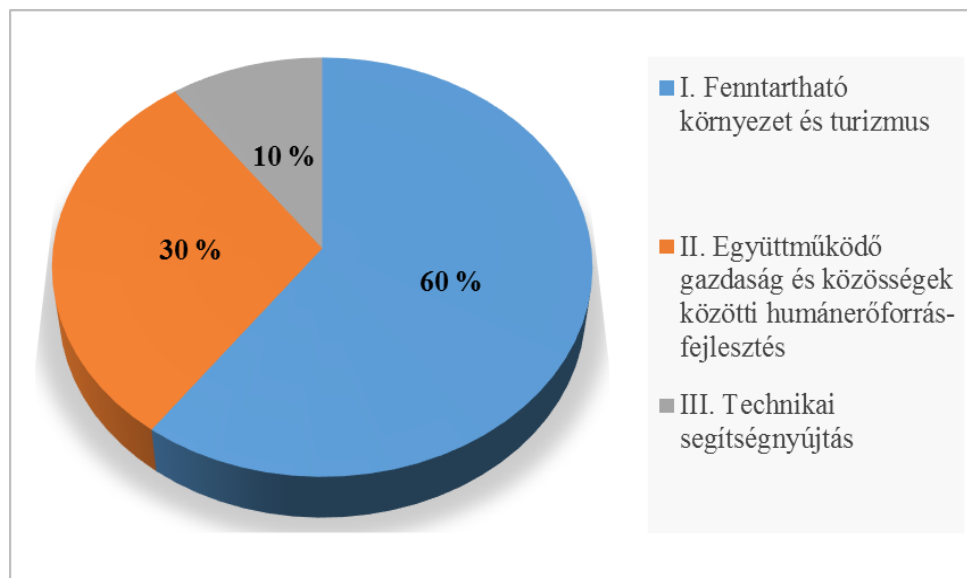


Image 3– The division of funds in the IPA projects

The European Committee approved of the Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-Border Program on the 13th of March, 2008. The Program funds various activities, among which infrastructural developments serving the protection of the environment and environmental values receive special attention:

- development of joint programs, studies, environmental development strategies;
- construction and designation of bicycle routes,
- improvement of tourist attractions and the related infrastructure;
- measures facilitating the integration of people in disadvantaged situation into the world of work;
- development of means and infrastructure necessary for research activity;

- preparation of joint feasibility studies;
- joint development of curriculum, and the expansion of educational opportunities;
- improving human relations, such as organising festivals, presentation, concerts, exhibitions, artistic academies, charitable events, cross-border amateur sports championships and tournaments;
- designing activities aiming at the reduction of linguistic barriers.

Priorities/Areas of intervention/Activities
1. Priority: Sustainable environment and tourism
1.1 Sustainable and attractive environment
1.1.1 Landscape development in the Mura-Drava-Danube area (and in its natural and regional vicinity)
1.1.2 Environmental planning activity, and small-scale community actions to improve the environmental quality of natural areas; habitat-reconstruction
1.2 Sustainable tourism in the Mura-Drava-Danube river areas
1.2.1 Development of regional touristic product plan
1.2.2 Improvement of infrastructure related to active tourism and ecotourism: visitor centres, forest schools, water sport infrastructure, bicycle roads, hiking paths, rental facilities
1.2.3 Improvement of the thematic routes of cultural heritage
1.2.4 Popularization of the river area as a single touristic product
1.2.5 Facilitation of private investment

Image 4 – The priorities of the IPA projects

The area eligible for funding by the Program is located at the south-western border of Hungary and the north-eastern border of Croatia. The two countries are separated by the Drava River for most of the length of the shared borderline. On the Croatian side, apart from the counties along the border (Međimurska - *Muraköz*, Koprivničko-križevačka - *Kapronca-Körös*, Virovitičko-podravka - *Verőce-Drávamente* and Osječko-baranjska – *Osijek-Baranja*) four other counties participate in the program, as so-called related regions (Varaždinska - *Varasd*, Bjelovarsko-bilogorska - *Belovár-Bilogora*, Požeško-slavonska - *Pozsega-Szlavon* and Vukovarsko-srijemska - *Vukovár-Szerémség*). The related regions can only use no more than 20% of the community resources available in the Programme.

In Hungary the area eligible for funding is constituted by Zala, Somogy and Baranya (NUTS III level) counties. Zala county is part of the Western-Transdanubia Region, while Somogy and Baranya counties belong to the South-Transdanubian Region. The total area eligible for funding in the two countries is 31.028 km².



Image 5 –The areas of Croatia and Hungary eligible for funding within the framework of the IPA projects

Recent ecotouristic projects

1. The creation of the Regional Touristic Project Plan

When creating the Program, the concept thought out by the creators and decision-makers was the coordinated development of tourism in the region along the border. The comprehensive strategic document created within the framework of the project is the basis for all touristic development financed by the Programme, as the third invitation for tender was prepared in accordance with the Regional Touristic Product Plan, and it included the list of activities eligible for funding. To accompany the over 650-page joint strategic material, a comprehensive GIS (geographic information system) database containing several thousand points was also prepared, which can serve as the basis for planning even in the next, 2014-2020 period.

2. From wine tradition to wine tourism - creating cross-border wine routes

The project was called to life by the demand of vintners for closer, cross-border cooperation. The partners concentrate their joint activity on six fields, including collection of data, organising training, infrastructural improvements, the development of quality certificates, preparing promotional publications and film, and also introducing new types of events. Through the online platform to be created in the project, local vintners can reach new consumer groups, and tourists seeking active or nature-related recreation.

3. Tourism without borders - joint development of visitors information centres in Nagyatád and Križevc

One of the longest-existing partnerships of the Hungarian-Croatian border region aims at the creation of common touristic infrastructure in the latest joint project. One building will be renovated in Križevci and Nagyatád each, which then are going to serve as touristic visitor centres in the future,

contributing to the touristic activities of the cross-border region through organising programmes and providing tourist information. The centres are created in both cities in based on a common concept, similarly, the range of service and programmes will also be created in an agreed way.

3.4. Ecotourism in Baranya and Pécs

The South-Transdanubian region offers outstanding natural features throughout its whole area of the, which can serve as good bases for ecotouristic improvements. The nature reserves managed by the Danube-Drava National Park provide particularly attractive landmarks even with international standards. The Drava is considered to be one of the three cleanest rivers of Europe, and the geological morphological features of Mecsek include unique values. The participants of the tourism profession also regard the ecotouristic attraction of the region as a promising, but also unexploited potential. In addition to natural features, the development of ecotourism is also strongly determined by the attitude thereto of the residents of and tourists arriving to the region, and also by the preparedness of ecotouristic service providers, and their willingness to cooperate.

In the Western Mecsek area uranium mining started in the 1950s, and transformed the image of the agricultural settlements and the life of the residents. The termination of mining activity caused significant natural, economic and social tension in the area. Rural tourism, connected to active and ecotourism means one of the opening points.

Mecsek possesses diverse geological, botanical and zoological features. This motivates those dealing with the development of tourism to prefer different forms of soft tourism, with bearing in mind the principles of sustainable development to the greatest extent.

Landscape and natural values constitute the main touristic attraction of the Western Mecsek.

A representative study (Spiegler P. (2011) Turisztikai imázsselemezés. Turisztikai „Tér-képek” a Dél-Dunántúlról) indicated that the interviewed local residents are aware of the surrounding natural values.

The empirical examination showed that the residents of the region have a fundamentally positive approach to tourism, while as yet they do not attribute great economic significance to it. The negative social, cultural and environmental effects arising in connection with tourism are not yet felt by the residents of the Western Mecsek region, which indicates the sustainability and improvement potential of the tourism of the region which is at the initial phase of the destination life cycle.

Table no. 1. The differences of attitudes towards tourists in the examined settlements in accordance with agreeing with each statement (average based on marks 1-5).

	Tourists are strangers here, they do not understand our customs and disturb our everyday life	Tourists endanger the natural, social and cultural values of the area.	Tourists are generally kind, friendly and forge good relationship with locals	The presence of tourists make life easier as they mean significant source of income and work opportunities.
Those not employed in tourism	1,32	1,37	3,82	2,96
Those employed in tourism	1,1	1,2	4,3	4,2
Weak regional identity	1,48	1,5	3,48	3
Strong regional identity	1,27	1,32	3,93	3,01

Source: Spiegler P. (2011) *Turisztikai imázs elemzés. Turisztikai „Tér-képek” a Dél-Dunántúlról*

The questionnaire study indicated that the local residents fundamentally consider the situation of the region good in terms of village image, availability and hospitality. The best values were uniformly attributed to the opportunities for trips in the area. The fact that the hosting ability of the destination is considered to be good by locals also shows how positively they judge their own life circumstances. These are the points which constitute the strength and attraction of the area. The local population is dedicated to the protection of natural values, which is considered to be very important according to half of those interviewed, and one quarter thinks it is a significant task.

A significant proportion of residents (16%) is planning to enter into hospitality. This proportion is by all means promising with regard to the improvements to be implemented in the area in the future.

The initial conditions of the increasingly popular manufacturing of local products are also favourable. The answers given to the question: „What home-made products do you have that could be offered to visitors to the village?” reflect colourful, manifold activities.

The support of the local residents, which, according to the quoted study, is given among the residents of settlements in the Mecsek area, is necessary for the realisation of ecotouristic development intentions.

The ecotouristic attractions of Baranya county

- **The cellars of Villány:** The impressive cellars constructed in two rows face the main street of Villány, and welcome the guests with high quality, polite service.
- **The cellars of Villány-Virágos:** The cellars are nestled scattered around the hillside behind the church. These presses characterise the traditional cellars of the wine region, and their style and layout attracts the visiting tourists.

- **Villány Wine Museum:** it is open all year round to visitors who are interested in the history of the Villány-Siklós wine region, and the development of vine cultivation and wine-making and its most important tools.
- **Church Hill/Villány:** The former quarry was qualified as protected area due to the fossils and paleontological remains located here.
- **Open-air events/Villány:** In Villány the Red Wine Festival has long traditions, and has been organised by the town for nearly twenty years, with great success. The autumn event is preceded by a series of programmes in the summer, named „Friday- time for Villány”, which are held every second week. Another event has complemented the summer programmes for three years, born from the cooperation of three towns, named „Tenkes alja Fesztivál” (“Festival at the foot of Tenkes”)
- **Pogány:** Pogány Lake, and plane rides are available at the airport.
- **Palkonya:** The protected cellars of Palkonya, and its circular Catholic church can raise the interest of ecotourists.
- **Beremend crystal cave:** The highly protected cave is located in the Vineyard-hill of Beremend, belonging to the Villány Hills. The intricate system of cavities, which was discovered in 1984, through mining activity in the limestone quarry of the Beremend Cement Plant, was created by thermal water, and its lower passages are still directly connected to warm karst water.
- **The Danube-Drava National Park:**
 - Pécs – Pintér Garden: The arboretum got its name from János Pintér retired bank clerk of Pécs, who began to set plants here in the 1920s. After his death the natural flora reoccupied the majority of the garden, thus increasing the variety of the garden.
 - Pécs – Tettye Lime Tuff Cave: The Tettye Lime Tuff Cave is a unique geological formation, its system of cavities is about ten thousand years old, and has been formed in a thick, loosely structured layer of freshwater lime tuff. At the beginning of the 1900s, it was a tourist attraction, called „Gateway to Hell”, with a dreadful dragon inside.
 - ABALIGET CAVE: One of the most well-known and most popular natural attractions of the Mecsek is the Abaliget Cave. Its 466 meter long main corridor and three sub-corridors, which are difficult to pass, became known through continuous explorations. The cave is an important bat shelter, where hundreds of lesser and greater horseshoe bats can be seen during the winter. The well-constructed main corridor of the cave can be visited and visitors can walk comfortably along it, without need for any special clothing. The average temperature of the cave is 12 °C, and its climate gives relief to those suffering from respiratory diseases, allergies or asthma.
 - Drávaszentes - Drava Gate Visitor Centre: The Drava Gate Visitor Centre located near Barcs offers several opportunities to find out more about the natural and cultural historical values of the protected areas located along the Drava.

- Boki-Duna – Fishing Exhibition: The fishing exhibition takes the visitors 500 years back in time, and offers a glimpse into an ancient water world. We can become familiar with and even try the fishing customs and tools of our ancestors.
- Szársomlyó: The highest peak of Hungary's southernmost mountain range - the Villányi Mountains - is the Szársomlyó. Its prominent peak creates unique and very different microclimatic conditions on its southern and northern side, and botanical rarities live on its sub-Mediterranean climatic areas. 75 protected plant species have been identified on the mount, among which 4 species cannot be found anywhere else in Hungary.
- Nagyarsány Statue Park: The history of the Nagyarsány Statue Park dates back to 1967. In that year the first sculptor symposium was held in the former quarry of the Szársomlyó, by the initiation of young artists of Pécs, and later permanent summer workshop was created. In accordance with the memorandum, each artist has to donate one of their works created at the workshop to the public collection of the symposium. This constituted the basis of today's open-air statue park. The artwork collection was classified as national monument in 2009.

There are significant ongoing ecotouristic developments in Baranya county currently. With European Union funding, an Ancient Drava Visitor Centre and Exhibition is being constructed in Szaporca. The aim of the new facility is to present the Drava River, life in the Ormánság area, and the interactive presentation of traditional forms of farming and local customs.

The aim of another important development that encompasses Baranya county as well, and is being implemented from European Union funds is to expand the bicycle road network of the area. As a result of this development, the area can connect to the international bicycle road network named EuroVelo.

Pécs

Pécs, being the seat of Baranya county, does not only play a significant role with regard to its ecotouristic attractions, but also because several different organisations operate in the city that facilitate the activity.

South-Transdanubian Ecotouristic Cluster

The South-Transdanubian Ecotouristic Cluster was formed on the basis of the initiation of the Gyeregyalog.hu Association, and later, in summer 2010 it won the ecotouristic cluster development tender set in the framework of the DDOP.

Its aim, in accordance with the approach of ecotourism, is to present nature and rarities to visitors in a way that tourism, neither through its quantity, nor through its quality can harm natural and cultural values. In addition to the interesting attractions, our members welcome visitors with colourful programmes, and with local specialities at several places. A school curriculum and ecotouristic board game has also been created to complement these services.

Each member has the opportunity to create their own hiking route, or to connect to an existing one. Throughout these routes a network of signs corresponding to the uniform image shall be created, on which the nearby cluster members will be indicated.

By purchasing selective waste containers, the members help the visitors learn how to use these in practise. The Ecotourism Days programme series will be introduced, in which each member can participate with at least 1 programme.

The website of the ecotouristic cluster has been completed, where accommodation and catering facilities and actual programmes are recommended.

Cluster membership is an excellent opportunity for service suppliers dedicated to ecotourism to increase awareness to their offers, to improve their products and services, and thus tourists interested in ecotourism can also receive the expected services.

Pécs Zoo

At the beginning of May, 2014 the works began to convert the zoo of Pécs into an ecotouristic experience park, thus the institution shall remain closed for the public for a year. The zoo was built in 1961, and today visitors can see 200 species here. In the course of the renovations, a half a hectare larger, 4-hectare area will await the visitors, it will also fulfil new functions and its maintenance will become environmentally friendly. In the framework of the constructions taking place on the Mecsek hillside, a visitor centre will be built to accommodate the aquarium-terrarium and various events, in addition to an ecotouristic park that will present the wildlife and vegetation of Mecsek and also serve educational and research services, furthermore, modern enclosures will be created, which will at the same time prevent the rainwater contaminated with excrement to infiltrate the soil. The improvements provide an opportunity to present popular animals that attract wide audiences, such as brown bears, leopards, pumas, tigers, seals and also several bird and marine fish species.

„Mókus Suli” Forestry Forest School and House of Forests

The Forestry Forest School operated by the Mecsekerdő Zrt opened its gates in March 1996 only at a few minutes' distance from Pécs, in Árpádtető, at the borderline of the Eastern Mecsek and the Melegmány Valley. Approximately 2500 children take part in our nature-related programmes each year.

The forest school is based on several years' practical experience and has its own programme developed in on the basis of study trips in Hungary and abroad, that closely follows the primary school curriculum. The children are offered the chance to study nature in a natural environment. Our field programmes give an opportunity to get closer to nature, and children can experience nature step by step, thus explore its internal correlations and so they are able to develop a new approach to nature, a new attitude, which involves understanding, love and responsibility.

Our programmes mostly take place in outdoor sites. Two well-equipped study rooms are available for indoor programmes, teacher trainings and presentations. The programmes are adapted to seasons and various age groups, and are related to the following topics:

- How to behave in nature
- The geography of the Mecsek
- The wildlife and vegetation of the Mecsek
- Protected plants and animals
- Soil and its inhabitants
- The flora and fauna of waters, the protection of our waters
- Herbs
- Forest and wildlife management
- Nature protection
- The condition of our environment
- Practical knowledge
- Tales and poems about nature
- The folklore of the Mecsek
- Games on the content of nature studies
- Preparing toys and gifts from natural materials

3.5. Ecotourism in the Baranja-Triangle

The Drávaköz area, also known as the Baranja-Triangle is the area bordered by the Drava and Danube, which is one of the most outstanding regional units of ecotourism, as it has extremely special natural treasures, unique vegetation and wildlife both in its Hungarian and Croatian areas.



Image 5 –The Hungarian and Croatian areas of the Baranja-Triangle (Drávaköz)

The **Danube-Drava National Park** is located in the region, and includes several significant ecotouristic attractions, such as the Béda-Karapanca. The area, which has extremely interesting vegetation and wildlife, consists of two main parts. The Béda side lies on the right bank of the Danube, from Mohács to the southern national border. The Karapanca side stretches along the left bank of the river, and includes the Karapanca fishing lake. Checkered lilies, honeysuckles and pig's heads can be found in its groves. The solitary clematis is the protected plant of wetlands. The lower section of the Danube has the largest white-tailed eagle and black stork population in the country. Ravens, saker falcons and white-tailed eagles nest in the forests of the Szúnyog Island. The flood areas and backwaters of the Danube, large groups of great egrets, little egrets and spoonbills can be seen. Among mammals, otters are outstandingly precious, and the dense forests are home to wildcats. The Riha Lake, on the Mohács Island is „ramsari” territory, and its special treasure is the little egret and night heron nesting site, and a small number of red-crested pochard, that can be seen in couples.

Croatian areas

Ecological networks are systems of ecologically important areas that are connected to or near each other, and which significantly contribute to the conservation of natural balance and biological diversity due to their balanced bio-geographical division. These areas have become ecologically important regions of the Croatian Republic, and thus are included among the European Union's Natura 2000 ecologically important areas, and are also significant from the point of view of protecting endangered species and habitat types.

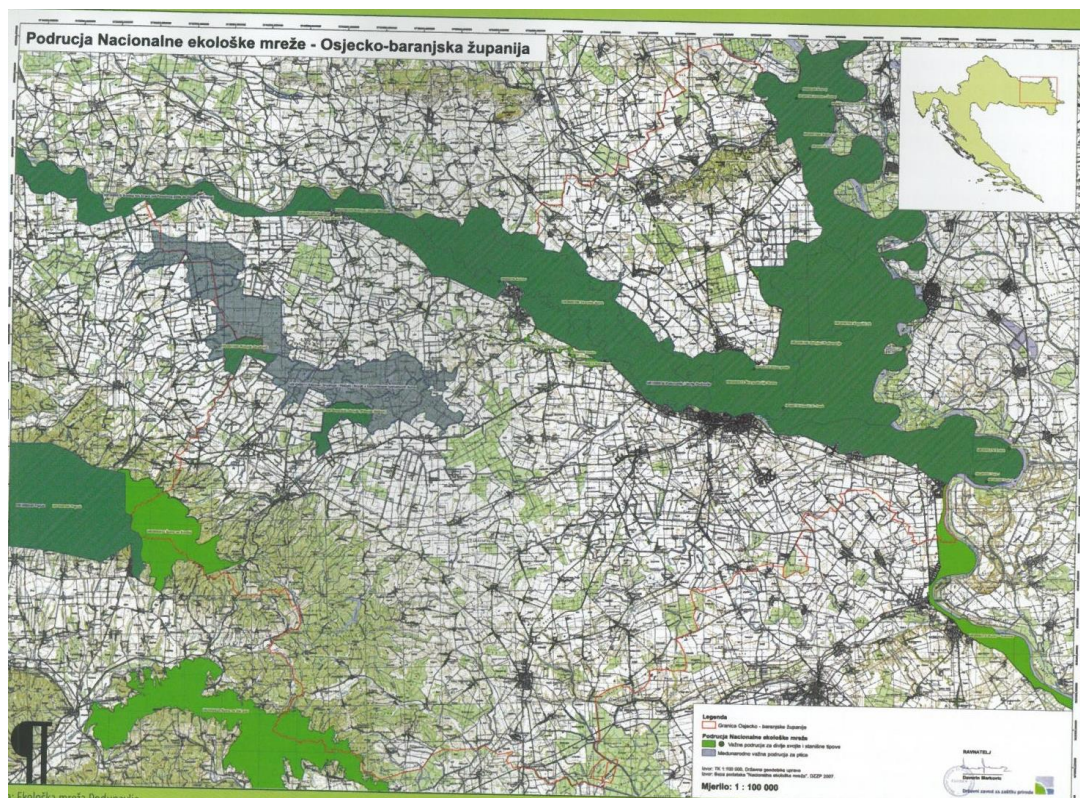


Image 6 – The ecological network of the areas along the Danube

In Croatia, an act of environmental protection requires the creation of ecological networks. Similarly to the European Union Natura 2000 ecological network, the areas of the Croatian ecological network are also divided into internationally important areas for birds, other wildlife species and habitat types. The description of each area contains the aim of protection, the list of species and habitat types by which it has been included in the ecological network, the sites where intervention and the effects of schemes can be observed, and the scheme, programme and ecological network must be taken into consideration in the course of the classification. Moreover, every area of the ecological network contains the guidelines indicating the level of protection, which pertain to each physical persons and legal entities residing in the area using the natural treasures or perform activities or intervention. The ecological network of the Croatian Republic includes inland (47%) and marine (39%) areas in Croatia, and two corridors: that of sea turtles, and the Palagruza-Lastovo-Peljesac corridor (important area due to bird migration). The ecological network was approved of in 2007. Natura 2000 has not yet been introduced in Croatia, but the State Institution of Nature Protection has had an expert evaluation prepared.

Some of the cultural assets of Osijek-Baranja county obtained a public function after the renovation:

1. Erdut tower –regular research is carried out to prevent landslides
2. A Bijelo Brdo traditional house –was renovated with support from the Ministry of Culture, and its primary purpose is to present traditional way of life
3. Birthplace of Milutin Milanovic in Dalj –cultural and research centre
4. Normann castle in Bizovác
5. Monument in Batina
6. The Mailath castle in Donji Mihojac
7. The Vörösmart museum – important archeological site, but also a Wine Museum
8. Sokac house in Topoja
9. Catholic sanctuary in Aljmás „Gospe od Utocista” –has been the biggest Mary-shrine in Eastern Croatia since 1703
10. Monastery of Dalj „Uspenja presvete Bogorodice” on the mountain, the monastery-church of Vodice, consists of the open-air altar carved into the mountain, and residence. A freshwater spring can be found, which has healing powers according to folklore traditions.

Economic activity related to protected natural areas

In the area of Osijek-Baranja county the most dominant branches of economy based on natural resources is agriculture, followed by forest management, fish farming and hunting. Tourism, and thus rural and ecotourism have at last begun to develop in nature reserves, such as the Kopácsi wetland. The improvement of eco-agriculture includes great opportunities for the family farms of the area.

The aging of the population, the lack of information concerning developments, and the lack of support from higher authorities certainly pose problems.

If natural treasures are involved in tourism, it is crucial to determine the limits of the sustainable capacity of the ecosystem. Thus the maximum number of such touristic users able to visit one given tourist destination at the same time, while not causing harm in the physical, economic, and socio-cultural environment, and in a way that the quality of the experience is not deteriorated for the visitors.

The present condition of the tourism sector in Osijek-Baranja is not satisfactory, as a great potential is available, which, however, is touristically unused. Concerning the natural environment, it means that the negative impact of tourism is insignificant, almost non-existent. The existing problems are mainly related to the irresponsible management of each point, and their catalysts are most often the lack of the appropriate communal and transportation infrastructure and illegal constructions.

In the environmental protection programme of Osijek-Baranja county among others, the need arose to prepare a programme for the more organised management of the existing values, which means that an inventory, land register, and map should be created concerning the touristic activities and attractions. The programme also includes the statement that „green” touristic contents, and ecotourism should be improved, through which visitors have the opportunity to become familiar with nature. The ecotouristic offers have to be based on the existing, successful activities, like the eco-centre of the Green Osijek Association on Zlatna Gerda. A detailed study has to be elaborated on further developments, building on the promising potentials which are already present in touristic offers: developing health tourism, footpaths, the network of bicycle roads, tidying up the surroundings of castles and other potential attractions and the renewal and revitalization of deserted village areas and the renovation of their traditional architecture and revitalization, the improvement of rural tourism – combined with ecological agriculture.

The biggest ecotouristic attraction of the area is the Kopácsi Wetlands Nature Reserve Park. The number of tourists visiting the park is increasing: it was visited by 5120 people between the years 2001 and 2008, however, later it had 36.775 visitors, which is a significant rise. Visitors of the park have the opportunity to become familiar with the traditional values of the region, the richness of Pannonian architecture and of nature. There is a chance to explore the special wildlife reserve by boats, while tour guides inform the tourists of the ecologic value of the whole park, and of its vegetation and wildlife. The Kopácsi Wetland provide excellent opportunities for cycling tourists as well, thus it is an increasingly popular destination of cyclists arriving from all over the world. A so-called Internet corner is available for each cyclist visitor as well. The park offers possibilities for recreation, fishing in canals along the Danube, at the Zlatna gerda pumping station, in the backwaters at Vemelj, and in the River Danube. The Kopácsi Wetland is an excellent location for bird-watching.

According to the management of the park, there is a need for new educational touristic contents, the expansion of existing visitor infrastructure within and outside of the boundaries of the park as well. There is a need for the improvement of programs which keep visitors in or in the vicinity of the park for a longer period of time. In the questionnaires filled by visitors, the demand arose for longer stays, and for possibilities of visiting it individually or in smaller groups.

In addition to the Kopácsi wetland, there is opportunity for the development of eco and rural tourism in the whole area along the Danube, and its first signs are already visible. Thus approx. 180 guest beds are available in Bellye, and approx. 120 of them in Karancs. Ten years ago Bellye offered only 20 guest beds, and Karancs had none. This branch of tourism is also important from the aspect of self-sustenance of local residents, as the rate of unemployment is high.

In the near future there will be opportunities for the improvement of ecotourism in the recently qualified international Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve. With the development of appropriate ecotouristic programmes – which aim at tempting the visitors to spend a longer time in the area of the biosphere reserve – could also become an excellent market for local, higher quality products. The core and temporary areas are primarily agricultural areas, and the trend of agricultural and food products becoming „brand-centred” can already be observed. The beauty of the rivers and their environment, and several recreational activities – such as bird-watching, angling, bathing, cycling – provide opportunities for raising interest.

The area is also characterised by a large number of cultural and traditional events, and a strong regional consciousness, which, together with recreational activities, can be attractive for tourists with diverse interests, from culture to gastronomy, from rafting to cycling. A number of cities can be found inside the temporary zone, at a distance of 10 km. The Croatian capital, Zagreb, and several other cities in neighbouring countries can be reached in 1-4 hours by car, this the region becomes available for a large number of visitors. Being a member of the biosphere reserve network – as an international recognition of the values of the region – creates an opportunity for the presentation of the reserve, which functions as a unique touristic product for visitors arriving from distant countries, and prompts them to stay longer and visit the whole of the biosphere reserve.

The culinary treasures, wines of the region, and the exceptional traditions of food production in general are well-known in Croatia, and it is one of the fundamental aspects, which can be used for improvements. Small family farms offering accommodation and catering already exist in certain points of the biosphere reserve, where restaurants more and more often serve traditional products. The biosphere reserve could be an example for those areas of Croatia, which realize the potential prospect in ecotourism. The prospects of the development of ecotourism are of special importance for areas affected by war, and in locations where encouragement is needed to accelerate developments.

The European background provides good possibilities in today's negative economic climate, as there already is operational capacity in the county. The consequences of privatisation and the war can still be felt, thus even more effort and means are needed for the development of the region. The unemployment rate is high, and the population is old and poorly trained. Negative demographical trends are present in Osijek-Baranja county, such as the migration of younger generations due to unemployment. In addition, due to the economic crisis there is a bigger pressure on natural resources and their usage, such as excessive felling and deforestation, water pollution, the inappropriate purification and disposal of sewage, and outdated river regulation procedures.

4. The development of ecotourism

4.1. The opportunities of the developing ecotourism in relation to the project

The area involved in the project has excellent features. On the Hungarian side there are relatively low differences in level along the route of the designated bicycle road. The only significant obstacle for cyclists taking this route is the Villány Mountains. From the point of view of ecotourism, the most important features are the Drava and its vicinity, although it is also worth mentioning that by crossing the Three Rivers Biking route, the Béda-Karapanca can be reached in the east, and in the west the Ancient Drava Ecotouristic Visitor Centre is accessible.

The possibilities of development have been categorised as follows:

- Infrastructural improvements
- Marketing tools
- Possibilities for cooperation
- Other potential developments

Infrastructural improvements

The infrastructural improvement of currently available attractions is vital, as tourists can be drawn to attractive infrastructural environment. **In addition to developing existing values, such innovative improvements are necessary that are for certain reasons different from the other ecotouristic attractions of the area.** Unique, creative ideas, solutions are necessary to attract visitors. „Let us be different from others”, as Zsolt Németh, the president of Cyclists Hungary Association (Kerékpárosok Magyarország Szövetség) pointed out at the workshop organised within the framework of the project.

The implementation of an innovative development can become a driving force, a popular, attractive name in the area along the border. A good example of this is the Ancient Drava Ecotouristic Visitor Centre, which is not located on the route of the project, but with the help of Three Rivers Bicycle Road it is connected thereto.



Image 7 – The visualisation of the Ancient Drava Ecotouristc Visitor Centre and Exhibition

The **creation of information points, booths** at each ecotouristic site, or the improvement of existing ones also carries opportunities which enable the provision of better services to visitors.

The creation of tour centres, eco-centres greatly assist guests in using several services at one site. **The members of the tour centre network are quality accommodation providers, ports, horse ranches and restaurants, where river boat trips, bicycle-, horse-riding and walking trips are organised,** and special services are offered for tourists throughout the region. An excellent example of this is the Tisza Lake Tour Centre network.



Image 8: Tisza Lake Eco-Centre

In the course of infrastructural improvements, **ensuring accessibility, and the repair and improvement of existing roads are essential.** This concerns accessibility by car or bicycle, and also access by water, moreover, through the development of the Pogány airport, these destinations would become available for foreign tourists as well.

Marketing tools

With regard to marketing tools, **the creation of a comprehensive strategy** would be necessary at regional level, which would define the short-, medium- and long-term goals and strategic concepts for the next period. When awarding funds, it can be an important factor, how the given project ideas fit the existing specialisation development conception.

When creating a high-quality service, the **creation of a „brand“**, an attractive brand name, together with effective marketing strategy, will draw visitors more efficiently. The basis of this is the implementation of the above-mentioned infrastructural investments.

Promoting the existing products through the appropriate channels is also important, for which an excellent opportunity could be **participation at events, fairs**, and the popularization of the given ecotouristic destination.

In order to reach guests more effectively and to satisfy a wide range of needs, the **development of package offers** is highly favourable, such as combined hiking, bicycle and boat tours, which already exist on the market.

Study tours organised for journalists facilitate efficient publicity, through which, with a one-off investment, the ecotouristic product or area in question can be presented to a wide audience, thus the investment will yield manifold benefits.

The application of **various special offers, loyalty cards** can make services more attractive for families, groups, schools, or visitors of more modest means.

In today's accelerated world **online marketing** appears to be the most effective tool if we wish to sell our product effectively. With the help of the internet and smartphones, users can access information within seconds, and can decide the location and way to spend their spare time on the basis of the available information.

The given ecotouristic offers can be made more colourful and interesting through various **themed tours, individual solutions and packages**. Such offers can be a tour including a photo shooting, or a geocaching game.

Possibilities for cooperation

Through extensive cooperation, the range of services and target groups can be broadened and expanded excellently as well. It is important to **make the involved partners interested in cooperating, on commercial, or other bases**. Cooperation can be established with service providers (accommodation, restaurants, beaches, snack bars, wineries), and through the partnership, guests can be offered a more complex touristic package. By providing mutual discounts, service providers and guests also benefit from the cooperation, e.g. by presenting an admission ticket, they could get meals or accommodation at a lower price in the given area.

Cooperation with **local governments** can be attractive for the given settlement, as tourists will spend their money in local towns and villages, which can bring manifold benefits for these settlement.

Different tourist organisations can mainly contribute to promotion. With their help the ecotouristic service will be available on several platforms.

By **involving schools** a wider community can be reached, and in addition to experiences, students can also gain knowledge, and due to their good memories of a destination, visitors might return with their friends or family. It must be noted that safety is a priority for parents, but through appropriate measures, this can be solved.

The involvement of famous people can mean further potential. Cooperation with these persons can be the key to certain target groups. Actors, athletes, musicians, and the representatives of other arts can do a lot for certain ecotouristic attractions to gain more publicity.

Various seasonal events can focus attention on a given attraction or location. With appropriate organisation, good communication and promotion, a given target area can be popularised successfully.



Image 9. – The logo of the Tisza Lake Bike Fest

Other opportunities for development

Raising the awareness of society is considered to be another opportunity for development in a sense that people should be more acquainted with ecotourism, and it should be made more easily available for them, and, most importantly, its meaning, significance and content must also be explained.

We believe that it is important to create an approach through which tourists do not only use and exploit natural environment, but, **when appropriate, can give something back through certain activities as well.**



Image 10 - The program of the Pilis Parkerdő Zrt.

The development possibilities are summarised by the following table:

Infrastructural improvements	Marketing tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation - Creating appealing brand name, attraction - Creation of visitor centres - Information centre - Creation of information points, booths - Creation of tour centres - Improvement of attractions - Improving the accessibility of ecotouristic attractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective marketing strategy - Creation of the area as „brands” - More effective promotion of tourist attractions - Online booking facilities - Smartphone applications - Participation at events, fairs - Study tours for journalists - Package offers - Discounts - Maps - Online marketing - Browser optimization - Website and web store management - Partner programme system - Creating banners - Online PR - Web design and graphics - Designing image and logo - Writing web texts - Photo-tours - Geocaching games
Possibilities for cooperation	Other opportunities for improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting guests from across the border - Product tying - Threading wineries - Fishing shows - Improvement of local products and their sale along the bicycle route (wine, cheese, pálinka, honey) - Involving schools - Famous persons - Events - Cooperation between service providers - Creating alliances of interests - Involvement of service providers; making them interested on commercial basis - Involvement of tourist organisations - Involving local governments and making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the role of ecotourism within tourism - Ecotourism should not only remain a label, it should become a content-rich touristic product - The number of visitors of ecotouristic sites should be limited, thus protecting nature - Dispelling misconceptions concerning ecotourism, popularizing ecotourism, and making it more conscious - Nature should not only be used, but tours should have added values (e.g. gathering waste) - Invitations for further tenders for funds - Creating an approach focusing on tour centres

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>them interested</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation with tourist associations - Cooperation with accommodation providers, snack bars, restaurants - Cooperation with TDMs - Involving tour operators - Cooperation with campsites - Tourinform offices - Creating a complex service provider network - Creation of a chain of services - Connecting various touristic segments - Overall development - Expanding the activity of tourist associations | |
|--|--|

4.2. Connecting and joint development of ecotourism and bicycle tourism

Cycling in nature is a wonderful and unique experience, as it is an active way of recreation and gaining pleasant exercises, without releasing materials harmful for nature. Thus **the development and construction of bicycle roads is one of the main conditions of developing ecotourism successfully**. EU funds also facilitate and (partly) finance bicycle road constructions. The following local routes belong to international bicycle routes:

- Drava cycling route – this project is based on the Danube cycling route. The following towns are included in the route in Osijek-Baranja county: Belišće, Alsómihoľjác and Valpó, and its tourist offices.

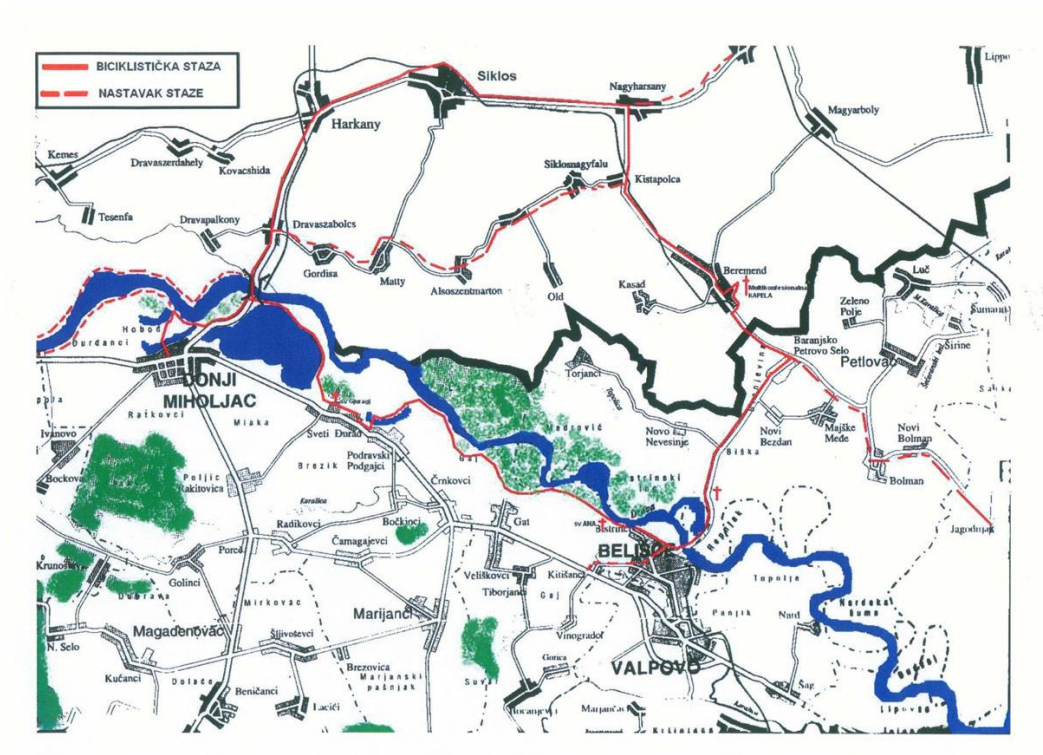


Image 11 – Drava cycling route

- Pannonian Peace Route from Osijek to Zombor –the project manager is the „Green Osijek Eco-Society”, which has designated the road and installed information and educational boards for cyclists along the route.



Image 12 – Pannonian Peace route

- “Dráva Bike Tour” cycling route, Osijek - Erdőd – running through Osijek
- Osijek - Nekkse- Diakovár – Osijek.

The area involved in the project has excellent features from several aspects concerning bicycle tourism and ecotourism. The initiative involving Hungary and Croatia is based primarily on the cultural and natural features of the region. The area has a varied geography, and is able to satisfy the needs of every cyclists as tourists who merely seek a way to spend their spare time can find flat sections, or routes that can be covered easily due to low level differences, and those who cycle for sport can find challenging hilly and mountainous landscapes. In addition, nature reserves mainly involving the Drava, and ecotouristic attractions can also be found near the indirect or direct route of the project.

It is necessary to connect the different branches of tourism, as, by strengthening each other, they can be more effective together than individually. Alternatives in cyclist tourism could complement ecotouristic programmes. It would be worth to enhance it with discounts (e.g. discounts in price for those arriving on bikes to ecotouristic events or programmes).

The installation and creation of bicycle racks, rest areas, water supplies along the route of the bicycle roads, the designation, or possible construction of bicycle routes connecting the sites, and also discounts offered to cyclists would expectedly draw a larger number of bicycle tourists to ecotouristic attractions.

Wine tourism plays an important role in the touristic offers of both countries. In the Hungarian area of the region, apart from the wines of Pécs, the Villány wine region is also well-known. Through the cooperation of the vintners of Villány and the vicinity, the Villány wine route was created, which already attracts several tourists to the area. In Croatia, near the Banska Kosa, well-preserved cellars carved in the loess wall can be found, and the vineyards of Erdőd, located in the Slavonian region provide a picturesque view. **Connecting the wine regions with a bicycle route could further enhance the present situation of wine tourism. It would be worth to create low-priced accommodation, where tourists could stay and have meals at reasonable prices, store their bicycles in a safe, covered facility, and if needed, they could be cleaned and repaired as well.**

The University of Pécs has one of the largest number of students among the institutions of higher education in Hungary. Its students increasingly frequently choose cycling, which is cheap, and is a much faster form of transport than public transport, besides it does not harm the environment. **It would be worth to organise specific offers, events, which are attractive for foreign and Hungarian university students, who would prefer to leave the busy cities and visit the countryside, and its ecotouristic centres.**

There are civil organisations in both countries with activities related to cycling and ecotourism. The scope of activity of these organisations include the protection of cyclists' interests, the preparation of studies and surveys for the construction of cyclist infrastructure, and also environmental education. They frequently organise external events, some even on a weekly basis. The organisation of cyclist gatherings **near ecotouristic attractions provides excellent opportunities. The organisation of cyclist events would be more scenic and authentic in natural environments. A good example of this is the tour named „Gemenc on two wheels”.**

It would be important to make people aware of the benefits, positive effects of cycling and ecotourism, of the opportunities offered by the region, through different marketing tools. If the number of cyclists increases, there is a bigger chance for more service providers (snack bars, service stations, accommodation, etc.) to be created along bicycle roads and ecotouristic attractions.

Following the dissolution of the Schengen borders in the near future, crossing borders will become much easier, which can contribute to **the organisation of Hungarian-Croatian joint event.**

The main tourist destinations in Hungary are the capital, the northern areas of the country, the Great Plain and the Balaton area. Tourists visiting Croatia mainly head towards the seaside. As the area of the project lies far from the „main attractions” of both countries, the improvement and expansion of

regions connected to international bicycle routes would increase the popularity and improve the touristic usage of the region. **It is necessary to enhance the touristic appeal of the area through different marketing tools, to promote advancement from its present position. At present, the Balaton, the Neusiedler Lake, and the Tisza Lake appear in public opinion as destinations of ecotourism and bicycle tourism, but a cross-border bicycle route, which partly runs along the Drava would be considered as a speciality on the market.**

The near future will bring an increasing number of possibilities for businesses to have access to funds. **A number of tenders will be set at county or subregional level. If businesses related to bicycle tourism and ecotourism could develop due to the extra funds, it would create workplaces for locals, and would be useful for bicycle tourists and hikers, and other tourists as well. Thus, it is worth setting future invitations for tenders in a way that they will make European Union funds available for the service providers or potential providers of bicycle tourism and ecotourism. When setting the invitations for tender, it would be important to facilitate that ecotourism and bicycle tourism should appear jointly in the project, thus strengthening each other.**

More emphasis should be placed on the involvement of schools and youth. Children fundamentally enjoy exercise, cycling, and love nature. **Primary school pupils could be involved in cycling through competitions and trips, while secondary school or university students could be motivated with events, and with the help of celebrities – actors, musicians, singers, athletes - popular with their age groups.**



Image 13 - Forest school in the Zlatna Greda eco-centre in Croatia

An ecotourism-centered attitude should be incorporated in school curriculums, both in the form of theory and practise. If the shaping of children’s attitude is begun at a young age, then a generation with a healthier, thoroughly different approach will grow up.

By involving Geography and Physical Education teachers, and organising study trips for them, schools could be better approached. In the majority of schools, excursions are organised by these members of staff.



Image 14 – Study trip in a Bulgarian ecotouristic centre

It is worth to cooperate with local service providers (restaurants, snack bars, local shops), and through their involvement, the sale of local products, the provision of discounts, popularity of settlements could be enhanced. A good example of this is the restaurant located in the Pécsvárad castle, which welcomes groups of bicycle tourists with a glass of soft drink at Pentecost. Tourists obviously do not set out to Pécsvárad on a bicycle tour because of this, but this offer contributes to the good memories gathered here by the visitors, and the restaurant can benefit from this gesture, as visitors will strengthen its good reputation. Local service providers need to be made interested in cooperation, it must be pointed out that if a settlement offers a wide range of tourist-friendly services, it can help draw visitors and contribute to the development of the town or village.

One problem is that there is no developed, uniform touristic „package”, as in most cases the existing services are not coordinated. The improvement of ecotourism contributes to the development of bicycle tourism, but when planning bicycle roads, existing and flourishing attractions and also less well-known values must also be taken into consideration.

Another inhibiting factor of creating a uniform offer is the fact that local attempts are often isolated, not focused as regional aspiration, there is no coordination and appropriate cooperation either. The creation of the above would be extremely important for the development of bicycle tourism. **A uniform image would be necessary, such as the creation of unified strategic approach.** Joint marketing, joint investment, special programmes would greatly facilitate improvements in the region.

Combined solutions of transport are limited in the region, thus the transportation of bicycles poses great difficulties for those who do not arrive to the future bicycle roads by car. **Railway carriages often do not have compartments suitable for the transportation of bicycles, and coaches completely lack these facilities.** The improvement thereof is vital, as cycling is mostly popular with youth, who often do not own a car, instead, use means of public transport. Larger cities are appropriately accessible, but it is occasionally difficult to reach small villages.

Currently existing bicycle roads are in bad condition at certain places, and they do not constitute a continuous unit, which also makes travelling difficult, as many tourists choose not to embark on the tours, if they are forced to cycle along main roads at certain sections of the route, as it is neither safe nor healthy. The condition of low-traffic roads suitable for cycling is also not satisfactory, and unpaved bicycle roads are frequent, where, due to the dust, it is questionable whether cycling is healthy.

In the areas affected by the project the signs of bicycle routes are not appropriate, neither concerning quantity, nor quality, and almost no foreign-language signs exist. In order to improve this, a well-developed, multilingual sign system should be created in cooperation with Croatia, and the created system should be regularly checked and a solution should be devised for the replacement of missing or damaged signs.

Thus, improvements have to be divided into several phases, and it is not sufficient to focus only on the construction of bicycle routes and on the renovation of existing roads, but a **uniform touristic offer must be created in cooperation with Croatia, and the attractions located along the roads must be promoted through uniform image and marketing, and accommodations and cyclist services of appropriate quality should be ensured.**

Among the threats concerning the development of bicycle tourism, it is of special importance to avoid any competition that could arise between the areas across the border, instead of the existing cooperation. It is important to prevent this, as Croatia should be regarded as a partner, and not as a competitor, as our aims are common, and the planned increase of incomes from this, hitherto not significant branch and thus the economic development of the whole region is in the interest of both countries. **Thus, it is inevitable that the aims should be constructed and realized along a common strategy, and communication should be continuous between the two countries.** Disputes should be settled through compromise, as we should not take only our own interest into consideration, as this would risk the positive outcome of the project and the established good relations. Successful cooperation could facilitate the realization of further joint, cross-border projects.

It is essential that appropriate cooperation is established among civil organisations, associations related to cycling and ecotourism, and that they have uniform, common goals, that joint work should be successful, as this is the key for successful performance.

In the areas covered by the project, the following joint steps of improving bicycle tourism and ecotourism should be taken:

- Connecting existing bicycle roads and ecotouristic attractions into a network
- Directing bicycle roads towards ecotouristic destinations
- Connecting touristic branches
- Creation of discounts for cyclists and ecotourists
- Creation of concerted touristic marketing
- Further infrastructural improvements
 - Bicycle roads
 - Rest areas
 - Water supplies
 - Cyclist-friendly accommodation
 - Service stations
- Enhancing the image of cycling and ecotourism
- Creating a Regional Concept
- Involving cyclist communities, civil organisations
- Developing joint Croatian-Hungarian touristic packages
- Making use of natural and cultural values
- Making tenders available for cyclist and ecotouristic service providers
- Involving schools
 - Physical Education teachers
 - Camps
 - Events
 - Class excursions
 - Competitions

- Organising campaigns
- Involving famous persons
- Renovation of monuments, tourist attractions along bicycle routes
- Raising public awareness of existing bicycle routes
- Adapting accommodation facilities to the needs of tourists
- The careful planning of future bicycle routes (taking safety, dangers, and agricultural areas into consideration, where machinery can damage bicycle roads)
- Increasing willingness to open businesses in settlements along bicycle routes
- Creating uniform, complex touristic packages
- Involving youth through events
- Tour guide training
- Improving bicycle storage facilities
- Creating bicycle routes leading out of cities
- Involving cyclist and ecotouristic communities and civil organisations
- Photo-tours
- Geocaching games

5. Conclusion

Hungary is extremely rich in natural values, and the nearly completely intact plains, marshes, swamps, flood areas, meadows, forests, lawns, that are home to ancient vegetation and wildlife, have remained present in several places.

One of the four highlighted touristic products that should be developed in accordance with the regional development strategy is ecotourism. The Drava represents an outstanding natural value, similarly to the Danube-Drava National Park, the smallest in the country.

The target groups of ecotourism:

- The potential target groups affected by ecotourism are varied, as primarily the visitors aged 30-50, arriving from Western European countries are interested in unique natural values. Among the visitors of National Parks, the number of German, Dutch, and Austrian tourists is the highest. **We have to acknowledge with regret that tourism in Hungarian National Park involves a much smaller clientele than international ecotouristic centres of similar features.**
- The second place among the target groups is taken by **those attending schools**, who, however, represent a low remunerative and seasonal demand. In spite of this, this branch of youth tourism should be made appreciated and should receive more significant support, mainly because **they realise the highly important tasks of environmentally conscious education that also emphasizes the protection of nature.**
- In addition, ecotourism can become a complementary programme for the participants of international business and medical tourism.

The characteristics of ecotourists

- They are mainly **interested in natural and cultural attractions and experiences;**
- They usually combine gaining experiences with physical exercise;
- **They minimise the environmental impact (disturbance) caused by their presence;**
- They mostly use local services, thus increase the income of local residents, improve local economy;
- They adapt to local circumstances, respect traditions, do not seek special attention, they rather **prefer to blend into the environment.**

The area involved in the project has excellent features. On the Hungarian side there are relatively low differences in level along the route of the designated bicycle road. The only significant obstacle for cyclists taking this route is the Villány Mountains. **From the point of view of ecotourism, the most important features are the Drava and its vicinity, although it is also worth mentioning that by crossing the Three Rivers Biking route, the Béda-Karapanca can be reached in the east, and in the west the Ancient Drava Ecotouristic Visitor Centre is accessible.**

The opportunities of development are categorised as follows:

- Infrastructural improvements
- Marketing tools
- Possibilities for cooperation
- Other potential developments

Among possible infrastructural developments, the creation of a **unique, innovative and interactive** attraction would be appropriate, as this would attract tourists the most effectively. Good examples exist nationally and worldwide as to how the creation of **complex touristic services** is possible through establishing eco-centres and tour centres. The development of existing values, and the improvement of accessibility is also vital, e.g. through the construction and creation of bicycle roads.

According to the ecotouristic experts interviewed in the study, the most important opening point would be to invest into **marketing tools**, as the sources available for the maintainers of ecotouristic attractions are **mostly spent on operation and maintenance, and the sources left for marketing and popularization of are very limited**. The interviewed ecotouristic experts also voiced the opinion that nowadays **online marketing** is the most efficient tool, as people, but primarily youth can be reached through it the most effectively (e.g. smartphone applications, webpages, community websites, opportunities for online booking). It would be important to create a highly popular attraction on which a complete marketing strategy could be centred. Even more visitors could be attracted by offering complex touristic packages. Participation at fairs, exhibitions is also a useful way of popularizing ecotourism. Through organising study tours, certain persons, organisations could be involved, who, in turn could induce a certain kind of multiplier effect, and thus further target groups could be reached (e.g. journalists, schools). Special offers, discounts could motivate target groups with limited possibilities. By organising interactive thematic tours – e.g. photo-shooting tours, geocaching games – mainly the younger target audience could be reached.

Cooperation with different groups, organisations **can be highly significant** in popularizing ecotourism. Cooperation with these groups can lead to further opportunities, projects, and they can act as channels to different target groups. As one of the goals can be the creation of complex touristic packages, the **involvement of touristic organisations** (accommodation providers, restaurants, civil groups, associations, touristic service providers, TDMs, tourinform offices) can be appropriate. In addition to touristic organisations, the involvement of **local governments, schools** could be useful, as through these different target groups can also be addressed than through touristic organisations.

The **creation of a complex ecotouristic concept** should be highlighted among the other possible developments, in which the main ecotouristic organisations of the region would be involved. Shaping awareness, and dispelling misconceptions are important, that is, **the initiation of such change of attitude**, that can affect the whole of society, regardless of age, sex, and financial status. The invitations for tender of 2014-2020 also offer further opportunities. In this period, in addition to centrally set national calls for tender, **local tenders will also be available**, thus there will be opportunities for supporting local ecotouristic invitations for tenders and projects as well.

It is essential to connect cycling-related and ecotouristic developments. Cycling in nature is a wonderful and unique experience, as it is an active way of recreation and gaining pleasant exercises, without releasing materials harmful for nature. Thus the development and construction of bicycle roads is one of the main conditions of developing ecotourism successfully. The area covered by the project connects to different international bicycle tour routes at several points directly or indirectly (e.g. Three Rivers Biking Route, Drava Bike Tour, Pannonian Peace Route), and also calls at ecotouristic attractions (Kopácsi Wetlands, Béda-Karapanca). **By incorporating existing bicycle roads and ecotouristic attractions in a network, bicycle tourism and ecotourism would mutually strengthen each other and it would also increase the number of tourists.**

It is essential that bicycle routes to be designated and constructed in the future should lead to ecotouristic attractions, or connect them. **The connection of the branches of tourism,** and the realization of **coordinated marketing** are essential. Within the framework of infrastructural improvements the number of ecotourists can be generated through the creation of resting areas, water supply and repair stations in addition to the designation and creation of bicycle roads.

Cycling-related and ecotouristic developments could be coordinated through the elaboration of a uniform regional concept. At present it can be observed that **bicycle roads have been created patchily,** typically between two or more settlements.

Through discounts, special offers, programmes the accessibility of ecotouristic attractions by bicycle could be facilitated. Visitors from across the border could be attracted by **offering Croatian-Hungarian programme packages,** and thus the circle of tourists could be expanded.

Cyclist and ecotouristic destinations could be promoted and target groups could be involved more effectively through the cooperation of cyclist and ecotouristic organisations.

The involvement of **famous persons** (e.g. athletes, musicians, actors) in ecotouristic and bicycle touristic campaigns can enhance the efficiency of marketing actions greatly.

In conclusion, it can be said that the area covered by the project has excellent potentials concerning ecotourism and bicycle tourism. Efficient improvements require infrastructural investments, coordinated development concepts and marketing campaigns, as well as the establishment of wide cooperation. In accordance with these aspects the bicycle-related and ecotouristic development of the region will be efficiently manageable, and can become a significant factor among the offers of the touristic market of the region and the area along the border.

6. Sources

- Personal interview with Buchert Eszter, the general deputy director of the Danube-Drava National Park
- Personal interview with Dinko Pesic, the manager of the Green Osijek Association for Nature and Environment Protection

- Personal interview with Benovics Gábor, bicycle tour guide, the professional manager of several ongoing projects, the managing director of the Helian NaTour
- A Kerékpáros turizmus fejlesztési stratégiája - Önkormányzati Minisztérium Turisztikai Szakállamtitkársága megbízásából készítette az EconoConsult Kft és a COWI Magyarország Kft. (2009)
- Az ökoturizmus fejlesztési lehetősége a Dél-dunántúli turisztikai Régióban - Dél-Dunántúli Ökoturisztikai Klaszter (2013)
- Nemzeti Turizmus Fejlesztési Stratégia (2005-2013) – Magyar Turisztikai Hivatal
- Ökoturisztikai fejlesztési lehetőségek – az idegenforgalmi világtrendek tükrében – a szlovén–magyar határ két oldalán – Dr. Gyuricza László PTE TTK Földrajzi Intézet Pécs, Magyarország
- Országos ökoturizmus fejlesztési stratégia - Pannon Egyetem, Turizmus Tanszék (2008)
- Útmutató látogató- és családbarát ökoturisztikai bemutatóhelyek tervezéséhez - Pannon Egyetem, Turizmus Tanszék (2009)
- A Dráva menti területek ökoturisztikai fejlesztése – Dr. Remenyik Bulcsú
- http://www.mythologic.hu/digitalcity/projects/tdm/tdm_documents.jsp?dom=AAABEAVS&dok=BAAEBOXU&fmn=BAADDYXD&prt=AAABEAXK&bem=BAAEBPIX&men=BAADDYXE&cntlng=hu
- <http://neta.itthon.hu/szakmai-oldalak/turisztikai-termekek/zoldturizmus>
- http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/0051_Turisztikai_termektervezes_es_fejlesztés/ch07s05.html
- The webpage of the Danube-Drava National Park – (www.ddnp.hu)
- The webpage of Green Osijek Association for Nature and Environment Protection (<http://www.zeleni-osijek.hr>)
- The webpage of the Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 (<http://www.hu-hr-ipa.com>)
- http://www.mythologic.hu/digitalcity/projects/tdm/tdm_documents.jsp?dom=AAABEAVS&dok=BAAEBOXU&fmn=BAADDYXD&prt=AAABEAXK&bem=BAAEBPIX&men=BAADDYXE&cntlng=hu
- <http://neta.itthon.hu/szakmai-oldalak/turisztikai-termekek/zoldturizmus>
- http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/0051_Turisztikai_termektervezes_es_fejlesztés/ch07s05.html
- <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/nemzetgazdasagi-miniszterium/tervezeskoordinacioert-felelos-allamtitkarsag/hirek/strategiak>

- http://www.biokontroll.hu/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1375%3Aagroturizmus--oekoturizmus-europaban&catid=293%3Aokoturizmus&Itemid=127&lang=hu
- http://www.kisalfold.hu/kitekinto/hatarmenti_okoturizmus/2134679/
- <http://www.pecsistop.hu/regio/az-okoturizmus-jegyeben-telik-a-hetvege/1036779/>
- <http://neta.itthon.hu/szakmai-oldalak/turisztikai-termekek/zoldturizmus>
- http://www.termeszetvedelem.hu/_user/downloads/okoturizmus/okoturizmus_strategia_X.pdf
- <http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96koturizmus>
- http://kornyezet.ektf.hu/userfiles/Termeszeted_es_okoturizm_honlap.pdf
- http://itthon.hu/site/upload/mtrt/Turizmus_Bulletin/01_12/Sz3.htm
- <http://www.baranyazoldut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/%C3%96koturisztikai-min%C5%91s%C3%ADt%C3%A9si-rendszer.pdf>
- <http://hu.kllvx.com/travel-advice/general-travel-tips/1015073015.html>