

A new Slovakian-Hungarian cross-border geopark in Central Europe – how can it promote better connections

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Borders and borderlands within The Central Europe



Borders in Central Europe

- Frequent changes of borders played dominant role in the transformation of the Central European spatial structure in the 20th century
- Due to political intentions, borders got disjunctive role primarily
- New borders within the disrupted formerly uniform spatial structure often distorted the spatial structure lines and the hinterland of regional centres
- Moreover borders often represented European fault lines, too
- This situation could have changed after the political turn and especially because of connection to the European Union
- Nevertheless, also nowadays borders are more or less rather disjunctive than connecting



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Borders in Central Europe

Recent situation – bad and promising factors

- Regions along the borders became peripheries
- Living standards are often much less than in other regions
- Age structure bad – young people migrated
- Cross-border co-operations on logistics, research+development, commerce came into being
- Improvement of infrastructure, especially along transit corridors, are in progress along the borders (however, not enough!)
- Investments from developed areas are poor (due to global crisis still less), especially mutual investments are rare
- Similar structural problems arise on both sides

Breaking points should be found!



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Borders in Central Europe

Important tools:

- establishment of simple, direct frontier connections of settlements or microregions can ensure mutual advantages
- flowing of labour power and capital, to be employed in the other country, region
- cooperation on all possible manner
- joint applying for funds
- especially co-operation of close centres on the two sides of the border is getting more and more important



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Borders in Central Europe

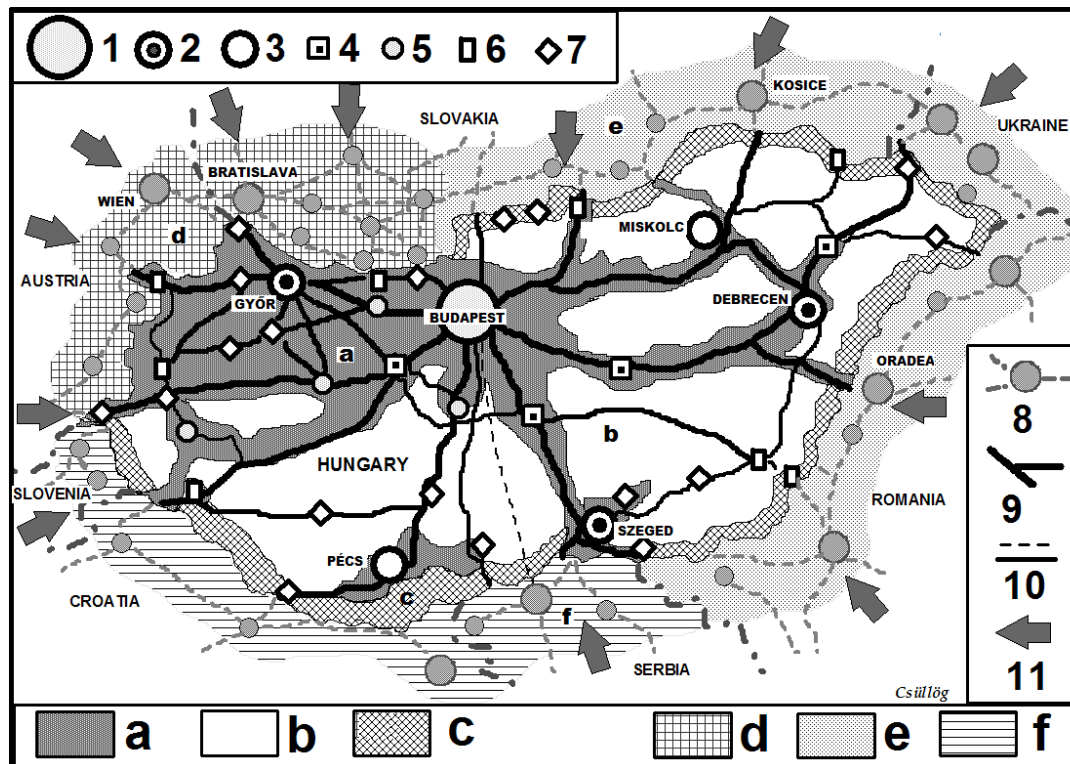
Today not only the pressure of interdependence but the opportunity to make use of advantages deriving from European processes revalue the advantages of the mutually formed frontier spatial structure

It is mutually more effective by cross-border activities



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In case of Hungary Borders in the Hungarian spatial structure

1. National centre
2. Regional centre with direct cross-border effect zone
3. Regional centre with indirect over-the-border effect zone
4. National distributors of transit drift;
5. Partial centres of transit drift
6. Near-border centres of transit and local border drift

7. Background centres
8. External near-border centres with spatial structure lines
9. Major national spatial structure and spatial transit lines
10. Secondary spatial structure and spatial transit lines
11. The arrival directions of transit drifts

a) Developed spatial structure with dense city network, active transit with national and regional spatial drift lines; b) Limited spatial structure without significant spatial organising centres and transit lines; c) Passive border zones without centres and near-border transit lines; d) Spatial structure favourable for cross-border connections at both sides; e) Mainly the external spatial structure favourable for cross-border connections, only the transit drifts are of proper activity; f) Spatial structure deficient for cross-border connections at both sides.



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In case of Hungary

Functional change of borders – including strengthening of connecting roles – does not occur on the whole border

Due to the difference of spatial structure and economic development appears differently

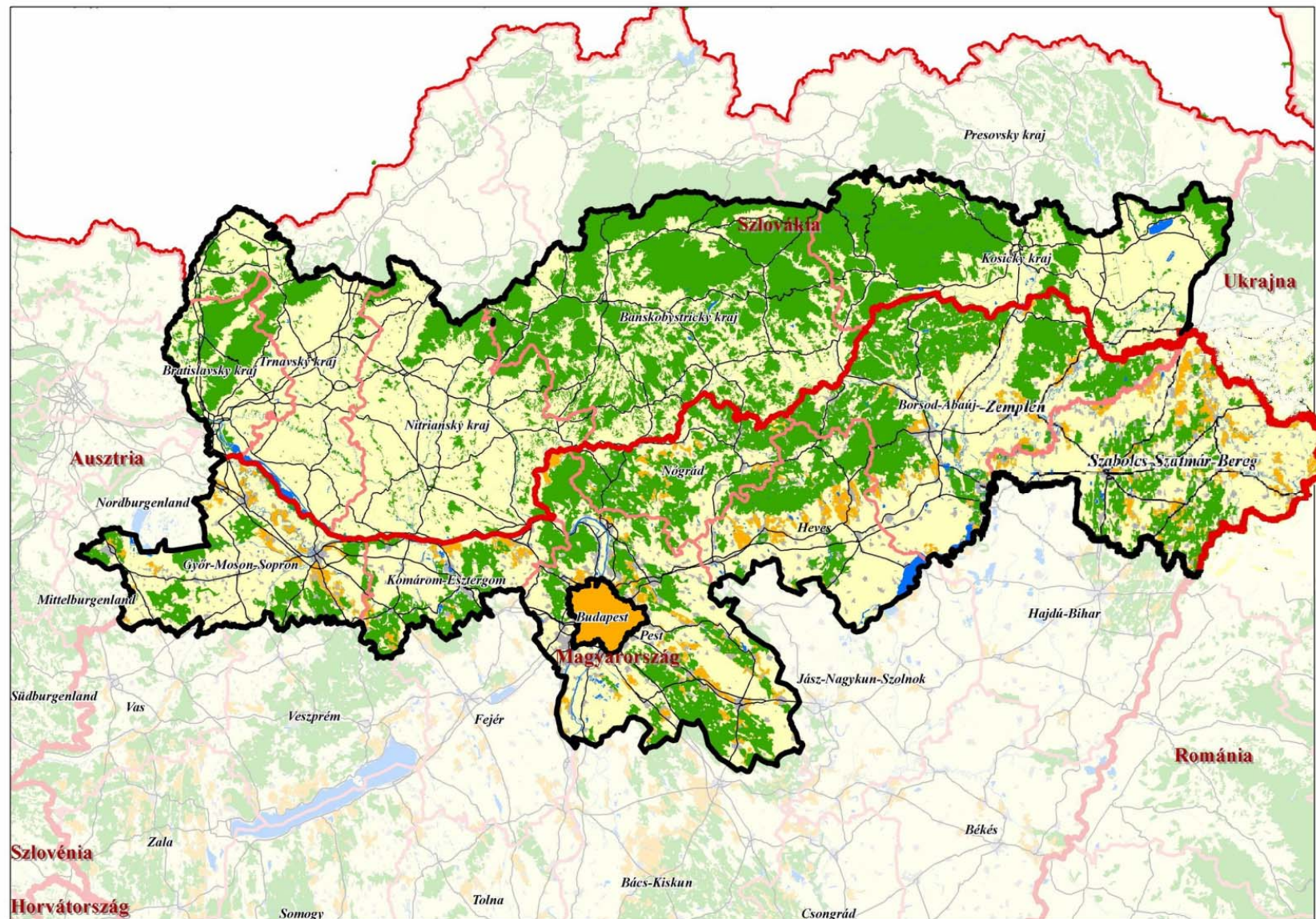
- E.g. good connection, joined impact areas: the region of Austrian-Slovakian-Hungarian border among Szombathely–Sopron–Győr–Esztergom where function alteration and developed spatial structure strengthen each other
- Developed external impact areas of the same level of development with centres of external macro-regions (Wien, Bratislava), having strong cross-border effect (tight local contacts)
- In opposite, there are poor regions with less contact – e.g. from Esztergom until Sátoraljaújhely along the border with Slovakia



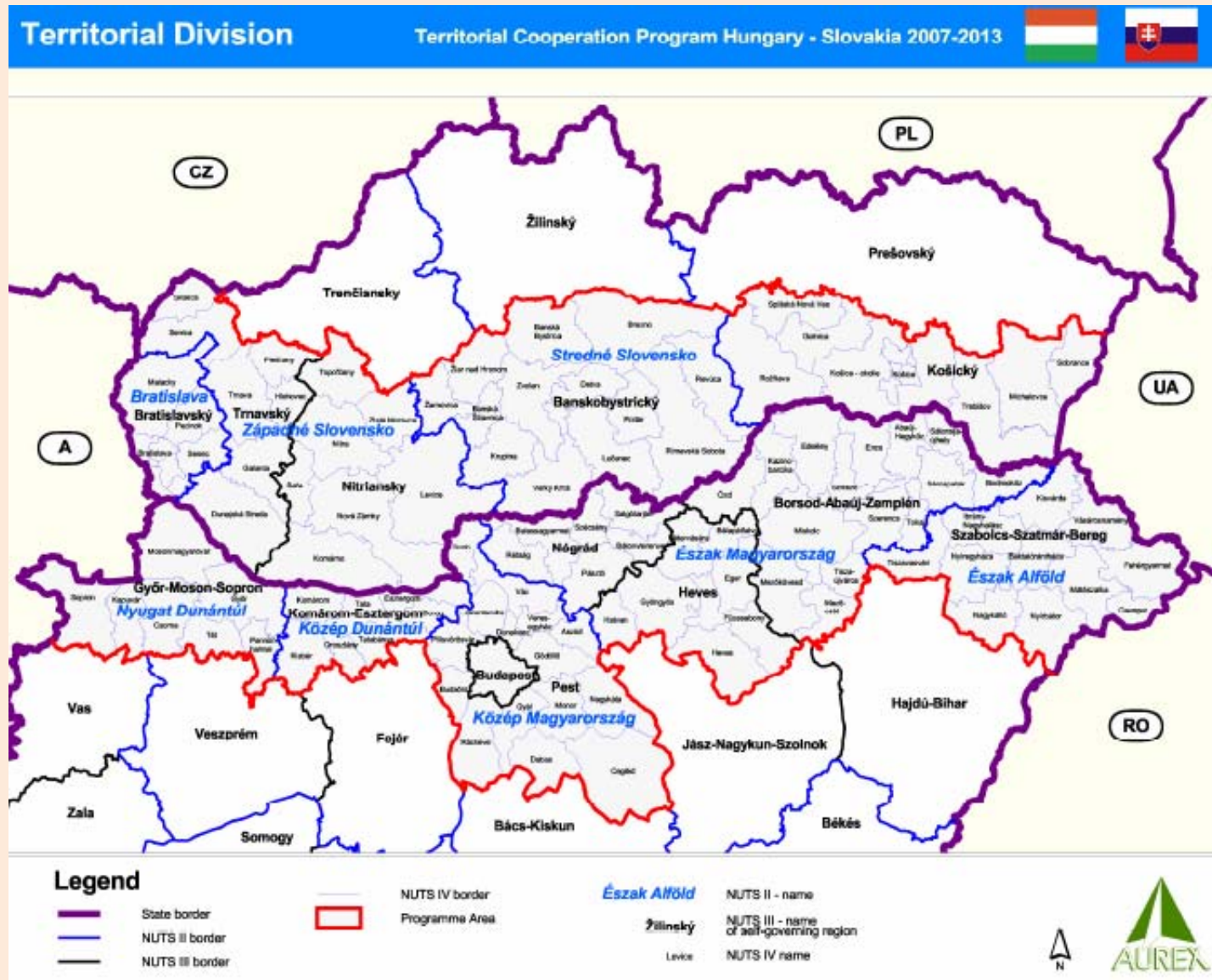
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The Hungarian-Slovakian borderland



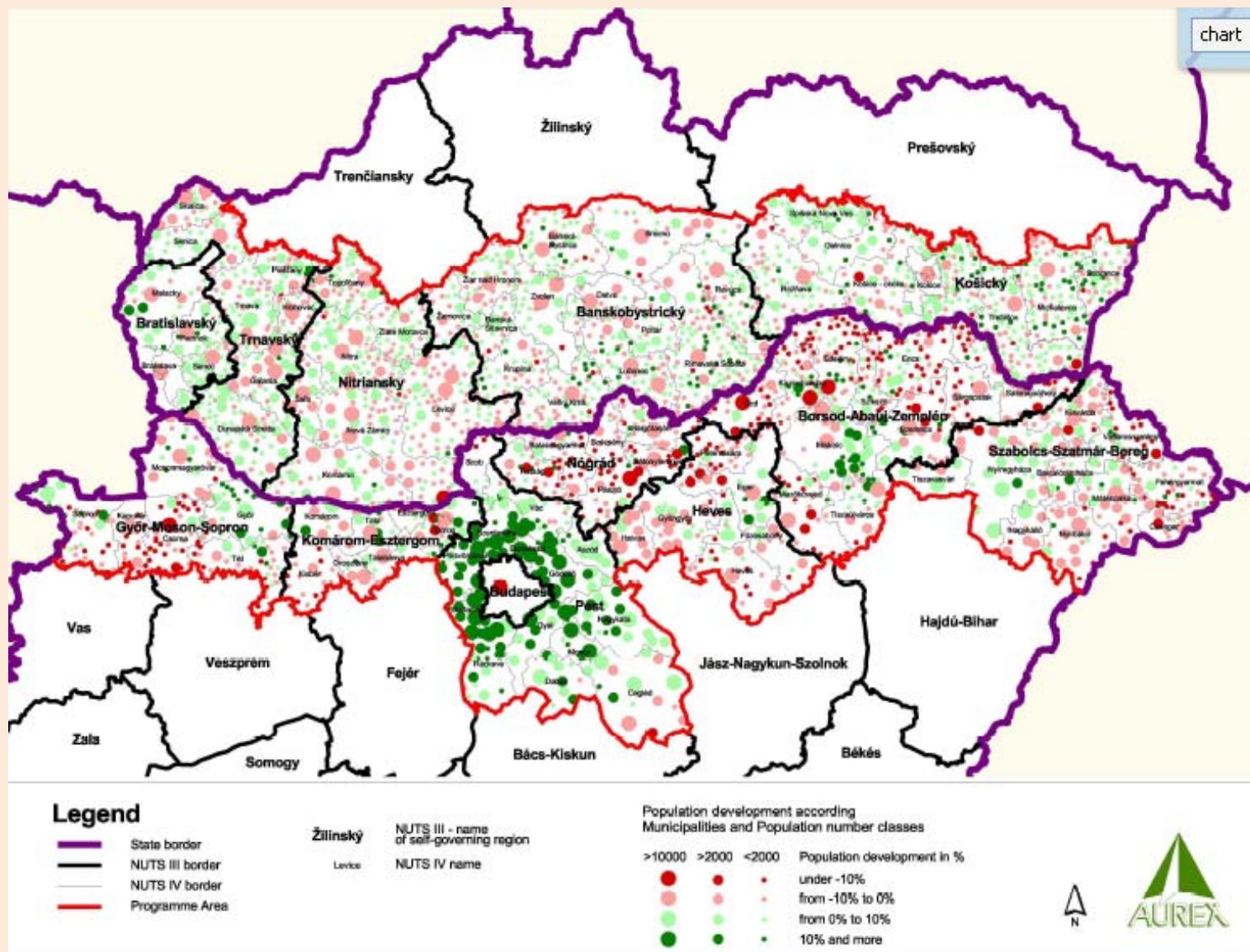
Administrative divisions



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Population



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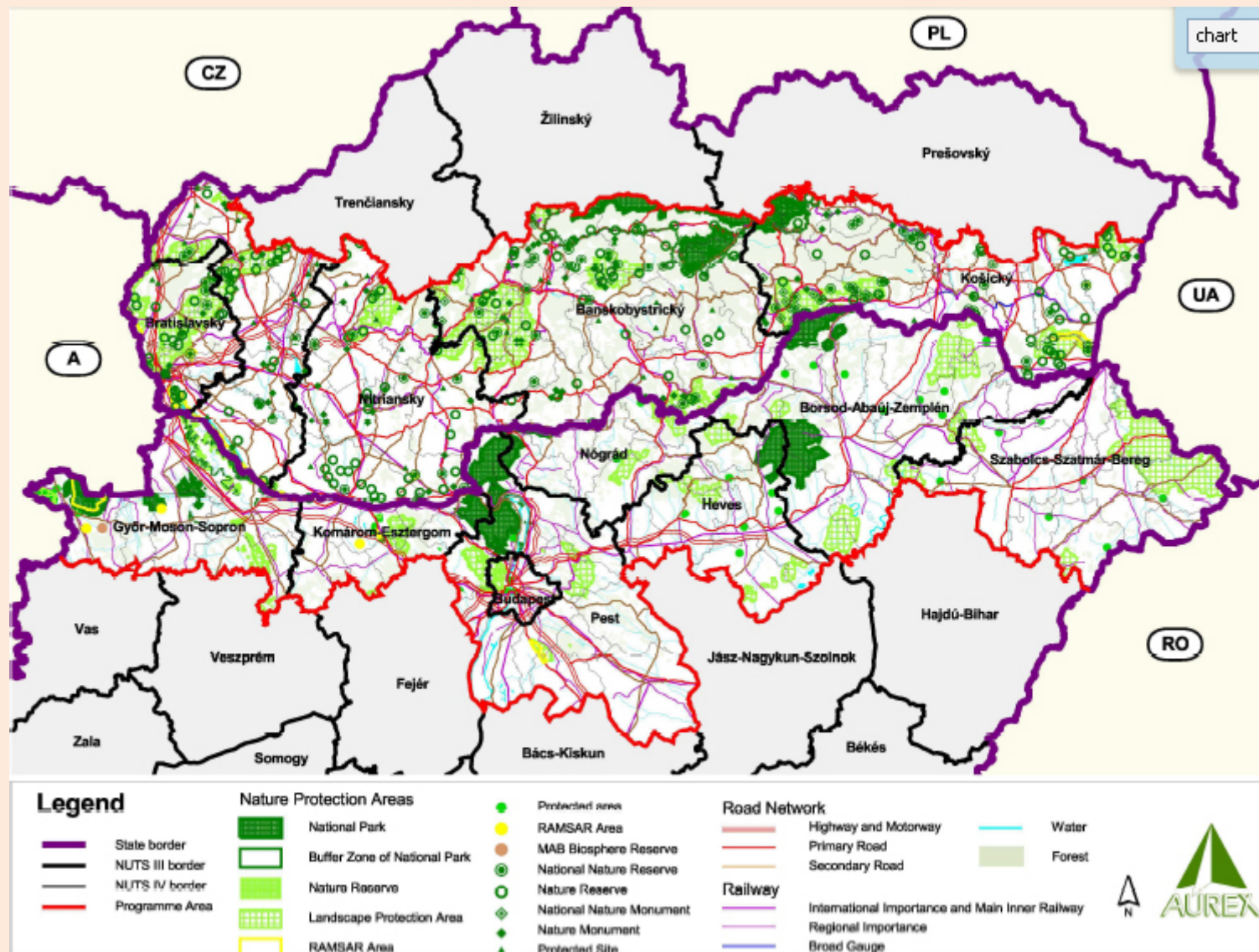
Traffic



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Nature protection areas



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Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013

The programme is focusing on three main cooperation fields:

- The development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for a sustainable territorial development
- Strengthening transnational co-operations through actions related to Community priorities and promoting an integrated territorial development
- The reinforcement of the effectiveness of the regional policy by promoting interregional co-operations through the exchange of experience at the appropriate territorial level.



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Objectives

- Along the central mountainous and the eastern parts of the border region, there are huge disparities
- These areas are characterised by a high unemployment rate, in some cases significantly higher than the respective national average, which leads to the assumption that the economic structure of the region requires transformation; service sector should especially be increased, which consequently requires human resource development
- These regions suffer from insufficiently developed or even missing technical infrastructure that affect the quality of life, the accessibility and the attractiveness of the border areas for tourists and investors
- **The whole border section can be considered as an ecological corridor between the two countries, and further developments still have to be done in the field of environmental protection**
- **This lead to the idea of a common geopark**



The aim and role of the geoparks

- The notion of ‘geopark’ has only a very short past
- Launched by UNESCO at the end of the 20th century
2000 – the European Geopark Network was established
- New concept – demand of a kind of regional development
- According to the definition of UNESCO: „a geopark is an area containing a number of protected geosites, which are part of an integrated concept of protection, education and sustainable development”



4 keywords: regional development, geoconservation, education, geotourism

Aims and possibilities:

- to conserve significant geological features („geosites”) by protection measures in consultation with collaborating universities, geological surveys or relevant statutory bodies in accordance with local traditions and legislative obligations
- to promote the education: a geopark organizes activities and provides logistic support to communicate geoscientific knowledge and environmental concepts to the public
- to develop the geotourism: a geopark stimulates economic activity and sustainable development through geotourism and local socio-economic development through the promotion of a quality label linked with the local natural heritage



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Langkawi Declaration 2010

‘...philosophy and vision of geoparks provide a balance between conservation of heritage, local socioeconomic development and local community empowerment. Thus, **geopark is an effective and practical tool for regional sustainable development...**

By 2010, 77 internationally accepted and registered geoparks



Langkawi: a new geopark was born

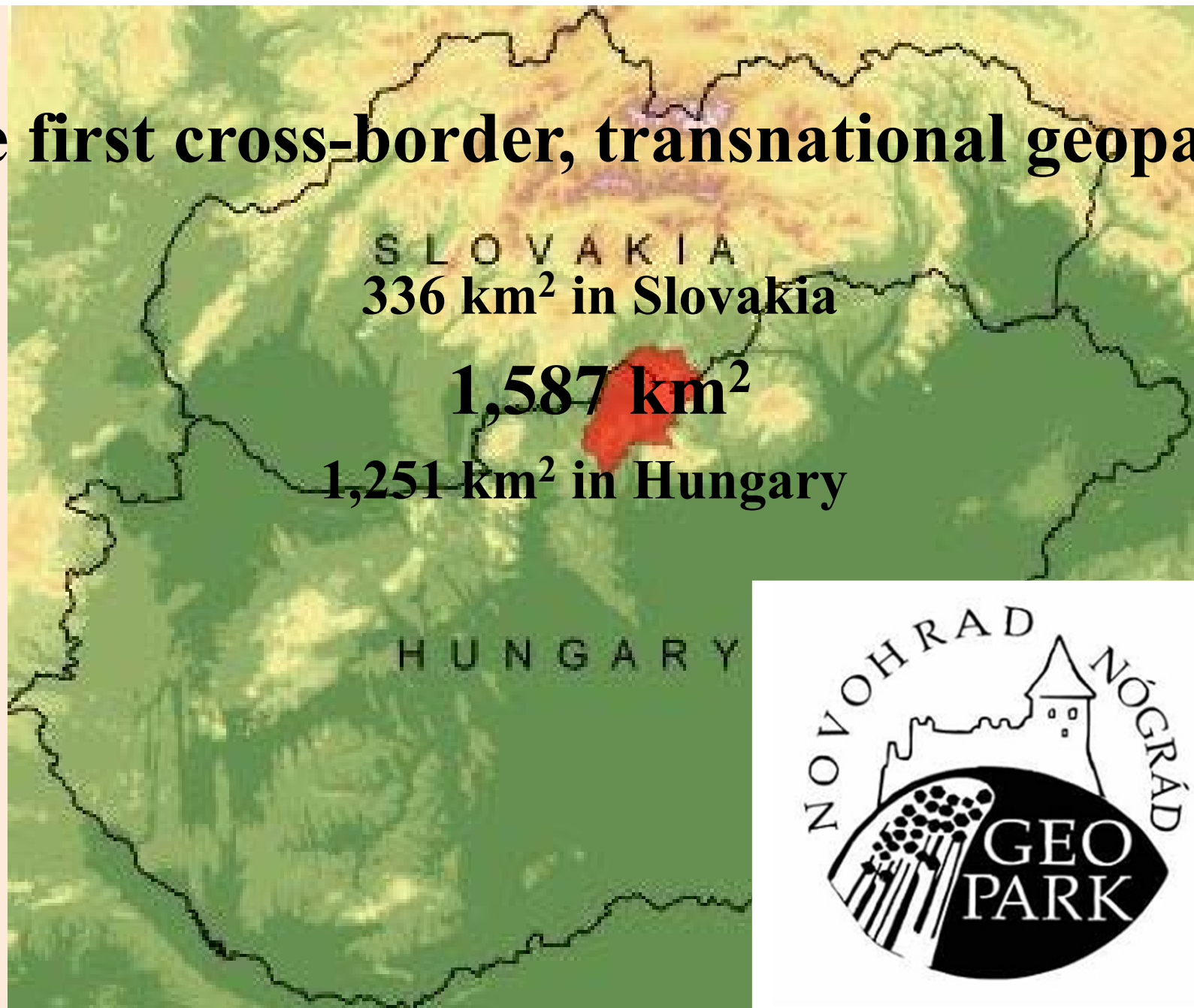
Novohrad–Nógrád Geopark



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The first cross-border, transnational geopark



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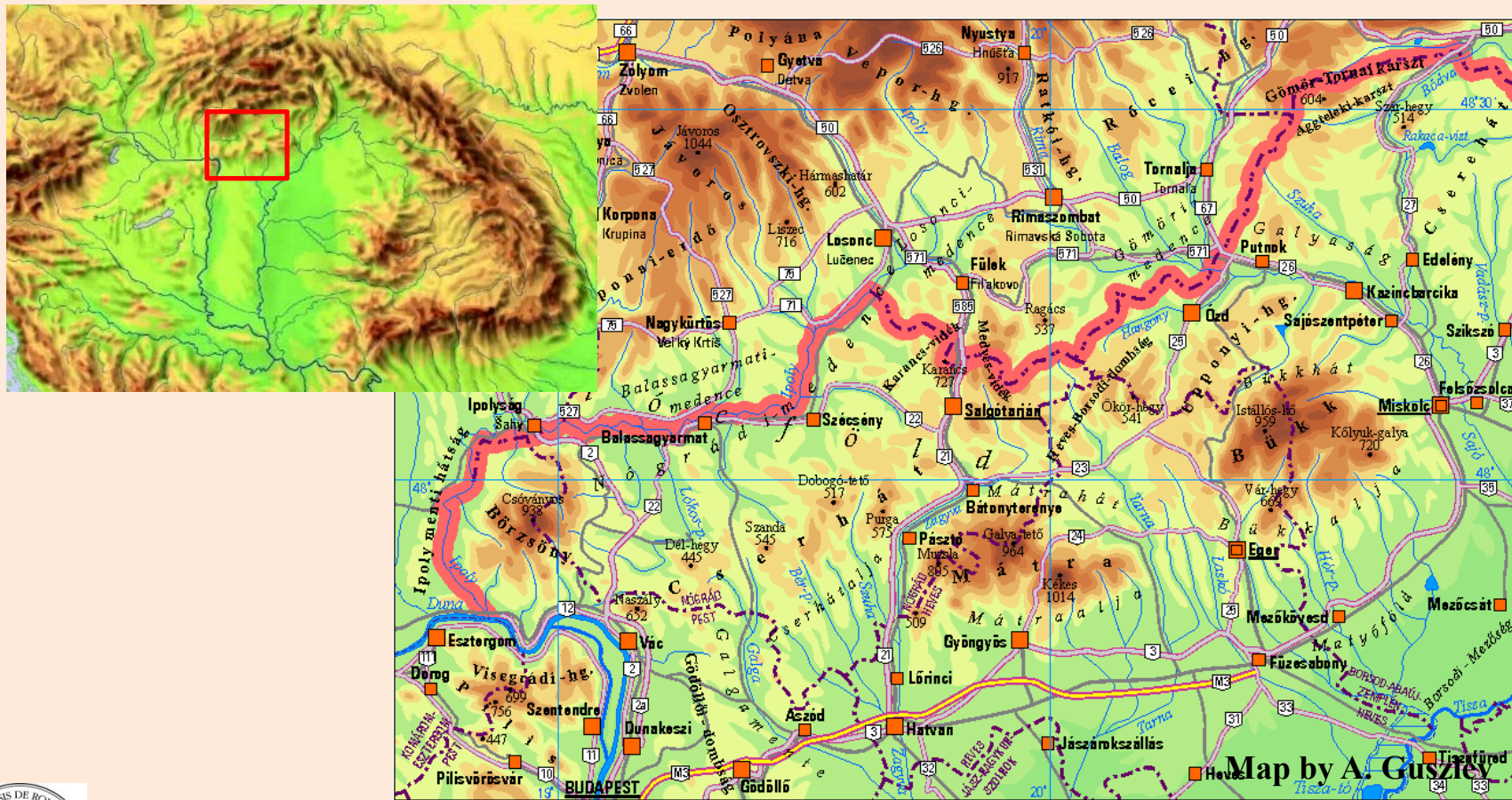
Preliminaries

- End of 1990's: Bükk National Park (H) and CHKO Cerova Vrchovina (SK) planned a thematic route for introducing jointly the most interesting geosites
- 2001: a Phare CBC project was created (Geological study trail in the CHKO Cerova Vrchovina and Karancs-Medves LPA), was not accepted
- 2005: a new Phare CBC project was created (Preparing of Nógrád Geopark) by Salgótarján Microregion. The application was successful, planning has begun
- 2008: experts of Hungarian Geological Society made inventar of the geosites with detailed maps
- 2009-2010: Application has been worked out



Location of the geopark

Southern ranges of the Northwest Carpathian Mountains:
the Cserhát, Karancs, Medves and Cseres (Cerová) mountains



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91 settlements

- 63 in Hungary
- 28 in Slovakia

Slovak name: Novohrad

Hungarian name: Nógrád

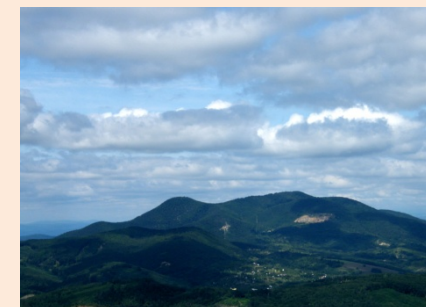
Origin: name of a former county



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Heritage of the region

This region possesses outstanding geoheritage
Cultural, historical, architectural values as well
Habitat of the so-called “Palóc” ethnic group
Special folk art and living traditions



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Geology

Landscape is determined mainly by diversity of rocks

- Neogene and partly Palaeogene sediments: near-shore neritic sediments such as sandstone, clayey marl and schlieren are dominant
- and Neogene volcanic rocks: rhyolites, andesites and basalts from different volcanic epochs

Frequent tectonic movements

Landscape is determined also by series of erosionally dissected hilly ridges

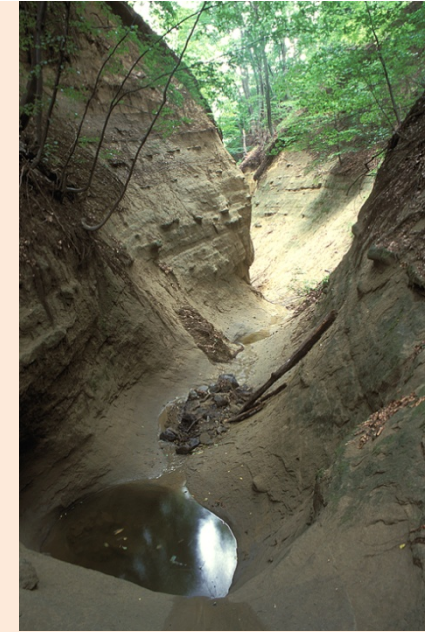


Valuable geosites

Sandstone formations



Nemti



Zagyvaróna



Kenyeretlenpuszta (Drňa)

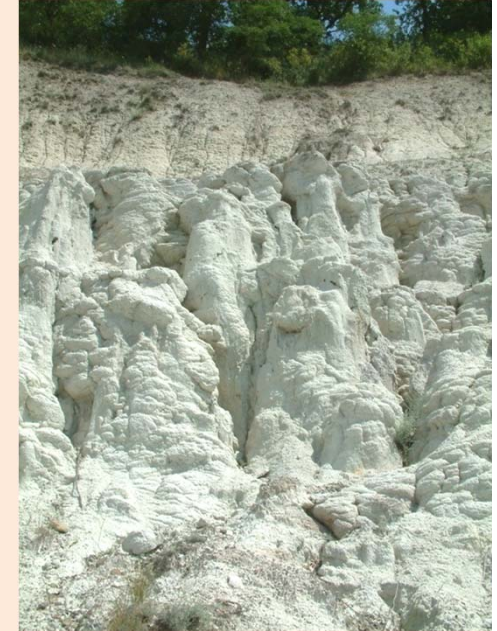


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Rhyolite tuff formations



Vizslás



Rákóczibánya



Kazár



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Geosites



Andesite dykes, Nagylóc



Prismatic jointing of curved columns
unique in andesites, Bér



Basalt formations: Medves Plateau
(Medvedia výšina), Somos-kő (Šomoška)



Basalt neck, Ajnácskő (Hajnáčka)



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Curiosities



Ipolytarnóc, „prehistoric Pompeii”
won European Diploma



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Fossil footprints



Completely undamaged petrified footprints of extinct animals: rhinos, birds, carnivores and deer-like animals

Have remained on the surface due to the big debris of a pyroclastic flow that has buried the once existed habitat



Petrified trunk

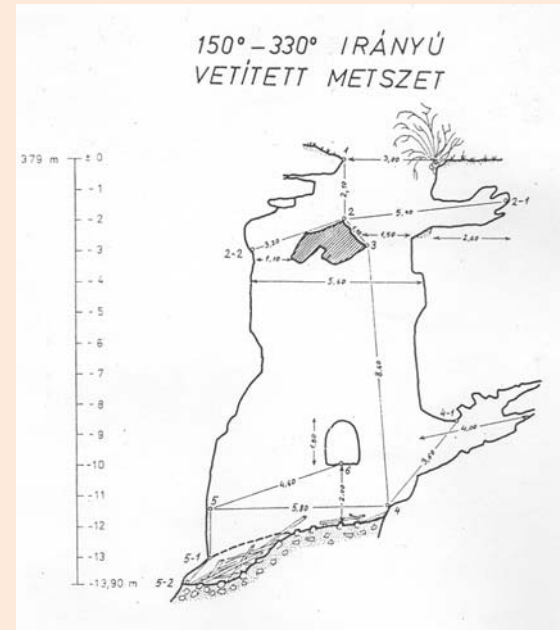


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Curiosities

Basalt lava cave, Szilaspogony



A gas bubble was formed inside,
creating a 13 m high lava cave
Artificial entrance gallery



Mining heritage



Underground Mining Museum, Salgótarján

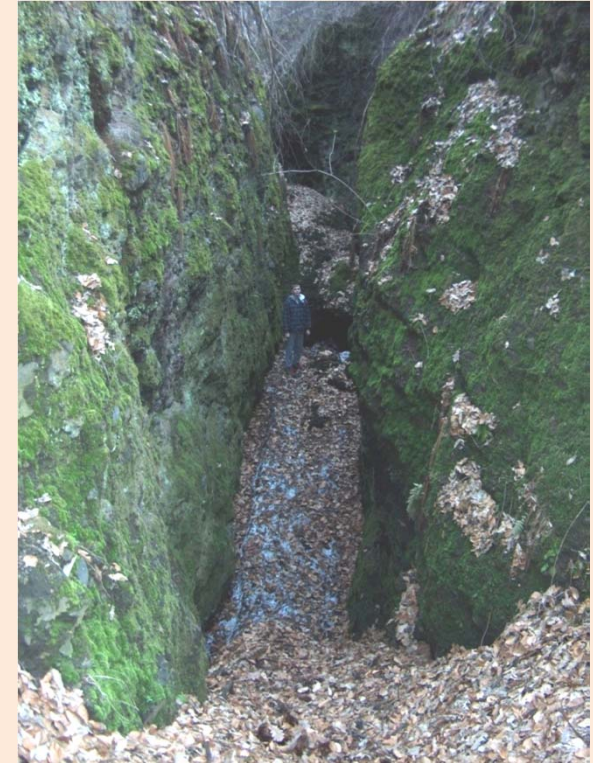
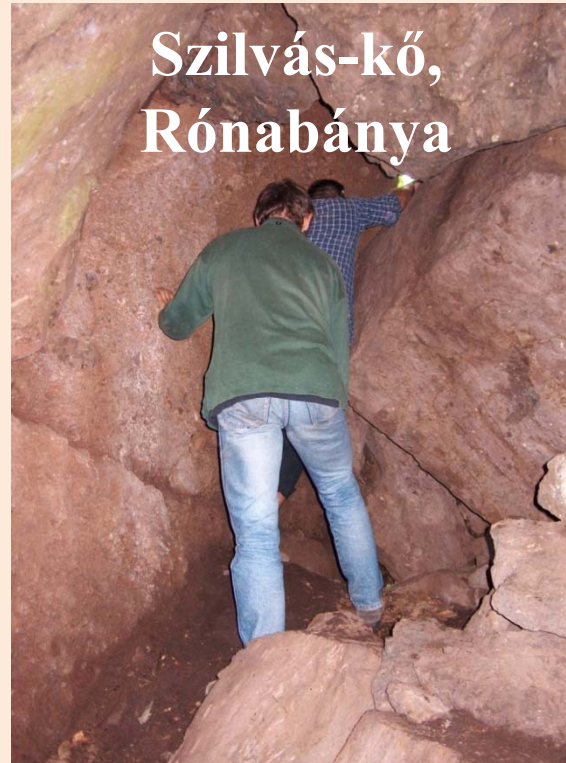


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Curiosities

Result of undermining as geoheritage



- Unique chasms and pseudo-caves owing to undermining – Brown-coal strata were lying under the basalt sheet
- Having finished mining activity the surface collapsed



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Curiosities



Cave, Mucsény (Mučín), formed by the mouldering of a tree trunk in rhyodacite tuff



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Fülek (Fil'akovo)



Folklore

- folk architecture
- traditional costumes
- traditional cuisine

Cultural heritage

Archaeological finds

Medieval castles

Churches, sacral places

Memorials of outstanding persons

Museums and exhibitions



Mátraverebély-Szentkút



Ajnácskő (Hajnačka)



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Joint Hungarian-Slovakian organization



Each side delegates 4 members for the term of 4 years to the Committee, which is presided over by a president and will employ a voting system requiring a two third majority. There are experts working for the Committee, who may represent the Geopark during local and international consultations.



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Organization on both side

Slovakian side

The **Novohrad Tourist Information Centre** is the main Geopark office and the visitor centre at the same time. It is located in Fil'akovo and run by the municipality. The office delegates one member to the Committee of the trans-boundary Geopark due to the fact, that it represents the 28 municipalities of the Slovakian side.

The **Geopark Novohrad-Nógrád Association** is an **autonomous corporate body**, independent of the political and state institutions. It delegates 3 members to the international Geopark's committee. Its mission and aims are co-operation among all of the partners with the aim of sustainable development of the whole territory in the field of tourism (geotourism) together with the preservation of natural and cultural values.



Organization on both side

Hungarian side

The Nógrád Geopark Nonprofit Ltd was founded by the micro-regions, representing the 63 municipalities on the Hungarian side and by private investors to lead the administrative work of the Geopark. Headquarters is in Salgótarján. The director of the organization is delegated to the Committee of the transborder geopark.

The Nógrád Geopark Association represents NGOs, universities, the Bükk National Park Directorate, tourism organizations, experts and different stakeholders who are willing to co-operate on Geopark issues. The Association delegates three members to the Committee. The Association maintains close ties with the Slovakian partner and leads widespread consultation among governmental and private entities.



Some results of co-operation

- Uniform image concerning the information
- Trilingual (Slovakian, Hungarian, English) tables, leaflets
- Common decisions on tasks of development
- Hungarian-Slovakian joint operative board
- Co-operation between tourism agencies – tourist destination managements were established on both side
- TDM-s organize cross-border projects, including geological and cultural sites of the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark
- Websites – partly good, partly still in initial phase
<http://www.nogradgeopark.eu/>
<http://www.nnegtc.eu/index.php/en/documents>



Information and education



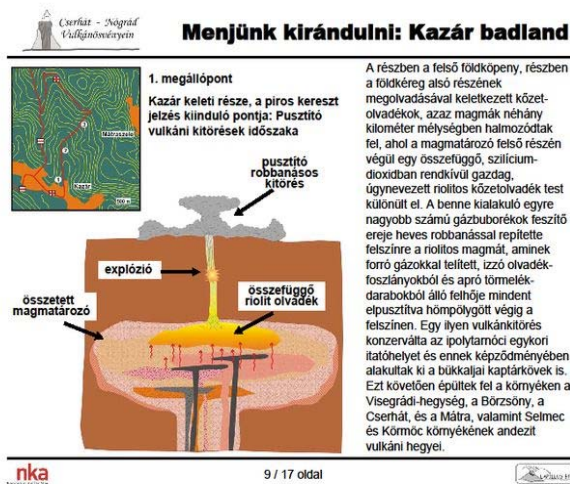
New, mostly trilingual information tables were made and are prepared in the geopark

A detailed brochure in different languages was edited encompassing all important values of the geopark

Volcanism: didactic “electronic leaflets” edited by Szabolcs Harangi, professor at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Educational materials are available on the Internet

They make known the whole region



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Internet documents

Among others downloadable application documents can be found (in pdf-form):

Novohrad - Nógrád Geopark Application dossier Full material with enclosures, including e.g. Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark Enclosure 5-6 (Geology I-II)

Trilingual Geopark's website informs about programs also in the other country

TDM's website occasionally



Requirements

The geoheritage together with the cultural heritage affords great opportunity for developing the tourism

Geosites must be introduced, especially in the other country, must be supplied by appropriate infrastructure, must be made known by the tools of the modern media

Study trails, interpretive centres, information and orientation tables and leaflets must be created

Car parks, comfortable paths and cycle trails must be built, also across the borderline; also public transport must be improved and joined

On the area of the Geopark there are already 23 study trails, but only 2 of them is crossing the border

All these works are still in an initial stage



Is it enough? The future?

Nevertheless, the capacity of geotourism is only partly utilized, it should be increased

TDM-s should work much effectively together

Cultural events should be more frequent and effective

Attractiveness should be strengthened

Co-operation between self-governments and local authorities should be more fluent and smooth

Jealousy, private interest should be much more reduced

Innovative ideas should be involved and applied

In case of fulfilment of the above mentioned requests much more new jobs, employments could be created



New financial assistance

Novohrad–Nógrád Geopark Nonprofit Ltd. and Self-government of Town Salgótarján sent in joint application in frame of the *Operative Development Programs for North Hungary* (financed mostly by EU-funds)

News (12.08.2012)

The result: 614,000,000 HUF (2,193,000 EUR) has been obtained for developing the tourism of the Geopark

Unfortunately it is available only for the Hungarian side



Perspectives and threats

The title of „geopark” will be re-examined after 5 year's activity and in the worst case, the title can be withdrawn

Therefore, for the progress of the Nógrád–Novohrad Geopark, great efforts are necessary, especially for better utilization of the Slovakian-Hungarian co-operation

It would be a sin not to take full advantage of such an excellent cross-border co-operation

