

Review
of
CESCI – Central European Service for crossborder initiatives
Activity report - 2015
(<https://goo.gl/p05u4K>)

Presenting the Association

CESCI was founded in 2009 by private persons to help lighten borders in the Central European region and to stimulate, as well as professionally support cross-border cooperation. With its over 50 members, the association pursues its activities in the following 4 fields to reach the above mentioned goals:

- in the field of border studies, as well as the specific border regions, scientific research is conducted, and the association also partakes in the international scientific life, publishes papers, as well as organises conferences, seminars and realises research projects;
- it effectuates cross-border integral strategic plans, takes part in EU programming and develops its own methodology accordingly;
- the association prepares, develops and supports cross-border institutions;
- it also functions as a mediator between actors at different levels in order to help develop cross-border cooperation initiatives; consequently, within this framework, it presents opinion on policy papers, conducts dissemination activities (e.g. brochures, films, events, workshops), partakes in the work of EU-level professional networks, and provides information and council to local participants.

A significant part of the association's activities is made up by public utility tasks. Business activity mainly consists of programming and planning, as well as institutional development.

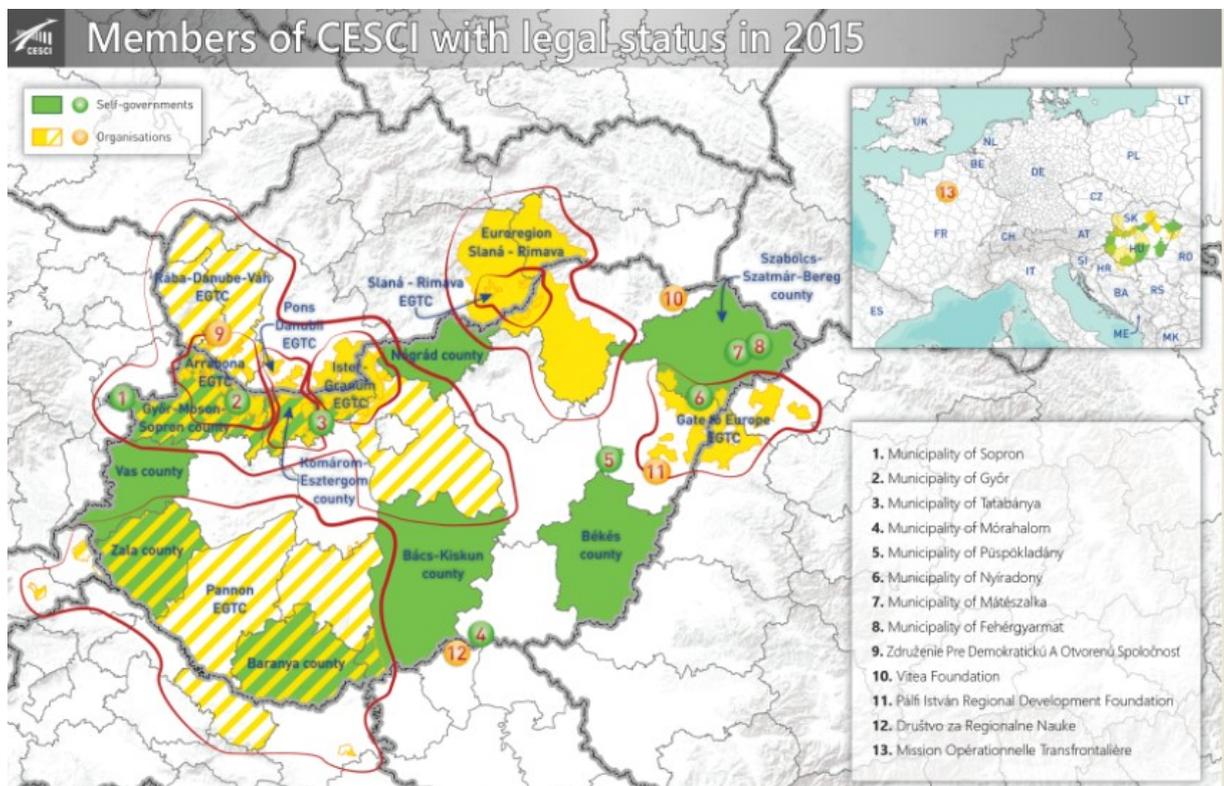
Members of CESCI are primarily municipalities at different levels which take an interest in cross-border cooperation, but also private persons and professional organisations (including the MOT itself). From a geographical point of view, most of its members are Hungarian, but Slovak, Romanian, Serbian and French entities have also joined the association.

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

Vice-president of the association is dr. Tamás Tóth, vice-rector of the Szent István University.

Members of the board in 2015:

- dr. József Benedek, professor of geography, vice-president of the Senate of the Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj Napoca)
- Zsolt Borkai, mayor (City of Győr)
- dr. András Levente Gál, office manager attorney, former secretary of state (Budapest)
- dr. Jože Gričar, professor of economics (University of Maribor, Slovenia)
- Judit H. Kovács, president of the Society of Christian Leaders and Businessmen
- dr. Péter Szegvári, jurist, political scientist, senior municipal advisor to the lord mayor of Budapest
- Alena Vachnová, project manager, board member of CESCO Carpathia (Slovakia).



CESCI on the map of Europe

Ever since its founding, CESCO is continuously gaining strength. In 2009, the professional organisation of the association consisted of one person; in 2015 it has increased to 13.

CESCI has been part of CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks) since 2013, and has also taken on its secretarial tasks since 2015. The network unifies over 600 rural and regional municipalities. Besides the Hungarian association, members of the network include Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, the Union of Baltic

Cities, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC), MedCities, the Council of Danubian Cities and Regions, as well as the City Twins Association.

Apart from secretarial tasks, CESCO is actively participating in the network's professional activities by expressing an opinion about commonly elaborated EU policy comments, formulating special reviews and preparing news articles for the website.

At the Executive and Policy Committee's session on April 16th, Gyula Ocskay, Secretary General and András Levente Gál vice-president represented our association, and in total put forward three proposals: to conduct a survey by questionnaires among members of those involved in the network in order to see what services are expected of CECICN; to launch a Europe-level report on the state of cooperation initiatives in border areas; and to realise a methodology related to the level of cross-border cooperation, which could be used in the future to evaluate these cooperation initiatives. Attendees welcomed all three proposals. Additionally, they confirmed their intention to submit a common tender entitled Europe for Citizens, which was also proposed by CESCO.

The association has joined the **Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)** in 2013. In 2015, we have in several ways and with considerable financial funds supported Europe's oldest professional organisation (founded in 1971). On 27 February, we have organised the AEBR Executive Committee's meeting in Budapest, accompanied by cultural events, related to the closing conference of our EUSDR project. We have opened a common office based in Novi Sad, Serbia, where we provided the financial background for not only the maintenance of the office, but also the employment of AEBR's regional associate. Moreover, we also contributed to the realisation of Novi Sad's Youth Forum.

The **Budapest Platform**, co-founded at the end of 2010 by MOT (France), the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations and CCDRN (Portugal), aims at influencing state level policies in order to support cross-border cooperation. The network did not have any activities in 2015. Similarly, we did not partake in the EuroGeo association's activities for the year 2015. Membership for the latter was acquired 2 years ago.

We have been part of the **EGTC Platform** founded by the Committee of the Regions since the beginning. The Platform brings together European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, as well as professional associations and institutions dealing with EGTCs. In 2015 we have again participated at the annual session of the Platform and we are continuously informing all relevant experts in Brussels about activities along the Hungarian borders.

Through one of our associates, we are taking part in the work of **ABS (Association of Borderlands Studies)**, where legal entities cannot apply for membership. The association is the largest of its kind, incorporating 5 continents, unifying scholars and researchers taking an interest in borderland research.

In 2015, CESCO itself has strengthened its presence in Central-Europe. At the beginning of the year, **CESCI Balkans** was founded. Together with AEBR, the association based in Novi Sad has already organised a major conference in September (VII. Youth Forum) with around 150 participants. Within the framework of the event, the CESCO Balkans office was formally opened. Two of its associates have then again organised a successful seminar in December on spatial planning. CESCO Balkans has established an extensive partnership even in this short period of existence, including Serbia, as well as other countries of the Balkans, and has submitted numerous applications for calls.

Late Summer 2015, led by our former board member, Rudolf Bauer, **CESCI Carpathia** was founded in Košice (Slovakia). Its main activity scope covers the northern and eastern regions of the Carpathians. Since its existence of a few months, the association has prepared a development strategy for the city of Tornaľa, took part in the elaboration of the study aimed at the preparation works for the Via Carpatia transport corridor, as well as that of a transnational project, and has organised a successful project development training for municipal experts.

Strengthening our international presence has again demanded significant resources in 2015, but development of our professional relations would be inconceivable without these steps. Today, CESCO is a recognised actor of EU level discourses related to cross-border cooperation.

The following data may help to form an image of the association's daily operation:

- our association has had 10 employees during the course of the year (with temporarily 5 part-term employees) in its Budapest offices, with a further 2 (temporarily 3, one part-time) staff members in the Esztergom institution;
- our internship programme is very successful – a dozen of young candidates have passed through our offices during the year, 13 of which have worked for CESCO in the last year;
- in 2015 (taking into consideration the struggles of the first semester), a financial consolidation of the association was necessary, which obstructed many of our professional plans, but it helped reach a financial stability by 2016, all whilst increasing the association's international network and recognition.

In the next part, we will present our activities of 2015 by scope.

1. Scientific research

In cooperation with external experts, CESCO associates are engaged in extensive border research activity, primarily within the framework of the European Institute in Esztergom. Research is mainly directed at the various theoretical questions of border studies, but also on internal processes of specific border areas. The aim is to assure appropriate scientific basis for the planning and development work.

Research projects

Crossing the borders

The closing conference of the 2014 project processing cross-border cooperation initiatives of the Danube Basin was held on 27 February 2015 at the Institut Francais in Budapest. Hervé Ferrage, director of the institution, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, president of AEBR and first vice-president of the Committee of the Regions, as well as István Joó, ministerial commissioner for the Danube Strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) held opening speeches during the event.

During the conference, the main results of our research project were presented, and elaborators of the case studies spoke about each case study. An introductory lecture was held by Kurt Puchinger, Austrian coordinator for Priority Axis no. 10 of the Danube Strategy.

Within the framework of the conference, our association has organised AEBR's next Executive Committee meeting .

During the course of the year, the territorial database related to the project was set up, summary studies were written and the full material was edited. The project will be concluded with the on-line publication of the studies in Spring 2016.

Phantom border

In cooperation with the institution and the planning department, and called upon by the Leibniz Institution in Leipzig, an abstract was submitted back in 2014 on a cross-border mental mapping research, which was approved by the editors. Whilst preparing the study, it became clear that the accepted topic (Changes in the space usage of people living in the region centred around Esztergom- Štúrovo due to the opening of the Mária Valéria bridge) requires a more extended research than anticipated. This is why we decided to publish our results based on a broader study, regardless of the call.

As a result of the in-depth interviews conducted in 2014 and the results of the traffic count by questionnaires, processing of which was launched in 2015, the first studies were written and

in spring another four-day questioning took place on the bridge. A presentation was held about the research at the international conference of the Károlyi Foundation in March. At the end of the year, we have started composing a study volume, with an expected publication date of summer 2016.

Scientific calls

At the beginning of May, we have submitted our first H2020 application for the *Twinning* call aimed at strengthening cooperation between research centres. To the three year long, EUR 900,000 capacity building project, the Italian European Academy (Bolzano), the Finnish Karelian Institute (Joensuu) and the Northern Irish Centre for Cross-border Studies (Armagh) were invited to participate. The tender did not win support.

We have submitted two tenders to calls by the *PAGEO Fund* created by the Hungarian National Bank. The one is aimed at creating an extended study in the field of geopolitics, the other would have enabled the most prominent European experts in the field of border studies to gather for a series of lectures in Hungary. However, these applications did not win either.

Participation at scientific events

Eurogeo: Conference of European Geographers (Budapest, 30 August – 2 September)

CESCO associates have actively participated at the 2015 EUGEO conference. They had their own panel on the discourse forming effects of cross-border spatial planning and held overall 8 lectures in different topics:

- Kitti Dubniczki and Mátyás Jaschitz on adapting landscape modelling to spatial planning,
- Éva Gangl and Enikő Nyerges on cross-border health care service zones,
- Roland Hesz and András Nyeste on indicators helping the assessment of programmes along the border,
- Mátyás Jaschitz on the planning methodology developed by CESCO, as well as the different territorial cohesion aspects of living in a border area,
- Márton Pete on cultural cooperation,
- and Gyula Ocskay on the historic aspects of borders, as well as on the EGTC.

Hereby, the association qualified as the most active think-tank during the conference.

Balance and challenges – 9th annual international scientific conference of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Miskolc celebrating their 25th anniversary (Lillafüred, 15-16 October)

To celebrate their 25 years of existence, the Faculty of Economics of the University of Miskolc organised a conference in Lillafüred, to which our association was specifically invited. Éva Gangl, GIS analyst and Gyula Ocskay Secretary General held lectures at the event. Éva Gangl held a presentation on a methodology developed by CESCO, entitled *Increasing the interoperability of borders – Presenting a special cross-border planning methodology*, and Gyula Ocskay gave a lecture on *Space as a social product. A few aspects related to semantics of social innovation*.

Further Scientific Appearances

13-14 March: participation and lectures at the international conference of the Károlyi Foundation in Fehérvársurgó (Zsolt Bottlik and Gyula Ocskay on the results of the Phantom border study)

18 June: participation and lecture at the Budapest conference organised by the Kopint Foundation for Economic Research and the Kempelen Institution, entitled Slovak-Hungarian cross-border migration/ Slovensko-mad'arská pohraničná migrácia (Mátyás Jaschitz on the labour market processes in the Hungarian-Slovak border region)

5 November: participation and lecture at a conference in Törökbálint entitled Adapting to labour market demands (Mátyás Jaschitz on the labour market processes in the Hungarian-Slovak border region)

10 November: participation and lecture at a conference in Salgótarján on the labour market in border regions (Mátyás Jaschitz on the labour market processes in the Hungarian-Slovak border region)

10 December: lecture at the 10th anniversary of the Regional Scientific Society in Szabadka (Gyula Ocskay on the economic role of borders)

Publications and Brochures

2015 Yearbook of the European Institution

Edited by James Scott, the 2015 Yearbook of the research institution, the English language Cross-border Review, featuring publications of several of our associates, was finished by the

end of the year. Apart from CESCO associates, the review also contains the work of excellent researchers of the field.

The Carpathian Euroregion project

The president of CESCO Carpathia, our former board member, Rudolf Bauer has prepared a summary study on the history and operation of the first Eastern European euroregion, the Carpathian euroregion. The study was proofread by associates of the institution and published on our website.

Scientific publications of CESCO associates in the year 2015:

- Gyelník, T. (2015a): European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015, European Council on Foreign Relations, London (Slovakia)
- Gyelník, T. (2015b): Metamorphosis of sovereignty and bareness in the post-1989 world politics. In: Scott, W. J., Pete, M. (eds.): Cross-Border Review 2015, CESCO, Budapest, pp. 7-26.
- Gyelník, T. (2015c): The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the end of the First World War. In: Scott, W. J., Pete, M. (eds.): Cross-Border Review 2015, CESCO, Budapest, pp. 134-141.
- Jaschitz, M. (2015): Book review: Zsolt Bottlik (Ed.): Cross-Border Review Yearbook 2014; Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives, Budapest. ISSN: 2064-6704. Deturope Central European Journal of Regional Development and Tourism. Vol. 7. Issue 1. p. 137-146.
- Kuttor D. – Ocskay Gy. (2015): A határok változó szerepe, határ menti kapcsolatok. (Changing role of borders and cross-border relations.) In Fábrián Attila (szerk.): Otthon a Kárpát-medencében. Területfejlesztési Szabadegyetem 2011-2015. Nyugat-Magyarországi Egyetem Kiadó, Sopron, 485-512.
- Ocskay Gy. (2015): A határ – valóban gazdasági hátrány? (The border – is it a real economic handicap?) In Ricz András – Takács Zoltán (szerk.): A régió TÍZpróbája. Regionális Tudományi Társaság, Szabadka, 77-87.
- Pete M. (2015): Beszámoló a 7e Festival de Géopolitique de Grenoble konferenciáról. (Report on the 7th Festival de Géopolitique de Grenoble conference.) Tér és Társadalom 29(3): 161-163.
- Pete, M. (2015): Cross-border territorial monitoring. In: Scott, J. W. – Pete, M. (eds.) (2015): Cross-Border Review, European Institute of Cross-Border Studies (Esztergom) - Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI), Budapest, ISSN 2064-6704, pp. 111-116.
- Pete, M. (2015): Meusburger, P., Gregory, D., Suarsana, L. (eds.): Geographies of Knowledge and Power. Hungarian Geographical Bulletin 64:(4) pp. 349-352.
- Pete, M. (2015): Péter Balogh (2014): Perpetual borders: German-Polish cross-border contacts in the Szczecin area. Stockholm: Stockholm University, Department of Human Geography, 2014. (Södertörn doctoral dissertations; 92.) In: Scott, J. W. – Pete, M. (eds.) (2015): Cross-Border Review, European Institute of Cross-Border Studies (Esztergom) - Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI), Budapest, ISSN 2064-6704, pp. 129-134.
- Pete, M. (2015): Stuart Elden: The birth of territory. Tér és Társadalom 29(4): 160-163.

- Pete M. (2015): Új állam épül : Koszovó. (New state under construction: Kosovo.) A Földgömb 33(9): 56-69.
- Pete, M. (2015): von Hirschhausen, B.; Grandits, H.; Kraft, C.; Müller, D.; Serrier, T. (2015): Phantomgrenzen. Räume und Akteure in der Zeit neu denken, Wallstein Verlag GmbH, Göttingen, 224 p., In: Scott, J. W. – Pete, M. (eds.) (2015): Cross-Border Review, European Institute of Cross-Border Studies (Esztergom) - Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI), Budapest, ISSN 2064-6704, pp. 142-145.

2. Programming, planning and strategic documents in the border region

For years cross-border planning has been the main business income for our association. However, we have also prepared strategic documents within the framework of our public utility activities in 2015.

The Slovak-Hungarian INTERREG V-A programme (2014–2020)

Following the Brussels approval of the programme, we participated in the elaboration of executive documents as well, in the framework of which we prepared the relevant background material for the second (transport) and third (employment) priority axes.

Functional consideration and evaluation of planned cross-border public road infrastructural developments in the Hungarian-Slovak border region

We submitted a proposal in cooperation with Főmterv Zrt. to a call announced by the Hungarian Transport Administration. Based on the successful tender, it was the privilege of our association's consortium to prepare the functional analysis of cross-border public roads planned to be constructed on the Hungarian-Slovak border between 2014 and 2020. The importance of the analysis is that specific cross-border development projects can only be effectuated from EU funds based on this document.

Development strategy of the Slaná-Rimava EGTC

The Slaná-Rimava EGTC development strategy had to be submitted to the client by the 28th of February. Parallel to the strategy chapter, the cohesion analysis as well as the proposed intervention structure was presented to the EGTC assembly on the 3rd of February in Putnok. The finished strategy was submitted at the end of February. Before its finalisation, public consultation was carried out during the course of spring.

Development strategy of the Mura Region EGTC

Our association prepared the development strategy of the Hungarian-Croatian Mura Region EGTC, which is based in Tótszerdahely, and was registered in spring 2015. The cohesion analysis was conducted in 2015. The analysis, providing an overview on the actual situation, was to be finalised until 18 December 2015.



The 'Via Carpatia' study

On behalf of the Kassa County Municipality, in the last quarter of 2015 we have conducted the analysis examining the expected social and economic effects of the planned Via Carpatia North-South transport corridor, running along the eastern borders of the EU. We involved CESCO Carpatia for the elaboration of the study, which is concluded with policy recommendations.

Migration strategy

As a subcontractor, we have elaborated a migration strategy for the City of Győr, in which solutions to both social and labour market issues are proposed in a cross-border dimension.

Planning projects with public benefit

In 2015 as a public utility service, we have continued developing the **irrigation concept** to be applied to the scope of the **Gate to Europe EGTC**. Apart from our associates, an external hydrogeologist expert was involved in the working procedure. Due to the lack of data on the Romanian side (the relevant ministry considers data related to groundwater to be a state secret and did not provide us with it), we were only able to set up an incomplete analysis by the end of the year, where only content of the Hungarian side of the border can be assessed.

On behalf of the Ministry of Human Capacities, we have elaborated an extended study on a new way of financing **cross-border Hungarian cultural developments**. Instead of the current, national policy-based model, we proposed a multi-fund type development and financing practice based on landscape regions, whilst at the same time presenting successful Western European examples. The comprehensive concept was finalised in March.

It is also on request of the Ministry that we have put together an inventory about the **public functions** along the border that EGTCs can take over from local governments. The aim of the background documentation is to provide ammunition to alternative service systems of border areas in sectors supervised by the Ministry.

We have prepared a Slovak language version to the **Slaná-Rimava EGTC strategy** free of charge, to be able to carry out the public consultation on the Slovak side as well.

On request of the Prime Minister's Office, conditions of realising **two planned border crossing points** (Szent Gellért bridge in Cenad and the road linking Geszt and Cefa) were analysed. With both studies, we aimed at giving ammunition to decision makers strictly based on a professional argumentation in order to realise or dismiss the relevant new relations.

Our associates continuously participate in European professional discourses related to territorial cooperation programmes, within the framework of which we are trying to promote our own methodology. On April the 10th, Éva Gangl GIS analyst held a presentation on the subject at the AEBR conference in Lisbon entitled **Territorial Impact Assessment**.

3. Cross-border institution and project development

Providing assistance for cross-border cooperation constitutes the most significant part of CESCO's activities. We provide support to launching and developing cross-border institutions, and we help these organisations to realise specific development ideas. We establish long-term cooperation following our strategic approach based on scientific results.

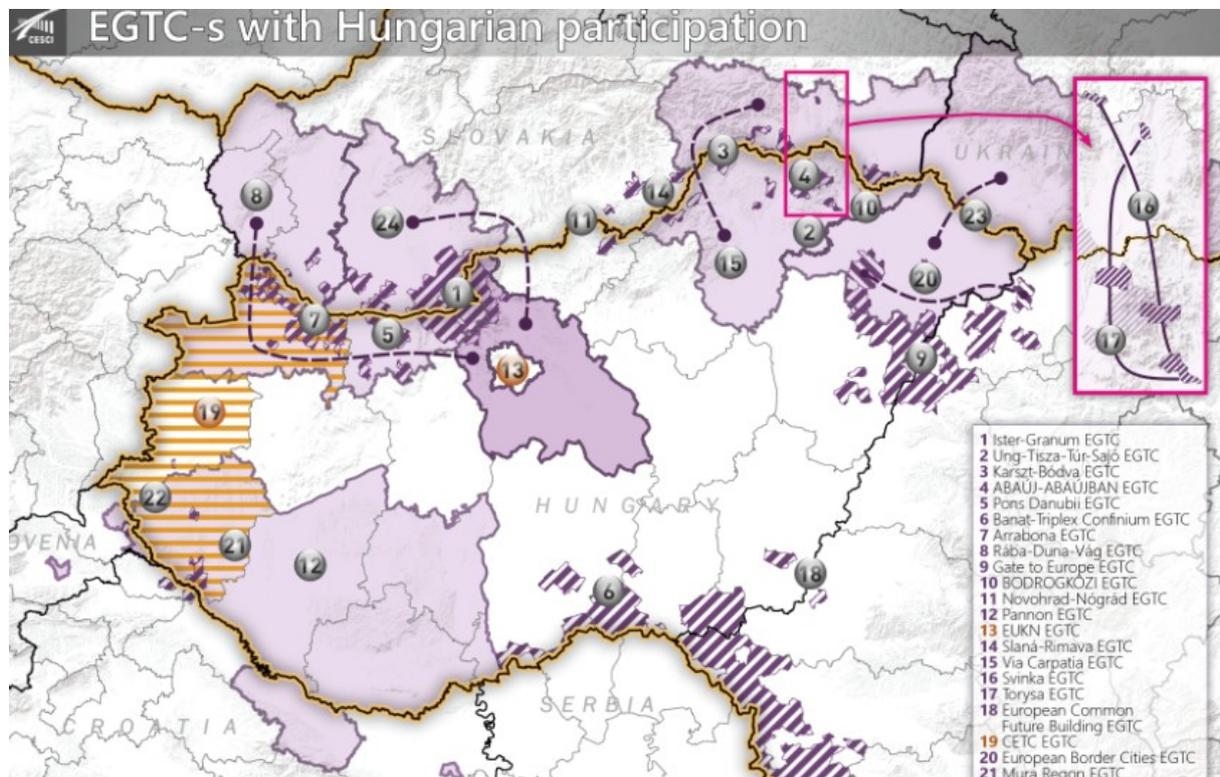
Expert support for founding EGTCs

Our association has successfully participated at the **Euro-Contrôle Route's** (network of European transport authorities) tender related to the founding of an EGTC. According to the contract signed in August, CESCO experts will coordinate the founding procedure of the grouping incorporating 14 countries.

Similarly, it is CESCO that provided the professional background for the EU's first EGTC with a non-EU entity. Members of the **Tisza EGTC** are: the County Council of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, the County Council of Transcarpathia, as well as the City of Kisvárdá. The exceptional EGTC was registered in October in Budapest.

Professional public utility support for the Hungarian EGTC programme

Our association plays a determinant role in the realisation of the Hungarian EGTC programme coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is for a large part thanks to CESCO's input that Hungary is considered a leading EU member state in this field (25 of 59 European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation registered up until today have a Hungarian member, 20 of which has its seat in our country), therefore both decision makers and professional actors take an interest in our professional experience.



In spring 2015, a document was set up for development plans between 2014 and 2020 for EGTCs with Hungarian participation, related to the strategic cooperation framework agreement with the Hungarian Development Centre (HDC), which helps synergic, integrated use of EU funds that can be accessed for financing developments.

The work of EGTCs with Hungarian participation is continuously supported by providing information and minor background documentation (e.g. EGTC maps, tender summaries, etc.). Professional background documentation was prepared for the Novohrad-Nógrád EGTC concerning the planned enlargement.

In the case of the Ister-Granum EGTC, we have organised several workshops in order to prepare development related to local products and logistic improvement. An action plan aimed at bringing about the creation of the Ister-Granum enterprise-logistics zone was drawn up, which presents in detail the tasks ahead concerning the project, and additionally, a consortium contract was put together related to the establishment of the zone.

The BTC EGTC's preparation work for cross-border calls to be opened in 2016 was aided by a series of project development workshops. As a result, we were able to identify more than 80 specific project ideas, based on which we have started elaborating specific projects. One of them in the field of energetics has already been submitted to the first call of the Danube Transnational Programme. Preparation of further projects is under way. The EGTCs work was assisted also by donating a server and two laptops.

An extended grant agreement was signed with the RDV EGTC, within the framework of which we

- provide legal support for the administrative and operational tasks of the EGTC by coordinating member accession processes and help modifying the Statutes accordingly;
- support the EGTC's website by content updates;
- related to the latter, a territorial statistic database and a series of maps presenting the EGTC's socio-economic situation was created;
- have established a territorial cooperation along the Lower Ipeľ at the request of the EGTC in the form of a development partnership, and have also started elaborating common development projects; thanks to the organised workshops, 44 project ideas could be identified so far, based on which we have started preparing specific applications;

- organised two project development workshops in 2015 with the participation of the 5 member counties, where apart from identifying commonly accessible calls, individual consultation between counties was also allowed for (7 potential projects were identified during the first two workshops).

Project development and funding maps

Our association has actively joined the elaboration process of two transnational projects, as a partner. One is aimed at launching a cooperation focusing on innovation in agriculture industry; the other would ideally result in a cross-border energy development initiative. The two proposals were submitted in partnership to the call announced by the *Danube Transnational Programme*.

On behalf of the University of Miskolc, we have started elaborating a comprehensive programme for a research and development project to be implemented in the field of *social innovation*, which equally includes a description on funds that can be accessed.

It is also at the request of the University of Miskolc that we have joined a workshop organised within the framework of an ENPI project (February 4th), where information about the *funds helping further cooperation* between universities of the four countries involved in the programme (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine) was provided.

Recently, we have had several requests related to drawing up *funding maps* on specific sectors or regions. Such a funding map was prepared in the request of the municipality of Veszprém, which presents territorial and direct funds that can be accessed by the city. A similar document was created for the newly founded Tisza EGTC's management, which sums up all available European and American options for the Subcarpathian Region (Ukraine).

At the request of the *Slovene Embassy*, we have composed a background material on EU and non-EU funding that can be accessed in order to stimulate cooperation between Slovenes in Hungary and Hungarians in Slovenia.

Based on the requests that got more and more frequent, our associates have set up a comprehensive table, which includes a wide range of funds open for applications by all different entities.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, during the course of autumn, we have composed a funding map for partners of the city-level partnership evolving in the *Hungarian-Serbian-Croatian tri-border* region, with the participation of Baja and Mohács from the Hungarian side; Sombor and Apatin in Serbia; as well as Beli Manastir and Osijek in

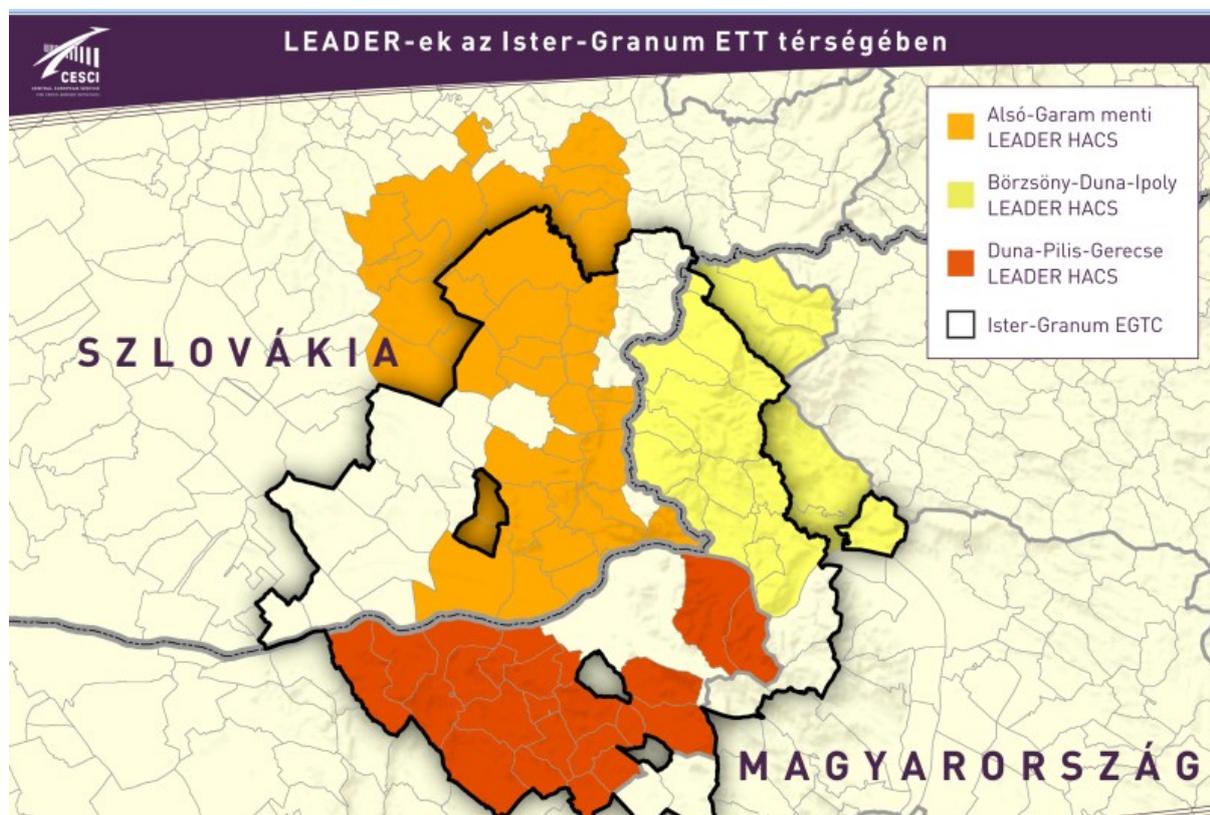
Croatia. The study also examined possible territorial and organisational aspects of the possible cooperation. Associates of the CESCO Balkans office were also involved in the work including the two project-preparation workshops (Sombor and Baja).

Related events

- June 3rd:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- June 9th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- June 16th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- June 23rd–24th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- June 25th:** project development workshop with representatives of the Ister-Granum enterprise-logistics zone (Esztergom)
- June 30th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- July 23rd:** project development workshop related to the Ister-Granum programme on local products (Esztergom)
- July 28th:** project development workshop with representatives of the Ister-Granum EGTC (Esztergom)
- August 4th:** presentation on the Slovak-Hungarian programme at the event of the Ister-Granum EGTC (Esztergom)
- September 14–15th:** project development workshops, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- September 18th:** project development workshop, Ister-Granum EGTC – local products working group (Esztergom)
- September 22nd:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- September 29th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- October 6th:** project development workshop, BTC EGTC (Mórahalom)
- October 7th:** inaugural meeting of the development partnership along the Lower Ipel' in Ipolydamásd
- October 12th:** participation at the general assembly of the Mura Region EGTC in Tótszerdahely
- October 16th:** inaugural meeting of the Tisza EGTC, Kisvárdá

November 6th: project development workshop, Ister-Granum EGTC – logistic working group

November 11th: presentation at the Börzsöny-Danube-Ipel' LEADER LAG programming working group meeting (Szob)



November 16th: project workshop of the development partnership along the Lower Ipel', Ipolydamásd

November 24th: project development workshop, RDV EGTC (Tatabánya)

December 1st: project workshop of the development partnership along the Lower Ipel', Ipolydamásd

December 14th: RDV project development workshop, Győr

December 15th: presenting the results of the project development workshops at the BTC EGTC's General Assembly, Mórahalom

4. Mediation

A significant part of our public utility activities constitutes of mediating between participants involved in cross-border cooperation along the borders, which includes transferring relevant information to local participants (e.g. via our on-line newsletter, printed publications and

professional events) and enforcing the aspects of cross-border cooperation at national and EU professional and stakeholder forums (professional background materials, decision-preparation studies, involvement in the work of national and EU level professional networks, participation at international conferences and workshops).

Participation at professional events

Tamás Deutsch's hearing at the European Parliament (Brussels, February 4th)

The European Parliament Commission for Regional Policy asked Tamás Deutsch, member of the European Parliament to evaluate the 6th Cohesion Report. On behalf of the Hungarian MEP, our association was asked to prepare a professional background non-paper and to contribute to the hearing held related to the topic.

Special legislation for strengthening cooperation initiatives in border areas (Luxembourg, May 19th)

Luxembourg, holding the EU Presidency at the time, put forward a legislative proposal, which would enable a common solution for specific problems in a given border region which stands loose from the two countries' legal systems. A workshop was held related to this revolutionary proposal, where our association was represented by its Secretary General. During the round table discussion coordinated by the MOT, he spoke in favour of necessary data harmonisation for the common development of border regions.

Future of Cohesion Policy workshops (Brussels, October 1st and July 13th)

At the request of the Committee of the Regions, an expert of our association joined the work of expert group on the future of cohesion policy. We have participated at two workshops during the funding period, and we have also prepared an official comment where we enhanced the necessity of putting place-based approach in the spotlight.

Cross-border Review workshops (Brussels, September 9th, Komárom, October 2nd)

We have also participated at the activities of the expert working group aimed at summarising legal-administrative obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation initiatives, which was launched by the European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy. In September 2015, we were present at the inauguration meeting of the working group, and have also prepared professional background material on data harmonisation necessity in cross-border territorial planning. Additionally, in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office and the Széchenyi Programme Office, we organised one of the expert audits realised within the

framework of the initiative, namely the Komárom Workshop. It was CESCO's task to identify the projects to be presented and to invite project owners, as well as to invite and prepare experts to present the individual obstacles.

Gala conference to the 25th anniversary of the INTERREG programme (Luxembourg, September 15th)

Last year, the EU celebrated the 25th anniversary of the policy supporting territorial cooperation, as well as the financial programme related to it. The main gala was organised in relationship with the Luxembourg presidency in mid-September, where a CESCO associate was also present.

Annual forum of the Danube Strategy (Ulm, October 12th)

Mátyás Jaschitz, director of planning represented CESCO at the 2015 Danube Forum, where he also held a presentation on territorial planning. The forum was attended by member states of the Danube Strategy, and is organised annually to strengthen cooperation between sectorial and social actors.

Open Days (Brussels, October 13-15)

Every year we take part in the meeting of European Cities and Regions in Brussels. We did not hold a presentation in 2015, but we provided professional help for putting together the two presentations of the Ister-Granum EGTC, and commented in the debates of various panels.

European Seminar on Democratic Governance Of Crossborder Areas (Saint Louis, October 22-23)

As a new result of our strategic professional cooperation with the Council of Europe's Democratic Institutions and Governance Department, CESCO was asked to present a lecture at the seminar related to cross-border civil cooperation, which was held in France. Hungarian examples were successfully presented during the seminar.

First seminar of CESCO Carpathia (Košice, November 5th)

The first seminar of CESCO Carpathia founded during the summer, was held at the beginning of November, mainly for local government leaders. Presenters at the seminar shared global project development knowledge. Our Secretary General spoke about the Slovakia-Hungary INTERREG programme.

Annual AEBR conference and General Assembly (Brussels, November 12-13th)

The last couple of years, we have been able to develop a strong professional cooperation with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), which has gained the highest respect since its foundation in 1971. Apart from our already mentioned support, in 2015 we actively participated in the annual conference of the association delegating our vice-president, and one of our associates held a presentation on development funds available to EGTCs.

Further important professional events:

January 14th: participation at the workshop of the TransHUSK+ project in Esztergom

January 22nd: participation and presentation at the conference on border area conditions in Fehérgyarmat

February 13-14th: civil workshop of the Transylvanian Plain in Gherla

April 16-17th: participation and presentation at the annual conference of EGTC approval authorities, Budapest

May 22nd: participation and presentation at a conference on local production networks, Abda

May 28th: participation and presentation at the EGTC workshop co-organised by the Committee of the Regions and the German Federal Ministry for Infrastructural Development, Brussels

June 17th: participation at the closing conference of the TransHUSK+ project, Győr

June 18th: participation at the conference of ESRA and MPE OCM entitled *Together for Social participation*

June 26th: participation at the inter-ministerial EGTC working group session

June 30th: participation at a workshop entitled *The potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions*, Luxembourg

August 26th: participation and presentation at the V4 project closing event of the Novohrad-Nógrád EGTC, Salgótarján

September 8th: participation at the eRegion project workshop initiated by Hungarian-Slovene municipalities, Murska Sobota

September 21-22nd: participation at the ALADIN 5. DERC conference, Ljubljana

- September 22nd:** participation at the Danube Strategy's inter-ministerial working group meeting, in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade
- September 23-24th:** participation at the Danube Transnational Programme's inaugural conference, Budapest
- September 28th:** participation and presentation at the conference entitled *120th anniversary of the Mária Valéria Bridge*, Esztergom
- September 30th:** participation at the MOT's project closing conference on economic cooperation, Paris
- October 15th:** participation at a lecture on the Besence Model held in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences' Institute for Minority Studies
- November 24th:** participation at the Measure and Well Being conference co-organised by the Green European Foundation and the Ökopolisz Foundation, Budapest
- November 26th:** lecture at the seminar for transborder Hungarian territorial regional developers organised by the Hungarian Development Centre, Budapest
- November 27th:** presentation at the *Civilians for cross-border cooperation* conference, Szeged
- December 7th:** presentation at the territorial planning conference organised by AEBR Balkans and CESCO Balkans, Novi Sad
- December 10th:** presenting the Danubian Tool-kit project to the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at the Steering Committee meeting of the Danube Strategy's 8th priority axis

Own professional events

The "Szentgotthárd Initiative" (Szentgotthárd, April 21-22)

In the last few years, the working organ has developed fruitful relations with Slovene partners. An especially good cooperation was established with the Slovenian Ambassador to Budapest and the Hungarian Ambassador to Ljubljana, and Professor Gričar's joining the Presidency has visibly stimulated our activity related to building Hungarian-Slovene relations. On April 21-22, 2015 patronised by the two ambassadors, Hungarian and Slovene mayors, businessmen, regional development experts and representatives of the academic sphere (over 60 people in total) met in Szentgotthárd to explore possible forms of cooperation, share

development concepts and find partners for specific project ideas. Attendees then signed the Szentgotthárd declaration, which states that an annual event should be created where cooperation between representatives of neighbouring nations can be strengthened and extended.

Organising EGTC workshops

Similarly to previous years, we have launched our series of workshops for EGTCs with Hungarian participation.

The first workshop was organised within the framework of the strategic agreement signed with the Hungarian Development Centre and co-hosted with the HDC on **May 29th in Kisvárda**, with as main goal to present the EGTC programme's results so far, as well as projects for the 2014-2020 financial period. Representatives of the EGTCs initiated a cross-border economic development programme by handing a summary document to Miklós Seszták, Minister for National Development.

Our next workshop was held on September **23-24, 2015 in Budakeszi**. The programme took off with a discussion with Secretary of State to the Prime Minister's Office, Árpád János Potápi, which allowed EGTCs to get to know the State Secretariat for National Policy's view on EGTCs, and also presented an opportunity for representatives of the State Secretariat to meet EGTCs development plans. Furthermore during the workshop, the usual professional consultation with relevant representatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was held. In addition, Sara Svensson, associate of the Central European University presented her results gained so far in her EGTC study, and conducted interviews with EGTC directors.

The last workshop of the year was held in **Zsámbék on November 18-19th**. The main topics of the meeting were the three cross-border cooperation programmes (SK-HU, RO-HU, HU-HR) and presentations on these programmes by the representatives of the Technical Secretariats. During the workshop, a decision was made on changes to the organisational concept of the workshops: from now on, the individual EGTCs will serve as hosts for the events.

CLLD-workshop

On **July 6th**, experts on the subject were invited to a workshop on the professional and legal background of the cross-border CLLD model (Community-Led Local Development). We have reached an agreement with rural development and INTERREG experts on launching a common initiative for the cross-border use of the CLLD tool.

VII. Youth Forum (Novi Sad, September 7–11)

Joining AEBR and CESCO Balkans, we helped organising the VII. Youth Forum in Novi Sad, Serbia, linked to the official opening of our association's local branch. On the opening, Branislav Bugarski, provincial minister of Vojvodina, István Pásztor, president of the Vojvodina Provincial Parliament, Martín Guillermo-Ramírez, Secretary-General of AEBR, Patrícia Abaffy, head of department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as Ervin Erős, director of CESCO Balkans held welcoming speeches.

As part of the Youth Forum programme, Gyula Ocskay, Secretary General and Mátyás Jaschitz, director of planning even held a presentation on cross-border integrated planning and institutionalisation of cooperation initiatives.

Applications and tenders

- To the call of the DG Justice *Rights, Equality, Citizenship*, we have submitted our application entitled *Legal accessibility – across the borders* which aimed at identifying legal obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation, and at formulating proposals to their solution in Hungary as well as 4 neighbouring EU member states. Additionally, an international video making competition would have been launched as well in order to promote the topic. Our partners were: MOT (FRA), ISIG (ITA), the Forum Institute (SKK), the Civitas Foundation (ROM), the School of Advanced Social Studies of Nova Gorica (SLO) and the Autonomy Centre at Čakovec (CRO). The application did not receive funding.
- At the invitation of the Czech EuroSchola institute, we have joined an Erasmus+ application which aimed at training a new generation of experts of cross-border cooperation in several Central European countries. The project did not receive funding.
- Within the framework of the Visegrád Fund's Flagship initiatives, a Ukrainian association called IARDI commissioned our association for a partnership. As a result of the project, we would have organised study trips in Hungary for experts of countries of the Eastern Partnership to present successful local development initiatives. The proposal did not receive funding.
- It is equally for the Visegrád Fund, but on the call of the Visegrád+ that we have submitted a proposal as a lead partner, within the framework of which experts of the V4 states would have passed on their knowledge acquired in the field of cross-border cooperation to local participants in Serbia and Montenegro. The project included e-

learning material development, organisation of 3 trainings, as well as two study trips. The application did not receive funding.

- We also partook in two EU calls as a member of an international consortium: the Commission for Regional Policy of the European Parliament opened a call for the assessment of new territorial programmes, and the DG for Regional Policy of the European Commission accepted submissions on analysing lagging regions. We were not successful on either call.

Professional Background Documents

- *Project handbook on employment*: within the framework of the TÁMOP (Social Renewal) programme, we have compiled a handbook for Hungarian employment centres on preparing and realising cross-border projects. Apart from practical information, the handbook also contains an inventory of good practices, funding map and bibliography.
- *Preparatory documentation to the DERC conference*: Edit Szilágyiné Bátorfi, Ambassador of Hungary in Ljubljana partook in a roundtable discussion at the DERC Conference, to which background documentation was prepared by our association.
- *Vocational training research in the Pannonian Basin*: at the request of the State Secretariat for National Policy and as a sub-contractor of the Hétfő Research Institution, we participated in the analysis of Hungarian language vocational training in areas on the other side of the border. Concerning every region, each research was concluded by drawing up possibilities in order to increase vocational training's competitiveness.
- *Comment to the discussion on the future of Cohesion Policy*: related to the expert consultation launched by the Committee of the Regions we have formulated an official comment on the future of cohesion policy, in which we advocate for a place-based approach.
- *Comment to projects aiming at decreasing cross-border obstacles*: CESCO is also participating in the expert working group of the Cross-border Review project launched by the Commissioner for Regional Policy. Within the framework of the consultation, we have composed an official comment in which we urge for the harmonisation of territorial statistic systems.



Employees of CESCO in 2015 :

- Balogh, Péter (PhD): scientific researcher (European Institute)
- Bauer, Rudolf (PhD): director of CESCO Carpathia (CESCI Carpathia)
- Dubniczki, Kitti: strategic planner
- Erős, Ervin: director of CESCO Balkans (CESCI Balkans)
- Gangl, Éva: strategic planner, GIS analyst
- Gyelnik, Teodor: assistant research fellow (European Institute)
- Hesz, Roland: planner-analyst
- Hüse-Nyerges, Enikő: project manager and planner-analyst
- Jankai, Norbert (dr.): legal director
- Jaschitz, Mátyás: director of planning
- Ocskay, Gyula: secretary general
- Nikolov, Ana: director of planning (CESCI Balkans)
- Nyeste, András: planner-analyst
- Pete, Márton: assistant research fellow (Europe Institute)
- Román, Éva: part-time administrative assistant
- Vas, Annamária: head of office

Contact details

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