

Final Environmental Report
of the Strategic Environmental Assessment
of the Hungary-Croatia
IPA Cross-Border Co-operation Programme
2007-2013

Non-technical summary

(according to Annex 4 of the 2/2005 Government Decree
and Annex I(j) of the 2001/42/EC Directive)

Table of contents

I. Introduction and background	3
II. The relevant SEA framework.....	3
III. Short summary of the program analysed	4
IV. Methodology of Strategic Environmental Assessment.....	6
IV. Overview of the SEA and partnership process.....	8
IV.1. Milestones of the SEA process:.....	8
IV.2. The SEA and its partnership process.....	8
V. Analysis, major findings and recommendations of the strategic environmental assessment.....	10
V.1. Current state of environment	10
V.2. General evaluation of the Programme	11
V.3. Detailed evaluation and findings	11
V.4. Transboundary effects.....	14
V.5. Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the programme	15
VI. The SEA monitoring and follow-up measures	18

I. Introduction and background

In order to facilitate the application of the sustainability and environmental aspects, as well as to comply with legal regulations (Directive 2001/42/EC – hereafter Directive – and its national adaptation, Hungarian Government Decree 2/2005 (I.11.) – hereafter Government Decree), strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* (hereafter Programme) have been commissioned by the National Development Agency. The objective of the environmental assessment was to foster the integration and application of environmental and complex sustainability aspects during the preparation process into the Programme. During the SEA process, special emphasis has been put on consultations and communication with partners as well as on the presentation of partners' ideas to planners. The SEA was carried out by an independent evaluator, the Respect Ltd.

This document summarizes the conclusions concerning the SEA of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme*. The aim of the SEA was to improve quality and consistency of the Programme, especially in a sustainability context by transferring the feedbacks from professionals and stakeholders to programme planners. SEA is a useful tool to highlight potential positive environmental impacts of a program and hinder measures that might be harmful for the environment, so SEA can improve the Programme's environmental outcome.

The strategic environmental assessment has the following main features:

- search for the main environmental impacts;
- strategic focus: carried out for programs, plans, policies;
- method based and process oriented, tailored to the subject of assessment;
- iterative process;
- has influence on decision-making process in the whole programming process;
- improves transparency of assessment and planning process, by ensuring public participation in decision-making;
- considers the implementation of programs, too, not just focuses at the planning;
- results of the SEA is documented in an Environmental Report;
- key instrument to ensure sustainable development (SD).

In this non-technical summary, we present an overview about the methodology and process of the strategic environmental assessment, highlight the SEA's main findings and recommendations. We summarize then how environmental considerations, the opinions expressed and results of evaluating potential transboundary effects were taken into account and have been integrated into the Programme. Moreover, this section summarises the measures decided upon for monitoring significant environmental impact.

II. The relevant SEA framework

The strategic environmental assessment of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* was planned and carried out in line with the 2001/42/EC Directive (that defines and introduces strategic environmental assessment and introduces it into the planning process of programmes supported by EU Funds) and its national adaptation, the Hungarian Government Decree 2/2005 (I.11.).

EC 42/2001 SEA Directive:

aims “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development” (Article 1).

These objectives are to be achieved by:

ensuring first, that “an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment” (Article 1) and second, that the “effects of implementing [these] plans and programmes are taken into account during their preparation and before their adoption” (Preamble, paragraph 4).

III. Short summary of the program analysed

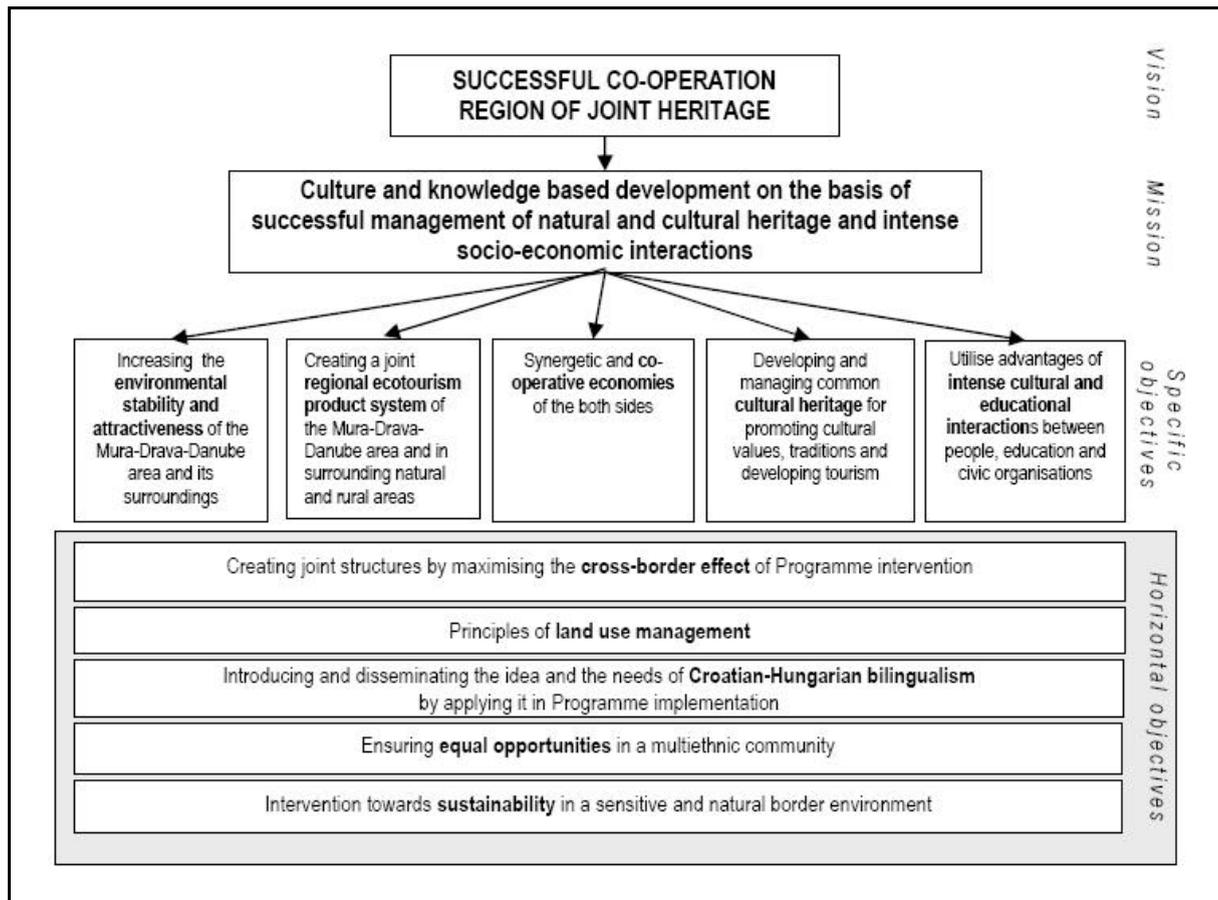
The *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* will be implemented within the 2007-2013 European Union financial framework. This strategic document is based on joint strategic planning effort of the Croatian and Hungarian parties and has been negotiated with the European Commission before its approval. The *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* will be operating between 2007 and 2013 as an IPA Programme (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance). According to the Council’s Regulation No. 1085/2006 and to the Commission Regulation (EC) 718/2007 this new instrument for pre-accession assistance provides financial resource both for candidate (Croatia, Turkey, FYR of Macedonia) and potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro) in the 2007-2013 budgetary period 2007-2013. Assistance will be used to support both the adoption and implementation of the *acquis communautaire*; and the preparation for the implementation and management of the Community's common policies.

The assistance is implemented through five components:

- Transition Assistance and Institution Building;
- Cross-Border Co-operation (CBC);
- Regional Development;
- Human Resources Development;
- Rural Development.

The CBC component has the objective of promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering stability, security and prosperity in the mutual interest of all countries concerned, and of encouraging their harmonic, balanced and sustainable development. Croatia is going to cooperate among others with Hungary within the framework of a common programme based on a joint institutional background. The two countries lay down their strategic development priorities in a joint programming document. Common financial resources available in the Programme will be used within a framework of an open call system. Implementation of the Programme will be carried out in joint structure through common projects and joint decision making.

The following chart presents the strategy of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme*.



The strategy will be implemented through 2 specific priorities. The implementation of the Programme will be assisted by the 3rd priority, called “Technical Assistance”.

Priority 1 - Sustainable Environment and Tourism

The aim of this priority is to foster environmental sustainability and safety in the border region, as well as the complex eco-tourism development of the Mura-Drava-Danube River Area and its immediate surroundings, in order to create a joint eco-tourism product through sustaining rich natural and cultural heritage.

Priority 2 – Co operative Economy and Intercommunity Human Resource Development

The aim of this priority is to facilitate economic ties, including business contacts, cross-border employment opportunities and cross-border research, development and innovation activities. The priority will also promote the establishment of common educational and cultural connections, as well as bilingualism in the Croatian-Hungarian border region. Activities in this priority will support local actors re-building the ties in the border region to create organic, coherent and vibrant socio-economic relations.

Priority 3 – Technical Assistance

The aim of this priority is to assure the successful operation of the Programme and to contribute to effective project generation, project selection and project implementation, thus increasing the quality of projects funded from the Programme. Priority 3 contributes to achieving all five specific objectives due to assuring successful operation of the Programme.

IV. Methodology of Strategic Environmental Assessment

The SEA method was based on two different approaches, which focused on the main aspects of the assessment process. These complimentary approaches were as follows:

1. The general review of the Programme (programme document) with environment focused ex-ante evaluation questions targeting on the relevance, coherence (linkages to other programming documents), consistency (clear and logical structure within the document), and result and impacts of the Programme.

2. Analysis of the Programme (programme document) based on 11 sustainable development principles listed in Annex 1 of the Directive (grouped in 8 categories) with special attention to the criteria for determining the significance of effects listed in Annex 2 of the Directive. The factors considered are:

I. Biodiversity, flora, fauna	This factor includes measures for the conservation of the diversity of habitats, of endangered species of flora and fauna, of natural values, of ecological networks embracing bio-geographic regions, as well as those concerning the preservation of the diversity of the biosphere, respectively the consideration of the protection of ecosystems and of the principle of sustainable development with natural resources.
II. Population and human health	This factor includes the moderation of effects endangering the population's economic and social quality of life and health status. The objectives include the reduction of number of diseases retraceable to environmental effects by restraining the pollution of environmental elements, as well as by spreading environmental aware behaviour and approach.
III. Soil	This factor includes activities related to the moderation of processes generating the (usually adverse) modification of the soil's mechanic and chemical structure, as well as activities for prevention of erosion and deflation, as the two biggest mechanic soil exhaustion processes, as well as soil acidification and salinisation, as the two most important chemical soil exhaustion processes.

IV. Water	<p>In case of the status and protection of waters we will consider the following detailed aspects:</p> <p>Development of waste water disposal and treatment, complex water protection investments, improvement of the oxygen and nutrient balance and water quality determined for flowing and still waters.</p> <p>In case of subsurface waters the reduction of polluting effects of endangering sources, furthermore, the matter of securing actual and potential drinking water resources in vulnerable environment. The reduction of concentration of natural materials in drinking water.</p> <p>Flood control, river and lake regulation, drainage and local water damage prevention. Implementation of technical interventions and developments for prevention of water damages.</p>
V. Air and climatic factors	<p>This factor includes measures taken against the qualitative status of the air and climatic factors: reduction of concentration of air-polluting materials emitted in large quantities - sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon-monoxide, carbon-dioxide and particulate matter; moderation and elimination of temporarily occurring pollution cases above the limit values lasting longer and occurring more frequently; the moderation of effects causing global air pollution through the combustion of fossil fuels, certain industrial and agricultural activities, and the application of substances causing greenhouse effect and ozone depletion.</p>
VI. Material assets and cultural heritage	<p>This factor includes measures taken against the damage caused by environment pollution in human establishments, material assets, as well as in buildings of the cultural heritage, monuments, museums, etc. (causing intellectual and financial loss for the society).</p>
VII. Landscape	<p>This factor includes measures affecting the establishment of a uniform landscape, taken for the rehabilitation of areas deteriorated mainly from the point of view of environment protection, for new, anthropogenic activities integrated in the nature, as well as for the realization of traditional farming types (grazing livestock holding, pasture management).</p>
VIII. Interrelationship between factors 1-7	<p>This factor includes the analytical cases in which the joint, inseparable effect of two or more factors of factors 1-7 have to be considered.</p>

The analysis of certain objectives and priorities of the Programme has been completed in accordance with the Directive according to the factors above, taking into account the probability, duration, frequency, reversibility, extent and spatial extension (including their cross-border effect) of the effects. The SEA framework and sustainable development criteria are in line with ones laid down in the National Sustainable Development Strategy as well.

IV. Overview of the SEA and partnership process

IV.1. Milestones of the SEA process:

- Task Force Meeting, (31st January, 2007) Budapest– SEA team presented the SEA framework, scope and methodology to Programme planners and stakeholders
- Preparation of SEA scope and methodology (January - February, 2007);
- Partnership consultation of SEA Scoping (February, 2007) – the opportunity was offered to official and NGO-partners to express their opinions and recommendations concerning the scope of SEA (documents were accessible for everyone on the homepages of National Development Agency and VÁTI Kht);
- SEA consultation in Pécs (2nd March, 2007) – organized for a wider range of stakeholders (official and civil partners) offering an extra opportunity to exchange information directly
- Partnership consultation of SEA report and the related Programme document (March, 2007) – the opportunity was offered to official and NGO-partners and wider public to express and submit their opinions and recommendations concerning the SEA report and the related Programme document (documents were accessible for all at the homepages of National Development Agency and VÁTI Kht)
- Task Force meeting (7th March, 2007, Osijek) – first SEA results and considerations were presented to planners and feedback from planners and stakeholders were gathered
- Communication of the conclusions and recommendations of the SEA report to Programme planners (April, 2007);
- Final environmental report – 27th June, 2007.
- Programme submitted to European Commission: 12th July, 2007.

IV.2. The SEA and its partnership process

The scope and methodology of the SEA report was prepared in line with Annex 4 of the Government Decree and Annex 1 of the Directive. The scope document of SEA was made available for official partners (ministries, national and regional authorities stipulated by Annex 3 of the Government Decree), as well as for non-governmental associations and chambers and they could express and submit their opinions related to the scoping for the SEA team (according to Article 7 of the Government Decree).

In line with the approved scoping, the preparation of the SEA has been supported by documented reconciliation with the planners.

The preparation of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* yielded several opportunities for official, state and social partners to put forward their opinion, especially on environmental and sustainability issues, as follows¹:

- During the comprehensive partnership process of the Programme (directly linked to the planning and preparation of the Programme), a wide range of social partners (economic and social associations, specialists, governmental and non-governmental organizations, etc.) was given the opportunity to express their opinions concerning the

¹ The process also provided the opportunity to mediate discussions between the SEA evaluators and the planners.

Programme in frames of workshops, meetings, phone-meetings and by sending written recommendations in forms of e-mail or mail.

- In the process of the ex ante evaluation, official and state governing parties and further partners affected or involved in planning or implementation were made possible to convey their opinions and recommendations to programme planners through forums and the channels ensured by ex ante evaluations.
- The scoping of the SEA report of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* was made available for and consulted with official partners (defined in Article 7 of the Government Decree) and social partners (for a sufficiently long period defined in the Decree).
- During the SEA process, the SEA team engaged in continuous and good professional connection and conversation with authorities and non-governmental organisations.
- The SEA report and the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* which the SEA report was based on, were open (for a sufficiently long period defined in the Decree) to any social stakeholder for communicating their opinion and recommendations related to the report's findings and recommendations. Specific invitations were sent to the main environmental authorities and NGOs for participating this partnership-process of the SEA report.

The text of the Programme was completed while incorporating the findings and conclusions of all of the consultations.

During the public consultation of the SEA report, the report and the related Programme document was made available for everyone (for a sufficiently long period defined in the Government Decree), both at the homepage of the VATI (www.vati.hu) and National Development Agency (www.nfu.hu) in line with Article 8 of the Government Decree and Article 6 of the Directive. The official partners defined in the Government Decree, and a wider range of social partners and non-governmental organisations were asked to express their opinions and help the work of the planners and the SEA team with recommendations concerning the environmental report and the related Programme document. A call for the SEA consultation was published at the homepages www.vati.hu and www.nfu.hu and in a national newspaper.

During the SEA report consultation, a reconciliation opportunity was offered for partners at the homepages of VATI and National Development Agency and directly by the planners. A partnership forum was organized with the participation of official and social stakeholders (incl. environmental civil organizations) on 2nd March, 2007 in Pécs.

The comments expressed by official and social partners during the partnership process of the SEA report reconfirmed most of the findings of the SEA team and suggested some further issues. After amending the SEA report in accordance with the outcomes of the partnership consultation, the SEA team discussed the new version with the planners. Following the reconciliation, the SEA report and the Programme document was sent to the Croatian partners for approval, and then, the final version of the *Hungary–Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme* was submitted to the Commission.

Following the submission of the Programme, the final SEA report and a non technical summary are available at the www.nfu.hu website. The final SEA report clearly shows how the comments and responses have influenced the Programme.

Major relevant SEA issues emerged from the consultation process and their status in the SEA

Comments from national, regional and local authorities:

No.	Brief description of the comment	Status in SEA
1.	Questions were formulated concerning next steps of planning process, regarding the development of the implementation manual of the Programme.	Issues are not in the scope of the SEA. VÁTI provided overview on future planning process.
2.	Questions were formulated concerning the issue of synergy and linkages between the cross-border Programme and Hungarian national (HU) sectoral and regional OPs.	Chapter 7 of the Programme provides detailed information on how the Programme is linked to the Hungarian NSRF 2007-2013.
4.	Project level indicators need to be developed beyond the programme level indicators.	The SEA is targeting on the programme level, therefore the project level (Environmental Impact Assessment – EIA) indicators and related information is out of the scope of the SEA.
5.	The open-air schools capacity needs to be developed in the region.	Transferred to the planners.

Comments from non-governmental organizations:

No.	Brief description of the comment	Status in SEA
1.	A generally positive opinion on the Environmental Report was expressed. The issue of making environmental information accessible for the public was welcome.	No action required.
2.	The conditions and institutional frameworks for nature protection are different on both sides of the border, which needs to be considered.	Transferred directly to planners.

V. Analysis, major findings and recommendations of the strategic environmental assessment

V.1. Current state of environment

The border region is characterised by the River Drava, flowing into the River Danube. The valuable nature and landscape is protected within the framework of the Danube- Drava National Park on the Hungarian side. The northern edges of the eligible area are

characterised by lakes and a small river: the Lake Balaton, and the Small Balaton and the River Sava. The high level surface water contamination can be observed in the River Danube and its tributary streams. The rate of biologically treated waste water and rate of sewage water treated with advanced treatment technologies is low in several sub-regions of the area. The situation of waste water treatment, regarding sewage collected by sewage systems, is positive.

Air pollution is not very high in the eligible area. Concerning the emission from industry, in all the three Hungarian counties the air is moderately polluted, due to the decline of the heavy industrial activities.

At the Croatian area, there are some landmines remaining on the Croatian side of the border region as a result of the military activities in the early 1990s, that danger needs special attention in development activities in the region.

V.2. General evaluation of the Programme

The *Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-Border Co-operation Programme* as a whole takes into consideration the main EU and national environmental and nature protection appropriations and aspects that guarantee the long-term sustainability of activities to be realized from the point of view of environmental aspects.

It must be mentioned however, that the document does not discuss some environmental problems that could occur during these developments, and by that it does not guarantee the protection of the environmental and natural status of the target area to a full extent. More specific definition would be necessary, for example regarding the monitoring and regulation methods of effects of ecological activities realized in sensitive areas.

The Programme has to emphasize on every account that assistance can only be granted for planning and implementation solutions that realize the objectives of the Programme by considering long-term effect assessments. The elements of the horizontal principles of environmental sustainability should formulate a minimum sustainability criteria that could assist decision-making during implementation.

According to the financial table, 56% of the total budget is allocated for the “Sustainable Environment and Tourism” priority which means that the Programme may have a significant direct impact on the environment through this priority. Since the present Programme provides a framework for a relative wide scope of eligible activities, therefore, the project selection process to be developed should guarantee, that the environment and environmental sustainability aspects will be taken into consideration to ensure that environmental impacts will be positive.

Hereinafter, we summarize our findings and recommendations concerning the priorities and activities by chapters.

V.3. Detailed evaluation and findings

V.3.1. Priority 1: Sustainable Environment And Tourism

Sustainable And Attractive Environment

The main objective of the Programme is the establishment of a natural landscape that supports both EU and national appropriations. By the development and establishment of the natural landscape, the Programme contributes to the preservation of biodiversity, to the protection of endangered flora and fauna.

The Programme contributes to the improvement of soil quality and the containment of disadvantageous soil exhaustion. Since soil destruction can have a long-term effect of more decades on the physical and chemical status of the soil, it must be considered whether any soil exploitation takes place related to landscape management. While assisting traditional, semi-natural land-use forms, technologies with the least load to the soil must be supported.

A significant part of eligible activities contribute directly to the main objectives by moderating the air pollution (development and expansion of green areas), improving the condition of surface and sub-surface waters and of the landscape, and contributing to the preservation of the population's health. The cleaning of waterways might have positive effect on tourism, however, its harmful environmental effects like possible surface water pollution caused by the increasing traffic must also be considered. These effects might occur on both sides of the border due to the topographic situation of the Danube-Drava-Mura rivers. By the use of environmental friendly materials and modern (BAT) technologies, negative effects can be moderated.

The air quality can be improved within a short time as a result of reforestation in the area of the main tourist sights and this affects generally positive both the living condition and health of those living in the area. The removal of illegal waste dumping-grounds helps in the improvement of sub-surface water quality.

Furthermore, it seems to be necessary to monitor the environment permanently in the areas affected by eco-tourism. Landscape rehabilitation, re-utilization of and removal of damages from brownfield areas and the elimination of landscape wounds resulting from industrial activities will generally decrease surface and sub-surface water pollution.

A landscape value database is a promising initiative. Linked with the comprehensive publication and popularization of certain developments these actions might improve and strengthen the environmental awareness of the population.

Sustainable Tourism in the Mura-Drava-Danube river area

The comprehensive local plan of open-air sports could significantly increase the appropriate integration of activities carried out in the nature. At the same time, these anthropogenic activities will clearly have a harmful effect – mainly due waste dumping alongside the newly constructed roads – on the general condition of the environment and especially on the native flora and fauna (there are more nature reserves in the programme area). We suggest the installation of appropriate quantity of waste collector containers at every establishment.

Monuments of national and European importance, and their environments could be preserved by construction activities.

The measures of the Programme fit into the NATURA 2000 programme, and meet the development criteria of the Hungarian Act LIII of 1996 on Nature Conservation, the criteria of the National Environmental Programme II (NKP II.) and ones of the National Nature Conservation Master Plan (NAT).

The soil will be most probably damaged in the investment areas, but its extent can be easily reduced by thoughtful work. Short and long-term soil exhaustion can be further decreased by appropriate waste-water management during establishment of new buildings, and restoration of old ones.

Unfortunately, the developments presented in the Programme can have several harmful effects at the same time. Development and use of linear infrastructure, causes damages in the soil, water bases, and the natural flora and fauna, so these type of activities should be minimized and monitored continuously during planning and implementation processes.

Environment-oriented tourism based on natural and cultural values might help fostering healthy lifestyle; and raise the employment rate of the population in the area, at the same time. Development of accommodation and further tourism-related services could reduce vehicle traffic and moderate polluting materials in the air.

The increase in number of tourists and intensity of visits in relatively undisturbed natural areas however, could have a negative effect on both environmental factors and certain elements of the built environments. A major problem related to eco-tourism is the high probability of environmental and nature pollution, since a big part of eco-activities are planned to be realized in natural areas.

Therefore, we making environmental effect assessments related for eco-tourism development and activities, especially in cases when nature reserve areas or habitats of protected species are affected. We suggest to increase the value of the developed areas by planting native plant species.

Furthermore, we suggest the decrease of use of fossil energy sources by replacing them with solar, wind or geothermal energy.

V.3.2. Priority 2: Economy and Intercommunity Human Resources Development

Co-operative Economy

It is important to increase co-operation of economic and social actors and institutions at both side of the boarder as both cost-effectiveness of economic and social activities and cohesion of society and economy can be increased by reducing the costs of co-operation.

The co-operation between universities and enterprises regarding research, development and innovation related to development of environmental friendly technologies will have positive spillover effects over the programme area.

As there is a large supply of biomass, it could have an important role among renewable energy production and use. The geothermal potential of Hungarian-Croatian border area can only be utilized if intensive research and co-operation will be realized among the two countries. The developments of the Programme fully meet these requirements.

Intercommunity Human Resources Development

Joint projects and co-operation might raise both the cohesion and the touristic value of events and natural values. Co-operation in the protection of both natural and cultural goods, joint cultural heritage is essential

Education and trainings might offer a natural and effective channel to promote issues like healthy lifestyle, or environmental friendly consumption habits and by using this channel, it can contribute to sustainable development substantially.

V.4. Transboundary effects

With regard to the strategic character of the *Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme*, significant transboundary effects are expected. So, the SEA team did efforts to integrate the Croatian stakeholders, official and non-governmental partners and their opinions into the SEA process².

The SEA report notices that proper analysis of environmental impacts and consideration of transboundary effects on environment should be ensured during the implementation period in case of projects with significant expected environmental effects. Programme implementers hereby commit themselves to analyse, consult and monitor transboundary environmental effects at the implementation level, during the whole implementation process (2007-2013).

Strengthening linkages and physical connections between the two sides of the border - especially between micro-regions –can reduce the isolation of the area and help the evolution of common responsibility for the environmental heritage and the waterways of the border area.

The quality of natural environment and environmental security will improve due to harmonised and joint environmental and water management achievements and civic activities for nature protection, where people have wide knowledge on the natural values of their region and organise their life in a more sustainable way.

The growing intensity of interactions between economic and social actors from the two sides of the border will enhance competitiveness, facilitate economic growth and create jobs. While carrying out joint activities, both the competitiveness of Croatian and Hungarian firms, universities and other organisations and the competitiveness of the region as a whole will be improved as there is an ongoing transfer of knowledge. Better performing local and regional economies result in a significant raise in welfare.

The Programme increases the intensity of co-operation between economic actors, research institutions and universities and contribute to a raise in product oriented RDI efforts at both sides of the border.

A common educational and cultural space could be developed in the Croatian-Hungarian border region by assisting and fostering common planning and further interactions between educational, research and cultural institutions. The important cultural heritage and the already

² The Programme document, the SEA report and the ex ante evaluation report was sent to the Ministry of the Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development in Croatia on 5th July, 2007. The Croatian partner (responsible for planning) confirmed officially the acceptance of the Programme in a letter sent to the Managing Authority of the Programme on 10th July, 2007. in which the Managing Authority was asked to submit the Programme to the European Commission. In this letter, the Croatian partner ministry emphasized the role of close cooperation and intensive consultative process between Croatian an Hungarian national and regional representatives during the elaboration of the Programme.

existing multicultural activity interactions in the field of arts and other elements of cultural life will contribute to the evolution of regional identity, as well.

The cooperation of municipalities and non-governmental organisations supported by the Programme might contribute to the development of a common regional identity.

The Programme might contribute to development of a common regional identity by supporting municipalities and non-governmental organisations that are willing to cooperate.

V.5. Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the programme

Proposals of the SEA were presented to the planners and consulted in details, as one of the most important action in the SEA process. The SEA team's proposals have been made on the basis of the analysis of and consultations held with official and social partners (made available for consultation on the websites of VATI Kht and National Development Agency) on environmental effects of the Programme. Findings and recommendations of the publicly consulted SEA report were completed and/or modified according to recommendations gathered during its public consultation.

The SEA proposed several recommendations that reveal the possibilities how potential negative environmental impacts of the Programme and its interventions could be anticipated or reduced.

The main conclusions of the SEA and the responses of the planners related to their consideration:

Proposals	Planner's statement on actions and decision taken according to SEA proposal
The tourist value of the area as well as the number of tourists (as potential environment polluters) could be raised significantly by the investments described in the Programme, A permanent monitoring of the main environmental parameters in the areas concerned in grown eco-tourism would be necessary.	The Programme monitoring should cover this aspect.
Soil destruction can have a long-term effect of more decades on the physical and chemical status of the soil, so it must be considered that no soil exploitation takes place by territory- and landscape-management. The assistance of traditional, semi-natural land-use forms, technologies with the least load to the soil must be supported.	Agreed - the Programmes ensure the soil protection for longer term (e.g. preserving natural land cover forms)
The wide-ranging publication and promotion of developments is suggested, since the environment awareness of the population can be significantly increased by these means.	Accepted

<p>The increase of the population retaining ability of small settlements, especially those with disadvantages, is necessary. Positive discrimination advised.</p>	
<p>In tourism-concentrated areas landscape rehabilitation would be justified, as well as the re-utilization and removal of damages from abandoned industrial areas and brownfield lands.</p> <p>The chance of surface and sub-surface water pollution could be decreased by the elimination of landscape wounds resulting from industrial activities.</p>	<p>Accepted, but the rehabilitation of industrial areas (brownfields) is not relevant for the eco-tourism oriented Programme.</p>
<p>The cleaning of waterways has an advantageous effect on tourism, however, harmful environmental effects and possible surface water pollution caused by the increasing traffic must also be considered. These effects can occur on both sides of the border due to the topographic situation of the Danube-Drava-Mura Rivers, however, by using environmental friendly materials and more modern and economic technologies, negative effects can be reversed.</p>	<p>Accepted and included in the Programme</p>
<p>During the planning, building and operation of tourism and water infrastructure, the specification of sustainable technology of buildings, use of environmentally friendly building materials and methods, energy-efficient, low waste and selective waste management methods are recommended.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>
<p>A major proportion of eco-activities are planned to be realized in natural areas, so eco-tourism might be one important source of environmental and nature pollution. The effects of establishment, operation and liquidation (if there is) on the natural values should be mentioned.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>
<p>We suggest that developments related to eco-tourism activities would be analyzed carefully, by making environmental effect assessments.</p> <p>These preliminary examinations and the accurate elaboration of the plans are highly important, since badly constructed establishments can have long-lasting negative effects.</p>	<p>Accepted and included in the Programme</p>
<p>The effect of operations concerning nature reserve areas or habitats of protected species</p>	<p>Accepted and included in the Programme</p>

<p>should be especially analyzed. We suggest focusing development into areas of native plant species.</p> <p>The construction and restoration of buildings must be realized considerately by maximal protection of natural green areas (woods, parks).</p>	
<p>The sustainable utilization of natural resources is significantly increased by the use of alternative energy sources (solar, geothermal energy). The installation of alternative energy-based systems in certain establishments would be expedient.</p> <p>The possible decrease in the use of fossil energy sources that might happen as a result of installing solar, wind or geothermal energy sources, should be examined parallel with cost-effectiveness assessment.</p>	Accepted and included in the Programme
<p>Soil salvage might be carried out before infrastructural investments: the reclamation layer of the soil can be saved and re-used by the establishment of green areas.</p> <p>The establishment of green areas can decrease the physical (erosion, deflation) and chemical (soil acidification and salinisation) exhaustion of the soil.</p> <p>Concerning the mining of construction materials, protection of sensitive areas and geological values must be considered</p>	Accepted
<p>Preservation of the natural landscape should be ensured by planning of network establishments (roads, railroads) - this should be a minimal condition for achieving the Programme objectives (e.g. eco-tourism).</p>	Not relevant for the Programme, planning of road networks is not CBC competency.
<p>Infrastructural operations designed for the support of eco-tourism might advance surface and subsurface water pollution, so expansion of the sewage system is suggested. According to sustainable water management principles, only those solutions should be preferred that would not cause even bigger ecological problems in the future.</p>	Not relevant, as the sewage management at the mentioned scale is out of the scope of the Programme
<p>The extended supply of bio-food might be both a tourist attraction and an environmental friendly measure.</p> <p>Selective waste collection might be of higher importance due to increased tourist traffic, and might imply environmental friendly lifestyle at the same time. Inclusion of both NGOs and private investors is a real option.</p>	Accepted as element of sustainability stated as horizontal aim of the Programme, but no so detailed.

Technical development and environmental sustainability can enforce and improve each other. It should be stated in case of R+D and innovation.	Not accepted, as it is not relevant for the supported RDI activities.
Health protection issue should be emphasized by education-training and research. It is recommended to highlight and focus more on the health-development and environmental health issues (integrating healthy lifestyle issues into education, the research in the field of environmental health).	Not accepted, other OP is dealing with that issue
Integrating issues like healthy lifestyle and environmental friendly consumption into education might enhance sustainable development.	Not accepted as already supported by a sectoral OP
The specialised institutions and civil organisations should provide information regarding the environment, towards small settlements in a more forceful manner. The local authorities of the small settlements are not properly informed (they have no environmental experts), although they have legal responsibilities.	Accepted and fully integrated
We recommend that instructions and manuals should be prepared for projects in the mother tongue of the minorities on both sides of the border.	Partly accepted, bilingualism is ensured through the whole Programme, but using of the minorities' language is not feasible.
Implementation manual should contain the environmental minimum criteria set for projects to be developed and evaluated	Accepted
The project communication plan needs to have a specific chapter on the potential environmental impacts and the pre-cautionary and migration activities.	Will be developed in the communication plan
The Annual report on implementation should provide a summary on the achievements made based on the environmental sustainability indicators	All indicators will be measured in annual implementation report

VI. The SEA monitoring and follow-up measures

Programme planners agree with the finding of the SEA report in that interventions may act in contrary to each other. Planners agree with SEA recommendations that sustainability aspects should be considered rather on an individual basis at further levels of planning and implementation (e.g.: manuals, calls for applications).

Relevant guarantees will be introduced in the implementation manual and/or the calls for proposals documentation of the Programme, with special regard to the following issues:

- a set of horizontal indicators and sustainability criteria;
- a Sustainability Guide, that helps assisting the principle of sustainability during the implementation and evaluation process,
- a chapter on evaluations will be extended to environmental impacts and related precautionary and mitigation activities.

During the implementation of the Programme the following monitoring measures will be introduced:

- A functional and efficient cooperation structure of key authorities (political, economic) and NGOs of the border region will be created and developed.
- Programme Monitoring and Information System will collect, store and analyse information gained from projects regarding their environmental performance in relation to project-level environmental minimum criteria and to programme-level environmental sustainability indicators.
- Relevant environmental authorities will be invited to the Monitoring Committee.
- Training of staff being involved in the implementation system will focus on sustainability aspects, as well.
- The Annual Report on Implementation should provide a summary on the achievements made with regard to the indicators measuring environmental sustainability.