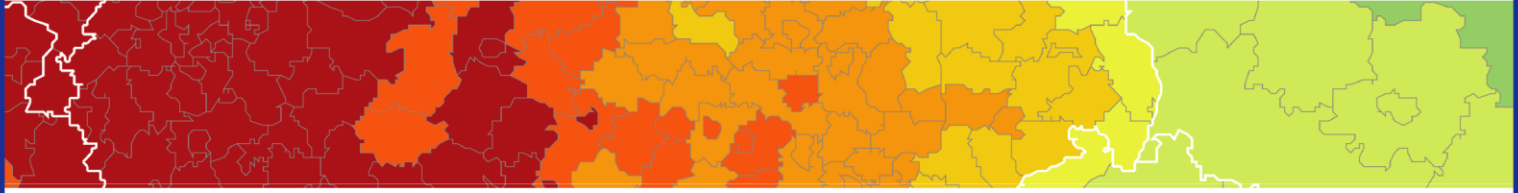


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



Cross-border Public Services (CPS)

Targeted Analysis

Final Report

**Scientific Report – Annex VII
Case study report – Pomurje**



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Version 16/11/2018

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Cross-border Public Services (CPS)

Final Report

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Abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
BORG	Bundes-Oberstufenrealgymnasium Bad Radkersburg
CESCI	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
CoR	European Committee of the Regions
CPS	Cross-border public services
CPSP	Cross-border public service provision
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European grouping of territorial cooperation
ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
RS	Republic of Slovenia

1 Introduction

This case study report presents the results of one of ten case studies conducted in the frame of the ESPON project "Cross-border public services". It aims at giving an overview of the cross-border public service (CPS) provision in the Slovenian region Pomurje and its neighbouring regions in Austria, Hungary and Croatia (in the following named "Pomurje region"¹) and indicating further needs and development potentials for future CPS. For the first time it develops a comprehensive overview of existing CPS in the Pomurje region. Overall, the analysis has revealed that CPS in this region are not well developed despite some achievements. Ten existing CPS have been identified in five policy fields. So far, CPS exist in the fields of transport, education and training, labour market and employment, environmental protection and civil protection. These tackle the regional needs only partly and need further development and spreading.

From a regional policy perspective two fields of intervention deserve special attention, these are education and environment protection. Considering the rather poor representation of cross-border public services in the region, these two fields are the most developed. Education with two schools offering cross-border public service seems a good case to find the crucial conditions that enable the service and possibly encourage them in other fields. Although trilateral cooperation of the nature parks has a long tradition, the potential to develop additional cross-border public services is still great. Therefore, CPS representing these policy fields are presented in more detail

- Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Őrség (environment protection),
- Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci (education),
- Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg (education).

This selection is also linked to the in-depth analysis of possible future CPS developments in the region. One example builds on the achievements of the Trilateral Nature Park and aims at widening the CPS provision of the park. The other example focuses on cross-border public transport to support and expand the few existing cross-border transport services.

After brief methodological remarks (Chapter 2), the existing case study structures and CPS identified are introduced (Chapter 3). This includes an outline of the relevant regional context, a review of the border situations from different perspectives and an overview of existing CPS in Pomurje region. The three existing CPS in the fields of education and training and environmental protection are thereafter analysed in more detail (Chapter 4). This includes an analysis of the specific needs addressed and their conditions for provision, delivery and management. Chapter 5 addresses future CPS needs in the region by focusing on two topics.

¹ For legibility reasons, in the following the term 'Pomurje region' refers to the whole case study area including the adjacent regions in Austria, Hungary and Croatia. Sole reference to only the Slovenian part of the case study area is indicated as 'Slovenian region Pomurje'.

For these potential future CPS possible set-up options and requirements are presented. The case study report concludes with lessons learned and recommendations (Chapter 6).

2 Methodology

The case study report is based on a triangulation of data gathering and analysis methods. Document and literature review provide basic information on CPS and context conditions in the Pomurje region.

This has been complemented by information from different stakeholders through an online survey and interviews as well as through written responses. The annex includes a list of the interviews conducted.

A workshop has been conducted in June 2018 in Murska Sobota, Slovenia. Apart from verifying the analytical results of the case study, this workshop was used to discuss the needs for future CPS development in the Pomurje region and to identify possible actions and developments to enhance CPS development. Stakeholders participating in the workshop included representatives of nature parks from Slovenia and Austria, regional administration from Croatia, public body for spatial planning from Croatia, regional nature protection agency from Austria, regional development agencies from Slovenia, bus service provider from Slovenia and national trading house from Hungary. Altogether 15 participants jointly discussed future CPS development in Pomurje region.

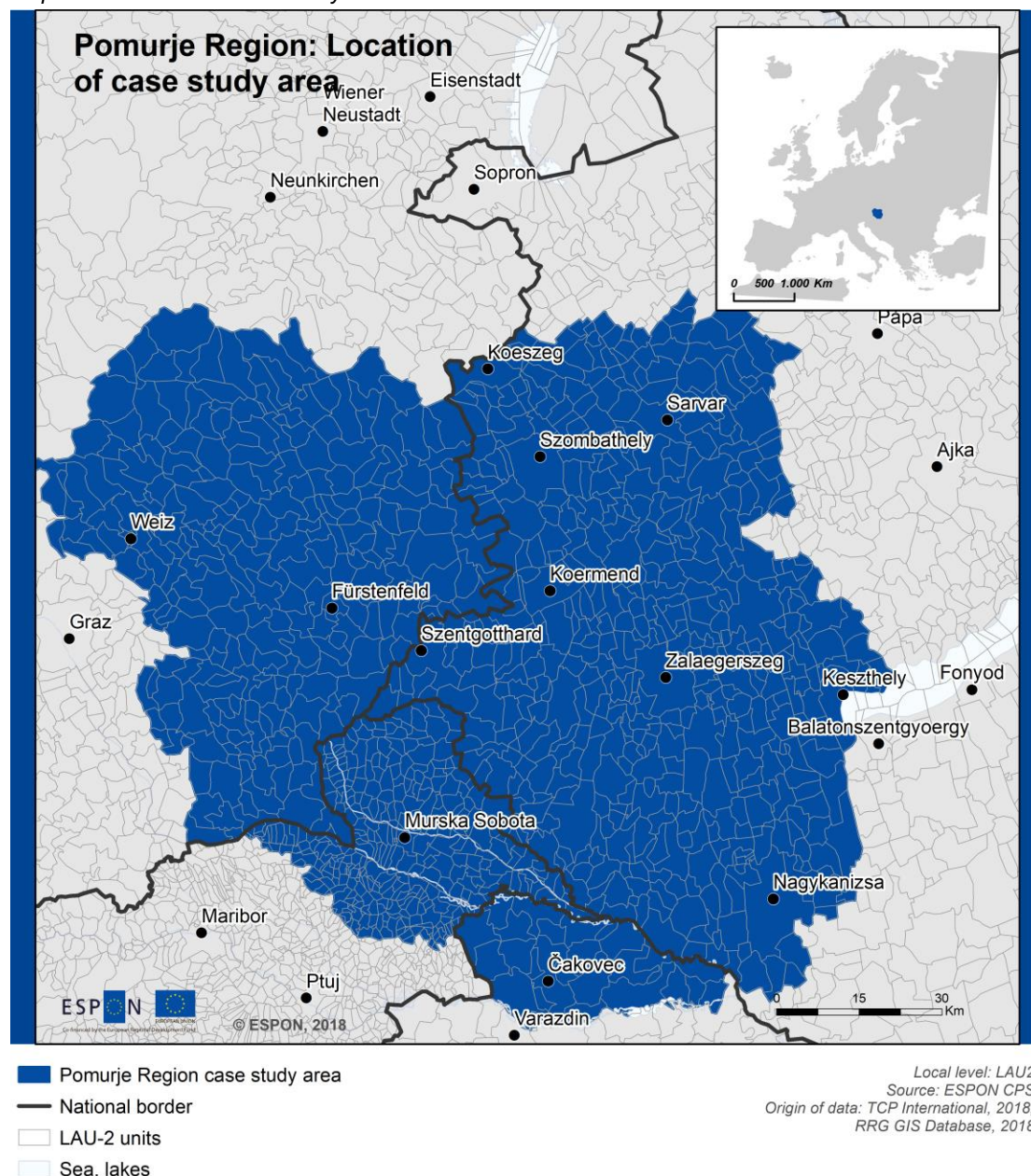
Current CPS have been analysed and mapped for illustration. Existing CPS are thus presented by quantitative and cartographic means as well as using qualitative empirical methods. Possible future CPS is based on qualitative analysis building on some background research on the framework for the provision of CPS and the workshop discussions and conclusions from relevant regional stakeholders. This is complemented with recommendations identified by the research team.

3 The case study region at a glance

The case study region consists of the Slovenian region Pomurje, which covers the Slovenian area around the river Mura in the most northern and eastern corner of Slovenia, and the bordering regions in three neighbouring countries of this area of Slovenia: Austria, Hungary and Croatia (see Map 3-1). This study discusses three borders: Slovenian-Austrian, Slovenian-Hungarian and Slovenian-Croatian, but also includes the Austrian-Hungarian and Hungarian-Croatian borders at some points.

The Slovenian region Pomurje, formally carries the name *Pomurska statistična regija* or Mura Statistical Region with the NUTS 3 code SI031. The neighbouring regions in the case study area are *Međimurska županija* or Međimurje County in Croatia (HR046), Vas (HU222) and Zala (HU223) counties in Hungary as well as *Südburgenland* or South Burgenland (AT113) and *Oststeiermark* or East Styria (AT224) in Austria.

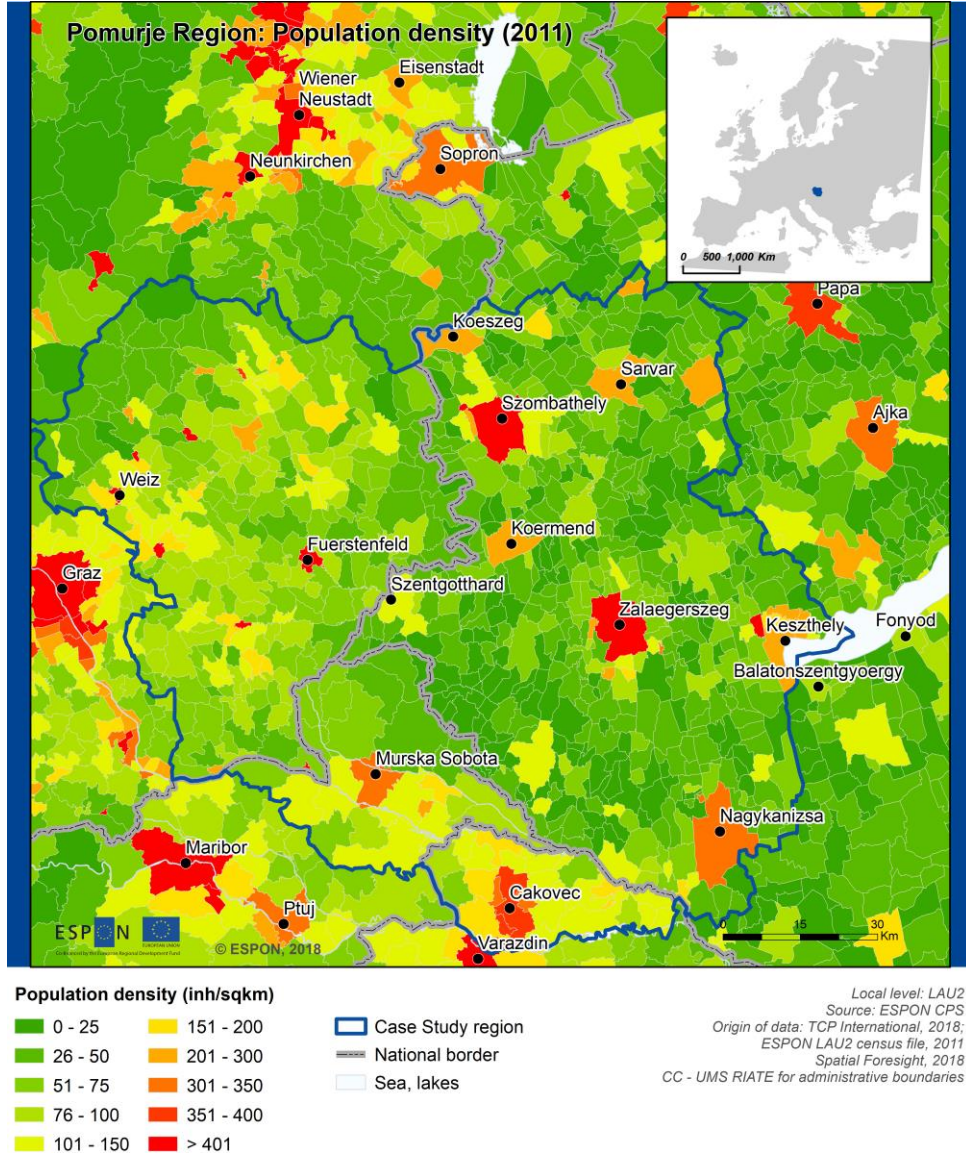
Map 3–1 The case study area



The whole case study area covers about 12,982 km² and has a total population of 1,136,339. Thereof, 119,145 inhabitants live in Slovenia, 364,582 in Austria, 538,808 in Hungary and 113,804 in Croatia (European Statistical System, 2018b).

The area has a rather low population density with few towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants. Larger towns are Murska Sobota (19,220) in Slovenia (Statistical Office Republic of Slovenia, 2012), Weiz (8,872) and Fürstenfeld (5,986) in Austria, Szombathely (78,884), Zalaegerszeg (59,499), Koeszeg (11,666), Sarvar (14,777), Koermend (11,950), Keszthely (20,619) and Nagykanizsa (49,026) in Hungary, and Čakovec (27,104) in Croatia (European Statistical System, 2018a; see Map 3-2).

Map 3–2 Population density in the Pomurje region, 2011



3.1 Multidimensional reality of the border

Being part of the Habsburg Monarchy (later Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary) the region has traditionally been ethnically heterogeneous and multilingual. Slovenians, Austrians, Croatians and Hungarians live on either side of the borders, in some areas more than two of the ethnic/language groups are residing.

After the two world wars and the breakup of Yugoslavia, which were destructive for cross-border relations, cross-border cooperation has been restored partially with the accession of Slovenia and Hungary to the EU in 2004 and Croatia in 2013.

The **political dimension** of the Slovenian-Austrian border had a clear closing effect before Slovenia joined the EU. Similarly, the Slovenian-Hungarian border became less closed with the EU accession of both countries. At the same time, the Slovenian-Croatian border became an external EU border. Despite EU accession of Croatia the border remains less open since Croatia has not yet joined the Schengen area.

As a result of the Schengen area the Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Hungarian borders allow for free movement of people, goods, services and capital between the countries, which also has an opening effect for CPS provision. This changed the overall framework for cross-border cooperation in general and CPS provision in particular.

Beside enabling cooperation through Schengen, the EU has encouraged and supported cooperation of different institutions and organisations across the borders in Pomurje region through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the Cross Border Cooperation programmes.

Three EGTCs have been established in Pomurje region. MASH with partner municipalities from Hungary and Slovenia, PANNON with partners from Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia as well as MURABA with partners from Slovenia and Hungary. Whereas MASH and PANNON are covering several policy fields, MURABA is rather focused on social policy.

Although the political dimension can be regarded as having an opening effect, there are differences in administrative systems that are causing closing effects. Austria, Croatia and Hungary all have regional government and administrative levels, whereas Slovenia only has the national and the municipal level. Cooperation at the regional level is therefore difficult as the regions do not have suitable peers at the Slovenian side. The national level can be estranged from the regional or local cross-border issues, whereas the municipality level can be too fragmentary and discordant to close agreements.

There are several bilateral agreements in the field of civil protection and disaster relief in the region. These are bilateral agreements between Slovenia and Austria as well as Croatia and Hungary respectively on cooperation in prevention and mutual assistance in the case of disasters or serious accidents. In addition, Slovenia has bilateral agreements with Austria, Croatia and Hungary on the early exchange of information in the event of a radiological emergency, due to the nuclear power plant in Krško. The agreements have been concluded between 1995 and 1999..

The **physical dimension** of all three border relations inhibits both opening and closing effects. Most parts of the border do not have physical obstacles. Solely the river Mura represents a natural barrier along parts of the Slovenian-Austrian and the Slovenian-Croatian borders respectively. At these parts of the border few bridges (mostly road) limit the crossing of the border.

The free movement of people, goods, services and capital due has been an important economic development opportunity for the case study region. This holds especially for Slovenians at the Slovenian-Austrian border, for Hungarians at the Slovenian-Hungarian border and also for Croatians at the Slovenian-Croatian border. Therefore and resulting from the changing political dimension the **economic dimension** of the border has an opening effect.

Economic discontinuities occur to different extents along the different part of the border in the Pomurje region. The Austrian part of the case study area is economically more developed than the Slovenian, Croatian and the Hungarian parts and the Slovenian region Pomurje is to some a bit better developed than the Hungarian and the Croatian region (see Table 1). Therefore, there are quite some commuters, who travel to work to the neighbouring regions either on a daily or weekly basis.

Table 3–1 GDP per capita by NUTS3 region, 2011

Name of the region	NUTS3 code	GDP per capita 2011 [EUR]
Pomurska statistična regija	SI031	11,867.89
Südburgenland	AT113	22,499.03
Oststeiermark	AT224	25,183.66
Vas	HU222	9,055.87
Zala	HU223	8,299.70
Međimurska županija	HR046	8,444.34

Source: Eurostat, 2011

The common use of the Euro in Austria and Slovenia has additional opening effects along this part of the case study area's border. All other borders require currency exchanges since Hungary and Croatia use their national currencies respectively. However, in the border areas in Croatia and Hungary the Euro is also widely accepted.

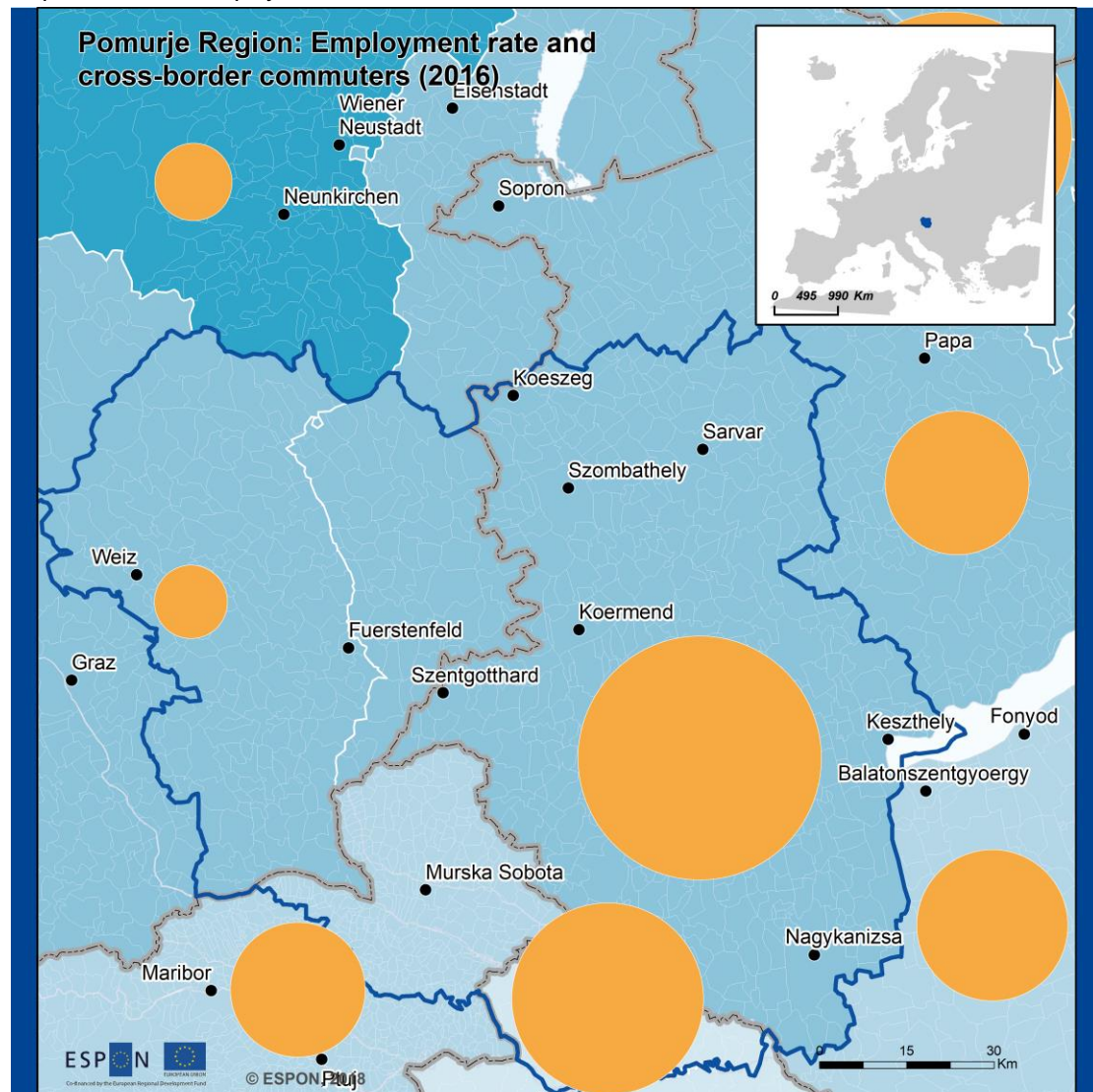
Due to the historical development the area is characterised by different ethnic minorities living in different parts of the case study region. There is a Hungarian minority in Slovenia and Slovenian minorities in all neighbouring regions in Austria, Hungary and Croatia. As a result of continuous contacts of cultures and languages the **socio-cultural dimension** has an opening effect.

Slovenia recognises some areas of its territory to be ethnically mixed with Hungarians as indigenous population. These are the municipalities of Hodoš, Moravske toplice, Šalovci, Lendava and Dobrovnik (Office for national minorities, 2018). According to the population census in 2002, the Hungarian minority in Slovenia comprises 6,243 individuals, and 7,713 people stated that their mother tongue was Hungarian. In these municipalities Hungarians have all rights granted by the constitution, which also means that, besides Slovenian, Hungarian is acknowledged as official language. This guarantees access to all public services in Hungarian, including education.

The strongest language barriers exist at the Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Hungarian borders, since the languages are not related. However, many Slovenians learn German at school and German is traditionally widely spoken in the Slovenian region Pomurje. Not least due to the acknowledged Hungarian minority in the Slovenian region Pomurje, there are many Slovenians speaking Hungarian.

Between Slovenia and Croatia the language barrier is weaker, since Serbo-Croatian was one of the official languages in Yugoslavia, and therefore also widely spoken in Slovenia. In addition, Slovenian and Croatian are closely related languages and one could even argue that the spoken language in the border region reflects a continuum of the two languages. Thus, the multilateral dimensionality of the border relations in Pomurje region are dominated by opening effects since the successive EU accession of Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia.

Map 3-3 Employment rate and the cross-border commuters



Employment rate, 20-64 years old (%)

- < 60
- 61 - 65
- 66 - 70
- 71 - 75
- 76 - 80
- > 80

Number of persons employed in a foreign country

- 1,000
- 10,000

- Case Study region
- National border
- Sea, lakes
- LAU-2 units
- NUTS 2

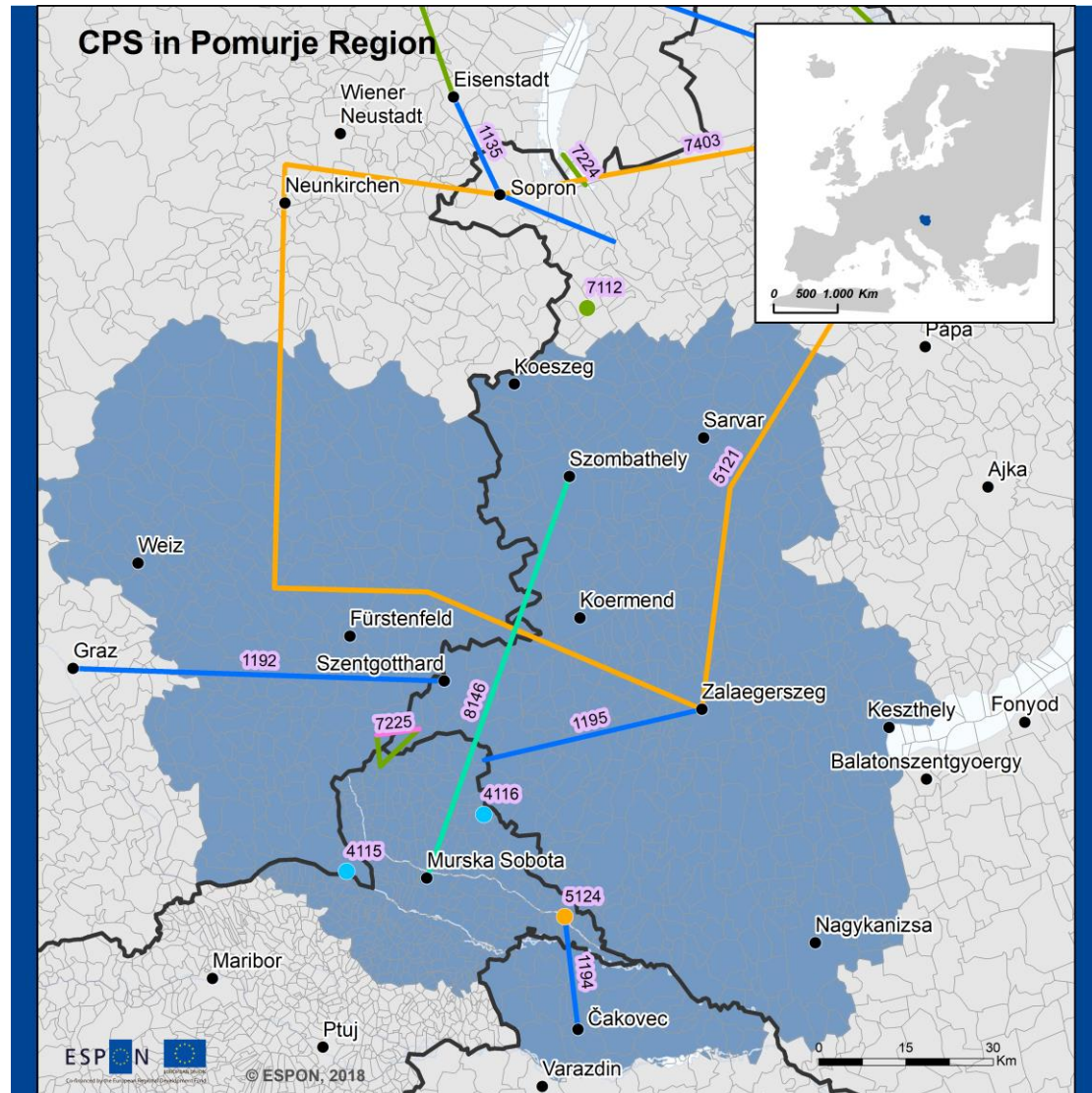
Statistical level: NUTS2
 Source: ESPON CPS
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018, Eurostat 2018
 (lfst_r_lfe2emprtn, lst_r_lfe2ecomm)
 Spatial Foresight, 2018
 CC - UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

3.2 Existing CPS in the region

The case study research has identified ten CPS in the Pomurje region, although some service providers were not aware about their specific characteristics.

The Trilateral Nature Park started the cooperation between the parks in the 90s, but it only became formal with an agreement in 2006. Other CPS mostly developed after the EU enlargement in 2004, when Slovenia and Hungary joined the EU. Although Croatia joined the EU in 2013, there is no CPS functioning at the Slovenian-Croatian border at the moment.

Map 3-4 CPS in Pomurje Region



Themes / fields of application of CPS services

- Citizenship, justice and public security
- Civil protection and disaster management
- Communication, broadband and information society
- Education and training
- Environment protection
- Healthcare and social inclusion
- Labour market and employment
- Spatial planning, tourism and culture
- Transport

- Case study area
- National border
- LAU-2 units
- Sea, lakes

Local level: LAU2
 Source: ESPON CPS
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018;
 RRG GIS Database, 2018

The existing CPS are covering different policy fields (see Map 3-4). There are two CPS on education and training, two on labour market and nature preservation and protection against natural and other disasters are covered by one CPS respectively. Four transport related CPS

were identified linking some towns in the case study area by local trains. The target groups naturally differ between these policy fields. The two CPS in the field of education are offered to pupils, the labour market CPS address job seekers and workers and the remaining CPS address the general public in different ways.

The CPS have widely been established due to the opening effects of the political dimension of the borders. As people are more likely to seek education or work across the border, the CPS followed. About a half of the CPS identified in the region are functioning as a voluntary action of a domestic service or a combination of domestic services on either side of the border. Table 3-2 gives a brief summary of all current CPS identified.

The CPS for which an in-depth analysis was conducted are detailed further in chapter 4. Other CPS currently in place in Pomurje region are in the fields of transport, labour market and employment as well as civil protection and disaster management.

Transport related CPS are currently only provided by national railway companies offering local cross-border connections and thereby connecting the different national railway systems. Examples are Ledava–Čakovec and Hodoš–Zalaegerszeg. There are no transport CPS outside the railway network which would allow commuters living in other parts of the area to commute by public transport. The need for such transport is mirrored in increasing labour mobility across all four national borders. This in turn leads to a demand for job related advisory services in the region, taking into account the different employment conditions and job searches. The examples of the Employment agency field office in Lendava, Slovenia and the EURES-T Pannonia are the only services in this field so far. These services focus on different areas within the Pomurje region, the service in Lendava addresses primarily Hungarian job-seekers in Slovenia, whereas the EURES-T Pannonia addresses job-seekers in the Austrian Hungarian border area of which the case study area is a part.

In the field of civil protection and disaster management a long-standing cooperation exists between Slovenia and all its neighbouring countries, including Austria, Hungary and Croatia that go back to the 1990s (Administration of the RS for civil protection and disaster relief, 2018). This is based on bilateral agreements on prevention, information exchange and mutual assistance in cases of disasters. Such general agreements are materializing regionally in common responses of fire brigades. Regional offices for civil protection and disaster relief in Murska Sobota, Slovenia, and Szombathely, Hungary inform each other on cases of emergency or natural disasters. Professional fire brigades as well as voluntary associations support each other in cases of accidents at the motorways connecting Slovenia and Hungary as well as with fires and floods. The mutual support is based on a voluntary action (Smodiš, 2018).

Table 3–2 Overview of CPS in the Pomurje Region

#	Map	Name	Theme	Year	Target group	Description
1		Cross-border train connection Lendava (SI) – Čakovec (HR)	Transport	/	General public	Cross-border railway connection
2		Cross-border train connection Ormož (SI) – Čakovec (HR)	Transport	/	General public	Cross-border railway connection
3		Cross-border train connection Murska Sobota (SI) – Zalaegerszeg (HU) (via Hodoš)	Transport	/	General public	Cross-border railway connection
4		Cross-border train connection Fehring (AT) –Szentgotthard (HU)	Transport	/	General public	Cross-border railway connection
5	4115	Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg educating also Slovenian pupils	Education and training	2004	Slovenian Pupils	The school accepts 15 students from Slovenia every year. The aim is to function as an open school in the border area. Slovenian students also get Slovenian lessons.
6	4116	Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci (SI) educating Hungarian pupils from neighbouring villages	Education and training	2014	Hungarian pupils	Hungarian pupils, mainly from the neighbouring village, attend the school under the same conditions as Slovenian pupils.
7	5121	EURES-T Pannonia	Labour market and employment	2009	Workers, Job Seekers, Employers	EURES-T Pannonia offers information to workers and job seekers in the Austrian-Hungarian cross-border region.
8	5124	Employment agency field office in Lendava, Slovenia, provides support for Hungarian job-seekers in Hungarian	Labour market and employment	2004	Job Seekers, Workers	Some employees at the field office in Lendava speak Hungarian (this is a bilingual area) and offer information to Hungarians looking for a job or job-related information.
9	7225	Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Őrség (Joint tourism offers and programmes)	Environmental protection, natural resources management and climate change action	2006	General public would it be possible to specify this?	The trilateral nature park was established with an agreement of all three parks to collaborate in numerous fields. At the moment the parks have common tourist information and branding.
10	8146	Mutual assistance and coordination between fire-brigades of Murska Sobota, Slovenia, and Szombathely, Hungary	Civil protection and disaster management	1995	General public would it be possible to specify this?	A bilateral agreement exists between Slovenia and Hungary. In case of emergency or natural disaster both sides receive the signal.

4 CPS provided in the region

From the above overview of existing CPS in the region, the following three CPS have been identified together with the stakeholders for a further in-depth analysis:

- CPS 1: Trilateral Nature Park
- CPS 2: Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci
- CPS 3: Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg

The following sections provide detailed insights into the framework conditions of the provision of these CPS. They highlight what needs are addressed and how the CPS provision is organised, respectively. These details may be of interest for similar CPS development in Slovenia – within and outside the Slovenian region Pomurje – but also in other European regions.

4.1 Trilateral Nature Park

The Trilateral Nature Park CPS is a joint service by the three individual parks, namely Goričko Nature Park (Slovenia), Nature Park Raab (Austria) and Örség National Park (Hungary). The Trilateral Nature Park encompasses a total area of 1,052 km² and includes thereby the area of seven Austrian, 28 Hungarian and eleven Slovenian municipalities (map 4-1). The park has 51,000 inhabitants altogether, which means that the population density of the park is 48 inhabitants per square km, varying from 36 in Örség to 66 in Raab (Dešnik and Domanjko, 2011). This is one of the most developed areas of cross-border cooperation for the provision of public services in the Pomurje region. This is not least due to the fact that nature does not recognise national borders. The CPS provision is based on a long-lasting cooperation in the framework of the Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Örség. The cooperation aims at coordinating protection and management of natural areas across national borders. The longstanding cooperation considered as a CPS since it is publicly financed, involves stakeholders across the border and delivers different sub-services. The CPS Trilateral Nature Park currently mainly ensures joint tourism-related services. In the future, the collaboration between the three parks could eventually lead to the establishment of a common management plan (Dešnik, 2018). This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Map 4-1: Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Őrség



Source: Goričko Nature Park

4.1.1 A voluntary agreement framed by the Alpine Convention

The first steps towards cross-border cooperation in the field of management and protection of natural areas were made in the Alps with the foundation of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alpine Regions (CIPRA) in 1952. The aim of the Commission was to form a convention that would protect the Alpine environment and its natural resources. After a process that took almost 40 years, *The Alpine Convention* was signed in 1991. The convention recognised the need for coordinated cross-border cooperation for numerous common problems that cannot be solved through national legislations alone (Convention on the Protection of the Alps 1995).

The Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Orseg is situated in the eastern part of the Alps. In this area transnational and cross-border cooperation has developed within the Alps-Adriatic Working Community (AAWC), founded at a meeting in Venice in November 1978. “Although protection and management of the natural areas have not been at the core of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community cooperation, it has nevertheless formed an important part of the cooperation since its inception” (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016, 190).

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the corresponding changes in Central and Eastern Europe transformed the context for cooperation in the area during the early 1990s. During this period the importance of the EU started to grow (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016). “Through the

EU INTERREG initiative and various pre-accession programmes, external funding for cooperation was also available for the first time, which gave a boost to cooperation initiatives” (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016, 190).

This was also the beginning of the idea to form a trilateral nature park with the aim to ensure coordinated management and protection of natural areas across borders. Although there was a shared vision to establish a joint nature park, three separate parks were established between 1998–2003. Therefore, this cross-border public service is a voluntary action of the three parks without any legal reference framework beyond the framework of the Alpine Convention.

The cooperation between the three parks is based on a partnership agreement that the park authorities have signed in 2006 and renewed in 2009. The partnership agreement declares the intention to cooperate in the fields of nature protection, tourism, culture, education and regional development.

Cooperation should take place through:

- raising public awareness in the fields of nature protection and environment, through raising awareness of youth, adults and employees in the field of industry and crafts, in particular in agriculture and forestry;
- planning of joint events, emphasising the diversity in cultural heritage and cultural activities;
- joint design of promotion and communication material, which will present the area to the tourism and agricultural markets as suitable for healthy living and recreation;
- the formulation of a common management plan, in which the aspects of heritage protection and restructuring of natural habitats will be emphasised;
- joint search for funding from the European Union;
- joint cooperation within the European Green Belt Initiative (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016, 194).

4.1.2 Needs to address environmental and landscape protection jointly

These tasks outlined in the agreement are closely linked to the needs for joint environmental and landscape protection across the borders of the nature park. According to the director of the park authority in Slovenia, the establishment of the three parks is the result of the common efforts of all three sides to protect the natural and cultural characteristics of the region. Their proximity to the border and each other as well as the shared understanding of the area as a cross-border region with a certain degree of preservation led to the actual establishment of the three parks and its joint cooperation agreement (Dešnik, 2018).

The shared vision, aiming at a common cross-border management plan, has started to develop in the early 1990s. The process was slow but decisive, and the vision is a result of the continuous cooperation between the actors during the last 20 years (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016, 193). Due to the long cooperation tradition, there are high levels of mutual trust, sense of “belonging together” and a common identity that facilitate the establishment of the cross-border public service.

Currently, the main tasks of the Trilateral Nature Park are related to the development of the park territory. The park provides common tourist services and promotes tourism in the cross-border region. Another development task aims at ensuring that the fundamental pre-conditions for economic development, competitiveness and innovation are secured and that available social energies, skills and resources can be best harnessed. This leads to the delivery of specialised and high quality public services adapted to the special needs of a territory. The common public service should harmonise the differences in the degrees of nature preservation of the individual parks and tailor the economic, agricultural and tourist aspects to environmental sustainability.

Theoretically, the park has also preservation tasks that are defined as delivery of specialised public services that protect, maintain and enhance the functions of green infrastructures to deliver ecosystem services. These tasks are currently conducted by the individual parks, although they attempt to collaborate in this field as well.

CPS provision primarily aims to improve the effectiveness of services provided by the three parks individually. Thus, the CPS addresses a need for coordination and harmonisation and integration of domestic public services that already exist on the different sides of the border.

4.1.3 A CPS using soft and green infrastructures

The services provided by the Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Órség are based on soft infrastructure – the cooperation between the park authorities of the three parks and the green infrastructure of the natural and landscape environment covered by the park area. The Trilateral Nature Park does not comprise of its own infrastructure such as offices. The infrastructure upon which this CPS is built is therefore domestic infrastructure that has been established after the informal talks about a joint authority already started but before the cross-border public service was established through the partnership agreement. The soft infrastructure forming the production base of the cross-border public services is one-sidedly owned as well as maintained by the respective state (Dešnik, 2018). This informal character building on the individual parks' responsibilities is also apparent in the naming the trilateral park as this varies between the three countries, where always the domestic park name is mentioned first (Dešnik, 2018).

4.1.4 Networking delivery with different tasks and capacities

The cooperation agreement has been signed by the three park authorities rather than the bodies that established the parks. Thus, the agreement has no financial consequences as it was not signed by those who decide on the budget and financial structure of the individual park. These are the national governments of Slovenia and Hungary, respectively, and regional government in the case of the Austrian nature park.

Consequently, the three parks differ in terms of organisational structure, capacities and tasks (see Table 4-1-4). To deal with this asymmetry, the park authorities are collaborating in common EU projects to exchange experience as much as possible and coordinate tasks such

as a joint tourism promotion. However, this restricts common activities to tasks that are under the responsibility of all three park authorities. In addition, project funding does not substitute permanent financial support for the joint activities that would enable long-term planning of cross-border activities.

Table 4-1-4: Comparison of facts between three parks

	Goričko Nature Park	Raab Nature Park	Őrség National Park
State	Slovenia	Austria	Hungary
Place of Authority	Grad	Jennersdorf	Őriszentpeter
Established	2003	1998	2002
Established by	National government	State Government of Burgenland	National government
Responsibility	nature conservation	nature protection, tourism, education and regional development	park authority serves as a nature protection authority on the county level, overseeing an area substantially larger than the park itself
Employees	12	1,5	60

4.1.5 Conclusions

The parks have not been planning to establish a common body or administrative unit to formalise the collaboration. The networking delivery requires to focus on the specific services the parks want to offer jointly and plan the implementation in detail. The success to do so, builds on the long-term cooperation between the parks, especially on the good relations between the staff of the parks. As a result mutual trust has developed and can be considered as the main factor for successful CPS provision by the trilateral park.

The parks have nourished the relations although they do not necessarily have resources reserved for that. This is one of the main reasons the cross-border service is currently limited to development tasks. Although, development of a joint vision can take years, it is the perfect base to build upon, even if the resources are scarce. Also, it proved, that a shared vision across the borders can motivate national actions, such as the establishment of the individual parks.

4.2 Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci

This service is provided by the Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci (*Dvojezična osnovna šola Prosenjakovci/Ketnyelvu Altalanos Iskola Partosfalva*) in Slovenia.

The Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci is located next to the Slovenian-Hungarian border and is less than 4.5 km away from the centre of Soboška ves (Magyarszombatfa) in Hungary. The settlement is part of the municipality of Moravske Toplice, which is one of the ethnically mixed areas, where Hungarians are recognised by the Republic of Slovenia as indigenous population. Thus, the school also has official names not only in Slovenian but in Hungarian, as indicated above. The first parents from Hungary decided to enrol their children at the school in Prosenjakovci in 2014. The good word spread and ever since the interest has been growing and in the school year 2017/2018, 22 of 75 pupils enrolled in the school were Hungarian citizens (Interview with Herman, 2018).

4.2.1 A legal framework for domestic services guaranteeing bilingual service access

In accordance with the Slovenian legislation, the Hungarian ethnic minority is granted all rights given by the constitution and the international treaties. Therefore, Slovenian and Hungarian are both official languages in all municipalities where Hungarians are acknowledged as indigenous minority. This guarantees access to all public services in Hungarian language, including education (Office for national minorities, 2018).

There is, however, no obligation for Slovenian schools to admit pupils from Hungary living outside Slovenia. Thus, the offer to Hungarian citizens living in Hungary is a voluntary service offered by the Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci.

4.2.2 Cross-border needs extending an originally domestic service

Based on Slovenian law mentioned above and to ensure adequate education for the children, whose mother tongue is Hungarian, Hungarian schools were introduced in 1945. However, primary school education without Slovenian language knowledge has hampered the Hungarian minority children in enrolling in Slovenian secondary schools. Thus, their parents started to enrol their children in Slovenian primary schools for easier access to secondary schools and the labour market. Consequently, Hungarian primary schools in Slovenia became less attractive and experienced decreasing enrolment (Hozjan, 2007).

To resolve this problem, the model of bilingual education has been introduced in 1959 to enable the pupils to gain knowledge of and in both languages. In bilingual schools, pupils whose mother tongue is Hungarian obtain primary education jointly with pupils whose mother tongue is Slovenian. The languages rotate according to a time schedule and are used equally to communicate in class and in all other school activities as well as in the communication of the school. This includes written and oral communication.

In line with this general need in the municipalities with an acknowledged Hungarian minority, the Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci was not established for the purpose to be used by citizens on both sides of the border. The public service was initiated as domestic service to address the needs of citizens in Slovenia to acquire primary school education.

The public service became a cross-border public service through the need of children in Hungary living close to the border to easily access primary education. Being located in the immediate neighbourhood and offering classes in Hungarian makes the bilingual school in Prosenjakovci an attractive alternative for Hungarian parents when enrolling their children for primary education.

Crucial triggers for extending the domestic service to a CPS were:

- the remoteness of the cross-border area (rural and sparsely populated);
- long distances / travel times to urban centres in domestic hinterland;
- the low relevance of socio-cultural dividing lines (existence of mutual trust, a sense of “belonging together” & a common identity) due to Hungarian being spoken on both sides of the border and a strong cultural presence of the Hungarian minority in this part of Slovenia.

According to the headmaster (Interview with Herman, 2018), some parents decided to enrol their children in this school because they consider the level of education in Prosenjakovci to be higher than in Hungary. The school offers several foreign languages, thorough information technology education and equipment, various leisure activities, special needs meals and other high standard additions to the basic curriculum not necessarily available at Hungarian primary schools in their surroundings.

The service is provided to all citizens living on the Slovenian side of the border to ensure adequate access to affordable services in all parts of the territory with acceptable levels of quality of life and societal participation at their places of living and working. Hungarians living across the border may have limited access due to capacity restrictions of the school. Nevertheless, despite the limits of EU Council Directive to children of migrant workers Hungarian children can enrol freely (Interview with Herman, 2018).

4.2.3 Domestic existing hard and soft infrastructures are the basis for CPS provision

Since the CPS evolved from a domestic service it is built upon the already existing infrastructure that is one-sidedly owned by the Slovenian part. This includes the hard infrastructure of the school buildings and facilities as well as the soft infrastructure in terms of rules and processes established, such as the rules for bilingual teaching to address the needs of the Hungarian pupils from Slovenia.

The school has not enlarged its infrastructure but allows to enrol a limited number of Hungarian children in order to fill up the classes to a maximum of 21 pupils per class (Interview with Herman, 2018). So far, the available infrastructure has proven sufficient, since no Hungarian children from across the border applying for the school in Prosenjakovci had to be rejected yet.

The maintenance and the costs related to the curriculum are entirely covered by the Slovenian national budget and the municipality, who share the costs of schools in Slovenia. Thus, without additional infrastructure general funding is not affected by admitting additional

pupils from across the border. Instead, it can be argued that the service is provided more efficiently since more children benefit from the same offer.

Hungarian parents, if they do not work in Slovenia, are not entitled to some subsidies, as for instance school meals, that may be subsidised for pupils living in Slovenia. The criteria for the subsidy are low income of the family or some other special circumstances, such as subsidies for children in foster care or asylum seekers. Citizens from Hungary also have to organise the transport to and from school by themselves since there is no public transport available or dedicated to pupils crossing the border. Other examples for the differences are accident insurances and preventive health care. Since these are not provided by the budget providing primary school education, Hungarian pupils are not entitled to the preventive health care that is offered to Slovenian pupils nor are they insured in case of accidents at school. Parents have to organise insurances separately (Interview with Herman, 2018).

4.2.4 Centralised one-sided CPS delivery

Corresponding to the used infrastructure and the development from a domestic service to a CPS, it is provided in a centralised way by using the existing local body in Slovenia without involving public bodies from Hungary. Despite this one-sided delivery there were no blocking factors for expanding the bilingual primary education in Prosenjakovci for children from across the border.

4.2.5 Conclusions

The cross-border public service has various benefits for both sites, which is the reason for the voluntary service of the bilingual school offered to Hungarian pupils. Additional children from Hungary ensure that the school has enough pupils to continuously provide the service even if the population is shrinking in rural municipalities. The continuous contact of the pupils contributes to promoting Hungarian language and culture in everyday life of the pupils in this border municipality. Hungarian in Hungary differs to some extent to the language spoken by the Hungarian minority, therefore the daily contact is valuable for the minority. Although, these two cultures have lived close together for so long, the contact on a daily basis has a positive influence on tolerance and acceptance of differences among children and parents.

Hungarian children benefit from primary education that is accessible without long travel times and a high service quality.

Possible further developments of the CPS are envisaged in two ways, namely an inclusion of Hungarian residents in all services of the primary school without separate financing schemes and an extension towards pre-school level.

Current legal and administrative frameworks are adequate to provide this cross-border public service as such since it does not require any formal approval of the qualification obtained at primary school. Nevertheless, the framework is not inclusive in terms of financial agreements, which inhibits a possible disadvantage for Hungarian pupils. Thus, some additional

agreements are needed to ensure the same services for children from Hungary to address the same level of service provision related to transport, meals, and preventive health care.

Given the positive experience with the CPS the school intends to extend the service to pre-school classes. Especially families with children in primary school would benefit from the service provision at one location. However, for pre-school classes Hungarian parents would have to pay the full tuition fee whereas this is subsidised for Slovenian residents. Thus, for further CPS development in this direction the headmaster of the school aims for an agreement between the Slovenian and Hungarian governments.

4.3 Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg

This service is provided by the Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg (*Bundes-Oberstufenrealgymnasium Bad Radkersburg*), Austria. The school is located nearby river Mura that is the barrier separating the continuous settlement of Bad Radkersburg at the Austrian side and Gornja Radgona at the Slovenian side of the border.

4.3.1 A voluntary action without specific legal frameworks

There is no obligation for Austrian schools to admit pupils from Slovenia living outside Austria. Thus, the offer to Slovenian pupils living in Slovenia but wishing to attend the school in Bad Radkersburg is a voluntary service offered by the secondary school.

4.3.2 Widening of possible higher education options through cross-border education

Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg was originally established to address the needs of citizens in the Austrian border area. It used to be a domestic service. It became a cross-border public service through the actual demand by Slovenian pupils.

Slovenian pupils have been admitted to the school already since the 1980s. The opening effects of the border when Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 raised the interest by Slovenians to attend the school in Bad Radkersburg. The main reason for Slovenian students to enrol is to gain perfect knowledge of German. Many of the pupils already have a very good command of German when entering the school since most of them are living close to the border and are used to the Austrian culture to the effect that there are no language and culture barriers (Interview with Fasching, 2018).

Pupils enrolling in the secondary school in Bad Radkersburg are mainly ambitious pupils, who want to continue their studies in Austria or Germany or elsewhere in Europe. Obtaining the high school degree at an Austrian secondary school improves their chances to get a position at universities abroad. In addition, the programmes offered by the school in Bad Radkersburg are appealing to many of them. The school has specific music, natural science and language programmes that allows pupils to focus on the field they like and excel at. The open character of the school, where pupils and professors are regarded as colleagues rather than being in a hierarchical relationship, further attracts pupils from both sides of the border. Also, the school

is organised as a campus and offers numerous additional leisure activities (Interview with Fasching, 2018).

Taking the voluntary character of the CPS into account, attendance of Slovenian pupils is limited to 15 pupils per year. In each of the three programmes (music, natural science and languages) a maximum of five pupils from Slovenia is accepted. The students interested have to take a test on their command of German. The most convincing applicants are invited to enrol. In the school year 2017/2018 a total of 60 Slovenian pupils (out of 300 pupils altogether) have been enrolled at the school (Interview with Fasching, 2018).

4.3.3 Centralised one-sided CPS delivery

Since the CPS evolved from a domestic service it is built upon the already existing infrastructure that is one-sidedly owned by the Austrian part. This includes the hard infrastructure of the school buildings and facilities as well as the soft infrastructure in terms of rules and processes established, such as examination rules and curricula for obtaining the high-school degree required for higher education access.

The maintenance and the costs related to the curriculum are entirely the responsibility of Austrian national budget. However, the ambition of the school since its establishment in 1967 was to provide an open school service for the cross-border area (Interview with Fasching, 2018). Thus, without additional infrastructure general funding is not affected by admitting additional pupils from across the border. Instead, it can be argued that the service is provided more efficiently since more pupils benefit from the same offer. Overall, Slovenian pupils can enrol under the same conditions as Austrian pupils.

4.3.4 Centralised one-sided CPS delivery supported by Austria and Slovenia

Corresponding to the used infrastructure and the development from a domestic service to a CPS, it is provided in a centralised way by using the existing local body in Austria without involving public bodies from Slovenia. Despite this one-sided delivery there were no blocking factors for expanding the secondary school education in Bad Radkersberg for children from across the border. On the contrary, open access across the border has always been the overall aim.

Limiting the number of Slovenian pupils admitted every year is not only a result of the voluntary character but also proves useful for ensuring sufficient contact with the German language in official and unofficial activities. This way, the original motive of the pupils to obtain a perfect command of German can be answered (Interview with Fasching, 2018).

During recent years, the voluntary service basis has been extended by offering Slovenian language courses to Slovenian pupils. This shall ensure that Slovenian pupils also obtain education in their mother tongue beyond primary school level. This is coupled with cultural insights as the school employed a teacher from Slovenia.

Although the Slovenian government does not contribute to the schooling financially, there is support at the principal level. This was demonstrated in 2017 when the Slovenian President of

the National Assembly visited the school during its 50th anniversary celebration (Interview with Fasching, 2018).

4.3.5 Conclusions

The school considers its cross-border service as a mission to promote the border as an advantage. Ambitions and working ways differ between Austrian and Slovenian pupils. Their joint education thus is not only important to promote the border as advantageous but to enrich the school and school education.

Furthermore, the CPS provision is also favourable for collaboration between the two neighbouring cities, since many of the Slovenian pupils are from Gornja Radgona, who will later have better chances to seek work in Austria.

The school envisages to offer Slovenian lessons also to Austrian pupils. This would support a more balanced exchange between Austrian and Slovenian students in both languages, whereas this is currently largely taking place in German. However, until now there has been a lack of sufficient interest, since at least 15 pupils would have to be interested per year to obtain a financially stable size of the language course. In recent years only about five pupils were interested respectively.

5 The future of CPS in the region

Opening and closing effects of the border discussed in chapter 3 revealed needs for cross-border public services in several areas. In view of a regional development perspective primary and secondary education, medical emergency services and services supporting job-seekers and cross-border workers are among these areas:

Primary and secondary education

Although cooperation is relatively well developed in primary and secondary education, trans-regional transfer of knowledge is still weak and there are only few corresponding examples of CPS provision in Pomurje region. Cross-border education could serve as a means to strengthen this dynamic. Furthermore, such CPS would strengthen foreign language proficiency and, indirectly, self-confidence and employment opportunities of the youth. This is consistent with the main education goals of Slovenia as stated in the Organisation and Financing of Education Act, which aims also to “educate for mutual tolerance, promote gender equality awareness, respect for human diversity and mutual cooperation” and to “enable inclusion in European integration processes” (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2015).

Medical emergency

In medical emergency time is crucial and in some cases medical assistance can be provided more quickly and appropriately by crossing the border. Given the closeness of the different borders in Pomurje region this is an issue for all border relations in the area. So far there are neither interstate agreements and nor CPS existing. Efforts are currently limited to the

harmonisation of information systems at national and regional levels without any policy document directly addressing medical emergency CPS (Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota).

Labour mobility

Increasing cross-border commuting indicates that there is a growing trend in labour mobility across all national borders in Pomurje region. The two CPS identified so far address only certain areas of the whole of Pomurje region and little information is available on cross-border mobility at the trans-regional level. Therefore more advising services are needed for job-seekers and cross-border workers, both in terms of types of advices provided and geographically more widespread.

In addition to these three policy areas there are even more urgent needs to further develop or establish CPS, respectively, in the fields of nature preservation and transport. These potential CPS have been analysed in more detail and are presented in the following sections.

In the field of **nature preservation** there is both a need for establishing a common river management along the river Mura/Mur involving all four countries of the region (Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary) and a need for further developing the existing CPS in the Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Őrség. Building on the experience of the Trilateral Nature Park could be useful for enhancing cross-border environmental protection in other parts of the region such as the river Mura/Mur. Thus the following section 5.1 develops possible further CPS developments for the Trilateral Nature Park.

Increased commuting does not only create additional demand for advisory services by cross-border job-seekers and workers but also creates needs for organising cross-border **transport**. As sustainable mobility is one of the priority themes at the regional, national and EU level, diminishing car dependence of cross-border commuting is a necessity and requires efficient cross-border public transport. Given the limited access through few cross-border railway lines additional needs for public bus services have been identified. These are analysed in section 5.2.

Chapter 5 concludes with a short assessment of overall development potentials for CPS in the Pomurje region.

5.1 Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Őrség

Building on past experience of the Trilateral Nature Park to provide CPS in the Austrian-Slovenian-Hungarian border area park authorities envisage extending their common services within their park area. These services should complement CPS and domestic services provided so far by the Trilateral Nature Park and the three individual parks so far. The following reviews first possible further CPS that could be provided by the park before reviewing what changes would be required to implement the intended CPS extensions. The section concludes with proposals for potential first steps towards the new or enlarged CPS in the park area.

5.1.1 Specified CPS development for addressing needs of several target groups

The overarching objective is in establishing a formalised cooperation platform through which a common cross-border management plan of the Trilateral Nature Park area could be implemented. Such a common management plan would integrate nature and landscape protection goals of the three Member States taking into account their sustainable development objectives and the well-being of local communities. This approach aims to diminish currently existing conflicts between policy sectors, particularly in the fields of agriculture and nature protection (Peterlin and Simoneti, 2016, 194). Furthermore, joint management of the park should overcome differences in relevant national laws, institutional settings and administrative proceedings, particularly related to spatial planning, economic development as well as environmental policy and climate actions. Such an approach could include different types of CPS that address different target groups. The main needs for such CPS identified by the regional stakeholders are related to information, communication, awareness raising and training:

- Firstly, there is a need for awareness raising in the general public living in the area of the park. Shrinking population being one of the problems, making locals aware of the special features of their living environment is a way to make them value it more and consequently to stay.
- Children are important multipliers in a long-term perspective. Thus, there is a need for providing environmental protection related education to school children.
- Municipalities are the main actors regarding spatial development. They need specialised knowledge on the positive impact of nature conservation for regional economy.
- Similarly, local farmers have a particular information and training need to obtain more awareness, knowledge and skills on the importance of nature conservation and the related benefits for farming.
- Finally, tourists benefit from information on touristic offers and facilities in the Trilateral Nature Park area. While these are partially available, park authorities still envisage improving these CPS for tourists, in particular in view of joint tourist services offering to experience the nature of the park area.

In addition to these information and training needs there are other tasks that could be offered jointly better than by individual stakeholders on either side of the border. These concern common branding and marketing services that could support the local economy in the whole park area:

- Common branding and marketing of agricultural products would not only support the regional identity but could be beneficial for small local farmers in particular, since they often lack access to larger market areas.
- Local crafts, such as hand weaving, thatched roofing and pottery, are also important for the local identity. The Trilateral park could support branding and marketing of their products as well as encourage craftsmen to continue to produce and to pass their skills and knowledge on to younger generations.

In addition to these target groups for which the Trilateral Nature Park could either extend existing or develop new CPS it should also continue to address the needs of the individual

parks themselves. The parks mainly need opportunities to work together regularly, to visit each other and exchange good practices in order to agree on a common strategic management plan that could be implemented by a joint employee, for example.

These views on potential further CPS development and the needs identified are a result of continuous collaboration of the three parks during past decades.

5.1.2 Informal governance structures may not be sufficient for overcoming administrative and policy asymmetries

So far, the existence of the Trilateral Nature Park is based on an agreement signed by the park authorities. However, the park authorities are only executing the tasks transferred to them by either the national government or the regional government that have established them. This results in an asymmetry of main objectives, responsibilities and tasks of the three individual park authorities as outlined in section 4.1. This hampers actual harmonisation of tasks and the joint implementation of a shared vision. For example, the Slovenian park was established by the national government to serve nature conservation. Thus, the park, for instance, has no competence to provide services in support of the local economy.

The park authorities do not expect that a formalised structure could solve this asymmetry. They consider the most promising approach to act as a platform for product development for the target groups mentioned above and do so in their responsibility as formally individual bodies. This requires, however, continuous and systematic financial and organisational support. This could be ensured, for instance, by an employee jointly financed by the three parks who can coordinate the cross-border work. Taking into account the asymmetry of responsibilities, the park authorities have voiced their opinion that regional development agencies should promote cross-border collaboration and CPS provision in their fields of responsibility for further enhancing CPS provision in support of the Trilateral Nature Park's main aims.

The approach to further develop CPS in the Trilateral Nature Park as envisaged by the park authorities, however, does not sustainably overcome the repeatedly mentioned asymmetry. For being successfully implemented, this approach requires continuous and extensive collaboration of different stakeholders, i.e. the parks, regional development agencies etc. At the same time, the development and implementation of a truly common management plan does not appear to be realistic under these terms. Thus, other alternatives should be investigated that require a possibly higher degree of formalisation, even if this is not favoured by the three park authorities:

- The possibly least formal approach could consist of making additional agreements between single parks and their national/regional authorities who can transfer the required responsibility to conduct certain tasks in the park area to the park authority. In case of the Slovenian park this could be an agreement with the 11 Slovenian municipalities on spatial planning, for example, or an agreement with different ministries in order to extend the responsibilities of the park to additional fields. In this case the responsible authority

transferring certain tasks would then also have to provide the funding for the respective work it would normally conduct itself.

- Alternatively, including additional stakeholders in the agreement between the three parks may also help to overcome the asymmetry of responsibilities and tasks. It follows the same approach as the first proposal in order to allow the parks to conduct tasks required for a common management of the overall park area. This way, it would be clarified from the beginning that the transferred tasks shall be conducted jointly by the Trilateral Nature Park.
- While in the first two options the networking structure would be kept the third option considers replacing the networking structure with an integrated delivery model. For this a joint formal structure replacing the currently existing parks could be envisaged. Examples for integrated models managing nature and national parks across the border are existing in Europe. Some of them have founded an EGTC to replace prior informal cooperation structures. The replacement of the individual parks, however, only supports the overall objective and vision of the Trilateral Nature Park, if the joint structure is borne and funded by all required stakeholders whose competences are required to join all tasks required for the common management. This approach would be beneficial to employing staff dedicated to cross-border activities.

In the long-run, it may also prove useful to investigate the possibilities for overcoming different national legislations in view of the EC proposal on a cross-border mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context (COM(2018) 373 final).

5.1.3 Potential next steps include clarifications and investigation of governance options

Despite the common views on needs of the Trilateral Nature Park by the park authorities there seems to be room for improving the common understanding on what CPS should be provided jointly in order to provide certain services better, more effectively or more efficiently. Such common understanding would include specifying what policy fields, actions and services should be included in the common management.

This may require a joint development strategy for the Trilateral Park area, that specifies for each field (a) what should be achieved, (b) why a certain activity is better done / service is better provided jointly rather than individually, (c) what are the stakeholders required for the individual activity / service, (d) possible legal requirements through new national agreements or similar, (e) what is a realistic time frame etc.

In parallel further steps could be taken to investigate different delivery alternatives. If certain delivery models are excluded from the investigation this may hamper progress if more integrated approaches are required for certain services identified as being crucial for a common management.

Additional stakeholders required for the different services should be contacted. Once a convincing strategy can be offered this may improve the negotiation position and help involving them in favour of integrated cross-border environmental and landscape protection.

To conduct these different steps different project funding could be useful (such as Interreg). However, this should be used in view of the overall objective of developing a common management rather than working on individual and/or independent projects.

5.2 Cross-border public transport

An increasing number of daily commuters crosses one of the borders in the region to travel to work or school. Most cross-border commuters cross the Slovenian-Austrian border but also commuting across the Hungarian-Slovenian border is frequent. This is reflected also in Transport Development Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 (Transport Development Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia until 2030), which supports the need for new transport solutions from the spatial development perspective: “Public transport infrastructure may contribute to forming cross-border regions with neighbouring countries, which is important for the development of hilly and less accessible areas with numerous problems related to economic and demographic stagnation.”

Despite these needs, cross-border public transport is little developed so far and requires considerable efforts to answer both, national policy requirements and local citizens' needs. Public transport relies solely on railway, connecting some of the local centres between Slovenia and Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia as well as Austria and Hungary. The connections between Slovenia and Austria as well as between Hungary and Croatia are via other regions with unreasonable travel times.

Railway connections could be complemented by services for areas not accessible by train and services connecting these towns and villages with those accessible by train. Also, some cross-border railway connections operating in the past could be rather easily re-established. The following reviews first possible CPS that could either support mobility or provide better cross-border public transport before reviewing the changes required to develop the intended CPS. The section concludes with proposals for potential first steps towards new transport related CPS in Pomurje region.

5.2.1 New connections and information services to overcome dependence on individual transport

Cross-border public transport in Pomurje region relies on railway connections as cross-border public bus lines do not exist. Therefore, not all local centres are well connected, resulting from both a lack of demand and poorly developed infrastructure. Cross-border bus connections are limited to some commercial bus lines not connecting the regional centres in Pomurje region but the larger cities of the neighbouring countries. Thus, regional stakeholders identified different options for developing transport related CPS that address different target groups and can increase attractiveness of the regions in view of demographic shrinking:

- Daily commuters including workers, pupils and students could be the main users of cross-border public transport. Especially for pupils and students the need to offer alternatives to individual transport is high.

- Weekly commuters complement this group with demand for public transport on Fridays and Sundays. This includes in particular students and local citizens visiting relatives across the border.
- Elderly, who are unable to drive a car or have difficulties affording a car, can also benefit from better public transport connections increasing their mobility due to a lack of individual transport options.
- Regional and international tourists should also be encouraged to use public transport offered for the general public without designating specific bus routes to them. If tourists used general public transport this could support a cost efficient provision that maybe endangered otherwise due to the low population density in many parts of Pomurje region.

For making cross-border public transport more attractive to these different target groups regional stakeholders identified several aspects of CPS development:

- This includes awareness raising of local citizens highlighting the benefits of public transport and encouraging them to use public transport more frequently.
- Service quality needs to be improved through a sufficient frequency of public transport connections.
- Integrated information and communication offers that ideally allow passengers obtaining timetables and opportunities for combining transport modes most effectively.

Beyond the potentials for transport related CPS development in Pomurje region identified by the stakeholders, further services could be taken into consideration that may help increasing the attractiveness of public transport:

- developing integrated timetables of bus and train connections and including domestic and cross-border lines;
- offering higher frequencies of domestic public transport to address the needs of the population better;
- offering integrated ticketing systems for both domestic and cross-border travel.

5.2.2 The EU framework provides the principle rules for cross-border bus transport

Regulation (EC) No 1073/2009 provides the legal framework for cross-border public passenger transport by bus. Thereafter, cross-border bus services require inter alia an authorisation by all Member States in whose territories passengers are picked up or set down. Thus, no additional legal framework is required for developing transport services as outlined in the previous section. The local private bus transport provider working with a concession has voiced some interest to establish new cross-border lines that may have been inspired by the initiative of the ESPON CPS study. Due to a lack of capacity the provider intends to test the demand for cross-border bus connections by making time-limited offers rather than conducting a market research. Based on this interest first steps towards providing cross-border bus lines do not require any further governance changes but can be tested by the existing bus transport provider.

5.2.3 Several potential steps by regional stakeholders and public transport providers required

Potential next steps can be taken at different levels:

- initiating some tests by the local bus transport provider;
- regionally regarding a better assessment of the demand for public transport;
- regionally regarding the initiation of soft services on integrated offers, awareness raising etc.

The local bus transport provider

To avoid significant additional costs the bus provider intends to extend the existing lines across the border for a couple of stops. The provider intends to formally separating the lines at the border, to overcome the requirements arising from the EU regulation for authorisation during the testing period. Longer lines do not only require additional funding but immediately require authorisation by the involved Member States. Thus, they are not suitable for testing by the local bus transport provider.

However, in order to test potential demand, short bus route extensions may be misleading, especially if they are not well integrated with other public transport timetables, since they do not considerably increase the attractiveness of the bus lines.

Regional assessment of cross-border public bus transport demand

For increasing public transport attractiveness, and assessing potential demand for cross-border lines a more systematic approach has been suggested by regional stakeholders. Public transport in general has to gain a better image and the quality of overall supply must improve. Thus, a review of the local public transport system should take cross-border connections into account.

This requires several steps considered by the regional stakeholders:

- For integrating different modes some railway lines require reconstruction of tracks or possibly new constructions.
- Different shuttle bus options need to be assessed to connect existing train stations that lack infrastructure connection. An example is the missing railway bridge over Mura river between Gornja Radgona and Bad Radkersburg.
- In addition, alternative services, not bound to a fixed timetable but suitable especially for sparsely populated areas, such as Pomurje, need to be assessed. Buses on demand are an example for such flexible transport services. Different models for demand driven services should be reviewed.
- This could be further supported by assessing the potential for car sharing and carpooling, especially in those parts of the region that are sparsely populated.

Complementing these possible actions identified by the regional stakeholders it is suggested to consider all these different elements systematically in order to develop a strategic approach to develop domestic and cross-border public transport in the Slovenian region Pomurje in an integrated way. This should be accompanied by a systematic assessment of potential public transport demand to identify those routes most suitable for first extensions of the existing services.

Development of soft transport services

In order to tackle the multi-dimensionality of sustainable public transport development, both in terms of transport lines and complementing soft services, the stakeholders agreed that a regional partnership on multi-modal mobility needs to be established.

For successfully implementing either new transport routes or raising the demand for existing routes to allow for more frequent services soft measures have to support above actions. The regional stakeholders identified the following actions:

- Improving timetable and mapping information on public transport in the whole Pomurje region, including respective domestic and cross-border transport. This should include information on multi-modality options, including also options on carrying bikes on public transport.
- Developing integrated timetables of different bus lines and train schedules.
- Development of an integrated ticketing system taking into account, different transport modes and domestic as well as cross-border journeys.

The variety of proposed next steps also requires the identification of stakeholders that have both resources and responsibility to initiate and coordinate the different approaches. Ideally, this should combine hard and soft transport measures. Based on the identification of the 'lead stakeholder' it is recommended to firstly assess the actual needs for cross-border transport in combination with domestic public transport and needs for information and communication services before deciding about further implementation possibilities.

5.3 A considerable potential for future CPS in Pomurje region

The variety of policy fields mentioned at the beginning of chapter 5 and the outline of potential CPS in the two fields analysed more thoroughly show that Pomurje region has a remarkable potential for CPS. Existing CPS are currently covering only very few themes and issues, the majority of policy themes has not been tackled so far. It can even be argued that the close neighbourhood of the four Member States in Pomurje region calls for cross-border public services. Especially from the perspective of the Slovenian region Pomurje this seems to be a necessity for regional development and ensuring a sustainable provision of high quality public services.

The few existing and well-functioning CPS in the region could be used to raise awareness of decision-makers and potential providers about potential benefits of public service provision including the neighbouring regions of other Member States rather than providing services domestically only. In view of demographic change with a shrinking population these benefits are mostly linked to addressing a sufficient target group that is needed to provide public services efficiently at the quality required.

6 Lessons learned, recommendations & transferability

Cross-border public services provision in Pomurje is generally underdeveloped in view of the options for CPS identified in this area and in comparison with other EU case study areas explored in this ESPON study. Although cross-border cooperation and collaboration between the neighbouring regions has been strong in some fields, there is not much awareness about

the benefits achieved by the cross-border public service already existing. Cross-border public services are perfect to address the isolation, in some areas even a vacuum, of the border area. Although this has become less significant in the last two decades, the border areas could still benefit significantly from good cross-border relations and connections, expanding the space, where people can go to work or study and where they can use and offer their services. Also, offering some of the public services across the border could stop the trend of reducing the numbers of services, such as closing down local schools, for example.

In some cases cross-border public service providers are not really aware of the special nature of their service. They offer the service to their target group regardless the side of the border they come from. In such cases the service has been developed based on pragmatic considerations as the example of the primary school in Prosenjakovci shows. Admitting pupils from across the border may avoid that local pupils may have to travel further to the next larger settlement if the number of pupils further decreases.

However, as the case of the Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg shows, providing public services to target groups across the border can also be a special mission to promote the border as an advantage. Both examples could be copied and adjusted to the local conditions by other schools not only in Pomurje region but at other border areas.

As mentioned above, awareness raising is one of the first steps for further development of existing cross-border public services and establishment of new services in the region. This does not only concern citizens in general but local and regional decision-makers and administrations in particular. The variety of opening effects of the borders in the region that occur together with the need for providing services jointly across the borders for ensuring sufficient service quality in the long-run should be pointed out. For convincing arguments this requires case by case assessments of the specific benefits achieved by providing a service either jointly with stakeholders across the border or at the benefit of the citizens on both sides of a border. Good practices presenting the ways to establish a CPS as well as its benefits can be the next step to make decision-makers aware of the benefits of CPS.

Thus, both at local and regional level, the needs for CPS have to be further specified. Municipalities and other local players can play an important role as of their direct contact to the everyday life of citizens and their responsibility to organise certain public service. In Slovenia they are for instance responsible for provision of schools, health services and public transport. Municipalities and other local players will therefore be the best source to identify and specify missing or weak public services. In favour of mutual support on both sides of the border participative processes involving local public administration on both sides of the border and citizens in the respective area is recommended. This also includes trustful communication with neighbouring public authorities to identify different options and existing domestic services that could be beneficial for a larger area if extended across the border.

After mapping the needs, potentials for small and fast changes should be considered. In some cases, small actions, such as extending a bus line across the border can already provide a (temporary) solution.

From the Slovenian perspective, it could be beneficial to establish some kind of regional representative that would support the municipalities, who are often missing the capacities, in cross-border activities, but also represent them when talking to the neighbouring regional representatives that are now missing a peer at the Slovenian side.

A dialogue at national level could show the advantages of strong cooperation at the borders which in turn would provide support for processes at regional or local level. This can also enhance local and regional capacities to develop CPS. The exchange of good practices is another possibility to initiate new lines of thought at local administrations and thereby supporting the development of new CPS if useful. The national level should point out its interest in supporting cross-border cooperation, including cross-border public services. This will provide additional access points if legal or administrative changes or additional bilateral (or multilateral) agreements are required to enable the implementation of cross-border public services. Often this is only required for more elaborated and financially important services whereas first steps for soft measures, communication services and similar can usually be implemented without additional agreements between the involved Member States.

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Interviews

The following interviews have been conducted:

Interviewee	Organisation	Date	Place (TI = telephone interview)
Jožefa Herman	Bilingual Primary School Prosenjakovci	5 June 2018	Prosenjakovci
Stanislava Dešnik	Goričko Nature Park	7 June 2018	Grad
Eduard Fasching	Secondary School BORG Bad Radkersburg	7 June 2018	Bad Radkersburg
Rija Srkoč	Employment Service of Slovenia	7 June 2018	TI
Martin Smodiš	Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief	25 July 2018	TI

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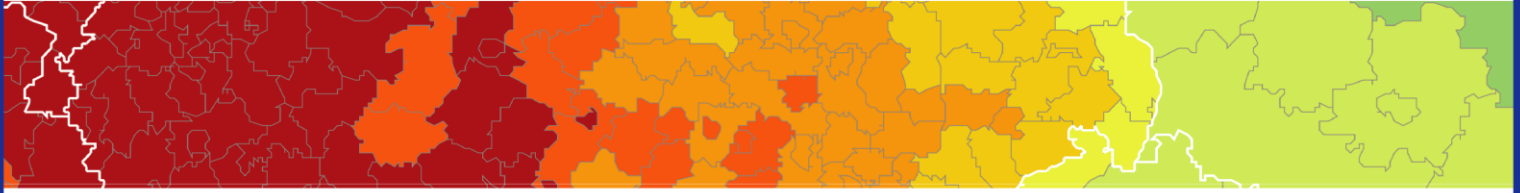
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