

EUROREGION SILESIA

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'Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.' Henry Ford

20 years ago when our two organizations were founded bearing in mind the establishment of Euroregion Silesia, we were making far-reaching plans for its future. The objectives were set and the tasks, which we were going to perform, were prepared. The enthusiasm of the Euroregion Silesia founders was sometimes replaced with doubts *'if we should have done it, if it has a sense, if it is not too early for – in this part of Europe - unknown and even innovative form of cooperation between Czechs and Poles.'*



The representatives of the City of Opava (Jan Mrázek - CZ), Krnov (Bedřich Marek - CZ), Racibórz (Andrzej Markowiak - PL) and Głubczyce (Dariusz Kašków - PL) signed the declaration of establishment of the joint euroregion on 3 November 1997.



The Agreement establishing Euroregion Silesia was solemnly signed in Moravian Chapel of former Dominican monastery in Opava on 20 September 1998.

This is how it all started.

The years have gone by and throughout them there have been more and more objectives. New tasks have appeared and every year we found out that there are new challenges, new possibilities and that we have to (and even want to) use them. The necessity to employ more new staff in our two secretariats brought about new tasks. Long before our two countries joined the European

Union we have been thinking about the challenges this event will bring about. For all those years joint together we have gradually removed obstacles and sought solutions. Small border crossings were modernized and we succeeded in opening a new border crossing Sudice-Pietraszyn. When the European Union introduced the first pre-accession programmes PHARE, at the Czech and Polish border too, organizations as well as inhabitants at the border territory opened themselves for cross-border cooperation. It was obvious that there is probably not a way back, that it is our mutual 'fortune', that it is also our progress.

In 2004 we joined the European Union; in 2007 we joined Schengen Area. The thing that seemed impossible in the 1990's has become reality. It was another incentive for more activities. Working together became everyday reality. Other cross-border programmes of the European Union such as INTERREG IIIA 2004-2006, Cross-Border Cooperation Operational Programme Czech Republic – Poland 2007-2013 and INTERREG V-A 2014-2020 enabled us to experience even more benefits, which are brought by the membership in the organizations such as Euroregion Silesia. Nothing comes easy but without partners on both sides of the border and without desire to work together we would not be where we are now. Hundreds of completed microprojects, a plethora of big cross-border projects and numerous joint sessions on the border have shown that working together is our success!



Consul General of the Czech Republic in Katowice Josef Byrtus (the third from the left) handed over the award of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic to the Czech and Polish part of Euroregion Silesia representatives on 25 October 2007.

It is obvious that the quote by Henry Ford is still relevant, even about cross-border cooperation, which was (especially in the United States) probably unknown at his times.

Mirosław Lenk
Chairman of Association of the Upstream Oder Municipalities
(Stowarzyszenie Gmin Dorzecza Górnej Odry)
Polish part of Euroregion Silesia

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Editors: Jana Novotná Galuzzková, Iwona Paprotny, Daria Kardaczyńska, Leonard Fulneczek

Address of the editors' office: Horní náměstí 69, 746 01 Opava, Česká republika, tel.: +420 553756220, e-mail: euroregion.silesia@opava-city.cz, www.euroregion-silesia.cz

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Euroregion Silesia 1998 - 2018



At the beginning of the 1990's the concepts of 'euroregion' and 'cross-border cooperation' were still unknown, contentless and uninteresting for most Czechs, Poles, Hungarians and other inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe. The hermetically closed state borders of these countries allowed hardly any cross-border contacts; people did not know the places or neighbours on the other side. The borders established throughout the last three centuries and even hardened after the Second World War built impassable barriers between the regions which belonged to each other historically, putting them in the position of peripheries not really attractive for life. After 1989 the desire of the people living in border territories to live the same quality life as the inland people led cities, towns and villages to seek new possibilities of cross-border cooperation and common solution to specific problems of border territories. Taking Western Europe as their model, they started to establish regional associations, which started cooperation with similar organizations on the other side of the border. This is how the first 'euroregions' were established in the Central and Eastern Europe, building bridges between neighbouring countries and becoming a driving force for cross-border cooperation.

The historic region of Silesia stretching over the north-eastern part of what is now the Czech Republic and south-western part of Poland was not an exception. The cities, towns and villages of this territory were meant for mutual cooperation regarding their common historical development. This homogenous territory was divided by a state border in 1742 when Queen Maria Theresa lost a part of the territory to King Frederick II in a war. A bigger territory became part of Prussia and only a significantly smaller part remained within the Lands of the Bohemian Crown reigned by Austrian Habsburgs. The newly established border first slowed down and gradually halted the development of mutual contacts. Even the result of the Second World War did not mean the connection of the divided region – Upper Silesia became part of Poland while Czech Silesia became part of Czechoslovakia. Although the two countries were divided only by 'a green border', the border territories were closely guarded and it was only possible to cross the border at the places of official border crossings, which were scarce. The contacts of inhabitants on both sides of the state border were renewed and the cross-border cooperation started to be developed after the democratic changes in both countries in 1989. First there were partnerships between individual cities, towns and villages, but gradually there was wider regional cooperation and in 1998 it culminated in establishing the euroregion which was named after the region which covers most of its territory – Silesia.

ABOUT US

Euroregion Silesia was established on 20 September 1998. In comparison with the oldest euroregion, which was established on German-Dutch border in 1958, it is a relatively modern cross-border organization. Euroregion Silesia was founded when the agreement on cooperation between Czech 'Regional

Association for Czech and Polish Cooperation Opavian Silesia' (later changed for 'Euroregion Silesia – CZ') and Polish 'Association of

the Upstream Oder Municipalities' was signed. While after the foundation of Euroregion Silesia their members were only a few cities, towns and villages on Czech as well as Polish side, and the personnel and technical background of the euroregion was minimal, nowadays Euroregion Silesia has over seventy members, which are cities, towns and villages exceeding the total of 770,000 inhabitants. Among the largest members there are the city of Ostrava (CZ) and both seat cities of Opava (CZ) and Racibórz (PL). Affiliated members of the Czech part of euroregion are organizations such as Silesian University in Opava, Regional Chamber of Commerce Opava, Matice Slezská and two local action groups – LAG Opavsko and LAG Hlučínsko. On the Czech side Euroregion Silesia operates in the territory of districts of Opava, Ostrava, Nový Jičín and Bruntál; on the Polish side in the territory of the counties of Racibórz, Wodzisław, Głubczyce and Rybnik. Two secretariats in the seat cities of Opava and Racibórz form the background for both euroregions.

Despite the diverse member base formed by small villages of agricultural character, medium-sized historic towns as well as a large industrial city with about 300,000 inhabitants, the cross-border cooperation within Euroregion Silesia is very intensive and contributes to balanced development of homogenous region of historic Silesia where the state border does not mean any obstacles.

Statistical data on Euroregion Silesia up to 1 January 2018

EUROREGION SILESIA	Czech Part	Polish Part	Total
area in km ²	1 243	1 547	2 790
inhabitants (in round figures to thousands)	482 000	286 000	768 000
number of member municipalities	51	22	73
number of affiliated organizations	5	0	5
relevant regions/voivodeships	Moravian-Silesian Region	Silesian Voivodeship Opole Voivodeship	3
administrative seat	Opava	Racibórz	2

OUR ACTIVITIES

Euroregion Silesia's activities focus on the support and realization of cross-border cooperation in the border territories of Polish and Czech Silesia and Northern Moravia. The aim is to suppress any negative influence the existence of the state border could have as well as to ensure steady development of border territories on both sides of the border, thus enabling its fluent integration within the European Union.

Euroregion Silesia deals with common interests in cross-border transport infrastructure, tackles common issues of the environment, supports development of cross-border tourism

and cooperation among Czech and Polish schools as well as development of culture, education and sport on both sides of the border, looks after common cultural heritage, supports cooperation in business and commerce and common plans for development of the cross-border region, organizes promotion of this territory and carries out many more tasks which help to meet the goals set by the European Union for European territorial cooperation.

Euroregion Silesia has built for itself a prominent position within Czech and Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation. It has participated in the Commission's activities since 2000. The Commission was established upon the agreement between the governments of both countries in September 1994 and its goal is to set directions and forms of cross-border cooperation, inspect problems which make the cooperation more complicated, and give certain recommendations leading to solutions to these problems. There are several working groups within the Commission focused on each particular activity. A significant success of Czech and Polish euroregions was the establishment of the Working Subgroup for the Issues of Euroregions in September 2001 whose leaders became Euroregion Silesia's representatives. In 2007 the Commission decided to change the Subgroup into an independent Working Group and currently it is one of the best cooperating groups in the Czech and Polish Intergovernmental Commission.

Euroregion Silesia plays a significant role in the European Union programmes set to support cross-border cooperation. An integral part of these programmes are 'small projects funds', which are used to finance projects of a small scope, so called microprojects. These funds are administered in the programmes of Czech and Polish cross-border cooperation by euroregions, which execute a role of so called Administrators in their territory. In the scope of this position they carry out a wide range of tasks such as providing information and methodological



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic awarded both Czech and Polish part of Euroregion Silesia with Jan Masaryk Medal of Honour for long-lasting and active contribution to the development of Czech and Polish cross-border cooperation

assistance when an application for subsidy from the Funds is prepared, the acceptance and approval of the applications for subsidy, the supervision of the projects in the time of their realization as well as the reimbursement of subsidies after the projects have been finished, and also sustainability control. A subsidy from the Funds could be claimed by public-law and non-profit bodies – municipalities, cities, associations

of municipalities, schools of all levels, police units as well as fire brigades, chambers of commerce, societies of various interests such as physical education society, societies focused on culture, free-time activities or regional development, local action groups, culture centres, museums, charitable or religious organizations, etc. Every euroregion is allocated a certain part of financial resources based on the size of the territory where it operates and the euroregion is responsible for their correct use. 'Small Projects Funds' has been working since as early as the pre-accession programmes called Phare CBC (cross-border cooperation). Over the 15 years of the funds' existence Euroregion Silesia has been allocated over 13,800,000 EUR and up to now almost 1,000 cross-border projects have been realized.

Apart from the position of the Administrator for 'small projects funds', which is used for financing cross-border projects of other bodies in the territory of Euroregion Silesia, the euroregion realizes its own projects too. They are either projects which are realized by both sides of the euroregion together, or projects realized by one or the other side of the euroregion or both of them together with other partners. Nowadays Euroregion Silesia is realizing the following projects:

The Name of the Project	Total Expenses of the Project	Number of Partners
READY TO HELP – the Common Security System for Border Municipalities in Euroregion Silesia	1 092 862,90 EUR	10
Cultural and Natural Heritage for the Development of Polish and Czech Border Territory – 'Common Heritage'	1 904 455,15 EUR	11
Updating and Implementation of Development Strategy for Euroregion Silesia 2014-2020	40 638,72 EUR	2
The Fairy-Tale Oder River	35 298,00 EUR	3
20 Years of Cross-Border Cooperation in Euroregion Silesia	30 386,75 EUR	2

OUR FUTURE

The document 'Development Strategy for Euroregion Silesia 2014 – 2020' creates a basic framework for further systematic development of cross-border cooperation and support for activities of the bodies which realize cross-border cooperation in the territory of Euroregion Silesia. It is currently being assessed how the document is complied with and it is being updated for the period after 2020. Although now the preparation for the new European seven-year period, i.e. the new financial period 2021 – 2027, is only at the beginning, Euroregion Silesia has already started analyzing its current as well as future needs and possibilities so that its strategic vision to become 'a thriving Czech and Polish region which supports the idea of European unity and together it develops its future on the basis of partner cooperation' would not be only a meaningless definition on a piece of paper.



Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions

People-to-people and small-scale projects in cross-border cooperation programmes

(abstract) 2017/C 342/06

Rapporteur: Pavel Branda (CZ/ECR), Deputy Mayor of Rádlo municipality

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. More than one third of EU citizens live and work in Europe's border regions. Those borders have a direct and indirect impact on their lives. Cross-border cooperation (CBC) has proved to be the most effective tool for overcoming the barrier effect and the dividing role of borders, integrating border areas and increasing the quality of life for border regions' citizens.
2. European Territorial Cooperation plays an important role in removing border obstacles and fostering CBC. In the period 2014-2020, more than EUR 10 billion will be invested in cooperation between regions, of which around EUR 6,6 billion will go to cross-border regions.
3. The Interreg A projects have achieved many tangible outcomes for many European citizens in very diverse territories all over the EU. An important and successful tool in CBC programmes are people-to-people and small-scale projects, designed to foster the convergence of bordering regions and initiating grassroots contact among people.
4. People-to-people (P2P) and small-scale projects can be defined by their size, duration and content. Small-scale projects are usually smaller in size than regular big projects (e.g. maximum size of EUR 100 000). They can also have a limited duration and their main focus is to finance initiatives in many different areas of CBC with a local impact, in order to support the main thematic objectives of EU programmes (including trust-building, creating favourable framework conditions and a bottom-up approach and initiating new partnerships). People-to-people projects are small-scale projects focusing primarily on promoting contacts and interaction between people on different sides of the border. These usually have a smaller budget and also a limited duration. The activities of the project happen in smaller geographic areas (commonly at Euroregional level) and their approaches are commonly place-based.
5. People-to-people (P2P) projects and small-scale projects are carried out in a wide range of fields such as culture (e.g. learning the neighbouring language), sport, tourism, education and vocational training, economy, science, environmental protection and ecology, healthcare, transport and small infrastructure (cross-border gaps), administrative cooperation, promotional activities, etc.
6. P2P and small-scale projects are accessible to a wide range of beneficiaries: municipalities, NGOs (numerous types of associations, platforms, networks, foundations, churches, etc.), educational institutions (schools, vocational training centres and universities), research and business-support institutions, among others.
7. These projects have been supported by several generations of CBC programmes. In the current period, P2P and small-scale projects in 19 CBC programmes (approximately in one third of them) are mainly being supported through a Small Project Fund (SPF) or similar instrument (sometimes called



- micro-projects, disposition fund, or framework project to support small projects/initiatives). These SPFs usually take the form of an 'umbrella project' under which several smaller sub-projects are implemented.
8. In general, the funding has been rather low — from 1,5 % up to 20 % of the allocation of the programmes (lower in the old EU, while in the new Member States and along the 'old' external borders the demand has been much higher).
 9. Independent studies dealing with CBC and all Interreg evaluations to date confirm that in Interreg A programmes the best qualitative results are not achieved primarily through flagship projects, but, rather, success is determined by the variety of different genuinely cross-border projects addressing region-specific needs while directly involving citizens, local authorities and civil society organisations. Quite often the management of these Interreg A programmes (sub-programmes) is decentralised. From the beginning of Interreg (1990), the programmes with the best evaluation results have often been those managed in a decentralised way, many of them including support to P2P projects and small-scale projects.
 10. Despite their positive impact, these projects face some major difficulties. They are not anchored in the regulations, and bigger projects are often preferred by managing authorities as being more cost-effective (the higher administration cost of P2P projects) and having a measurable impact. It is also difficult to link the soft effects of such projects to indicators related to the EU2020 strategy focusing on jobs and growth (lack of methodology and suitable evaluation indicators).
 11. The main objective of this opinion is to provide an evidence-based list of the benefits and added value of such projects and their decentralised implementation through Euroregions and similar structures such as EGTCs; to provide recommendations for their further simplification; and, ultimately, to put forward specific proposals for future CBC programmes, thus contributing to the debate on the future of cohesion policy post-2020.

II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

Added value and benefits of people-to-people and small-scale projects

12. considers that P2P and small-scale projects in general have a great European added value and contribute considerably to the overall objective of CBC programmes by means of overcoming border obstacles and integrating border areas and their citizens. ...

Advantages of decentralised management

13. sees nevertheless advantages for increased partnerships where the size of the eligible territory is bigger, however is aware of the possible negative impact: it is harder for the programmes to reflect the specific needs of different parts of a large territory. There is a tendency to support larger projects and this support becomes less accessible for local/regional players; ...

Role of Euroregions and similar cross-border structures

17. notes that the advantages of decentralised implementation of P2P and small-scale projects are best achieved through the involvement of Euroregions and similar cross-border structures. They could also have the legal form of an EGTC, which are very suitable for such a role;

18. recommends that, in order to ensure successful implementation, these structures should have considerable experience in CBC at local and regional level. They should be:

- permanent,
- cross-border,
- of a public nature: composed mainly by local and regional authorities,
- focusing on cross-border cooperation as their main objective, and
- experienced with EU programmes and projects;

Simplification as a prerequisite for successful implementation of small projects

19. emphasises that in order to preserve the added value of P2P and small-scale projects and their decentralised management, these projects and procedures must be very simple; ...

Communication of the results — evaluation of Small Project Funds

24. believes that in the light of the current situation in the EU (growing nationalism, UK withdrawal from the EU, migration crisis, economic and monetary difficulties) there is clearly an increasingly strong need to communicate the specific benefits and added value of EU action. ...

Recommendations for future CBC programmes post-2020

27. recommends that people-to-people projects and small-scale projects be anchored in the regulations governing EU support for cross-border cooperation as a legitimate instrument in CBC programmes and calls on the Commission to make the necessary provisions in the proposal for the next generation of regulations;

28. also recommends that people-to-people and small-scale projects be encouraged by the Commission to be part of the

CBC programmes, especially where there is the demand for such projects at local and regional level. ...

29. points out that the full benefits of such projects can be achieved through decentralised management either through Small Project Funds, or any similar instrument or directly by steering committees on the ground. It is essential that each border region is free to use its existing instruments and procedures that have proved effective for many years, ensuring the continuity of such funding with the overall objective to keep the programmes closer to the citizens;

30. recommends that Euroregions or similar structures and EGTCs should be the framework to guarantee the decentralised implementation of P2P and small-scale projects, ensuring their continuity and taking into account the already existing roles of such structures (e.g. 'umbrella project' recipients) that have proved useful. In border areas where these structures are not present, their creation should be encouraged or other suitable solutions should be found respecting as much as possible the principles stated above;

31. emphasises that in order to preserve the added value and benefits of people-to-people and small-scale projects, they and their management must be kept as simple as possible. More emphasis should be placed on content than on procedures, and simplified cost options should be preferred;

32. ...

33. calls on the Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament to take these specific recommendations into account and include all necessary rules to implement them when preparing legislative proposals for the next generation of CBC programmes, setting up these programmes and during their successful implementation. This will ensure that the benefits of European integration are felt strongly among the citizens of Europe's border regions.

Brussels, 12 July 2017.

Markku MARKKULA

The President of the European Committee of the Regions



The whole text was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 12 October 2017.

In May 2018 the European Commission published the first proposal of regulations for the upcoming period 2021 – 2027 and it is encouraging that for the first time in history Small Projects Funds are anchored in the proposal for the relevant regulation, i.e. Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments. Thus the Small Projects Funds will become a legitimate tool of cross-border cooperation programmes.



Small Project Funds in Euroregion Silesia

Small Project Funds as a Part of the Czech and Polish Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes

An integral part of the European Union programmes designed to support the cross-border cooperation is represented by a 'Small Projects Fund' used to finance small-scope projects. These small projects are mostly of non-investment character and enhance cooperation among organizations on both sides of the border. The main objective of the projects is to develop interpersonal relationships, common educational, cultural, sport and other leisure activities, public services, etc.

While the one-year pre-accession programmes of **Phare CBC Czech Republic – Poland (1999 – 2003)** were focused mainly on the support for big investment projects, small non-investment 'people-to-people' projects were supported by so-called 'Joint Small Projects Fund'. These small projects were allocated 10% of the overall financial sources for each year.

After the Czech Republic and Poland joined the European Union in May 2004, both countries could also join the Initiative INTERREG established to finance European territorial cooperation among member countries. In the cross-border cooperation programme **INTERREG IIIA Czech Republic – Poland (2004–2006)** there was an individual provision under Priority II named Microprojects Fund. This provision was allocated 15% of the overall financial sources, which meant contribution from the European Regional Development Fund in the amount of 5.1M EUR for the whole

programme period. The Microprojects Fund was administered by six euroregions in the Czech and Polish border territory: Nisa, Glacensis, Praděd, Silesia, Těšínské Slezsko and Beskydy. The allocation for the Microprojects Fund was divided into six parts on the basis of the size of each area managed by each particular euroregion and each of the euroregions was responsible for the correct use of these resources in the area.

Within **Cross-Border Cooperation Operational Programme Czech Republic – Poland 2007 – 2013** the Microprojects Fund was set aside as an independent support area, which was allocated 20% of the overall financial sources of the programme – the total of 43.8M EUR. As well as in the previous programme, the Microprojects Fund was administered by euroregions in this period. Within this programme over 3,000 small projects were realized on both side of the state border.

The Microprojects Fund as a well-established, flexible tool for the cross-border cooperation programmes established to finance small scope projects and administered by euroregions, which bear responsibility for the correct use of the allocated sources has been included into the current programme **INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland (2014 – 2020)**. The allocation is again 20% of the overall financial sources of the programme, which is 45,244M EUR.

THE RECAPITULATION OF ALL 'SMALL PROJECTS FUNDS' IN EUROREGION SILESIA 1999 – 2018

Programme / The Name of the Fund	Allocation of ERDF for the Projects in Euroregion Silesia	Number of Approved Projects
Phare CBC CZ-PL 1999–2003 / Joint Small Projects Fund	901,800 EUR	135
INTERREG IIIA Czech Republic – Poland 2004–2006 / Microprojects Fund	897,551 EUR	147
Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic - Poland 2007–2013 / Microprojects Fund	5,947,450 EUR	505
INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland 2014–2020 / Microprojects Fund	6,142,151 EUR	191*
Total	13,888,952 EUR	978*

* Data up to 30 June 2018

EUROREGION SILESIA AND ITS ROLE IN THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

Over the twenty years of its existence Euroregion Silesia has acquired vast experience, which it uses fully at work with Czech and Polish cross-border programmes. Euroregion participates in preparation and realization of these programmes; it has its own representation in the authorities responsible for project selection and monitoring programmes (Monitoring Committee). It uses its experience in managing 'small projects funds'.

The tasks that Euroregion Silesia had in the pre-accession programme Phare CBC were rather different on both sides of the border and were limited by the rules applicable to non-member EU countries. After the both countries had joined the EU, they also joined the programme INTERREG IIIA and their role of the so-called Microprojects Fund Manager gradually harmonized them and currently both parts of the euroregion perform tasks related to the Microprojects Fund management in mutual cooperation and

upon shared responsibility, which is embraced by the agreement on cooperation in the Microprojects Fund management. According to the agreement, the Czech part of Euroregion Silesia performs the role of the Lead Partner responsible for the whole Fund towards the Managing Authority, i.e. the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic; furthermore, the agreement defines mutual duties for Czech and Polish side of euroregion. The principle of the Lead Partner in Microprojects Fund management was introduced in the period of 2007 – 2013 and it continues its function in the period of 2014 – 2020.

The essential tasks of Euroregion Silesia in Microprojects Fund management

The preparation stage of the Microprojects Fund

- to prepare the basic documentation (Guidelines for applicants, Rules of Procedure for Euroregion Steering Committee, etc.)



Regular joint meetings of the representatives of all the six Czech and Polish euroregions are dedicated to discussions about issues related to the Microprojects Fund and other joint activities

- to appoint Euroregion Steering Committee which approves the project proposals
- to select evaluators who will evaluate the project proposals

The promotion stage of the Microprojects Fund and project proposals preparation

- to provide and publish information about the Microprojects Fund: at workshops, on the website, in the printed media, publication of promotional materials, etc.
- to provide methodological support for proposals preparation – one-to-one consultations, help to find a cross-border partner, etc.

The stage of grant proposals acceptance and check

- to accept proposals
- to check formalities and the proposal eligibility

The stage of grant proposals evaluation and selection

- to organize proposals evaluation by evaluators following the set criteria
- to process documentation for the meeting of Euroregion Steering Committee
- to organize the meetings of Euroregion Steering Committee; to process the outcomes of the meetings

The stage after the decision of Euroregion Steering Committee

- to inform applicants about the outcomes of the meetings of Euroregion Steering Committee
- to prepare and conclude agreements with successful applicants on the project financing

The stage of project realization

- to provide methodological support during the project realization
- to check the project realization continuously; to check the selection procedures
- to handle any possible requests for changes in the projects

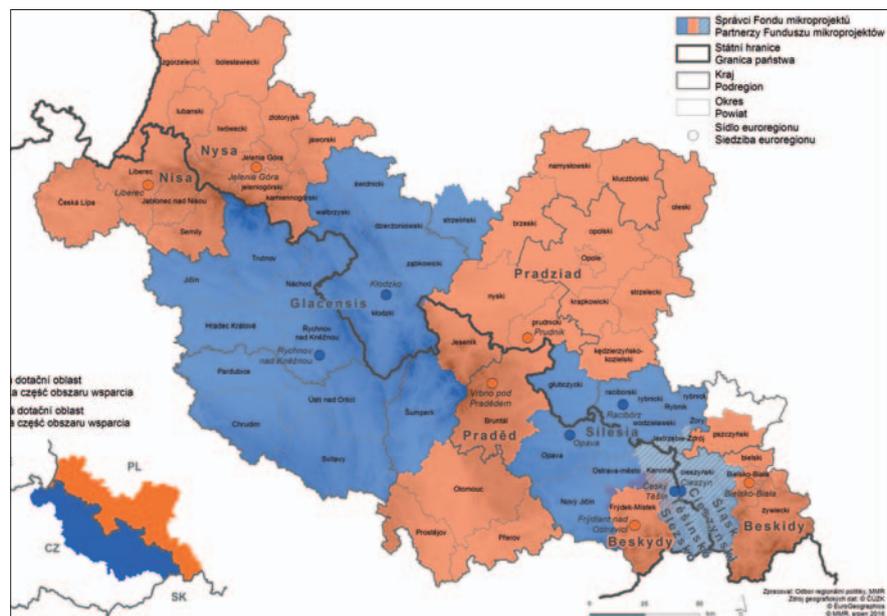
The stage of the projects termination

- to provide methodological support during the preparation of the application for the reimbursement and the final reports
- to check and approve of the applications for reimbursement and the final reports
- to reimburse the grant

The stage after the microprojects termination

- to check the sustainability of the selected sample of projects

Apart from the above stated tasks connected with applicants, the Microprojects Fund Manager has to administer regular monitoring reports about the Fund process, applications for the Fund administrative expenditure reimbursement, attend meetings and methodological workshops about the programme implementation, etc. The euroregion activities as the Fund Manager are supervised by controllers (Centre for Regional Development of the Czech Republic on Czech side, Silesian Voivodship Authority on Polish side), by Managing and National Authority (Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic and Ministry of Investment and Regional Development of Poland) and last but not least by relevant auditing authority (Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic).



The map of INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland 2014-2020 and division of the territory among six euroregions where the Microprojects Fund is administered. Source: Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic



READY TO HELP

The Joint Security System for Border Municipalities in Euroregion Silesia

Voluntary fire brigades, which operate in most Czech and Polish cities, towns and villages, are an integral part of the national integrated security systems while brigades operating in border territories are supposed to intervene on the other side of the border if it is necessary. The border territory of Euroregion Silesia is easily accessible as there are no mountains and there is a dense network of border crossings on road. Cross-border connection among these brigades and their capacity to act together if necessary has its own limitations. These limitations are inadequate technical background as well as inadequate readiness for joint intervention. Nine Czech and Polish neighbouring border municipalities realized the potential on the one hand and the limitations on the other hand and under the supervision of Euroregion Silesia as their Lead Partner they prepared a project **'READY TO HELP – The Joint Security System**

Krzyżanowice. The project is being realized in the cooperation with Fire Rescue Service of Moravian-Silesian Region, the local department in Opava (CZ), and District Headquarters of the State Fire Service in Racibórz (PL).

The main goal of the project is to establish a system of joint security on the territory of border municipalities in Euroregion Silesia by means of enhancement of technical background for 22 voluntary fire brigades (7 Czech and 15 Polish) and their readiness for joint firefighting and eliminating other natural disasters in border territories. 'The Joint Security System' is meant to be the connection of two national security systems on the level of voluntary brigades, which are parts of these systems in both countries.

Within the project, which will continue its realization until the end of 2019, 4 new fire engines (2 for Czech brigades and 2 for Polish brigades) and other technical equipment for 19 brigades have already been purchased. To enhance cross-border readiness and capacity of the voluntary fire brigades to act there are activities including 4 joint tactical training sessions realized alternately on Czech and Polish side, 2 joint training sessions in Central Firefighting School including theoretical workshops and practical training with the name 'University for Voluntary Firefighters' and joint work meetings of all the involved brigades. The integral part of the project is also an analysis of the joint security system of the border municipalities in Euroregion Silesia and the publication of brief and articulate handbook about joint security, which should serve as assistance for voluntary fire brigades during their intervention on the other side of the state border.



The representatives of all the Czech and Polish voluntary fire brigades involved in the project at their introductory meeting in February 2018.

for Border Municipalities in Euroregion Silesia'. The project was approved for a grant from INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland in June 2017 in the framework of Priority Axis 1 'Joint Risk Management'. The total amount of eligible expenditure of the project is 1,092,862.90 EUR; the approved grant from the resources of the European Regional Development Fund is 928,933.46 EUR, i.e. 85 %. Furthermore, a 5% grant from the state budget of the Czech Republic has been approved for the Czech partners.

There are 10 active partners in the project: Euroregion Silesia as the Lead Partner of the whole project, 7 border municipalities on Czech side: Sudice, Rohov, Strahovice, Chuchelná, Píšť, Hař and Šilheřovice and 2 central municipalities (gmins) on Polish side: Krzanowice and



Euroregion Silesia prepared a joint training session including theoretical workshops and practical training for Czech and Polish firefighters in Central Firefighting School in June 2018.

The Oder River in Cross-Border Projects

The Oder River belongs to the most significant rivers in Central Europe. On her way from its source to the Baltic Sea her waters flow over the distance longer than 850 kilometres. The river has its source on the Czech side of the Oder Hills and its upstream flows through the territory of Euroregion Silesia. The Oder is a river which does not know any borders; it is a symbol which connects Czech and Polish side of the euroregion. The border meanders of the Oder are a unique European phenomenon; they are as wild and beautiful as the landscape along the river. The Oder is a popular destination for tourists, neverending inspiration for artists and photographers, an issue of study for professionals. Thus, it is no wonder that in the document 'Development Strategy for Euroregion Silesia 2014 – 2020' there is an individual provision for this river named 'The Oder River – Joint Symbol of Euroregion Silesia' and that the Oder is a frequent topic of cross-border projects. Although the focus and specific goals are various for each particular project, the main goal of all these activities is to enhance the potential of the river upstream and its promotion as the most significant river in the territory of Euroregion Silesia.

The Fairy-Tale Oder River

'The Fairy-Tale Oder River' is the name of a Czech and Polish project which was allocated with the approved grant of 30,000 EUR from the Microprojects Fund in the framework of INTERREG V – A Czech Republic – Poland. The project, realized by the Czech company *Destination Management of Tourist Region Poodří – Moravské Kravaňsko* (Destinační management turistické oblasti Poodří – Moravské Kravaňsko) together with Euroregion Silesia, is concerned with the promotion of an interesting tourism product and mainly with its promotion among visitors from the Polish side. The tourism product The Fairy-Tale Oder River, which is focused on preschool and early school children as well as families with children, introduces interesting spots in the territory along the Oder River in gripping form and by means of fairy-tale characters. Within the project a complete Polish version

of the current tourism product has been created, i.e. Polish version of the information leaflet, two kinds of 12 worksheets for younger and older children, Polish version of the questing path, 10 animated fairy tales, a website and audioguide. Glove puppets of fairy tale characters have been purchased to guide visitors through each individual spot in the Oder River territory; children can collect the glove puppets and they can even get a little theatre for them. After the Polish version had been finished, joint pilot trips of Czech and Polish teachers were organized in April 2018 and they were followed by joint trips for school and preschool children groups in May 2018 and later also summer promotional activities. You can find more information on www.pohadkovepoodri.cz and www.bajkowa-odra.pl.

The Oder and Olza Rivers Closer to Tourists and Inhabitants of the Border Territories

The aim of the joint project of municipalities of Krzyżanowice (PL), Šilheřovice (CZ) and Bohumín (CZ), realized in 2017, was to enhance the attractiveness of the natural heritage of Czech and Polish border territory as well as to make it accessible for a wide range of visitors. In the framework of the project, which was allocated the approved grant of 446,166 EUR, an observation tower in the area of the Oder meanders was built, the education routes were renovated and on both sides of the border shelters for bikes were built for the visitors.



Kulíšek is a small visitors' guide in the 'The Oder River House of Nature'



Observation tower in Krzyżanowice-Chałupki (27 m) on the Polish side offers a view of the Oder River and its meanders.



To See What Others Cannot See

'Silesianka' – the route with observation towers and vantage points in Euroregion Silesia

Szlak Wież
Widokowych
Euroregionu



Stezka
Rozhleden
Euroregion

Is it easy to create 'a tourism product', not to say 'a quality tourism product'? I think everyone who has at least once prepared a tourism product, a tourism project or a strategic document related to tourism development has faced a plethora of questions with no answers and numerous doubts. The working or professional teams, which work on the final version of visions, missions and strategic goals, have changed texts for hundreds of times and thought what could be better, what could attract visitors more and thus could enable tourism potential development of the territory where they are working.

Euroregion Silesia faced such a challenge in 2014 when the first strategic document related to both sides of the euroregion was finalized. 'Development Strategy for Euroregion Silesia 2014-2020' became a significant material setting the directions of our activities. One of the five thematic objectives focuses on 'tourism, culture and sport' while tourism development plays an important role and leads to making particular future project intentions more detailed. This is how the idea for building 'A Route of Observation Towers and Vantage Points in Euroregion Silesia' has appeared.

After the introductory analysis had been made when the Strategy was processed, it was clear that in our region there are already several observation towers and vantage points accessible for visitors. All of them exist, however, as 'independent' attractions without being connected into one complex. Furthermore, it was obvious that a considerable number of our municipalities would like to build new observation towers or vantage points, or renovate the existing buildings and make them accessible for visitors. Thus, in 2016 Euroregion Silesia prepared a complex concept to build observation towers and vantage points in various places in the euroregion, which is gradually being realized through many projects. Firstly, there were three groups of projects for Microprojects Fund (in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd stages), 11 proposals overall for 'small' observation towers and vantage points. They were only small from the financial point of view because the whole concept is one and big. To build other observation towers such as the one in Wodzisław Śląski (PL), Budišov nad Budišovkou (CZ) or Jeseník nad Odrou (CZ) requires substantial financial expenditure out of scope of Microprojects Fund.

Therefore they will be a part of one big project of 'Silesianka', which is now being prepared and which should connect all the observation towers and vantage points – the existing as well as the newly built ones – into one complex tourism product. And as there must be somebody who will supervise everything and who will coordinate every particular activity (including the promotion and launch of the new product), it was obvious that it will be the role for Euroregion Silesia.



The city tower called 'Hláška', built in 1614 – 1618, is a symbol of Opava (CZ). It is a seat of local authorities and also the Czech part of Euroregion Silesia. The tower offers a beautiful view of Opava and its surroundings. The tower is accessible for the public.



Knights' Tower in Wodzisław Śląski (PL) will be accessible for visitors after renovation planned for 2020-2021.

You might ask if we have taken the right direction. Well, we will know in a few years. We comfort ourselves with the thought about the Eiffel Tower, which did not look like something interesting when it was constructed; for local people it was just tons of ugly iron in the centre of historic city of Paris and after several years it was even supposed to be deconstructed. Fortunately, it was finally saved and nowadays it is a symbol: a symbol of France, Europe, which is famous all over the world. It was worth fighting for it! Don't you think?! This comparison might not be ideal but it shows what beginnings are like – uncertainty, doubts, criticism... There must be, however, somebody who decides which direction to take and there must be somebody who will support the decision. Thus we would like to thank all Euroregion Silesia member municipalities for support and trust in our mutual idea. Therefore such associations like ours exist to do together what one municipality could not do by itself. And this is the reason why we will do our best to build our 'Silesianka', which might become the symbol of Euroregion Silesia in the future.

In the current call of the programme INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland running until 30 September 2018 we are going to submit a project called 'Silesianka – the Route of Observation Towers and Vantage Points in Euroregion Silesia'. Finally it should include more than 30 structures: some of them small such as a few-metre-high vantage point in Baborów (PL) or Mszana (PL) but some of them much bigger, e.g. 73-metre-high structures such as the observation tower of New City Hall in Ostrava (CZ), 33-metre-high observation tower of the town hall in Głubczyce (PL) or 27-metre-high observation tower at the meanders of the Oder River in Chałupki (PL). There will also be included observation towers of historic buildings such as neo-

every observation tower and vantage point as well as many other interesting places included in the product of the route. 'Silesianka' will be the guide through the game and she will introduce the route in the way that everybody will wish to appear on the route at least for a while.

If everything goes as we wish, we will take the route to see observation towers, vantage points and beautiful places of Euroregion Silesia together with 'Silesianka' in two or three years. We hope to welcome you on the route!



The observation tower called Bolt Tower was built in 2014-2015 as the extension of a non-function blast furnace in the former industrial area in Ostrava-Vitkovice (CZ). Its author is a famous Czech architect Josef Pleskot. The tower was named 'bolt' as it looks like one and also it takes its name after Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt, who blessed it in May 2015. He was a regular competitor on Golden Spike, IAAF World Challenge Meeting, organized annually in Ostrava. You can find his signature in Bolt Tower café.

Gothic Knight's Tower in Wodzisław Śląski (PL) built in 1867, the observation tower in the ruins of Neorenaissance castle in Tworów (PL) or the city tower built in the early 17th century called 'Hláška' in the centre of Opava (CZ), which is now the seat of the local authorities and the Czech secretariat of Euroregion Silesia too.

In the project there will be professional offers of thematic trips, there will also be a loyalty programme motivating people to visit all the structures. Among our planned promotional and informational activities there will be a website, a Facebook profile, promotional videos, maps, leaflets about integrative board game, which should support awareness and tourists' interest in visiting

'Common Heritage'

Flagship projects – challenge of the programme INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland 2014-2020



společné dědictví
wspólne dziedzictwo

The 'flagship' projects are the projects which are realized by the applicants from the whole supported territory. It is a new initiative of the programme INTERREG V-A Czech Republic – Poland 2014-2020. There have been projects realized by a higher number of partners from both sides of the border but they have never been from the whole programme territory, i.e. from all the eight regions and voivodeships at the same time.

Association of the Upstream Oder River Municipalities (Stowarzyszenie Gmin Dorzecza Górnej Odry) in Racibórz – the Polish part of Euroregion Silesia – is one of the partners involved in realization of this type of the project named **Cultural and Natural Heritage for Polish and Czech cross-border territory development 'Common Heritage'**. There are total of 11 partners in the project, five out of them are Polish and six Czech organizations.

The aim of the project is to turn Czech and Polish border territory into an attractive tourist destination. The strategic objective of the project is to create a permanent, integrated network of promotional cooperation in Czech and Polish border territory based on natural and cultural heritage. Furthermore, other objectives are to support tourism, to create tourism products and support them, to initiate and connect the existing tourist routes into cross-border tourist routes and last but not least to integrate the existing offers into complex cross-border tourist packages, which will motivate tourists to stay longer in our region.

The realization of the project started in January 2017 and will finish by 30 June 2020. The project activities can be divided into several groups, i.e.:

1. The study of the potential – the activity focused on the creation of common thematic, branded 'Cultural and Natural Tourism Routes' including mapping of the tourist potential for Czech and Polish border territory in the view of tourism requirements.
2. Marketing measures leading to create:
 - a) joint visualization of the project/the brand of the project, a website, an online television, informational materials about tourist structures, holders; 'Border Territory Badge' plus a loyalty system will be created for the visited points of interest and structures, a mobile app, geogame. The project will be promoted at tourism trade fairs and other PR events.
 - b) printed materials including an image brochure about the border territory, informational brochures about the border regions, a catalogue of thematic tourist routes as well as 'The Border Territory Tourist Newspaper'.
3. Another group of activities are workshops focused on tourism product management, study trips about the supported territory for the project partners as well as preparation of fam trips and press trips for tourism representatives.
4. In the last group there are activities related to the project management including the meetings of the project Managing Authority whose aim is to coordinate the project and evaluate continuously the progress in the realization of the activities.

Every partner is responsible for a different part of the project but all of them work together to create one brand 'Common Heritage'. The main activities in responsibility of the Association of the Upstream Oder River Municipalities (the Polish part of Euroregion Silesia) are to process common visualization of the project, create a website, publish informational leaflets about the region and organize study trips about Silesian voivodeship. The approved budget of the project is the total of 2,240,567.43 EUR; the budget of the Polish part of Euroregion Silesia in this project is 130,995.60 EUR. Become our Facebook fan on 'Wspólne dziedzictwo / Společné dědictví' (Common Heritage) and very soon you will also be able to find all relevant information on the website www.tourism-pl-cz.eu.



A workshop focused on tourism product management – Technical Monuments Route in Silesian Voivodeship.





Euroregion Silesia Full of Sports

Sport is a form of activity whose goal is to improve your condition, most often physical one involving competition while following set rules. This kind of sport can be divided into two groups – amateur and professional and we are going to analysis sport activities in these forms in Euroregion Silesia.

The main seat of professional sport in the euroregion territory is Ostrava, the third largest city in the Czech Republic. You can find an ice-hockey club HC Vítkovice here, the team which plays their home games of Czech ice-hockey extraleague in the pompous Ostravar Arena. The arena, whose capacity is 12,500 spectators and is one of the biggest multipurpose arenas in the Czech Republic, hosted IIHF World Ice-Hockey Championship in 2004 and 2015. It is no wonder that ice-hockey is one of the most popular sports in the Czech Republic. Football, another very popular sport in the Czech Republic, is currently represented in the top Czech league by two teams seated in the Euroregion Silesia territory: FC Baník Ostrava and Silesian (Slezský) FC Opava. The representatives of these two cities, namely NH Ostrava and BK Opava, also play the top Czech league in men basketball. Both Ostrava men and women teams play also the top Czech volleyball league. In Ostrava there are numerous sport events of the top world level. Apart from the above mentioned IIHF World Ice-Hockey Championship, there is also annually organized IAAF World Challenge Meeting `Golden Spike` which was regularly attended by famous Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, the fastest man on the planet. When we look at the Polish side of Euroregion Silesia, we do not find as many successful professional sports teams and athletes there. There is currently no team playing in the top Polish league. In the past the football teams of Racibórz, Rybnik and Wodzisław used to play in the top league. A few years ago the women football team of Racibórz (RTP Unia Racibórz) became the winner of the top league and then played also the female Champions League. Nowadays the sport which is on the top level is speedway in Rybnik (Nice 1st League) and football in Racibórz (Unia Racibórz).

There are obviously many possibilities to do amateur sport in the territory of Euroregion Silesia. Football is no doubt one of the most popular sports. Almost every city, town and village on both sides of the border has an amateur football club and loyal fans support their teams whenever they play a match. There are many football stadiums and pitches on both sides of the border, tennis courts, swimming pools or multipurpose arenas. As we mentioned above, ice-hockey is very popular on the Czech side and so there are many local amateur ice-hockey teams. They can use ice-hockey stadiums such as Buly Arena in Kravaře (CZ), which is a complex sport and recreational area including a water park. On the Czech side you can also find golf courses for all kinds of golf. There are two classic golf courses situated in castle parks – the golf course in Šilheřovice, which is one of the oldest 18-hole golf courses, and Silesia Golf Resort in Kravaře. Both golf courses are accessible for the public. The fans of other golf forms can play adventure golf, minigolf or lately very popular discgolf. One of the discgolf fields has been created in parkland in Budišov nad Budišovkou (CZ) thanks to the project **DISCGOLF WITHOUT BORDERS** –

the Enlargement of Outdoor Activities for Tourists in Czech and Polish Border Territory, which was financed from the Microprojects Fund in Euroregion Silesia.

Inline skating is another popular leisure sport activity. Hundreds of inline skaters of all generations regularly participate in the inline skating rides through night Opava (CZ) called `Blade Nights`. The project **SKATING COMMON THING - IN-LINE SKATING TRACK ROHOV** financed from Microprojects Fund in Euroregion Silesia was used to build a short track for inline skating in the border village of Rohov (CZ).

There are also some interesting projects realized not only by cities, towns and villages but also by sport unions and clubs. The active cooperation of these subjects should be taken into close account as well. One of the most active in this field is Polish People's Sports Club `Czarni` in Nowa Wieś. Together with Czech TJ Slavia Píšť they realized, apart from other projects, the project named **Polish and Czech Small Volleyball School**. Thanks to the project there was organized a sport camp in Wisła (PL) where Czech and Polish young people improved their volleyball skills together. Another example could be Polish sport club `Naprzód` Borucin, which realized the project named **Throw the Ball over the Border** together with the Czech club TJ Spartak Chuchelná.

Despite current numerous possibilities of passive recreation, we can say that sports are more and more popular. Better and wider sport infrastructure, possibilities created by local authorities and sport unions, rise in modern sport disciplines popularity which can attract young people and last but not least financial support for sport projects from the European programmes bring about the promise that sport will continue to be preferred leisure activity for all generations. We can assume that Euroregion Silesia will not be an exception to this trend.



SILESIA BIKE MARATHON is an international bike race organized annually in Opava (CZ) since 2001. More than a thousand bikers take part in this race in several categories and tracks – 90 km, 50 km and 20 km plus children's bike race and most recently also a push bike race for the youngest children.

