



Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006

PROGRAMME: INTERREG III A Austria-Slovakia

**KOBRA 2010 – Stadt Umland Kooperation Bratislava 2010/
KOBRA 2010 – Urban Regional Cooperation Bratislava 2010**

Project Good Practice Study

Project Study: KOBRA 2010 – Stadt Umland Kooperation Bratislava 2010/ KOBRA 2010 – Urban Regional Cooperation Bratislava 2010

1. General Information

Keywords: Promoting urban, local and coastal development

Region: Austrian/ Slovak border area

Programme strand: Programme: INTERREG IIIA/PHARE CBC Austria-Slovakia 2000-2006

Measure: Cross-border Spatial Development in Rural and Urban Area's
Priority topic(s): Sustainable Spatial and Environmental Development

Duration: January 2006-October 2007

Funding: The project had a total budget of €69,000 of which €34,500 was funded by ERDF; the remaining €34,500 was provided by national co-financing, as included in the INTERREG programme.

Lead partner and partners:

- Lead partner: Regional Management Lower Austria, Weinviertel Office
- Partners: Planning Community East, Weinviertel Management, Regional Development Association Industrieviertel, Regional Management Burgenland; City of Bratislava/ Spatial Planning Department.

2. Project Aim

The KOBRA 2010 project aimed to promote cooperation between Slovak and Austrian partners in the Bratislava region, with a view to involving Austrian municipalities in the process of urban development and planning of the greater Bratislava region. The objectives were twofold:

- to develop a joint spatial vision for the Austrian urban regional municipalities neighbouring the city of Bratislava, as a basis for deepening cross-border spatial cooperation;
- to encourage joint urban planning and the definition of an 'open space corridor' in the cross-border region

3. Project Description

As Bratislava expands, Austrian municipalities across the border are finding themselves incorporated into the capital's hinterland, effectively becoming 'suburbs' of the Slovak capital. Municipalities on both sides of the border need to work together on regional urban and economic development issues to ensure joined-up planning. The project was envisaged to help the Austrian border towns better formulate a regional development strategy, by identifying their new role in this process and promoting their own special cultural and ecological status, and urban identity. It was hoped to engage the Austrian Planning Community East and State Governments of Burgenland and Lower Austria, plus partners in Vienna and Bratislava, in expert discussions about existing local and regional plans, in order to define and map functional zones and regional development priorities.

The advantage for Bratislava is the benefit from Austrian expertise in urban planning, and guidance and consultation on its long-term growth strategy. This will help avoid planning conflict and duplication in the development of infrastructures, particularly transport services which are often poorly planned in cross-border towns.

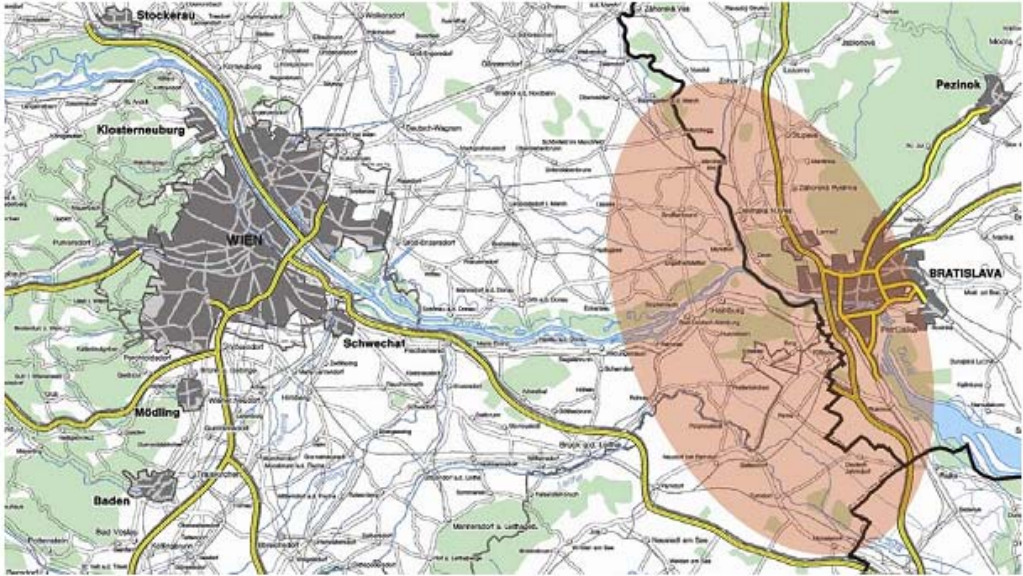


Figure1: Overview of the KOBRA region located at the Austrian-Slovak border and covering 14 municipalities in the Austrian 'hinterland' of Bratislava, and in two Austrian federal states, Lower Austria and Burgenland.

4. Political and Strategic Context

The twin cities of Bratislava and Vienna are situated just 60 kilometres from each other, a distance which covers an expanding cross-border region. The two European capital cities are the most closely located of the EU's 27 capital cities. EU accession and membership of the Schengen travel area have heightened the potential for Austrian/Slovak cooperation in an integrated metropolitan area. A new motorway in November 2007 has improved connections and built new market opportunities. Planners predict a regional population increase of more than 400,000 people in the next 20 years. The strong dynamics of Bratislava are affecting the rural Austrian towns.

To the south of the Slovak capital, in particular, the demand for new settlements, leisure and recreational areas has increased dramatically. Formerly rural villages are fast growing into suburban towns. Meanwhile, the future of protected natural areas, such as the national park "Donau-Auen" between the two capitals depends on a well-balanced and sustainable development plan for Bratislava, its neighbouring towns and surrounding rural parts of the programme area, which includes other vibrant and attractive nearby towns, such as Brno and Gyor.

With a series of projects and joint initiatives (KOBRA, KOBRA+) prior to KOBRA 2010, Bratislava and the neighbouring Austrian regions have been engaging in a process of intense cross-border co-operation to harmonise spatial development and urban planning in the region. Several spatial visions have been drafted in recent years.

5. Project Implementation

The Austrian partner (Regional Management Lower Austria) provided strong political and strategic ownership of the project, which was well supported early on by the Austrian regions (Lower Austria, Burgenland). Implementation was jointly coordinated and went smoothly. The partners had a good understanding of the project aims and provided useful advice throughout the project's lifetime, addressing administrative, planning and other bottlenecks as they arose. The partners engaged in discussion and consultation with professional stakeholders and the general public.

The Austrian lead partner felt that developing an effective cross-border partnership was a real challenge. Austrian partners were generally very active in implementation, and while the Slovak authorities got involved, they remained rather formal in their engagement – perhaps because they were new to Interreg and cross-border cooperation schemes, but also maybe due to a lack of strong political support for the project on the Slovak side. The success of this project, however, provides a convincing argument in support of greater joint collaboration, and a follow-up project to intensify dialogue.

6. Project Results

The project was successful in terms of its goals and objectives. Key achievements include:

1. a joint vision or "spatial concept: framework concept KOBRA 2010", which will now act as a reference framework for future planning and urban development in the KOBRA region. The spatial concept defines possible roles and functions of the municipalities in the Bratislava-Austrian urban agglomeration, on both sides of the border. As such, municipalities can now better coordinate their future development cooperation with the City of Bratislava.
2. a mission statement on the "Biosphere region and green centre" was agreed as a core element in the development strategy for the Vienna-Bratislava region.
3. an Austrian plan for open space, recreation and tourism (Master plan Grünraum, Erholung, Tourismus – see figure 2).
4. a Bratislava urban development plan, coordinated with the Austrian urban development concept and tourism masterplan.

On the basis of the spatial concept developed by KOBRA, urban-regional cooperation near the border is set to develop further, focusing on the joint management and protection of open space along the border, and the development of a detailed 'accessibility' (transport) concept that will connect the Austrian hinterland municipalities with Bratislava's public transport network.

Three important recommendations emerged and are gradually being implemented, which aim to improve quality of life in the border region:

1. the creation of a landscape corridor along the Austrian-Slovak border south of the Danube. This axis will prevent the ad hoc growth of settlements as well as unregulated urban sprawl of Bratislava into the Austrian hinterland. Furthermore, it will improve the attractiveness of residential areas on both sides of the border.
2. the building of a bridge for cyclists and pedestrians across the March/Morava between Schlosshof and Devinska Nova Ves to connect Greater Bratislava with the castles of Marchfeld and, in so doing, address a missing link in the cross-border bicycle path network.
3. the extension of the network of bicycle paths for sports and recreational activity

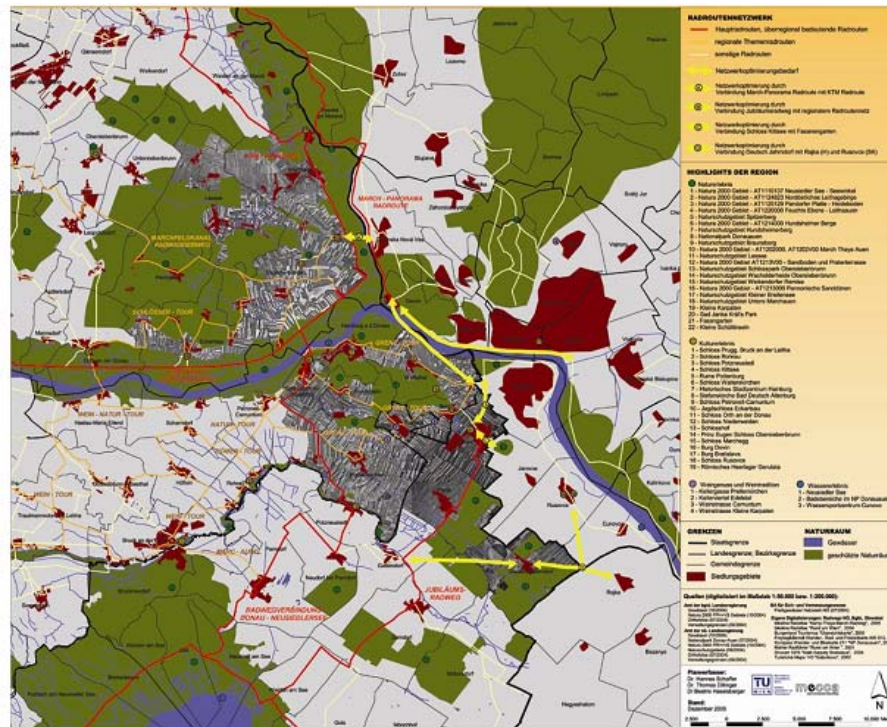


Figure 2: KOBRA Masterplan for open space, recreation and tourism

7. Conclusions

KOBRA 2010 is a good example of a cross-border initiative that has made an important contribution to the planning process of municipalities on each side of the Austrian/ Slovak border. It has successfully addressed the needs and interests of the wider population and been innovative in initiating discussions and stimulating joint reflection on the implications of 'co-habitation' in an expanding cross-border region. In this respect, the newly established cross-border spatial planning and coordination structures will be of great value for fostering further common activities in the area. In the longer term the lessons learned about joint spatial planning, but also about cooperation processes, should enhance the competitiveness of the region around Bratislava.

The project has strengthened common coordination structures. A future joint platform for the Austrian hinterland municipalities and the City of Bratislava is sought to ensure the ongoing coordination in matters of urban development. Further joint measures shall be defined for the mid- to long-term. The partners intend to bring together mayors from individual Bratislava city districts, to directly communicate with their counterparts in the Austrian border municipalities. Such a platform would provide a model for cross-border inter-municipal cooperation that could be applied elsewhere in Austria.

The project had some unintended consequences that have been greatly welcomed by the partners. There has been an improvement to local accessibility through public transport, with the establishment of a new bus connection between Bratislava and Hainburg. There is also significant evidence of learning by the city of Bratislava, in terms of the way its now manages relations with its suburb municipalities. Bratislava has clearly drawn on the experience and lessons previously learned by the city of Vienna. Importantly, during project implementation the partners came to realise that political commitment must be forthcoming on both sides of the border, and expressed through informal and very practical involvement on the ground, not just formal cooperation on paper.