
GEOGRAFICKÝ ČASOPIS

54

2002

3

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POLISH-SLOVAK TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

M. Więckowski: Polish-Slovak transboundary cooperation. Geografický časopis, 54, 2002, 3, 4 figs., 3 tabs., 17 refs.

The paper concerns analysis of the Polish-Slovak transboundary cooperation. The author presents the legal bases for transboundary cooperation between Poland and Slovakia and the most important spheres of cooperation. In this article, attention has been confined to those areas considered of the greatest importance to Polish-Slovak cooperation. These are first and foremost: the protection of the natural environment, tourism, transport (from both the infrastructural and linkage points of view). The last part of the paper presents transboundary units (that is euroregions).

Key words: transboundary cooperation, transboundary region, protection of the natural environment, tourism, transport, Poland, Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

Manifestations of cooperation between Poland and its southern neighbours can be found from as early as the 14th century. The conference of the Polish, Czech and Hungarian monarchs at Visegrad in 1335 can be cited as an example. True cooperation between Poland and Czechoslovakia came into play in the 20th century, mainly after 1918, when Poland regained its sovereignty. An important element in the then cooperation was the establishment of a tourism convention allowing for free movement of tourists in the near-border areas of Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was followed – in 1932 – by the creation of Europe's first

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transboundary protected area between the two countries in the Pieniny Mountains. Unfortunately, the cooperation was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II shortly afterwards.

POLISH-SLOVAK TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION POLICY

New opportunities for cooperation between Poland and her neighbours were to appear with the transformations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The idea of a re-embarking upon cooperative relationships between Poland and the southern neighbours was associated with the re-activation of the Visegrad Group. Representatives of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary met at the beginning of the 1990s – still before the emergence of the Czech Republic and Slovakia as separate entities – in Bratislava, Visegrad and Kraków. The third (Polish-hosted) summit culminated in the signing of the Kraków Declaration for the “triumvirate” of countries, as well as bilateral agreements between all the participating states. Where Polish-Slovak cooperation was concerned it was the Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic that was relevant. This concerned good neighbourly relations, solidarity and friendly cooperation and was signed in Kraków on October 6th 1991.

The decision on the initiation of cross-border cooperation was taken during the May 1992 Summit in Prague. The Foreign Ministers of the three countries emphasized in the final document the great weight attached to local government's establishment of regional cross-border cooperation and decentralization.

The Prague Declaration signed on May 5th 1992 contains a draft for the putting in place of tripartite cross-border cooperation, as well as a signalling of willingness that detailed agreements should be signed in accordance with the Madrid Convention.

Even before Slovakia left the Federation, its western border region with Poland had formed an International Association of Slovak and Polish Local Authorities in the Beskid Area, with its seat in Rajcza. The founding meeting took place on June 9th 1992, with the Association being registered in the Voivodship Court in Bielsko-Biała, and the first Annual General Meeting (with election of authorities and the adoption of a resolution denoting the programme of action) taking place in September (Iwanek 1995). At the same time, the Association should be seen as having acted on the basis of national law, having only an informal character as regards international law. Nevertheless, the Association became a progenitor of the Beskid Euroregion established in 2000.

Nevertheless, the legal bases for transboundary cooperation between Poland and Slovakia have been put in place, being constituted by:

- the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Slovak Republic of July 18th 1994, as approved by Decision of the (Polish) Council of Ministers no. 107/94 of December 21st 1996 (the Polish-Slovak Intergovernmental Commission on Transboundary Cooperation was created on the basis of this agreement),
- the Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on legal relations and collaboration over the common state border of July 6th 1995 (*Dziennik Ustaw* 1996),

- the Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on local transboundary movement, concluded in Zakopane on December 6th, 1996 (*Dziennik Ustaw* 1997),
- numerous governmental, regional, and local-governmental agreements concerning cooperation in particular domains,
- the statutes of the Carpathian Euroregion, the Tatra Mountains and Beskidy Euroregion Associations.

In addition, within the framework of the Polish-Slovak Inter-governmental Commission, the Working Group on coordination of the development of near-border regions was joined by a further ten groups with responsibilities in the following areas (CUPRP 1997):

- border crossings and transport,
- economic cooperation and tourism,
- environmental protection and forestry,
- culture, education and youth exchanges,
- cross-border cooperation by local authorities,
- agriculture and the food economy,
- spatial planning and construction,
- labour and social policy,
- the counteraction of catastrophes, accidents and natural disasters and their effects,
- healthcare and medical rescue.

The directions of economic development and means of utilizing the natural environment of the Polish-Slovak borderland are also discussed and analysed at scientific conferences organized on the initiative of regional research centres, as well as at Economic Forum meetings among which the cyclical events are of the greatest importance. The Javorina Polish-Slovak Economic Forum can be considered the most important of all.

Legal regulations govern the possibilities for crossing the border and engaging in cross-border cooperation. It is on the basis of these that organizations established by the governments or on local initiatives can operate, with a view to cooperation being supported and shaped. However, the cooperation itself is very much dependent on the needs and possibilities of local communities.

While Polish-Slovak cooperation is obviously founded on the Madrid Convention, the emphasis is firmly on those spheres that are of importance with regard to the specific features of the Carpathians, and the socio-economic situation of northern Slovakia and southern Poland. Analyses of the conditioning and main forms of socio-economic activity in the development of the borderland led the Inter-governmental Commission to propose that development in the region proceed in five areas above all (CUPRP 1994). These areas were reiterated in the next Study from 1997, the only change being in the order of priorities. Thus, in line with the Coordinating Studies of 1994 and 1997, the most important spheres of Polish-Slovak cooperation are as presented in Tab. 1, wherein column A deals with the order in the 1994 Study and column B that in its successor from 1997.

Tab. 1. The most important spheres of Polish-Slovak cooperation

Sphere of cooperation	A (1994)	B (1997)
Comprehensive economic development	1	1
The protection and shaping of the natural environment	3	2
The development of technical infrastructure (particularly in transport, water management and finance)	4	3
The development of all forms of tourism not in conflict with nature conservation and the development of health-resort treatment	2	4
The development of cultural cooperation and cross-border social contacts	5	5

Based on CUPRP 1994, 1997.

Central and local governmental studies resemble the statutes of Euroregions and local-authority unions in drawing attention to the consistency of composition where the nature of the fields of Polish-Slovak cooperation are concerned. The aforementioned fields are again considered the most important.

As Stasiak (1995) has stressed, decisions and actions on the steady upgrading of the basic network of communications and various border crossings is of particular importance and necessity where cross-border cooperation is concerned. He adds that each item of cross-border cooperation must give wide consideration to matters linked with the environment. The justification here is that *“modern society attaches ever greater weight to living conditions and activity in an environment as unpolluted as possible, What is involved here are, for example, joint actions in protected areas cut through by borders, in drainage basins, etc. Also involved is the taking of joint action to link environmental protection with tourism”* (Stasiak 1995).

In the rest of this article, attention has been confined to those areas considered of the greatest importance to Polish-Slovak cooperation. These are first and foremost:

- the protection of the natural environment,
- tourism,
- transport (from both the infrastructural and linkage points of view).

POLISH-SLOVAK TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION IN THE 90S – A CASE STUDY

Cooperation between towns and cities

One of the more important manifestations of cooperation, and at the same time a basis for more of the same, are the agreements entered into between towns and cities in the two neighbouring countries. These show the goodwill and willingness of the two parties to take joint action in different spheres, and they mostly lead to closer cooperation and the development of ever-stronger transboundary ties. Agreements of this type have related to many fields, but among the most important have been:

- economic development,
- nature conservation,
- the development of tourism,
- the development of infrastructure (for example the building of roads and border crossings),
- cultural and sporting exchanges.

Fig. 1 presents pairs of localities that have embarked upon cooperation as expressed through signed agreements. Though these form a small statistical sample, it is nevertheless possible to put forward several cautious conclusions. Thus, cooperation would appear to link towns and cities:

- in close geographical proximity,
- of the same administrative rank (where regional capitals are concerned the distance may be greater as the rank and impact are greater),
- of similar functional structure (e.g. the spas of Krynica and Bardejov).

Urban centres not joining together in cooperation will tend to be:

- located in different parts of the borderland (such that a town in the eastern part would not tend to go into cooperation with one from the central or western parts),
- separated by some obstacle from their neighbours – e.g. Sucha Beskidzka

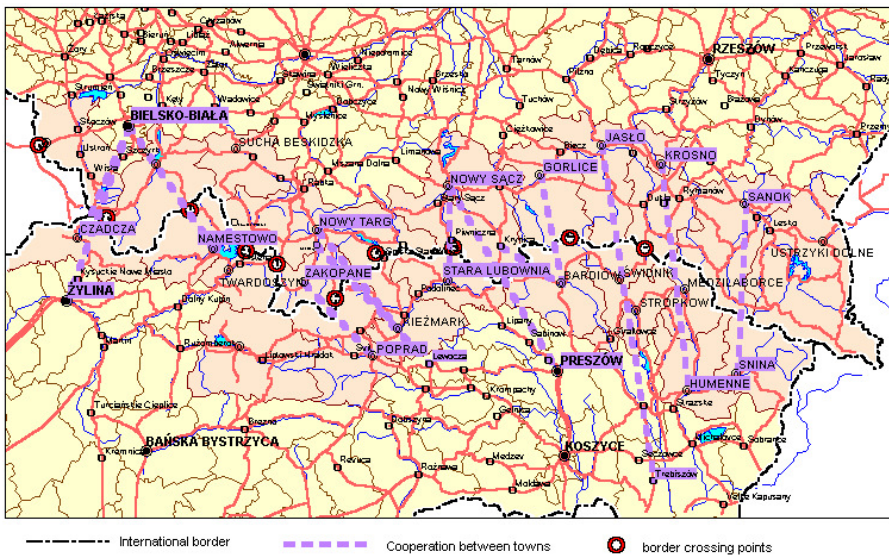


Fig. 1. Transboundary cooperation between Polish and Slovak towns in 1998

(isolated by the Babia Góra massif), Liptovský Mikuláš (by the Tatras), Ustrzyki Dolne (by the Bieszczady Mountains and a rather peripheral location) – all this confirms the role of natural (mainly orographic or in part ecological) barriers in obstructing cooperation.

Cooperation as regards nature conservation

Four transboundary protected areas have now been developed in the area under discussion. These are:

- the Western Beskid area (termed the Żywiecki or Żywiec-Orava), taking in the Beskid Żywiecki Landscape Park, the Kysuce CHKO and the Horná Orava CHKO (joint actions since 1989),
- the Tatras area – taking in the two National Parks in the Tatra Mountains, where cooperation has been ongoing since 1967 (close ties since 1989),
- the Pieniny Mountains area – again taking in National Parks on both sides of the border in cooperation since 1932 (reactivated 1989 and 1991),
- the Eastern Beskids area, including the Bieszczadzki and Poloniny National

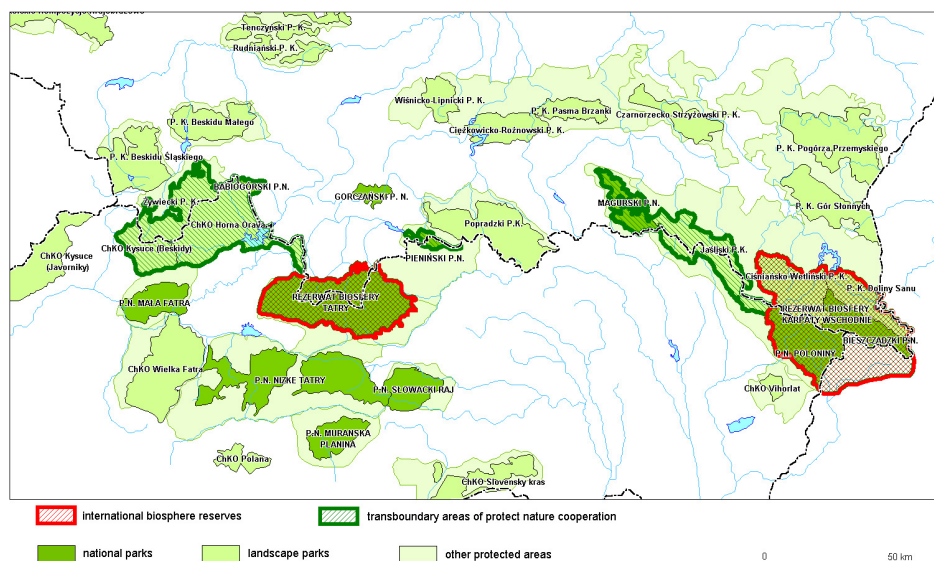


Fig. 2. Transboundary protected areas in Polish-Slovak borderland

Parks either side of the border, Poland's Ciśniańsko-Wetliński, San Valley and Jałśliki Landscape Parks, as well as the Vychodne Karpaty CHKO and to some extent also Poland's Magurski NP, with cooperation from 1992 onwards (see Fig. 2).

The Polish-Slovak cross-border cooperation in the area of nature conservation is becoming more and more intensive. It is having an ever-greater limiting influence as regards many other actions which have a negative impact on the natural environment. At the same time, the developing areas of joint protection do form centres for cooperation that are in many cases the nuclei of Euroregions (as with the Carpathians, Tatras and Beskids). Above all, cross-border cooperation in nature conservation entails:

- joint actions in protected areas divided by the national border (e.g. monitoring of changes, scientific research and the exchange of ideas),

- joint work seeking to limit transboundary pollution of air and waters including (elimination of emissions of SO₂),
- joint actions within a drainage basin (mainly the limiting of pollution in the Poprad basin),
- joint action linking nature conservation and tourism (all the National Parks and most of the Landscape Parks are crossed by borders),
- environmental education (mainly in the Beskid Żywiecki and Beskid Niski ranges, as well as the Bieszczady Mountains),
- material exchanges associated with the Parks, etc.

In the light of the presented analysis, it may also be supposed that further cooperation and joint action should work towards:

- the bringing under protection of the whole zone adjacent to the Polish-Slovak border,
- improvements in the quality of the air – for example by excluding traffic from the roads of international significance in National Parks – as at Łysa Polana,
- the designating of corridors for the movement of people and goods that are not in conflict with nature conservation (areas valuable from the natural point of view), etc. These should be the Żywiec – Bielsko Biała – Zwardoń – Čadca – Žilina route, as well as those involving Kraków – Chyżne – Dolný Kubín; Nowy Targ – Spišská Belá and Rzeszów – Krosno – Barwinek – Prešov – Košice,
- an improvement in the quality of waters (especially along the border section of the Poprad),
- the establishment of a joint system of water and wastewater management,
- the creation of a joint energy policy (for example using natural sources such as hydroelectric and geothermal power),
- the designation of zones for the dumping of wastes,
- the creation of databanks with exchanges of information and the monitoring of the natural environment in the near-border areas,
- the development of the system of environmental education (for example by creating an environmental education centre),
- the putting in place of a joint programme for the utilization of protected areas for tourist purposes, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Also to be anticipated is constant growth in:

- the role of pro-environmental activity seeking to preserve the environment in a form as little modified as possible,
- the significance of protected areas,
- tourist use, and the need to take joint action as regards tourism and nature conservation.

Having become a nucleus for cross-border cooperation of enormous significance in the shaping of transboundary ties, the protection of the environment may have a negative influence on some other activities. It may even lead to limitations on the development of tourism, for example. It will also affect the

development of cross-border roads and border crossings. Actions working for socio-economic growth in the area must also comply with intentions as regards the protection of the natural environment. Nevertheless, the retention of the environment in a state as little transformed as possible will impact positively overall on both the development of tourism and the quality of life enjoyed by local people.

The appearance of border crossings

Border crossings are needed for the near-border zone, for the development of transboundary ties and for the promotion of cross-border cooperation in general. Where they do not exist, virtually all legal international exchange is rendered impossible. It would thus seem logical that the more border crossings there are, and the greater their throughput, the easier cross-border cooperation will become. However, the type of permitted traffic passing through border crossings is not without significance here.

In the 1990s, many factors exerted an influence on the policy of opening new border crossings. A positive effect in increasing the number is therefore derived from:

- the earlier existence of railway lines and roads coming up to the border,
- the traditional activity and entrepreneurship of the highlanders,
- the willingness to embark upon cross-border cooperation, especially at the local level,
- the signing of an agreement on small-scale border traffic,
- the decision to establish new border crossings for tourists.

The most important factors hindering or delaying the appearance of new crossings must in turn be considered to have been:

- the lack of bridges over border rivers and streams,
- the destroyed railway lines (e.g. Nowy Targ – Podczerwone) and the presence of poor-quality roads (e.g. only reinforced or field roads),
- the lack of cohesive legal regulations in Poland and Slovakia,
- the lack of legal bases for cooperation on different levels of management,
- the disparity between standards, and ambiguity of formulations where spatial planning is concerned,
- the lack of financial means for the building of crossings and the modernization of those already in existence, as well as an excessively formalized procedure as regards the crossing of the border.

In 1990, the whole Polish-Slovak border had only 5 crossing points. By 1995, 6 new ones had appeared. In turn, the period from 1996 onwards (following the signing of the agreement on small-scale border traffic) saw the establishment of border crossings for those living in gminas at distances of up to 15 km from the border. Fifteen examples of this kind of crossing were in existence by 1998, such that there were a total of 27 crossings (representing a 540 % increase on the 5 existing in 1990). The greatest year-on-year increases were the 136.4 % increase between 1995 and 1996, and the 180 % increase between 1996 and 1997. These increases were the direct result of the signing of

the agreement on small-scale border traffic. In turn, 1999 saw the establishment of 22 new tourist crossing points for hikers, though these are not of course of significance where road or rail traffic are concerned.

Tab. 2. No. of crossing points, border traffic and level of traffic per crossing on the Polish-Slovak border in the years 1990-1998

Year	No. of crossing points	Border traffic	
		people in '000s	No. of crossing in 1 points per '000 people
1990	5	6 226	1 245
1991	6	8 556	1 426
1992	8	10 734	1 342
1993	8	8 556	1 007
1994	9	9 307	1 034
1995	11	12 800	1 164
1996 A	15	16 750	1 117
I	11	16 695	1 518
1997 A	27	15 251	565
I	11	14 751	1 341
1998 A	27	17 949	665
I	11	16 816	1 529

A – altogether, I – including those generally-accessible

Source: author's own study on the basis of materials from the Border Guard and Central Statistical Office (GUS 1999)

The increase in border traffic in the same period (1990-1998) was in fact more limited. While there were 6.2 million person-crossings in 1990, the figure for 1998 was just under 18 million. This represents a 288.3 % increase. The greatest year-on-year increase in the number of crossings of the border came in 1995 (up 37.5 % on the previous year) and 1991 (up 37.4 %). The increases in the number of crossings of the border and in border traffic are as presented in Tab. 2 and Fig.3.

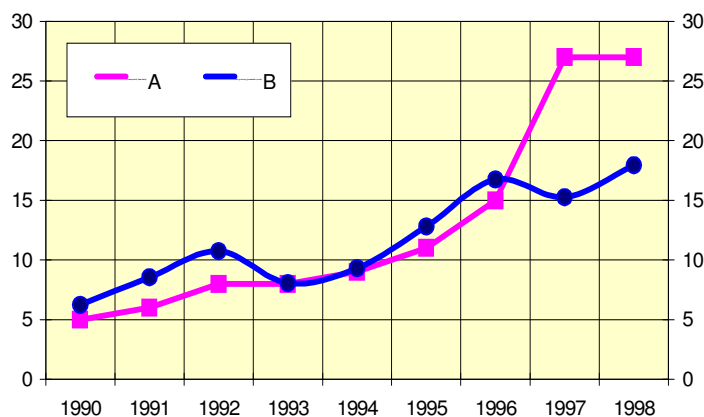


Fig. 3. Increase in numbers of border crossing points and border traffic along the Polish-Slovak border

A – number of border crossing points (left scale), B – border traffic in million (right scale)

It is possible to reach the conclusion that the increase in border traffic enforced the opening of new border crossings, though the reverse scenario could also be accepted. When a new crossing is opened, more and more people tend to make use of it – including those who have never crossed the border before. On the Polish-Slovak border, the increasing traffic combined with cross-border cooperation in the years 1990-92 to necessitate the opening of new crossing points. Subsequent years saw the two phenomena rise more or less together. However, the opening of the new crossings for small-scale traffic brought a much bigger and faster rise than did the increase in border traffic. From 1996 on there was a major increase in the number of crossing points, while the border traffic remained at a similar level (Fig. 3).

Attention needs to be paid to the level of use made of crossing points. There is a great difference between the extreme values noted. In 1998 the Chyżne – Trstená crossing was busiest, with more than 4 million person-crossings of the border¹. Where the generally-accessible road crossing points were concerned, the one taking the fewest people was Kniecna – Becherov, which only recorded 273,000 person-crossings in 1998. This represents a 14.5-fold difference. When consideration is also given to the railway crossings, it becomes clear that the least used point is Zwardoń – Skalité (117,000 person-crossings). In this case, the range becomes a 34-fold one. It is worth stressing at this point that the difference between border traffic at the busiest and least busy points shows an rise, if an uneven one. In 1990 it was a 5.1-fold difference, in 1994 15.4-fold and in 1996 23.9-fold. Taking the railway crossings into account, the increase in the range is even greater – from 5.1 in 1990 to 18.1 in 1994 and 27.1 in 1996. The differences are even bigger where crossings used by small-scale border traffic are also taken account of, since many of these have only symbolic movements of people, with figures close to zero.

Cooperation as regards transport

Cross-border rail and coach links form a certain kind of configuration of defined range, which denotes a real level of use of roads, railway lines and border crossings, as well as revealing defined demand. It also attests to the possibilities and real systems working to create transboundary societal ties (Więckowski 2000).

Fig. 4 presents the transboundary system of connections between Poland and Slovakia as of 1999. The greatest number of connection's use the Orava-Nowy Targ Basin (coaches only) or the Poprad Valley (coaches and rail). The linkages between large cities extend furthest from the border, with the strength of impact of such centres as Kraków, Katowice, Rzeszów and Košice extending equally far into each of the neighbouring countries.

The densest network of rail and coach linkages has been shaped in the central part of the borderland. The connections in question link Spiš – Orava and Poland's Podhale region, as well as the Beskid Sądecki area. A relatively large number of links are to be found in the eastern part of the borderland, with an important supplementation here deriving from rail links along the Sanok –

¹ The values given relate to the absolute number of crossings of the border in both directions.

Medzilaborce – Humenné route. In turn, the western part only has rail links (no coach links) via the Zwardoń Pass, or further west via the Czech Republic.

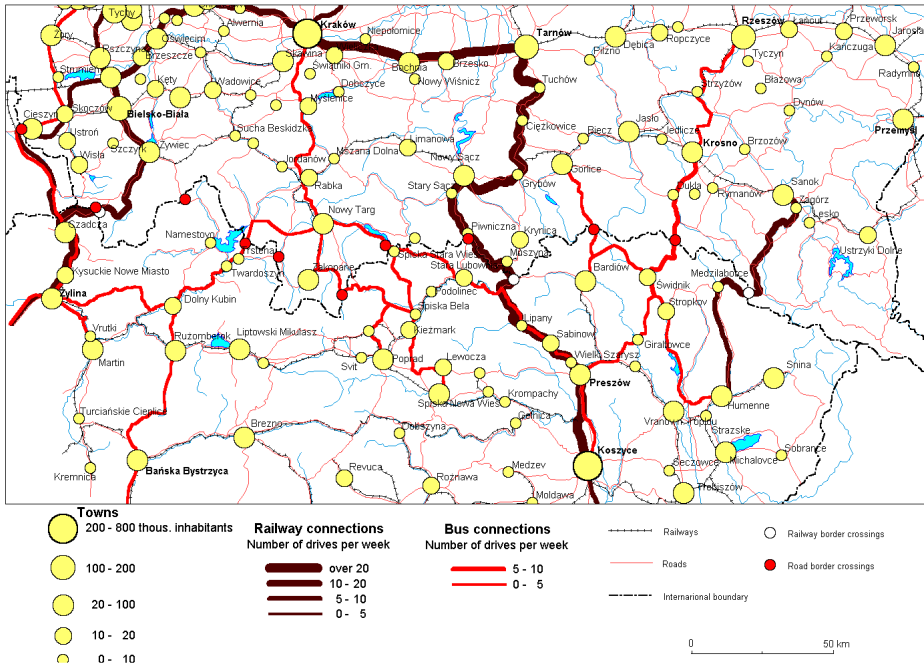


Fig. 4. Transboundary network of Polish-Slovakian transport connections

Connections that could facilitate transboundary tourist traffic would be of great importance. These might involve Krynica and Bardejov (following conversion of the Tylicz Pass crossing point into a generally-accessible one); Żywiec – Korbielów – Námestovo and Bielsko – Biała – Żywiec – Zwardoń – Žilina.

Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that important centres for cross-border communications have already taken shape. Those of a supra-regional nature include especially Kraków, Katowice and Košice. Among the regional connections to the centres, mention should be made of Nowy Targ, Stará Ľubovňa, Prešov, Čadca, Žilina and the group of towns formed by Nowy Sącz-Piwniczna.

The Polish-Slovak transport network does not include waterways or air routes, though there is a potential for these to develop. A particularly significant role may be played by air transport, with use being made of the airfields or airports in Poprad, Košice and Rzeszów, as well as more distant Kraków and Katowice.

The present spatial configuration of the transport network in the Polish-Slovak borderland is the result of the influence of natural conditions and the economic and political relations which have held sway in the last few centuries. That said, the cross-border system and linkages have also been influenced by the location and number of border crossings and all the other decisions of inter-

ested parties as regards actions to open new crossing points and build new transport routes.

Local and regional coach and rail links on a wider scale than hitherto began to emerge from the beginning of the 1990s. The network thereof is still taking shape, though the overall fundamental outline of its operations are now in place. The main network of linkages is formed by regular coachlines and rail links.

The transport system plays an important role in the shaping of cross-border ties between Poland and Slovakia. Natural conditioning is important as regards the direction and course of transport lines. Some mountain chains such as the Tatras, Bieszczady Mountains and Beskid Żywiecki range are a major barrier to the laying of roads and railway lines, and hence also for cross-border connections and movements of people.

Cooperation in the field of tourism

The coordinating studies of the development of Polish-Slovak border areas of 1993 and 1994 stated that “*the main factor in the socio-economic activation of the area is the huge natural and landscape potential for the development of all kinds of tourist traffic and health-resort treatment*” (CUPRP 1994). The same studies also set out the main areas of action where tourism and health resorts are concerned. These are:

- promotional activity as regards tourist and associated developments,
- the creation of conditions for the joint management and provision of near-border rest and recreation areas,
- the safeguarding of the accessibility and competitiveness of the areas, *for example* through: the assuring of a joint information system regarding places to stay and services, the creation of conditions for tourism on foot along the mountain trails either side of the border (including via non-passport tourist zones, especially for young people, in the most attractive areas wherein the border could be crossed at any point),
- the development of specialized health-resort and curative services,
- the promotion of agritourism, mainly in the Nowy Sącz, Spiš, Orava, Kysuce, Upper Orava and Zamagurza areas.

In considering cross-border cooperation from the spatial point of view, it is possible to divide the area into three main zones:

The borderline

This area is quite well-prepared for and made use of by cross-border tourism. The most-fully and best adapted are the tourist trails. An attractive natural environment has given rise to large numbers of them, though separate organization has led to double signposting of trails along a length of as much as 169 km.

The number of hikers' border crossings remains insufficient and the distribution is uneven. It would seem that strong cross-border ties have developed in the Pieniny and Beskid Żywiecki areas, and it is here that the most border crossings have been opened. The nature of the Pieniny Mountains, desire to protect them

and make them available have influenced the development of strong ties between the Polish and Slovak sides. This is an almost model example of cross-border cooperation in which it has proved possible to reconcile the protection of the environment with the development of tourism.

There are still too few border crossings in the Beskid Niski, Bieszczady and of course the Tatra Mountains. The last area is a typical example of a dualistic influence of the natural environment and its conceptualization by society. This is an attractive area from the natural, landscape and touristic points of view, and thanks to this anthropic pressure is enhanced and excessive traffic experienced on one side, while on the other there is a highly-developed need to protect the area.

There is no doubt that both an enlivening influence and assistance in the shaping of new transboundary ties would be provided by an opening-up of the border zone that would allow the border to be crossed anywhere.

The immediate hinterland

This lies in the mesoregions cut across by the border, in which there is a concentration of the most important administrative elements serving cross-border tourism. Beyond the border crossings themselves, the system of tourist trails is of exceptional importance. Also significant is the cross-border communication allowing for travel between the neighbouring countries. However, the decisive significance in the zone is that of the overnight accommodation and associated bases. As the present chapter has shown, their role is significant in both countries, and is best developed in the Tatra region.

The further hinterland

In the case of the Polish-Slovak borderland this has limited significance for the shaping of ties, thanks to mountain-based tourism. An accommodation base lying too far away does not facilitate penetration of the neighbouring country. Nevertheless, this is a zone in which coach and rail transport are of decisive importance. It also has the potential to become a tourist area.

While tourist attractions are obviously the magnets drawing people in, purchases and interests are also hugely important reasons behind trips to a neighbouring country. Differences in the level of socio-economic development also have their influence on the quality of tourism. Lower prices in Slovakia allow Polish tourists to stay longer over there. In turn, the high price of overnight stays in Poland ensures that less than 17,000 Slovaks decided upon such a stay in our country.

Nevertheless, there is a greater number of Slovaks visiting the Polish part of the borderland than vice versa. Slovaks mainly come to Poland for the day, while when Poles go to Slovakia (as they do ever more often), they stay longer and longer. The two Slovak border regions (of Prešov and Žilina) accommodated more than 63,500 Poles in 1998. In comparison, the former Polish voivodships of Krosno, Nowy Sącz and Bielsko-Biała put up only 2300 Slovaks. Equally glaring are the disproportions in the mean length of stays, with Slovaks

spending an average of 2.4 days in the Polish part of the borderland, cf. a figure of 4.7 days for Poles in the Slovak part (see Tab. 3).

A uniform natural environment cut through by the state border favours joint management, promotion, etc. Joint events and fairs are organized and there is ever-greater exchange of promotional materials, leaflets, maps and guides. The two sides now play a shared part in drafting many of these. Examples might be the book on the Pieniny Mountains, and the preparation of a map of the Ciśniański Landscape Park. Even several years ago, the Directors of the two Pieniny Mountains National Parks had already drawn up a joint system of tourist information in the form of map-sheets to be found in both the Polish and Slovak parts. Their content and scope was devised jointly and takes in both Parks. Trails in the Pieniny Mountains are also being adapted to the needs of tourists from both countries. New trails are being put in place. This area may thus serve as an example for cooperation, attesting as it does to well-developed cross-border ties. Now planned for the eastern part is joint marking out of supra-regional trails linked with the character of the area, which are intended to attract potential international tourists.

Tab. 3. Polish and Slovak tourists in places of overnight accommodation in the near-border provinces in 1998

	Tourists	Numbers spending the night	Number of overnight accommodation places	Length of stay
A	Slovaks in Poland	2 274	5 461	2.40
B	Poles in Slovakia	63 513	300 650	4.73
	B/A	27.9	55.1	1.97

THE EMERGENCE OF TRANSBOUNDARY TERRITORIAL UNITS AS THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION – CONCLUSIONS

The emerging transboundary units in the Polish-Slovak borderland area are not yet fully-fledged. Nevertheless, the borderland has quite clearly become divided into three separate parts (which may most simplistically be termed the western, central and eastern). The western part is home to the Beskidy (Beskids) Euroregion, the central to the Tatra Mountains Euroregion and the eastern to the Carpathian Euroregion. The foundation stone underpinning their emergence and functioning is the natural environment, which has been elevated to the highest rank in each case. Its rational use is the most important objective of each of the transboundary units, so that the main paths to development entail environmental protection and the development of tourism. A common feature of the transboundary units was administrative change in the 1990s, with subordination to newly-configured administrative units and changes in divisions on both sides of the border. It can be stated without fear or favour that the transboundary units underwent constant, ongoing processes of development in the 1990s - processes that are not yet complete.

The transboundary units represent the highest stage of cross-border cooperation. They take in areas that have embarked upon such cooperation, and even if

the ties are initially quite weak, they tend to take shape and gain in strength as time passes.

Equally, the Polish-Slovak borderland can be seen to have gained transboundary regions of two types:

- the first emerging through local initiatives – for example the Beskidy Euroregion,
- the second emerging by way of central initiatives – the Carpathian Euroregion.

It may also be possible to perceive a third type, personified by the Tatra Euroregion and representing some kind of blend of the two, emerging partly as a result of local initiatives and partly as a result of central ones. The transboundary territorial units have several common features:

- an area bounded by the limits of transboundary ties – with the main mountain chain of the Carpathians as the nucleus, and in several cases inclusion of only one distinct physico-geographical unit (the Tatras or Beskid Żywiecki),
- a natural environment of mountains being the element that links communities on either side of the border – something that has gained reflection in the names of the Euroregions (of the Eastern Carpathians, the Tatra Mountains and the Beskids),
- the management of what are naturally-valuable areas in accordance with the principles of sustainable development – as a priority for all the transboundary units in the Polish-Slovak borderland,
- a leading objective behind the establishment and operation of transboundary units in the form of the conservation of the natural environment and the use of nature for tourist ends, and hence towards the goal of socio-economic development.

It should be hoped that the now-underway process of shaping transboundary ties between Poland and Slovakia will progress further, while the actions of the authorities will lead towards the full opening of the border. This should take place with account taken of the specifics of what mountain areas exceptionally sensitive to anthropopressure.

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POLSKO-SLOVENSKÁ CEZHRANIČNÁ SPOLUPRÁCA

Začiatkom deväťdesiatych rokov vznikli nové príležitosti na spoluprácu medzi Poľskom a Slovenskou republikou. Dohody o vzájomnej cezhraničnej spolupráci sa týkali mnohých oblastí, ale k najdôležitejším patria: hospodársky rozvoj, ochrana prírody, rozvoj cestovného ruchu, rozvoj infraštruktúry (t.j. budovanie ciest a hraničných prechodov), kultúrna a športová výmena. V tomto článku sme venovali pozornosť tým oblastiam, ktoré považujeme za najdôležitejšie pre poľsko-slovenskú spoluprácu:

- ochrana životného prostredia,
- cestovný ruch,
- doprava (z hľadiska infraštruktúry ako aj spojenia).

Poľsko-slovenská hranica pretína významné a cenné oblasti prírodného prostredia. Cezhraničná spolupráca by sa mala uplatniť s ohľadom na zvláštnosti horského prostredia, najmä ich výnimočnú citlivosť na antropogénny tlak. Zostáva len dúfať, že formovanie cezhraničných väzieb medzi Poľskom a Slovenskom bude naďalej postupovať a kroky kompetentných budú smerovať k plnému otvoreniu hranice. Najlepšie pre obe krajiny by bolo, keby vstupovali do EÚ spoločne tak, aby spolupráca cez poľsko-slovenskú hranicu mohla pokračovať ako dobrý model cezhraničnej spolupráce, vhodný ako príklad pre ostatné krajiny.

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