

STUDY ON A GASTRO-TOURISTICAL PROJECT IN THE HUNGARY- ROMANIA CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is the discussion of the experiences on a Hungary-Romania cross-border project which was implemented in Arad, Békés, Csongrád and Timiș counties in 2012-2013. University of Szeged, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of the Banat in Timișoara and two Romanian and one Hungarian farmer associations were involved in collecting special local products and recipes, traditional cultural and gastronomic events, as well as restaurants and accommodations. As coordinators of the project we gathered several experiences. SWOT analysis was carried out to understand the circumstances and the advantages and disadvantages of the regions. The main conclusion of our experiences was the following: it seems there are more things which are connect than which are separate people in this border regions.

The project was financed by the HU-RO CBC Programme (The role of special local foods and events in development of local tourism – HURO/1001/213/2.1.2 – FEDERTO).

Keywords: rural tourism, Hungary-Romania, cross-border co-operation, project management

INTRODUCTION

In whole Europe the SMEs in agriculture try the diversification of their activities. Beside the animal, plant and horticultural production they focus on complementary activities, in most cases on rural tourism (HORVÁTH, 2009). In the Hungarian rural areas the most important strategic goal is the development of tourism based on the local thermal water and the joint services (VÁNTUS ET AL., 2012). The development of tourism is a complex objective helping it by establishing and improving the relating facilities. These facilities make easier not only the life of local inhabitants and serve employment, but many of them make the rural areas more attractive even for tourists (SZABÓ AND POSTA, 2012).

The purpose of development remains unchanged: to offer for tourists accommodation and gourmet specialties in rural areas, at affordable prices in a beautiful 100% natural area (CIOLAC ET AL., 2011). Regarding the good quality products local farmers markets could be good solutions contributing to the increased number of visitors. The implementation of developments easier with the aid of projects.

Projects involve uncertainty. At the beginning of a project, the exact amount of time that will be needed is not known, nor is the precise amount that the project will eventually cost. For some projects, it is even uncertain whether the intended goal will be reached at all (BAARS, 2006). The triangle of time-quality-cost shows the trade-offs inherent in any project. Time is the available time to deliver the forces in a project. Cost represents the amount of money or resources available and quality represents the “fit-to-purpose” that the project must achieve to be a success. The normal situation is that one of these factors is fixed and the other two will vary in inverse proportion to each other. For example “Time”

is often fixed and the "Quality" of the end product will depend on the "Cost" or resources available. Similarly if you are working to a fixed level of "Quality" then the "Cost" of the project will largely be dependent upon the "Time" available (if you have longer you can do it with fewer people) (JENKINS, 2006).

The aim of this study was the evaluation of cross-border cooperation with the help of a case study.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The aim of this paper is the discussion of the experiences on a cross-border project which was implemented in Arad, Békés, Csongrád and Timiș counties. The partners were:

- Two universities: University of Szeged Faculty of Agriculture (LP) at Hódmezővásárhely and University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of the Banat at Timișoara;
- and farmer associations were involved:
 - Farmers Association of Orosháza,
 - Association of Hungarian Farmers of Arad County,
 - Association of Farmers and Entrepreneurs of Bansag.

The objectives of the CBC project were collected as special local products and recipes, cultural and gastronomic events, as well as restaurants and accommodations. SWOT analysis was carried out to understand the circumstances and the advantages and disadvantages of the situation.

RESULTS

All the partners knew each other from other projects or other type of bilateral co-operations (Table 1). The partners had a strong willingness to implement the tasks which were decided in the application. The members of Project Management Group were delegated by every single partner.

Universities have complete facilities and experience for organising events, to do the documentation of professional work and to fit to financial rules. The collected material will be used also for educational purposes in the teaching of rural tourism by the intent of the partner universities.

The farmers associations have a great number of members, so the collecting of data was easier than it was planned, but the organisation of uniformity of data records, and the description and translation of folksy idioms were more difficult than it was imagined before. Sometimes the collection of data needed too much time, because the information of the persons who served data was complete about the project goals. Several local cultural and traditional event were collected to an event calendar which can be a database for those who would like to look for some attraction in the neighbourhood or spend a weekend in a familiar community and enjoy the hospitality of the hosts and the new/old taste of the local products and dishes. Some of the events (first of all religious celebrations) were reintroduced after a four decade break, so it is necessary to extend them for the young generation.

The outputs of the projects are the following. Meeting of entrepreneurs/specialists in all counties (Hódmezővásárhely, Arad, Timișoara and Orosháza). News and interviews about

our project activities in the media. All results are published in three books on two languages (Hungarian and Romanian):

- Gastronomy and local products in four counties of the Hungary-Romania cross-border region.
- Gastronomic and local events in the four examined counties.
- Restaurants and accommodation in the four examined counties.

The books will be passed to entrepreneurs, local libraries, tourist information points and to university students. All data are also represented on the project website (www.federto.eu).

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the project

Strengths • The goals were decided together with the partners. • The partners knew each other. • Universities had staff, experience and place for project work and events. • Professional and financial support. • Resolve in implementation. • Most of the partners could speak Hungarian, but all of them knew English so it was the language for communication of the project.	Weaknesses • Civil partners had no enough experience in project management. • No permanent staff at civil organisations. • Members of civil partners has always a job with a priority (e.g. at summer for farmers). • Translation of professional texts. • Not easy to agree in appointments to prepare project events which fit to each partners.
Opportunities • Get acquainted with several farmers and entrepreneurs. • Preparation of new projects. • Co-operation with local decision makers, stakeholders. • Realize stronger cooperation between the partners and farmers, and among the farmers and entrepreneurs. • Project events are good possibilities for the promotion of local values. • Easy to continue the data collection and extend the database during the following maintenance period.	Threats • Only one year for the project (short time). • Farmer organisations sometimes are influenced by policy. • There was a temptation to implement a "Hungarian-Hungarian" project. • It is easy to cause pique if we do not know enough about each other culture, traditions and religious rules. • When the visited enterprises do not have proper or enough information about the project aims, they do not want to appear in the database.

CONCLUSIONS

During the project lifetime the different organisations get a financial and professional support for their activities. The partner from Arad county won a special advantage: they could rebuild their staff to a team.

Cross-border co-operations could have a synergetic effect on the introduction of different cultures, traditions and the people of the different micro regions and bring closer of the nationalities. The main conclusion of our experiences was the following: it seems there are more things which are connect than which are divide us in this region.

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