ETIS HANDBOOK AQUA ADVENTURES

KISTOLMÁCS-HUNGARY

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecotourism is becoming more and more popular, as worldwide trends (especially the growing awareness of the detrimental effects of uncontrolled mass tourism) promote alternative, less environmental polluting means of tourism (in a collective term these forms are called responsible tourism). In addition to the increased environmental stress caused by mass tourism, there is another factor that increases the popularity of alternative forms of tourism, including ecotourism: this is the saturation of a large share of tourists with the standardised tourism products. New, innovative products are getting more and more popular and sought after.

The ecopark in planned the framework of the Aqua Adventures project fits perfectly to this trend. The area that is home to this project, the Kistolmács-Prelog region (a Hungarian-Croatian cross-border region) is excellent for ecotourism for several reasons: due to the relative former isolation of the area, the lack of former large-scale industrial investments and operations, and the low level of chemicals used in agriculture formerly, the natural environment is more untouched than in most other parts of Hungary and Croatia; the region is rich in natural endowments including a clean and fast river, forests, lakes, hiking paths, and in the vicinity several ecotourism facilities (e.g. study paths, visitor centres) managed by national park directorates can be found. Also, there is also

tradition of cooperation among Hungarian and Croatian stakeholders, findings of previous collaborations can be utilised (IPA projects etc.).

The eco-park to be created in the framework of the Aqua Adventures project is a facility that meets the demands of several target groups. During the stakeholder meetings, focus group interviews with the participation of different interest groups were contacted and interviewed on both sides of the border, including primary and secondary school teachers, experts of nature protection and ecotourism, experts of tourism destination management, people with different physical or other disabilities and organisations representing their interests, and university students. Their previous ecotourism and eco-park experiences (there are existing ecoparks operating for several years in Hungary) and their ideas, views, recommendations have all been integrated into the project findings.

The transboundary region needs a simple but operational organisation that is in responsible for the information flow, product development, marketing activity of the ecopark, and also for the harmonisation of the interests of the different stakeholder groups. The collection, systematisation and adequate use of information are a task of utmost importance, for which the system called ETIS is applied and tailor-made to the area.

The ultimate task of the ecopark is to put the region on the map of tourism, as this border area is not an obvious choice for a holiday even

for the domestic population, let alone the international ones who are usually transit passengers, only; to increase the number of tourists, the number of guest nights spent by tourists, in a way that does not deteriorate the state of the environment, in fact, improves that if possible, by the education of the different generations, especially the younger ones about how to behave as responsible tourists. Another huge achievement of the ecopark is the inclusion of people with disabilities whose travels are much more problematic in this region than in Western Europe for example: most service providers have failed so far the recognise the vast economic potential in this so far very much underutilised segment of tourism. The park is designed in a way that takes the needs of people with disabilities into consideration.

The Aqua Adventures project is a continuous learning process the lessons of which can also be transferred to ecoparks and similar facilities later, not only in Croatia and Hungary but also in other countries as well.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is no longer seen as a "luxury" or rich societies and as a possible option for the long-term survival of human kind, rather as the only sensible choice. There may have been debates a few decades ago about global warming, climate change and the role of the (over)consumer societies in the appearance and worsening of these problems, but there seems to be a consensus now that a radical shift in the behaviour and consumption habits of societies is needed.

Although it is usually industry, agriculture and transportation that people think about when they hear global climate change and tourism is not seen as a primary source of the ecological problem, the truth is that tourism now has a major contribution to the ecological problems. The ever-growing numbers of tourists (the number of international tourist arrivals grew from just 25 million in 1950 to almost 1.5 billion by 2019) and the increasing need for transportation means that tourism is now responsible for approximately 8% of the greenhouse gas emission on the planet – and this is only the direct impact through the movements of tourists, the indirect impacts (agricultural and industrial goods, transport devices produced to satisfy tourism demands, altering the natural

ecosystems in order to make rooms for tourism developments) make the situation even worse.

Not only the problems were recognised decades ago but so were the possible solutions. In the 1970s already, when the negative consequences of (mass) tourism became more and more obvious, academics came up with the idea of something relatively new, ideas about making tourism greener, less polluting for the environment. The names of these tourism activities are many and sometimes misleading: some talk about responsible tourism, other of mild tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism etc. What is common in these definitions, names is that the responsibility and the new attitude, behaviour of both the supply side of the tourism industry (the service providers, destination management organisations etc.) and the demand side (the tourists) is emphasised. The main differences between the "old", non-responsible and the "new", responsible tourists can be seen in the table below.

Table 1: The old and the new tourist

The Old Tourist	The New Tourist
Search for the sun	Experience something different
Follow the masses	Want to be in charge
Here today, gone tomorrow	See and enjoy but not destroy
Just to show that you had been	Just for the fun of it
Having	Being

Superiority	Understanding
Like attractions	Like sports
Precautions	Adventurous
Eat in hotel	Try local flare
Homogeneous	Hybrid
Hedonist	Responsible
Standardises services	Services satisfying individual needs
Role of environment in experience is negligible	Authenticity is a must
Limited contact with the local population	Intensive contact with the local population

The UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) concept of sustainable tourism (also accepted and used by the EU) is as follows: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

The "new" tourists are much more interested in decreasing the negative environmental impacts of their travels than the traditional, "old-style" mass tourists are. (Of course the distinction does not mean that all tourists are "new" now, it only means that there is a shift in the proportions towards the more environment conscious tourists.)

One of the most responsible ways of travelling is ecotourism. The IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) definition of ecotourism is as follows: "environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features — both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations".

Ecotourism is seen in two ways: as a product, environmentally responsible travel, and also as an attitude that aims at making the total of the tourism industry greener. The latter should not be underestimated: mass tourism is still the most common form of tourism and is expected to remain also in the future, so it is not only hardcore, dedicated

ecotourists who are the target group of ecotourism but so are less environment conscious (mass) tourists by changing the attitude of whom towards the environment during their travels may be a huge step forward in greening the tourism industry.

For this to be realised, ecotourism facilities must educate and entertain at the same time. Today's tourists seek experience that may be gained by walking along study paths, visiting ecotourism visitor centres, forest schools – or ecoparks where the education and experience of several generations is provided for, and where the attitude shaping of less environment conscious mass tourists, their conversion into at least green tourists can be achieved.

II. OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW DESTINATION POINT IN KISTOLMÁCS

Sustainable development is almost a "natural" phenomenon in the destination. The Kistolmács–Prelog area has always been an area less developed from economic and infrastructure aspects, being divided by a fast river (the Mura River), and after World War II by a state border that was one of the most strictly guarded and least permeable borders of Hungary. The rural character of the destination, the high proportion of afforestation (far above the national average), the relative proximity to natural areas, some with international recognition (the Ramsar Area of Little Balaton, the relatively recent Mura-Drava-Danube UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve designated in 2012 game), the rich flora and fauna (especially big games like red deer and wild boar the stock of which makes the destination an excellent location of hunting tourism that may also be pursued in a sustainable way) make the Kistolmács–Prelog area an area with great ecotourism potentials.

The Kistolmács–Prelog area is on the border of the territories of two national park directorates that are responsible for the sustainable use and development of the natural resources: these are the Danube-Dráva National Park and the Balaton Uplands national park.

The transport infrastructure of the area is relatively underdeveloped, which is an unfavourable development asset for the economy (and partly society) but a phenomenon definitely good for sustainable development and ecotourism.

III. DESTINATION PROFILE

The low density of (not too busy) roads, the relatively distance of main railway trunk lines and the lack of commercial navigation on the Mura River all result in a relatively low environmental stress, environment pollution which is now a precious asset not only for ecotourism but also for other sorts of tourism where untouched nature and healthy environment are the main attractions: rural or agri-tourism where the tranquil environment and the preserved rural traditions mean a lot for the increasingly urbanised domestic population and international visitors; the renaissance and growing interest in organically produced, local goods, especially food products, improves the chances of regions capable of the production of such goods with their unspoilt natural endowments to join in gastronomy tourism, enological tourism etc.

Another phenomenon of the touristic demand in highly industrialised and urbanised societies is the need for active recreation to tackle the problems caused by civilisation diseases: areas offering good opportunities for hiking, biking, horseback riding, canoeing, angling etc. are becoming more and more attractive for a growing share of tourists. The Kistolmács–Prelog area abounds in all these circumstances that guarantee the sustainable development of the economy, including tourism.

However, there are handicaps, problems regarding sustainability in the area as well:

- Like most rural areas in Hungary and also in Croatia, the Kistolmács–Prelog area also faces the problem of depopulation, as rural lifestyle

and agricultural employment seem less and less attractive for the younger generations. This means less labour force also for tourism developments;

- The lack of canalisation in some villages may negatively impact the quality of subsoil water;
- The general phenomenon of global climate change increases the frequency of weather anomalies that jeopardise sustainable farming and even tourism, and leads to the general ecological degradation of the area (sinking subsoil water levels and the concomitant aridification, the decline of the population of valuable flora and fauna species and the penetration of invasive species and diseases);

On the whole, the Kistolmács–Prelog area has definitely good endowments for sustainable development. The relatively good ecological condition of the area, due to the former isolation as a strictly guarded border region and the lack of intensive agricultural or industrial utilisation, is now a valuable asset for a series of economic activities that are related to each other:

- organic farming that may provide a stable livelihood for the local population engaged with agriculture and may also provide local tourism service providers with fashionable and competitive local foods, beverages and artisan products;

- sustainable forms of tourism like gastronomy and enological tourism, hunting tourism, angling tourism, riparian tourism – kayaking and canoeing –, ecotourism, hiking, equestrian tourism, bicycling,
- sustainable forestry that may produce raw materials for gastronomy tourism, artisan products and can also promote the development of other economic activities like tourism (hiking, bicycling or horseback riding on designated forest paths).

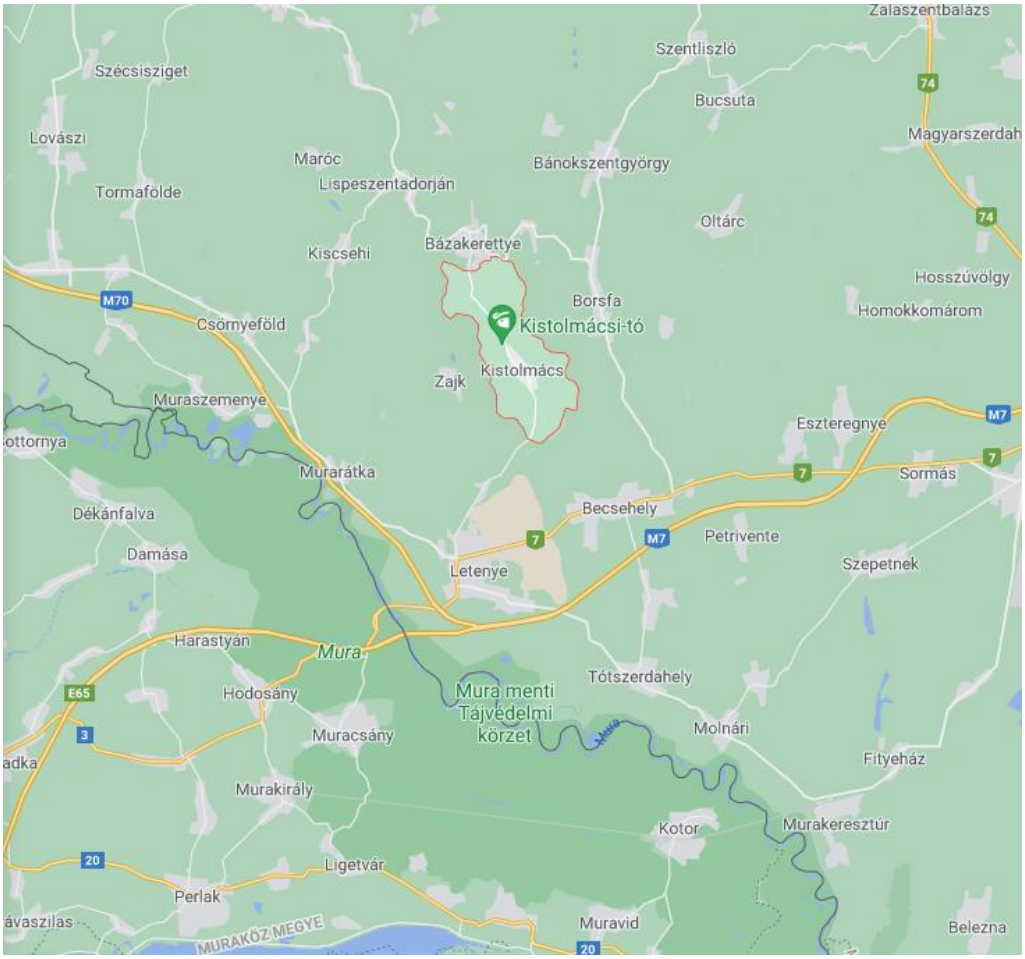
EUROPEAN TOURISM INDICATOR SYSTEM (ETIS)

ETIS indicators in a sustainable tourist destination – the example of the Kistolmács–Prelog cross-border Hungarian–Croatian ecopark micro-region.

ETIS is a system of indicators suitable for all tourist destinations, encouraging them to adopt a more intelligent approach to tourism planning. It is:

- a management tool, supporting destinations who want to take a sustainable approach to destination management
- a monitoring system, easy to use for collecting data and detailed information and to let destinations monitor their performance from one year to another
- an information tool (not a certification scheme), useful for policy makers, tourism enterprises and other stakeholders[1].

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en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Kistolmács
Zajk
Muraszemenye
Eszteregnye
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Sormás
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Becsehely
Petrivente
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Perlak
ávaszilas
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Belezna

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENTS IN HUNGARY

The significance of tourism is unquestionable now in the world, and tourism is no longer seen as a clearly economic phenomenon, rather as a process with considerable socio-economic impacts. Although traditional mass tourism is expected to remain the motivation for the majority of travels, alternative forms and new locations of tourism are becoming more and more popular recently, and one of these forms is ecotourism.

Among the new venues not visited or not so often visited by tourists so far, untouched natural areas are of special importance. The Hungarian population, however, has still not fully discovered the possibilities in this, which is due to at least two factors: the inadequate communication of the protected areas; and the lack of adequate infrastructure, in the absence of which natural beauties, no matter how attractive they are, will not induce significant volumes of tourism.

(Protected) territories rich in natural values can often be found in underdeveloped or backward areas, as it was just the disadvantageous situation from the aspect of economic use (natural factors: wetlands, infertile sand areas etc., or border regions not to be developed due to political considerations) that saved the natural values of these areas from intensive agriculture or industrialisation.

As regards the current infrastructure of ecotourism in Hungary, it is rapidly developing and now the ten national park directorates (the most significant actors of ecotourism in Hungary) manage approximately 60

visitor centres, almost 30 visitable caves, approximately 20 forest schools and almost 140 study paths (http://magyarnemzetiparkok.hu/). Of course it is not only national parks and other nature protection areas managed by the state that may be actors in ecotourism but so can for-profit companies: forestry companies and other business ventures also operate such establishments in Hungary – a forestry company significant and active in ecotourism in Hungary, the Kaszó Forestry is only at a distance of one hour's drive from Kistolmács.

The range of natural attractions is broad, but the number of really visitor-friendly establishments, taking the needs of visitors, families into consideration and offering a full range of services and experiences is not so high for the time being in Hungary. There is still huge potential in the development of ecotourism in Hungary, including the establishment of ecotourism facilities that offer entertainment and experience at the same time (edutainment) for multiple generations. The establishment of the new ecopark in the framework of the Aqua Adventures project enhances the

ecotourism potential of the respective settlements, the whole of the micro-region and even the country as a whole.

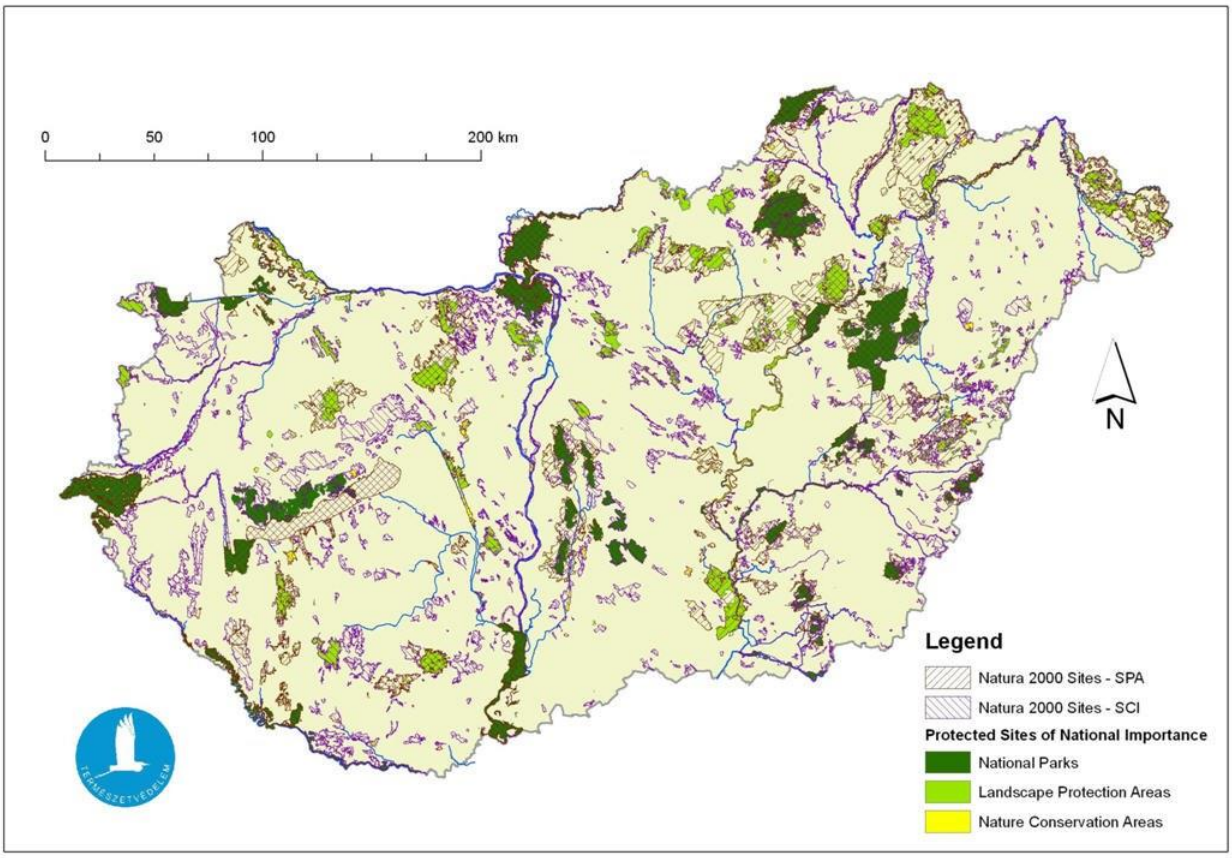

Figure 1: Protected areas in Hungary

https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/2010/countries/hu/nature-protection-and-biodiversity-state/bd3.jpg/view

Although ecotourism is often identified with protected areas, it is not only nature protection areas where ecotourism is possible. Nevertheless Hungary is urbanised and industrialised enough so that most natural

values have survived in areas under protection, just because of the lack of agricultural, industrial use or infrastructure developments.

Of the international IUCN categories of protected areas, not all six can be found in Hungary. The ones that do exist are as follows (www.termeszetvedelem.hu):

1. Natural areas and values of national significance, protected by single legal regulations:

- national parks (10 parks, 480,697.9 hectares);
- protected landscape areas (39 areas, 336,874.9 hectares);
- national nature reserves (172 reserves, 1,453.3 hectares);
- nature monuments (90 monuments, 122.5 ha).

2. Protected areas by force of law ("ex lege"):

- all marshes (1,193), salt lakes (340);
- all nature monuments: Cuman Mounds (1,542), hillforts (298), springs (6,607), sinkholes (795);
- all caves (4,152);
- areas protected by local regulations: nature protection areas (953 areas, 42,713.8 hectares) and nature monuments (852 monuments, with no territorial dimensions).

Further existing or potential destinations of ecotourism, under protection in Hungary, are as follows (https://www.hidrotanszek.hu/):

1. Forest reserves (62 reserves, 13,293,5 ha, core area: 3.707,5

hectares);

2. Nature parks operating by the approval of the competent minister (12 parks, 730.904 hectares);

3. Natura 2000 sites, areas protected by European community guidelines:

- special areas of conservation (479 areas, 1.44 million hectares);
- special areas of bird protection (56 areas, 1.37 million hectares).

4. LIFE programme (the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action, including nature and biodiversity).

5. Areas under the effect of international agreements:

- Wetlands of international importance (Ramsar areas) (29 areas, 260 667,8 hectares);
- MAB Man and Biosphere Reserves (6 reserves, 613,219 ha hectares; core area 30,300 hectares);
- European Diploma for Protected Areas (3 areas, 2,564.7 hectares);
- World heritage sites in Hungary (8 sites).

There are two more categories that are relatively new in Hungary but definitely interesting sites for the friends of ecotourism. They are International Dark Sky Reserves and geoparks. The first category includes the Zselic Protected Landscape Area, the Hortobágy National Park and Bükk National Park, while the two geoparks in Hungary for the time

being are the Bakony–Balaton Geopark and the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark.

As regards the demand for ecotourism in Hungary, a relatively low percentage of tourists is estimated to be ecotourists (1 to 5 per cent, which is not much different from the international average). This group, however, is far from being homogeneous; people get involved in ecotourism with different motivations and different levels of commitment to environment and nature protection. According to the Hungarian

National Ecotourism Development Strategy made in 2008, four categories of ecotourists (visiting national parks, as this segment was in the focus of the survey) can be distinguished. These categories should be analysed in details, as the adequate ecotourism strategies, and especially the marketing activities of the ecotourism destinations (including the Kistolmács–Prelog ecopark) can be built on the knowledge of them, as they are the target groups to be addressed. The categories are the following:

1. Occasional green tourists: they make approximately 50-60% of all visitors to national parks (and presumably other venues of ecotourism as well).

Characteristic features:

- they make short visits lasting for an hour or two;
- their main motivation is to visit a historical place or natural area, for entertainment;
- they see special natural environment, tranquillity and clean air as the main attraction;
- their attention may be grabbed by awareness-raising events and programmes, they want experiences and are less motivated to gain in-depth knowledge;
- they usually travel when the weather is suitable for an excursion;
- they require higher level of comfort and are less keen on physical activities;
- the make their decisions mainly based on the opinions of friends and acquaintances;
- they require medium category accommodations;
- they typically organise their trips on their own, but can also be group travellers who visit a visitor centre or any other ecotourism facility especially as part of a round tour.

Service packages required by this group are as follows:

- well known and built out visitor centres, study paths easily accessible by car;
- programmes enriched with experiences like horseback riding, riding in a horse-draught chariots etc.

2. Active green tourists: they are often called "outdoor tourists" as well. They make approximately 20-30% of all visitors travelling with ecotourism purposes.

Characteristic features:

- they make both one-day and several-days trips;
- they are typically young;
- their main motivation is to do some fashionable outdoor sport or leisure time activity;
- on the basis of their interests they can be divided into two groups: the ones interested in adventure tours, and ones keen on outdoors sports (especially hiking). Recreation is in the centre of their interest;
- they often visit eco-tours;
- their travel willingness depends on the weather;
- they see the spectacular natural environment and clean air as attractions;
- they gather detailed information about the visitable values of the destination to travel to, showcase places, visitor centres,

accommodation etc.;

- the sources of information they use include the internet, brochures and travel guide books;
- they look for medium category rural and private accommodations as well.

Service packages required by this group are as follows:

- sport activities that can be pursued in picturesque natural environment;
- typically group tours in both organised and non-organised form.

The segment of conscious ecotourists can be further divided into two sub-segments on the ground of motivation and activity:

3. Ecotourists: they make approximately 10-15% of all visitors.

Characteristic features:

- their main motivation is to get to know and understand natural and ecological processes and values;
- they feel responsible for the protection of the natural environment and they actively do something for it;
- they stay for longer periods in a destination in order to get to know it as thoroughly as possible;
- their travel willingness does not depend on the weather;

- their level of tolerance to environment pollution is low;
- they are willing to actively participate in researches and eco-projects.

4. Dedicated ecotourists: they are those really obsessed with nature protection and ecotourism. For them ecotourism is the number one tourism product. Their proportion is low for the time being, but not negligible. Of all national park visitors, 5-10% can be taken as dedicated ecotourists.

Characteristic features:

- for this segment ecotourism is more like a lifestyle than a tourism product;
- they are regular participants in ecotourism;
- their main motivation is of cognitive character;
- the love of nature and sustainability are parts of their lives;
- they often sleep in tents and require simple nature-friendly accommodations;
- they are active participants in nature protection.

As for the potential target groups of the ecopark to be established in the Kistolmács–Prelog cross-border area, it is especially the first two categories, i.e. occasional green tourists and active green tourists on which the project may rely on (which does not mean, of course, that

more dedicated, real ecotourists cannot find the area interesting).

The area does not have a nature reserve or an ecotourism value that is a real attraction on its own for dedicated ecotourists (a Ramsar Area, a strictly protected national park area, a Dark Sky Reserve etc. – this may change, though, as the latest Man and Biosphere Reserve of Hungary, and the first transboundary Reserve in the country, the Mura-Drava-Danube UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve increases its visibility and popularity), but there are enough values for less obsessed ecotourists. As the latter category is much more numerous, making the overwhelming

majority of nature tourists and ecotourists, the target group for the

would-be ecopark is quite large.

Ecotourism is not only a tourism product but also an attitude and an excellent tool for nature education for which the Kistolmács–Prelog ecopark can be an excellent location. Education and experience can be offered here to visitors at the same time, making the park attractive for both those who are already familiar with ecotourism and also those who may hear the concept for the first time.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE KISTOLMÁCS-PRELOG CROSS-BORDER REGION (POPULATION, TOURISM, STARTEGIES, POLICIES)

This cross-border area has gone through an interesting course of development through history, leaving its mark on the present socio-economic, and even environmental/ecological conditions.

The region belonged to the same state formation for several centuries until 1920, when the Treaty of Trianon concluding World War I resulted in a new situation: the territories south of the Mura River were awarded to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, while areas north of the river remained in Hungary. Before the 20th century thus there was no political border between the now Croatian and Hungarian parts of the Kistolmács–Prelog area, but there had always been a natural division line, the Mura river. In the new circumstances, the difficult physical permeability of the border (a rapid river with one single border crossing station) was exacerbated, especially in the decades after World War II, by the political tensions between the two countries, which made the border almost impermeable. The consciously neglected large-scale state developments (in infrastructure, industry etc.) resulted in worsening employment conditions, worse accessibility, underdeveloped infrastructure and, as, a consequence of all these, a decline in the number of population and a general socio-economic backwardness.

Also, rural areas have had to face very serious challenges in the recent decades in the whole of Europe and not only in Central-East Europe including Croatia and Hungary. With the widespread penetration of intensive cultivation methods in agriculture and the parallel decline in traditional, extensive or small-scale, homestead-based farming methods, rural areas started to lose their traditional functions, the number of agricultural employment fell and biodiversity also suffered a great loss. The same processes were observed along the Croatian–Hungarian border region as well.

On the other hand, border regions, coming from their isolation and often their handicapped situation (especially in places where relatively underdeveloped micro-regions are next to each other on the two sides of the border), could preserve those natural and cultural values that may be the foundations of special sorts of non-mass tourism (ecotourism and other green tourism activities). The Dráva Region, including one of the most

infamous and impoverished micro-regions of Hungary, the Ormánság, is a good example of such a region.

Rural development has many decades of past in the European Union and in Hungary. In the 1960s, the very first common policy of the then European Economic Community was the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In the beginning this common policy, as its name implied, primarily focused on the development of agriculture, the creation of food security for the community, but was subsequently gradually extended to complex rural development as well, including the development of rural tourism as an alternative source of income in rural areas.

The significance of tourism is now unquestionable in the world, and it is just as obvious that tourism must no longer be seen simply as an economic phenomenon but as a process with considerable socio-cultural

impacts as well.

Although traditional mass (4S: sun, sea, sand and sex) tourism is expected to remain the motivation of the largest part of travels, there are alternative forms and new destinations in tourism that are becoming more and more popular. Among these alternative forms of tourism, ecotourism and new destinations not visited, or not so intensively visited so far are getting more and more attention and gaining significance – which may be a development chance for the Dráva and the Mura Region.

There are traditions of cooperation both in tourism (and in socio-economic activities) and in nature protection in this area. The Danube-Dráva National Park was established in 1996, by the integration of several areas that had enjoyed nature protection status before, already. The

nature protection area that can be found in the direct vicinity of the ecopark to be created, at Zákány and Őrtilos, were awarded protected status in 1987.

At the Sofia Meeting on the Protection of the Environment in 1989, the Hungarian delegation proposed that a cross-border nature protection area, a national park should be created for the protection of the wetlands and the subsoil water bases. By the end of 1995, the cross-border Danube-Dráva National Park should have been created jointly by Hungary and Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav civil war prevented this plan from being realised, and so the Danube-Dráva National Park was created on the Hungarian side, only, in 1996.

A relatively recent development is the creation of the sixth UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve in Hungary, which is also the first cross-border MAB reserve: this is the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, stretching along the Drava, Mura and Danube Rivers. It was created in 2012 and its administrative authorities are the Ministry of Culture (Croatia) and the Danube-Drava National Park Directorate (Hungary).

The majority of terrestrial habitats of the core area and the buffer zone are covered by softwood or hardwood gallery forests, but there are also extensive grassland areas along the Drava River. The area (approximately two-thirds of which can be found in Croatia) contains a variety of wetland habitats, including those that are among the most threatened in Europe: alluvial forests, wet grasslands, gravel and sand bars, islands, steep banks, oxbow lakes, stagnant backwater, abandoned riverbeds and meanders. They are surrounded by riparian forests and arable land with scattered pastures. This variety of habitats provides shelter for a great number of species.

The core zone is located in Croatia. The buffer zone has a total population of 27,239 and the transition zone has a population of approximately 470,000 people. In this part of the biosphere reserve, the main cities are Osijek, Varaždin, Vukovar, Koprivnica, Virovitica, Cakovec and Ilok.

One of the major functions of the biosphere reserve is to provide a training ground for the revival and modernisation of floodplain

management, which will ensure an extra source of livelihood for local people and help preserve the natural values of the floodplain region. The major activities in the area are agriculture, forest management, sand and gravel extraction, diverse types of industry, and ecotourism.

It is not only ecotourism where cross-border projects have been realised so far but also other socio-economic activities and other forms of tourism. For this, a new development chance for the region was the accession of Croatia to the European Union, and a new momentum can be given by it joining the Schengen zone that will result in the elimination of the border in the physical sense. In the years prior to the accession there had already been a joint cross-border cooperation

programme with the participation of the two countries: it was the IPA Hungary–Croatia CBC programme. Tourism had a significant share from the projects in all three rounds of the tenders:

- for the first project call, 4 ecology-focused projects and a few tourism development projects were submitted (1 in gastronomy tourism, 1 in health tourism, 1 in green tourism, 1 in tourism planning and 1 in cultural heritage), the total allocations to which reached 49.53% of all support demands;
- the respective figures of the 2nd call for tender were as follows: 5 projects on ecology and 7 on tourism (2 ecotourism, 2 cultural heritage, 2 catering and 1 tourism planning) – with 24.18% of all support allocations absorbed by tourism;
- the same figures of the 3rd call for tender are as follows: 1 ecology-focused and 67 tourism projects (including 10 cycling tourism, 7 ecotourism, 2 tourism planning, 2 tourism marketing, 2 cultural heritage, 2 enological tourism, and also gastronomy tourism and the development of tourism infrastructure) – with 88.89% of the total support sum allocated to tourism.

The next round following Croatia's EU accession, the 2014–2020 Interreg V-A Hungary–Croatia Cooperation Programme received a total of 162 projects submitted, of which 139 were supported, including 17 tourism projects (9 in the category 'tourism attraction development' and 8 in

'theme routes and other tourism products'); municipalities, businesses, associations were among the supported entities. Almost half of the total support sum, 46.6% was awarded to projects in the first tourism topic and another 12.6% in the second one; the third category with significant support share is also indirectly linked to (eco)tourism, as financial support in this category was awarded for the development of the ecological conditions and biodiversity in the border region[2]. The Hungarian area is relatively close to one of the main tourism development regions designated recently in Hungary, the Balaton region (Figure 1).

In May 2021., the Hungarian Tourism Agency posted the National Tourism Strategy 2.0. This updated strategy states, that joint development of the tourism sector should be based on data driven planning. Currently, the biggest challenge in the micro regions is, that the necessary data for analysing is currently not available or not accessible. Therefore, to make the ETIS System accurate and compliant, continuous data collection should be ongoing and monitored. Only then can the changes (positive or negative) be really analysed, and conclusions drawn.

[2] www.huhr-cbc.com

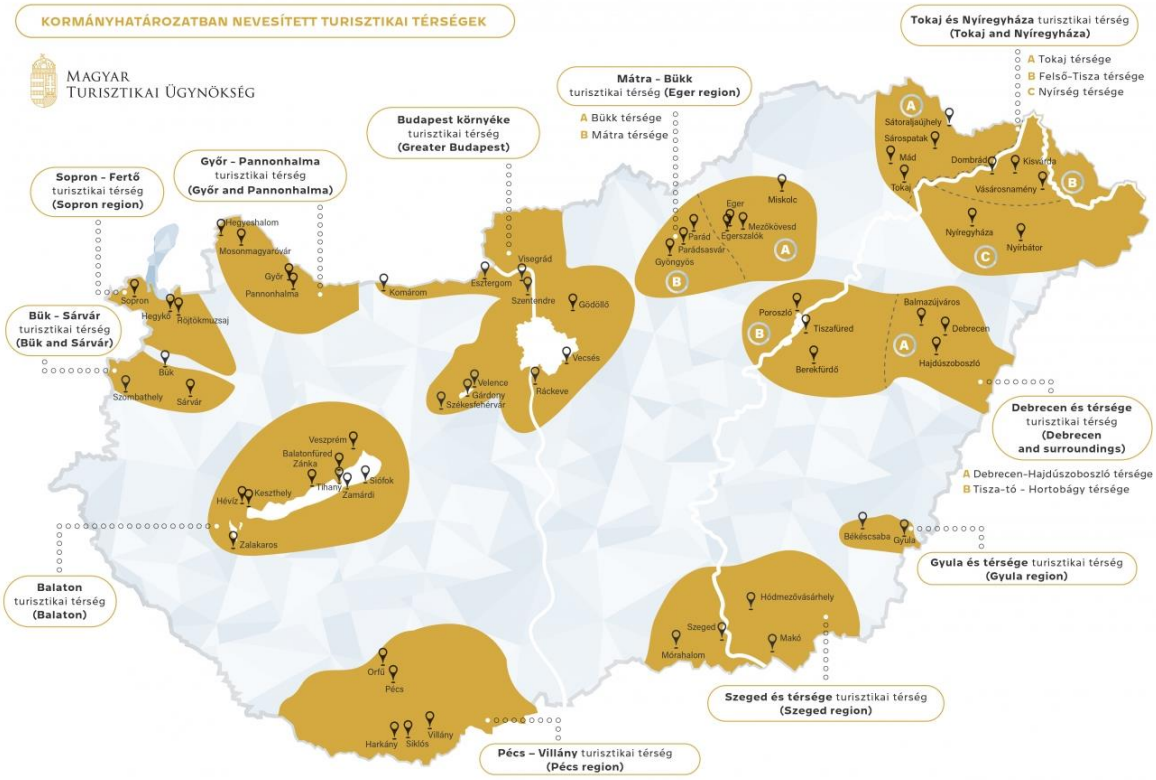

Figure 2: The tourism regions designated by the government of Hungary[3]

[3] https://hungarianinsider.com/11-tourist-areas-now-priority-regions-5313/

LOCATION: PRESENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

As regards physical geography, the respective area belongs to the Egerszeg-Letenye Hill Ridge. Its climate is moderately cool and wet, with the annual hours of sunshine being in the 1920-1960 range (one of the lowest in Hungary), and the annual mean temperature at 9.4-9.8 ºC. The annual amount of precipitation is approximately 770 millimetres, which makes the area relatively wet by Hungarian standards.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The relatively mild winters and cool summers make this micro-region the one with the lowest annual thermal fluctuation. The dominant winds, due to the impact of the north-west hill ridges, are northern in the first place and southern in the second place. Due to the shelter of the Eastern Alps, heavy winds are not typical in the area.

The major natural vegetation in the area is forests. The biggest value of the area is the ancient beech forest, but other forest vegetations are also typical. The micro-region is much more forested than the national average, which is a favourable asset for ecotourism.

The fauna of the area is rich, abounding both in hunted games (red deer, wild boar etc.) and protected species. There are several Natura 2000 sites in or close to the micro-region.

Natural lakes, oxbow lakes due to meandering of the river, can only be found beside the Mura River. The rest of the lakes are artificial reservoirs, including the lake of Kistolmács. The area is poor in contiguous subsoil water; the water table is 4 to 6 metres below the surface on the average. Not all homes are canalised, and the deficiencies of sewage treatment are a threat to the quality of subsoil waters.

The micro-region is traditionally a rural area dominated by agricultural activities, although most of the soils are not really fertile, so intensive farming does not have favourable endowments in the area – another factor that is good for ecotourism. The sector of agriculture that has excellent conditions is forestry. Among the almost 30 settlements of the micro-region, it is Kistolmács that has the highest proportion of forested areas within its administrative territory (74.4%).

SWOT Analysis of the micro region's tourism related attributes:

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Relative proximity of protected areas with national or international recognition (Dark Sky reserve, national park visitor centres and study paths, Ramsar areas, Natura 2000 areas etc.) - Traditions of previous Croatian–Hungarian cross-border cooperations also in tourism - Mura-Drava-Danube Man and Biosphere Reserve ("the Amazon of Europe") - Presence of travel agencies specialised on active tourism, existing tourism programme packages - Very high proportion of forested areas - Strong stock of games (red deer, wild boar)	- Only one road border crossing station across the Mura river between Hungary and Croatia - Relative distance from the main transport routes, especially the railway system - Distance from: capital cities; regional centres; border crossing station stations - Relatively underdeveloped areas by national standards on both sides of the border - Relative distance from the centres of the national parks managing the protected areas nearby (Danube-Dráva National Park and Balaton Uplands National Park) - Low number of commercial accommodations

- Good endowments for agritourism, heritage tourism, sport tourism and enological tourism - Auxiliary tourism services, attractions nearby attract a lot of tourists anyway that can be converted into eco-park visitors	- Diverse administrative structures, decision-making competencies etc. on the two sides of the cross-border area
Opportunities	Threats
- Development of partnership, training of stakeholders, development of pre-and post season, development of selective forms of tourism, tourist valuation of resources - Disappearance of the physical border between Croatia and Hungary after the accession of Croatia to the Schengen Agreement - Awareness raising for ecotourism - Positive changes in land use,	- Degradation of the ecological state of the region (e.g. sinking subsoil water levels due to droughts, or increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions induced by climate change; appearance and spread of invasive species etc.) - Economic recession resulting in decreasing disposable incomes - Negligence of infrastructure developments by the state - Competition of more dynamic

spread of more environment friendly farming methods - Placement of the services of the potential ecopark in as many packages as possible - Support schemes for rural tourism	micro-regions - Weakening position of ecotourism in the new tourism management of Hungary

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the potential of ecotourism in the Kistolmács–Prelog area

IV. STRUCTURE AND WORKFLOW OF STAKEHOLDER GROUP (1ST YEAR PLAN)

SEE ANNEX 1.

V. ETIS INDICATORS FOR THE KISTOLMÁCS-PRELOG CROSS-BORDER REGION

A. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT		
CRITERIA	INDICATOR REFERENCE	ETIS CORE INDICATORS
A.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PUBLIC POLICY	A.1.1	Percentage of tourism enterprises/establishments in the destination using a voluntary certification/labelling for environmental quality/sustainability and/or Corporate Social Responsibility
A.2 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	A.2.1	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination
	A.2.2	Percentage of repeat/return visitors (within 5 years)
B. ECONOMIC VALUE		
B.1 TOURISM FLOW (VOLUME AND	B.1.1	Number of tourist nights per month
	B.1.2	Number of same-day visitors per month
	B.1.3	Relative contribution of tourism to the

VALUE) AT DESTINATION		economy of the destination (% GDP)
	B.1.4	Daily spending per overnight tourist
	B.1.5	Daily spending per same-day visitors
B.2 TOURISM ENTERPRISE(S) PERFORMANCE	B.2.1	Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
		Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation per month and average for the year
B.3 QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT	B.3.1	Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment in the destination
	B.3.2	Percentage of jobs in tourism that are seasonal
B.4 TOURISM SUPPLY CHAIN	B.4.1	Percentage of locally produced food, drinks, goods and services sourced by the destination's tourism enterprises
C. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT		
C.1 COMMUNITY/SOCIAL IMPACT	C.1.1	Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents
	C.1.2	Percentage of residents who are satisfied with tourism in the destination (per month/season)

	C.1.3	Number of beds available in commercial accommodation establishments per 100 residents
	C.1.4	Number of second homes per 100 homes
C.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY	C.2.1	Percentage of tourists who register a complaint with the police
C.3 GENDER EQUALITY	C.3.1	Percentage of men and women employed in the tourism sector
	C.3.2	Percentage of tourism enterprises where the general manager position is held by a woman
C.4 INCLUSION/ACCESSIBILITY	C.4.1	Percentage of rooms in commercial accommodation establishments accessible for people with disabilities
	C.4.2	Percentage of commercial establishments participating in recognised accessibility information schemes
	C.4.3	Percentage of public transport that is accessible to people with disabilities and specific ac- cess requirements
		Percentage of tourist attractions that are

	C.4.4	accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes
C.5 PROTECTING AND ENHANCING CULTURAL HERITAGE, LOCAL IDENTITY AND ASSETS	C.5.1	Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the impacts of tourism on the destination's identity
	C.5.2	Percentage of the destination's events that are focused on traditional/local culture and heritage
D. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT		
D.1 REDUCING TRANSPORT IMPACT	D.1.1	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using different modes of transport to arrive at the destination
	D.1.2	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using local/soft mobility/public transport ser- vices to get around the destination
	D.1.3	Average travel (km) by tourists and same-day visitors from home to the destination
	D.1.4	Average carbon footprint of tourists and same-day visitors travelling from home to the destination

D.2 CLIMATE CHANGE	D.2.1	Percentage of tourism enterprises involved in climate change mitigation schemes - such as: CO2 offset, low energy systems, etc.- and 'adaptation' responses and actions
	D.2.2	Percentage of tourism accommodation and attraction infrastructure located in 'vulnerable zones'
D.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	D.3.1	Waste production per tourist night compared to general population waste production per person (kg)
	D.3.2	Percentage of tourism enterprises separating different types of waste
	D.3.3	Percentage of total waste recycled per tourist compared to total waste recycled per resident per year
D.4 SEWAGE TREATMENT	D.4.1	Percentage of sewage from the destination treated to at least secondary level prior to discharge
D.5 WATER	D.5.1	Water consumption per tourist night compared to general population water consumption per resident night

MANAGEMENT	D.5.2	Percentage of tourism enterprises taking actions to reduce water consumption
	D.5.3	Percentage of tourism enterprises using recycled water
D.6 ENERGY USAGE	D.6.1	Energy consumption per tourist night com- pared to general population energy consumption per resident night
	D.6.2.	Percentage of tourism enterprises that take actions to reduce energy consumption
	D.6.3	Percentage of annual amount of energy consumed from renewable sources (Mwh) compared to overall energy consumption at destination level per year
D.7 LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION	D.7.1	Percentage of local enterprises in the tourism sector actively supporting protection, conservation and management of local biodiversity and landscapes

Table 2. ETIS core indicators for the Kistolmács-Prelog area

VI. EVALUATION AND MONITORING PLAN FOR TRACKING RESULTS

The following indicative list of supplementary indicators (Tab. 3) has to be considered as a starting point and as an example of specific indicators which are being tested and can be tailored for a specific type of destination or for other needs. Therefore, the current list can be further enriched with additional indicators in the future.

RURAL AND ALTERNATIVE TOURISM	
VISITOR NUMBERS	Number of domestic and foreign guests
	Number of guest nights spent at rural accommodations
	Number of tourists coming with angling motivation
	Number of tourists coming with hunting motivation
	Number of tourists coming with biking motivation
	Number of tourists coming with horseback riding motivation
	Number of tourists coming with hiking motivation
	Number of border crossings at the Letenye station
ECOTOURISM	Number of study paths in the area
	Number of visitors walking the study paths in the area
	Number of visitor centres in the area

	Number of visitors to the visitor centres in the area
	Number of environmental protection and awareness raising events
	Number of attendants in environmental protection and awareness raising events
	Number of packages including the attractions of the ecopark
	Number of tourists inquiring about ecotourism possibilities
	Number of local school children taken to ecoparks or other ecotourism facilities
SEASONALITY	Breakdown of guests by months
ENTERPRISES	Number of rural accommodations
	Number of local goods producers selling to tourists
	Number of equestrian tourism facilities
	Number of catering facilities
FLORA AND FAUNA	Number of games taken by tourists, by species
	Number of protected bird species in the area
	Number of fish species living in the Mura River
	Change in the population of Natura 2000 indicator species

	Change in the population of Natura 2000 indicator species
ACCESSIBLE TOURISM	
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY	Percentage of the accessible attractions in the destination and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes
	Percentage of commercial accommodations with rooms accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes
EQUALITY/ACCESSIBILITY	Percentage of catering facilities accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes
	Percentage of each category of transport in the destination that is accessible, i.e. public transport and private hire coaches, minibuses, taxis or minicabs
REDUCING TRANSPORT IMPACT	Percentage of each category of transport in the destination that is accessible, i.e. public transport and private hire coaches, minibuses, taxis or minicabs
TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL ROUTES **	
	Number of visitors to the cultural/heritage events held

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	annually in the micro-region
	Number of cultural/ region heritage events held annually in the micro-
	Presence of TDM or Tour Inform office in the micro-region
	Is your enterprise located along a cultural route certified by the Council of Europe?
	If yes, are the products of your enterprise linked within the theme/ activities of the cultural route?
	If yes, is the communication on your enterprise/products mentioning the links with the cultural route?
ENTERPRISE SURVEY	Is the cultural route promoting/making visible your enterprise/ products?
	Educational level of the local population
	Is the community informed about the advantages of tourism?
	Is the local community involved in the actions organised by touristic bodies?
RESIDENT DATA	Are there direct benefits for the population from the tourism flows of the micro-region?

Table 3: ETIS supplementary indicators for the Kistolmács-Prelog area

ANNEX 1. REFERENCE LIST

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ANNEX 2. STRUCTURE AND WORKFLOW OF SWG

ANNEX 3. EVALUATION AND MONITORING PLAN FOR TRACKING RESULTS

Endnotes: "The content is the sole responsibility of Municipality of Kistolmács and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and/or the Managing Authority."