

Energy

The energy consumption has increased significantly in the involved regions, both in absolute and relative terms (per capita). The consumption of electric power is rising continually, but most of the increase is due to the transport sector and the industry.

Fossil fuels still cover most of the energy use. In Kärnten with its high rate of water power, the rate of renewable energy exceeds the 40 % of gross regional energy consumption.

The use of renewable energy sources is increasing in the entire cooperation area (water power, solar and photovoltaic, bio-gene energy), but the share has been quite stable, since the absolute amount of energy consumption is steadily growing.

In Austrian regions in particular, there is a relatively long tradition of good practices, an advanced level of competence and a developed sector of specialised companies, often organised in networks. Among others, the European centre of renewable energy in Güssing/Südburgenland must be highlighted at this point. This can be considered as an opportunity for cross-border cooperation, especially referring to the exchange of experiences and to research & technology cooperation.

Due to the high share of energy intensive industries (metal, paper and chemicals), Slovenia is one of the countries with high levels of electricity consumption. The consumption decreased in the period of 1992 – 2001, but on the other hand, the share of the energy consumption in transport and household is increasing. Slovenia has great problems with energy efficiency; great energy losses are caused by obsolete technology.

The use of renewable energy sources increased in the last years. The share of the energy produced from renewable energy sources (Austria 2004: 21 %, Slovenia 12 %) is quite advanced compared to the European level (EU 25, 2004: share of 6 %), mostly because of the production of hydropower plants. The use of biomass has also increased in the last period.

Local energy agencies were established recently on the Slovene side, providing impulse to the institutional base for the cross-border cooperation.

In general, the awareness of the wider population on the possibilities of renewable energy use and efficient energy use is not yet sufficient.

The efficient use of energy and increase of the renewable energy sources shall be part of national programmes, which shall cover major investments. In Austria, several programmes regarding energy efficiency (also covering enterprises) are financed in the framework of the klima:aktiv - programme. The extension to cross-border cooperation aspects could also be an option within this objective 3 programme.

To summarise, there is a lot of potential, competence and interest in the field of sustainable energy and energy efficiency, which can contribute a lot to the sustainability of the area.

Transport

The entire cooperation area is characterised by rather short distances, generally a good transport infrastructure is given, and therefore we could call it an **area with manageable distances**.

Road

Regarding the capitals and major centres of the area, these centres are entirely connected by an almost gapless motorway system. Within one day the route from Graz – Maribor – Celje – Ljubljana – Kranj –

Villach – Klagenfurt – (Leoben) – Graz is manageable. Along these points, the major development potential is allocated. Additionally, the railway system offers a public connection for the same chain. Thus, comfortable infrastructure preconditions for frequent personal cross-border interaction, meetings, events, delivery of goods and services, cultural and tourism offer are given.

As regards the main road connections, in the Austrian part, nearly all regions have good access to the highway network. Südburgenland has not been directly linked with the highway system yet, but a big road project – the S 7 as part of the Austrian road construction programme (connecting the Austrian A2 with Western Hungary) – will upgrade the transport links of the region significantly. At the moment this project is at the beginning of the implementation procedure, but the finalisation can be expected within the lifetime of the upcoming ERDF period.

From the environmental point of view, the dramatic increase in road transport, both in car transport and in freight traffic, must be observed. This growth goes hand in hand with a significant raise of the fuel energy consumption, of CO₂ emissions and, in particular in Austria, with NO_x and particulates due to the high rate of diesel-powered cars. This leads to a modal split in the transport, which increases the air and noise pollution, the drain of energy, and contributes highly to the greenhouse effect.

In Slovenia, the last few years were marked by an intensive investment to finalise the highway network. In the programme area, Ljubljana, Celje and Maribor are now linked, while the connections from Maribor to Murska Sobota and Kranj – Jesenice are not yet finished. The Koroško region remains excluded from this network. The plans to build the so-called 3rd development axis - the motorway connecting the 5th and 10th corridor from A2 Griffen – Holmec – Celje – Karlovac (Croatia) - are being prepared. The construction is to be feasible at the second half of the programming period. The connection is promising a lot of impulses to the regions concerned.

In recent years, heavy growth of passenger car transportation has been noted. On the other hand, the use of public transport is in decline in Slovenia. Furthermore, freight transport by road is growing rapidly and is higher than the rail transport.

Rail

The Austrian railway system at its main routes is in the process of upgrading to a high-level railroad-system. In the concerned cooperation area this refers to the Tauernbahn (Salzburg – Villach – Ljubljana) and the Südbahn (Vienna – Villach – Tarvisio) and Graz – Maribor. In the longer run, these investments will contribute to the upgrade of the transnational links of the entire region within Europe.

There are 3 cross-border railway connections between the Austrian and Slovenian regions: 2 main routes (Villach / Rosenbach – Jesenice, Spielfeld – Šentilj) and one at a significantly lower level (Holmec – Loibach connecting Ravne and Bleiburg).

The core areas are linked by public transport systems, but even in the case of short distances as between Graz and Maribor and between Villach / Klagenfurt and Ljubljana, the attractiveness of the public transport keeps limited due to regular stops at the border.

The rail network in Slovenia has not been modernised much due to priority investments in the highway infrastructure.

The regions have connection to the main rail axes. Freight transport is increasing, while passenger transport in Slovenia is also in decline.

A general remark to the public transport sector: although the relations and interactions across the border have increased significantly (daily commuters, consumers, students, visitors and business contacts), the rate of public transport has not gone in parallel. There is still a lack of attractiveness of the public transport supply in general, even regarding the transport links between the major towns (Graz - Maribor, Klagenfurt - Ljubljana).

Air

The programme area has relatively good accessibility by air. There are four internationally linked airports in the region: Ljubljana, Graz, Klagenfurt and Maribor. Nearly 90 % of the population in the cooperation area have access to an airport within one hour by car. This has to be regarded as a crucial asset in the competition of regions in Europe: it offers excellent opportunities for business contacts, for scientific and research networking, for long-distance tourism and for cultural, congress and event activities.

In the last years, the arrival of low cost airlines has been characteristic for the airports of Ljubljana, Graz and Klagenfurt, which increased the passenger inflow and outflow. The Maribor airport has been privatised and is still in the process of market positioning.

The airports are acting in a highly competitive market, however, they are going to find their specific regional profile and strategic role. It can be assumed that besides the fields of competition, specific fields of cooperation among the airports with mutual benefits, as, for instance, the goods transport or specific tourism transport opportunities, may emerge.

Border Crossings

Along the 330 km of the common border, there are altogether 37 border crossings of different statuses. 17 border crossings are intended for international traffic, 4 for the interstate traffic and 16 border crossings for the local traffic. Austria and Slovenia also signed agreements regulating trespassing of the border for mountaineering and tourism purposes in certain areas.

With the movement of the Schengen regime from the Austrian – Slovene border to the Slovene – Croatian border, a number of cross-border facilities will no longer serve its basic purpose. Consequently, a lot of infrastructure will be free for alternative use and follow-up activities. The border crossings are located in a very diverse geographical and functional context: from Alpine border crossings over to main routes on motorways and crossings on rivers and in the city. This offers a great variety of deliberations for useful and suitable follow-up activities.

To summarise, preconditions for economic development are favourable with the exception of a few regions, which still have rather poor access to the main transport routes. On the other hand, the immediate border connections of the public transport are less developed.