



REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE AUSTRIAN-SLOVAK BORDER REGION

General characteristics and geography

The Austrian-Slovak border region is divided into three distinct spatial-functional areas:

- The northern part of the region (Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Weinviertel, Trnava) is predominantly agricultural and lacks cross-border transportation links due to the natural barrier of the river March/Morava.
- The agglomeration axis Vienna-Bratislava is the core of the entire border region. Vienna and Bratislava jointly have a population of over 2 million inhabitants and are the major centres of the region with respect to the number of inhabitants, jobs and infrastructure and industrial zones.
- The southern parts of the region (Wiener Umland-Südteil, Nordburgenland the city of Bratislava and the southern parts of the region of Bratislava) belong to the development triangle Vienna-Bratislava-Győr and have a well-developed cross-border transportation infrastructure and are attractive as business locations. This is one of the most dynamic areas within the joint Austrian-Slovak border region.

The border region is characterised by large urban-rural disparities. Both capital regions, Vienna and Bratislava are close to areas at extreme peripheral locations (e.g. Weinviertel, northern parts of the districts of Bratislava and Trnava).

Approximately 4.5 million inhabitants, thereof 2.3 million women, lived in the Austrian-Slovak border region in 2004. Due to the fact that both capitals are situated in the joint region these are the regions in which the population is concentrated in both countries: one-third of Austrians and nearly one-fifth of Slovaks live on only about 10% (Austria) and 11% (Slovakia) of the respective country's territory.

Table 1: **Area, inhabitants and population density**

	Area in km ²	Inhabitants 2004		Density (inh./km ²)
		Total	Women	
Austria (border region)	22,086	3,376,737	1,746,404	152.9
Slovak Republic (border region)	6,199	1,154,330	600,589	186.2
Border region – total	28,285	4,531,067	2,346,993	160.2

Source: EUROSTAT

On a large-scale perspective, the Austrian-Slovak border area is where three large European landscapes merge. The Alps converge in this region with the Leitha Mountains and curve in a great arc to the Carpathians (Hundsheimer Berg, Malé Karpaty). Both mountain ranges converge here with the lowlands of the Little Hungarian Plain. These factors make for a highly varied landscape on both sides of the border.

This region is crossed by major rivers which flow into the Danube river system that runs from west to east. The river systems are not only shaping the formation of the landscape, because of their



unique flora and fauna and wetlands (Thaya, March/Morava, Danube) some of them are highly protected areas (national parks).

The Neusiedler See, Europe's only steppe lake is another most important landscape factor of this region. In 1993 the national park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel was established and covers an area of about 20,000 hectares.

Demography

The demographic structure and trends are affected by the regional structure of the border region with high concentration of population in the urban areas and on the opposite side the development of the rural regions. From these structural features the following most important demographic trends can be derived for the border region:

- increasing suburbanization processes in the urban areas
- dynamic population growth
- ageing population as consequence of overall demographic change like decreasing fertility rates, increasing life expectancy
- increasing population due to migration – a special issue in urban areas

The immediate vicinity of the two capitals of Vienna and Bratislava has an enormous population potential within a rather "confined" space. In the period 1991-2001 the population trends are very dynamic in the Austrian part, especially in the adjacent regions to Vienna. In the Slovak part of the border region population decreased.

The subsequent period from 2001 to 2004/2005 marked a moderate continuation of this trend. In this period the Austrian part of the region has reported again a slight growth, the Slovak part of the region remained stable.

Table 2: **Population structure in 2004 and population trend 1995-2004 (EUROSTAT)**

Regional unit Nuts III region	Population trend (change in %)			
	1995-2004		2001-2004	
	Total	Women	Total	Women
Austria – Border region	5.3	-	3.0	2.6
Slovak – Border region	-1.2	-	0.3	0.3
Border – region total	3.1	-	2.1	1.8
Austria	2.8	-	1.6	1.4
Slovak Republic	0.2	-	0.0	0.1

Source: EUROSTAT