

PBR
PILISI BIOSZFÉRA
REZERVÁTUM | 1981



HUSK
BIOSPHERE
RESERVES

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS OF THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE

**Prepared to support the development of
the community- and nature-based strategy
of the Pilis Biosphere Reserve**

2025



Interreg
Hungary – Slovakia



Co-funded by
the European Union

*Project: Community- and nature-based improvement of Biosphere
Reserves along the Hungarian-Slovak border to jointly protect and
enhance biodiversity (HUSK/2302/1.2/067)
Project partner: BURST Nonprofit Ltd.*



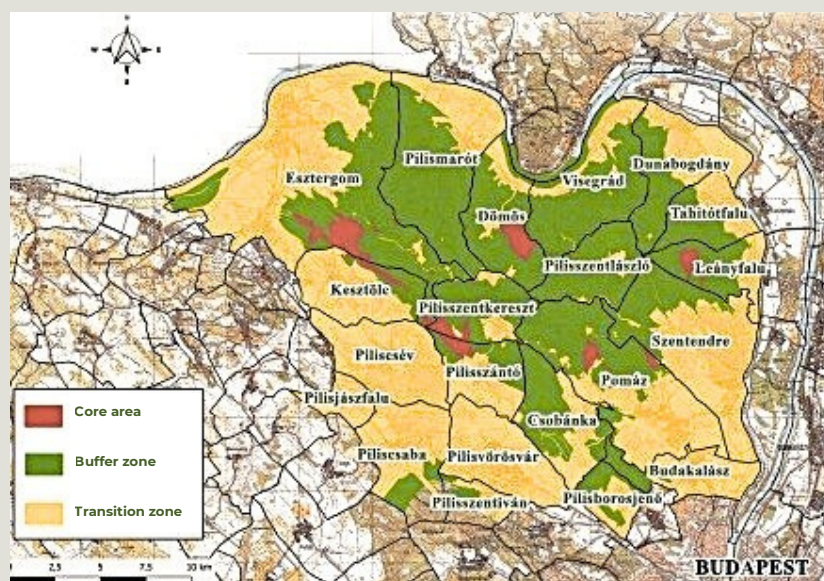
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A BIOSPHERE RESERVE?

Biosphere reserves are model areas designated by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme. Their aim is to harmonize human activities with nature conservation. The zoning system of biosphere reserves (core area, buffer zone, transition zone) ensures the protection of key habitats and biological diversity, while also allowing for responsible land use, social functions, and sustainable economy.

THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Pilis Biosphere Reserve (PBR), which encompasses the Pilis and the Visegrád Mountain, was established in 1981. The PBR covers more than 55,000 hectares, including the protected areas of the Duna-Ipoly National Park, state-owned forests, and the territory of 21 municipalities.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Within the framework of the Interreg VI-A Hungary–Slovakia Programme, the #biospherereserves project aims to support the development of the Pilis and Lake Fertő (HU) as well as the Poľana (SK) Biosphere Reserves. As part of the project, the partners implement various nature conservation and educational activities, involving local communities and fostering cross-border cooperation. BURST Nonprofit Ltd. is responsible for developing a community-based strategy for the participating biosphere reserves, incorporating nature-based solutions.

To support the preparation of the strategy, an online questionnaire survey was conducted among regional stakeholders in the autumn of 2025. This publication presents the main findings of the survey.

Project partners:

- Municipality of Pilisborosjenő
- Pilis Park Forestry Company
- Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate
- Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate
- Náš región (Our region) - Podpoľanie
- Municipality of Víglaš
- BURST Nonprofit Ltd.

OBJECTIVE OF THE SURVEY

The survey aimed to gather the opinions and experiences of organizations operating in the Pilis Biosphere Reserve region — municipalities, institutions, civil organizations, and businesses — in order to provide an overview of the current situation in the area as well as the future development directions and opportunities for the biosphere reserve.

A total of 88 respondents participated in the survey (including local municipalities, institutions, civil organizations, and businesses), covering the entire region.



Photo: Juhász András

HOW TO READ THIS PUBLICATION?

THIS DOCUMENT IS A CONDENSED SUMMARY OF THE 2025 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY. ITS PURPOSE IS TO PRESENT, IN AN EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND WAY, HOW REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE. THE CONTENT REFLECTS THE EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF LOCAL RESPONDENTS AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE PROFESSIONAL POSITION OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS.

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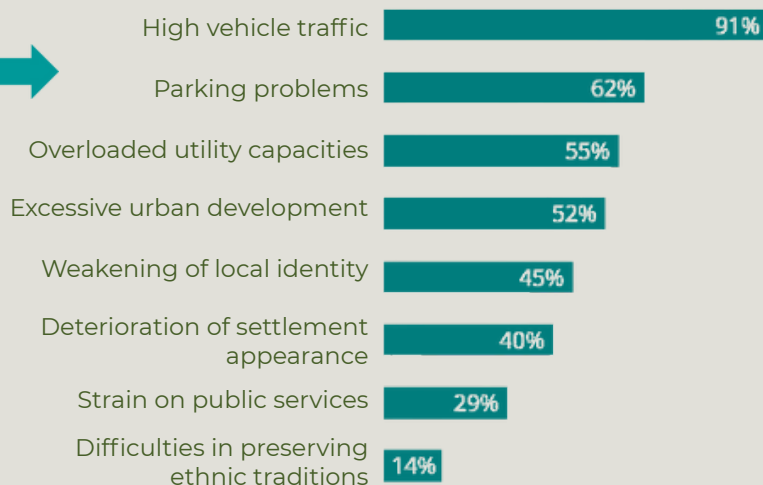
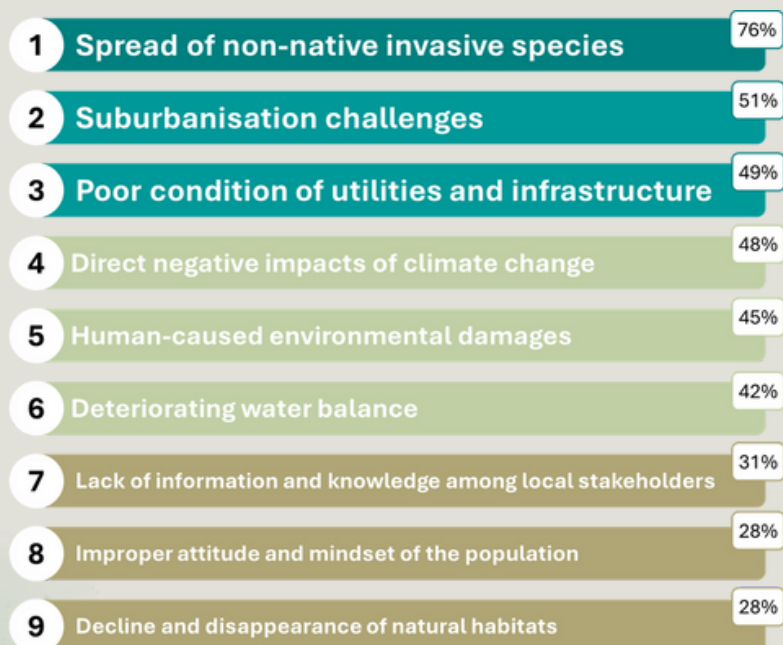


Photo: Pfiszterer Zsófia Bianka

CURRENT SITUATION OF SETTLEMENTS

The Pilis Biosphere Reserve region is a unique intersection of rich natural values and intense human presence. This diverse environment is not only abundant in natural and cultural assets but is also distinctive in the way local communities, landowners, and visitors collectively shape its future — both positively and negatively.

MAIN NATURE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES



SUBURBANIZATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The effects of climate change are most evident in extreme precipitation events and storm damage – meaning that one of the region’s strengths, its water resources and stream network, is becoming increasingly vulnerable.

According to the respondents, the Pilis Biosphere Reserve is not facing isolated problems, but rather mutually reinforcing processes. The spread of non-native invasive species, the pressure from urban agglomeration, deficiencies in infrastructure, the negative impacts of climate change, and the deteriorating water balance are all jointly reshaping the landscape. These therefore represent shared challenges that are worth addressing at the regional level.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES RELATED TO NATURE CONSERVATION

According to the survey results, although environmental protection and the preservation of natural values largely appear as a horizontal principle in municipal investments and projects, more substantial efforts are needed in this regard. Stronger action is, however, constrained by limited financial and human resources, as well as the lack of a strategic approach. While there is openness to nature-based solutions, their implementation is still limited, and the related knowledge is also restricted, making more extensive education and a more unified professional approach necessary.

In several settlements, civil organizations play an important role in nature conservation, and their presence and knowledge create value. At the same time, their numbers are typically small, their operations are not sufficiently coordinated, and consequently, their ability to influence decision-making is limited.

Involving the population in nature conservation faces challenges: knowledge is limited, participation in conservation is not a priority, the pool of volunteers is small, and engaging and involving young people is particularly difficult.

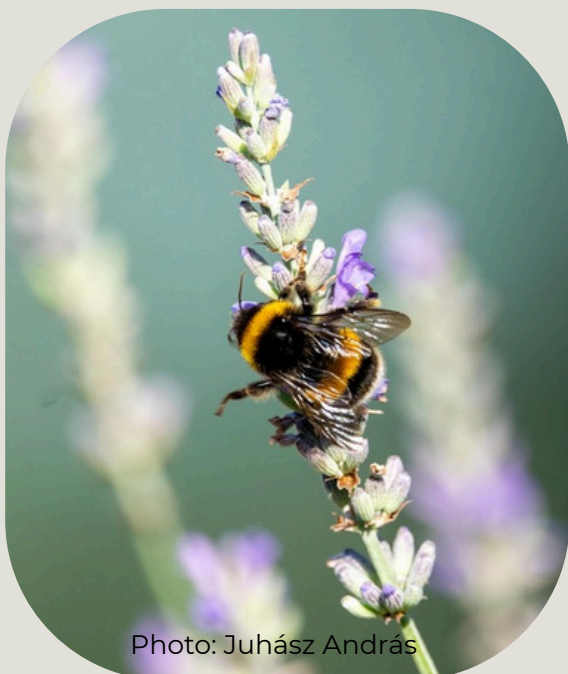
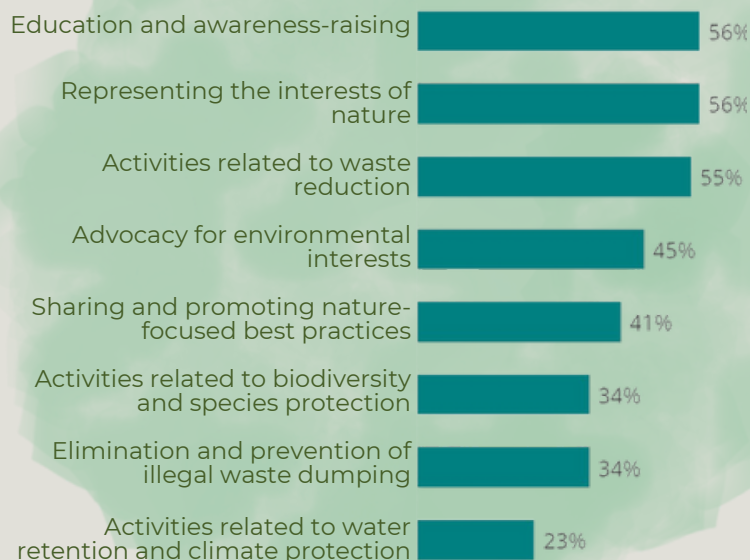


Photo: Juhász András

CIVIL CONTRIBUTION TO NATURE CONSERVATION



ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM

According to the respondents, although no particularly polluting economic activities take place in the settlements, environmental awareness and sustainability considerations are only limitedly reflected in the operations of local businesses. Traditional forms of agriculture are disappearing, short supply chains have not been established, and in several settlements, there is a lack of a clear economic development strategy that ensures a balance between humans and nature.

Hiking and tourism are present in most of the settlements. However, alongside positive impacts, the region also faces significant challenges — primarily related to parking, waste load, heavy vehicle traffic, and overcrowding — while the sector's ability to generate local revenue is weak. The main causes of these negative impacts, according to respondents, are weaknesses in visitor-friendly infrastructure and offerings, highly concentrated traffic in both space and time, inadequate visitor attitudes, and limited marketing activities.

NECESSARY INTERVENTIONS

Forward-looking initiatives are already emerging among local developments, demonstrating the knowledge and commitment present in the settlements. However, these good practices are mostly implemented in isolation; regional-level coordination, knowledge transfer, networking, and a shared regional identity still need to be developed to ensure that the local efforts can have a mutually reinforcing impact.

MOST IMPORTANT LOCAL INTERVENTIONS



Respondents consider the most important intervention to be strengthening the strategic foundations: developing conservation plans and concepts, systematizing and integrating local knowledge, and improving municipal knowledge and attitudes. Equally important are enhancing regional cooperation, promoting public awareness, and reviewing the legal framework. Sustainable economic development and the encouragement of volunteerism are also priorities for several settlements.

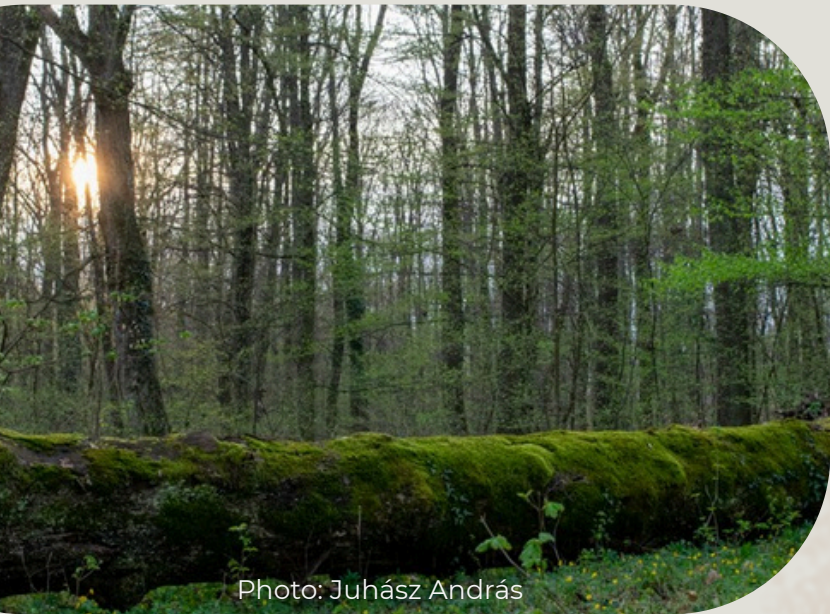


Photo: Juhász András

The intervention needs indicate that the base for green and cultural development already exist in the region. The effectiveness of interventions can be increased primarily through knowledge sharing, coordination among stakeholders, and strengthening common strategic frameworks. Respondents also suggested designating several ecologically valuable areas as protected, reflecting a commitment to nature conservation and underscoring the need for long-term, regional-level planning.

CURRENT SITUATION OF THE REGION

The previous chapter examined the current state of the Pilis Biosphere Reserve at the settlement level, from a local perspective. This chapter adopts a regional approach: based on respondents' opinions, it analyzes how natural and cultural resources, socio-economic processes, and collaborations reinforce each other, and where tensions and conflicts arise. The aim of this chapter is to identify the key factors that could form the foundation for the region's long-term, integrated, and sustainable operation.

Based on the results of the survey, the region's main strengths are its natural environment and landscape values, the proximity to Budapest, and the opportunities for recreation and hiking. The weaknesses and disadvantages are organized around three main axes: overuse and overdevelopment, institutional and infrastructural deficiencies, and environmental crisis symptoms, which represent the primary problems and risks.



Photo: Juhász András

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES



Natural environment & landscape values

(forests, topography, diverse and varied wildlife, scenery, the Danube, forest springs, quiet and clean surroundings)

Proximity and accessibility to Budapest

(good transport connections, closeness to the capital)

Hiking and tourist destination

(forest routes, viewpoints, educational trails, forest infrastructure)

Cultural and historical heritage

(traditions, museums, cultural sites, historical legacy)

Local community, collaborations, institutions

(active civil organizations, high professional standards)

Economic and social assets

(educated, financially strong population; solvent demand)

Pressure from urban agglomeration

(overpopulation, overdevelopment, reduction of green spaces, residential complexes, and industrial pressure)

Environmental and nature conservation issues

(habitat loss, invasive species, low priority of nature conservation)

Transportation and infrastructure issues

(overloaded roads, insufficient public transport, lack of bike paths, parking problems)

Negative impacts of climate change

(water scarcity, drying up of springs and streams, forest vulnerability, loss of habitats)

Impacts of mass tourism

(overcrowding, waste, habitat degradation, low local benefits)

Governmental and institutional shortcomings

(weak regulation, lack of long-term planning, low priority)

The region’s functioning is characterized by a strong duality: its outstanding natural and cultural values are under increasing pressure due to the proximity of the capital and the resulting excessive land use (urban developments, habitat degradation, transportation, and tourism load). Preserving natural assets and biodiversity therefore requires deliberate planning and coordinated interventions.



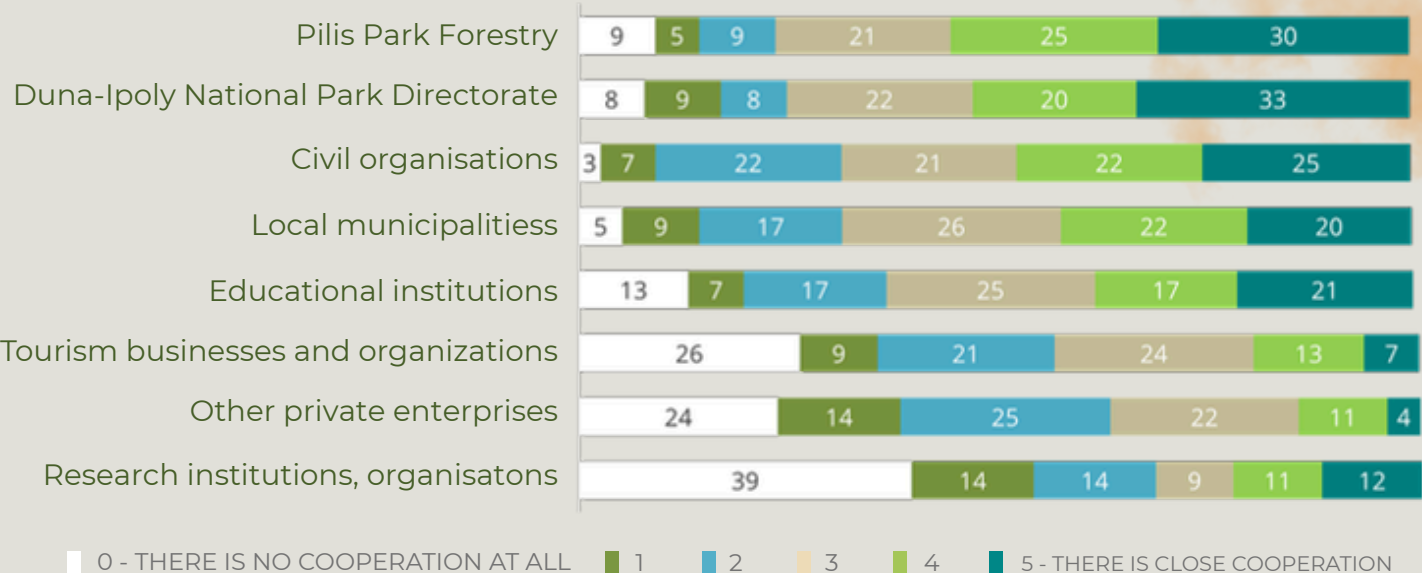
Photo: Juhász András

According to regional stakeholders, the key to sustainability lies in protecting habitats and green spaces, reducing development pressure, suppressing invasive species, and increasing the resilience of forests. A priority task is climate adaptation, particularly water retention, the protection of water resources, and the promotion of environmentally friendly transportation and tourism solutions. All of this can only be achieved through regional cooperation and consistent awareness-raising efforts.

EVALUATION OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

Cooperation among regional actors was generally rated as moderate by respondents, although significant differences were observed across sectors. The strongest connections exist between regional actors and Pilis Park Forestry, as well as the Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate. Relationships with civil organizations and municipalities are average but highly dependent on the specific settlement and organization, while cooperation with educational institutions is also moderate in frequency and quality (with considerable variation). Collaboration with economic and tourism actors, as well as research institutes, remains consistently weak, highlighting that beyond nature conservation partners, the engagement of other sectors still needs development — particularly in scientific and tourism areas, whose closer involvement could enable more well-founded and sustainable regional development in the long term.

THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF REGIONAL COOPERATION - 1-5 SCALE (%)



AWARENESS AND IMAGE OF THE PBR



Photo: Juhász András

The regional perception of the PBR management organization fundamentally determines the extent to which conservation and development goals can be achieved with the involvement of local actors. Awareness is not merely a matter of communication: it directly affects the willingness to cooperate, the quality of partnerships, and local acceptance. Therefore, it is important to assess how well local stakeholders know the PBR organization and its initiatives, how satisfied they are with its current work, and where it would be beneficial to strengthen presence and trust.

AWARENESS OF PROJECTS AND NATURE CONSERVATION CATEGORIES

Among the various conservation categories, national park, Natura 2000 site, and biosphere reserve statuses are the best known, whereas the European Diploma and Ramsar designation are much less familiar.

Awareness of conservation projects in the region varies widely: frequently communicated, large-scale programs — such as visitor monitoring in the Pilis, permanent forest management, or invasive species control — are much better known. In contrast, smaller-scale scientific or local interventions (e.g., the protection of the native species *Ferula sadleriana* or *Thlaspi montanum*) reach local stakeholders to a much lesser extent.

MAIN TASKS AND FUNCTIONS OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Respondents primarily associate biosphere reserves with nature conservation (often complemented by associations with restrictions and prohibitions), but strengthening the human–nature relationship also appears among their main functions. Their economic role, however, remains in the background. Awareness of the PBR is very high, yet knowledge of its operations and partnership system is much less certain: the roles of the main institutions are known, but cooperation with municipalities, civil organizations, and businesses is less clear. This suggests that while the core image of the BR is stable, communication regarding its cooperative and development functions needs to be strengthened.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE PBR

The overall perception of the PBR management organization's performance is moderately positive: most respondents are satisfied, although a smaller, more critical group views the cooperation as weaker. Civil organizations provide the most positive feedback, while economic actors assess the PBR's activities more reservedly, highlighting a potential area for improvement in future collaborations.

EVALUATION OF THE PBR ORGANIZATION'S PERFORMANCE AMONG CURRENT PARTNERS (1-7 SCALE)



The organization's goals are mostly clear for the respondents, and internal communication as well as strategic directions are generally well understood. However, the definition of organizational structure and responsibilities, documentation of processes, and transparency of funding — whose absence noticeably reduces overall satisfaction — require improvement.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE PBR ORGANIZATION'S OPERATIONS (CURRENT PARTNERS)



According to current partners, improving efficiency primarily requires strengthening regional cooperation, external communication, and strategic planning. In addition, enhancing internal information flow and establishing a more stable and transparent organizational operation are important. Half of the respondents support a review of the zoning system — mainly advocating for the designation of protected zones within settlement areas.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE PBR

In evaluating the current performance of the PBR, we examined how various stakeholders perceive the organization’s professional work, as well as the quality and effectiveness of its activities related to regional cooperation and the core functions of the biosphere reserve.

Overall, respondents rated the PBR’s performance as moderately good. Current partners evaluated the effectiveness of its activities — particularly in nature conservation, research, and environmental education — as above average, suggesting that the PBR’s professional work is stronger than is perceived externally. Therefore, greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring the visibility of its work and communicating its results.

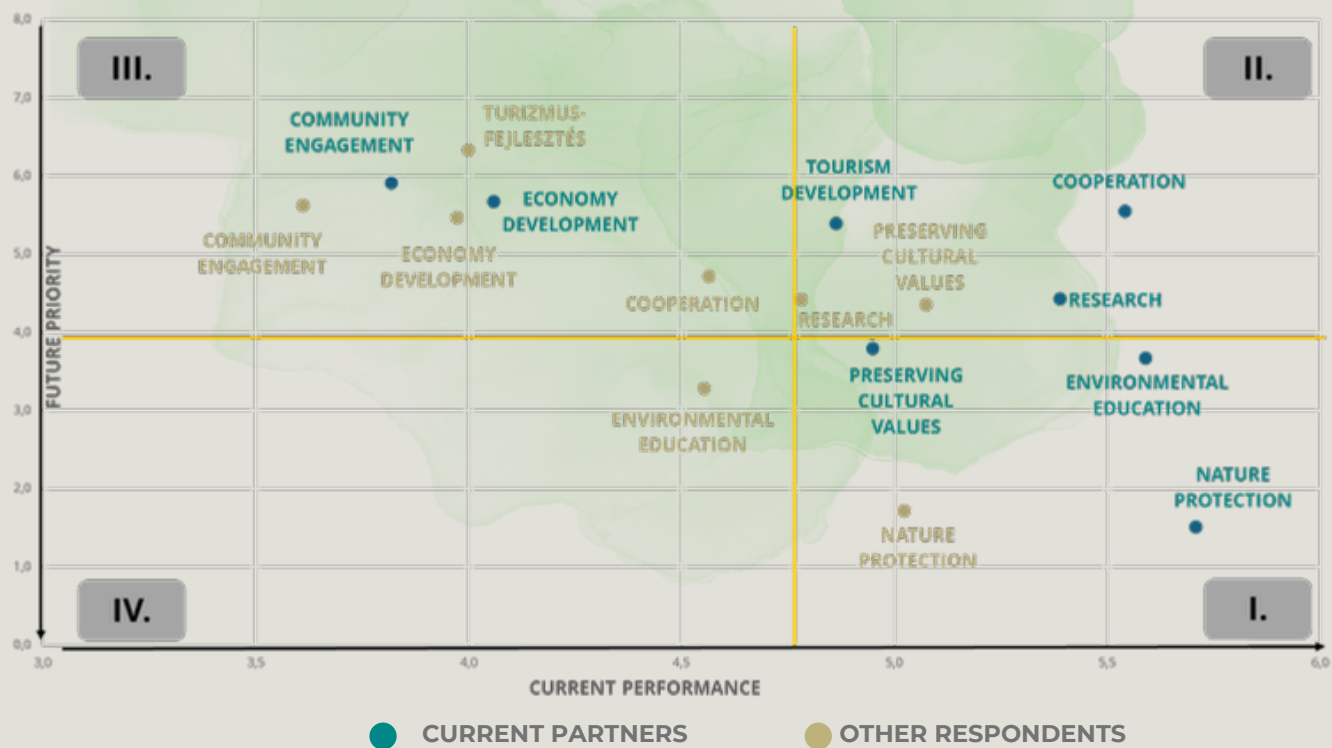
The ranking of priorities clearly shows that nature conservation is of paramount importance to all groups, and the region is currently performing well in this area. For environmental education and the promotion of cultural values, the focus is not only on improving performance but also on effectively communicating results. Engagement with local residents, sustainable economic development, and regional cooperation received lower evaluations, despite higher future expectations for these areas — therefore, their development should be prioritized moving forward.



Photo: Juhász András

The performance - priority matrix indicates which functions require maintaining performance and communication, and where strengthening is needed. The focus for future development will be on areas that are highly important but currently underperforming: enhancing local community engagement, economic linkages, and regional cooperation.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PRIORITIES OF THE PBR’S TASKS



TASKS OF THE PBR

According to respondents, the PBR's most important tasks are knowledge sharing, professional advice, and support. This is followed by organizing joint awareness-raising programs, regional events, and preparing collaborative regional plans and studies. Environmental education, the development and submission of joint legislative proposals, policy recommendations, initiating regional projects, and compiling regional databases are also considered important.

MOST IMPORTANT TASKS OF THE PBR

- Knowledge sharing, professional advice, and support
- Organizing joint awareness-raising programs and regional events
- Preparing collaborative regional plans and studies
- Implementing environmental education
- Developing and submitting joint legislative proposals to lawmakers
- Initiating, preparing, and implementing joint regional projects
- Compiling regional databases
- Designating additional - locally significant - conservation areas
- Collecting and integrating local knowledge
- Promoting local product supply chains based on regional cooperation
- Developing and offering regional program packages and tours
- PBR brand building, communication, and marketing activities
- Conducting surveys and research in the regio
- Launching community funding projects
- Creating a PBR certification label or mark

Developing activities that are important for current partners can improve the quality and effectiveness of existing cooperation. These primarily include organizing joint awareness-raising programs and regional events, preparing collaborative regional plans and studies, and compiling regional databases; secondarily, developing regional program packages and tour offerings, as well as PBR brand building, communication, and marketing activities.

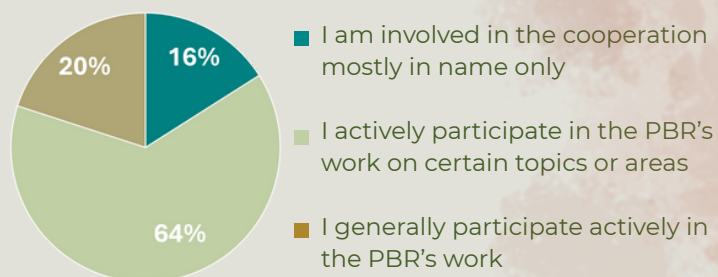
Incorporating activities that are particularly important for other stakeholders into the PBR's work can provide opportunities to expand the partner network and involve regional actors who are not yet cooperating. These include enhancing environmental education, preparing joint legislative proposals, and collecting and integrating local knowledge.



WILLINGNESS OF REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS TO PARTICIPATE

Based on the survey results, meaningful participation within the current PBR partner network is relatively low: most respondents are involved only in certain topics, while regular, active engagement is undertaken by only one-fifth of the partners. However, the vast majority of current partners indicated that they would be willing to take a more active role in the BR's work in the future.

ACTIVITY LEVEL OF CURRENT PARTNERS



The willingness to get involved is also very strong outside the current partner network: 95% of other respondents indicated they would join the PBR's work in some form. Most are open to occasional collaboration, while many are also interested in volunteer or coordination roles. Tasks related to nature conservation, education, and field volunteering are the most popular, whereas interest in economic and research collaborations is much lower.

The willingness to take part also extends to financial contributions. Nearly 60% of respondents indicated they would provide some form of monetary support for the PBR's operations, with this figure being particularly high among current partners (72%). Most would support the funding of specific projects, while one-third of current partners would also pay an annual or monthly membership fee.

There is both professional and financial willingness in the region to strengthen collaborative work, which could potentially allow for the development of a more formal organizational model in the future.