



## **"EMERGENCY RESCUE" workshop in Szombathely organised by Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI)**

The objective of the "HEAL NOW" health cooperation project is to explore and define options for a sustainable cross-border cooperation and to optimise access to care for the local population in the long run.

In line with current legislation, ambulance cars are not allowed to cross the Austro-Hungarian border even if human life is at stake. Once the framework for cross-border patient care (overcoming legal and administrative obstacles to allow future cross-border movement of ambulance) is in place, which is one of the key objectives of the project; a proposal for a cross-border emergency contract (future bilateral agreement) it will ensure care across the border and even save lives in emergency.

The Heal Now project's commitment is to bring health actors (e.g. hospitals, ambulance services) that play an important role in the Austro-Hungarian border region, together and to facilitate their long-term and sustainable cooperation.

Under the Prime Minister's Executive Order 35/2021 (VI.24.), negotiations of the agreement could start both at high and sectoral level, including channelling the dialogue and exchange of experiences among relevant health actors in the border region.

In this spirit, on the 29<sup>th</sup>.09.2021, a workshop was convened by CESCI, and hosted by the Directorate of the Western Transdanubian Regional Rescue Services (OMSZ) in Szombathely. The Austrian and Hungarian project partners and stakeholders along with the regional coordinators of the Joint Secretariat and CESCI representatives met to clarify the most important legal and technical issues for the formulation of proposals in response to the jointly identified needs in emergency care.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Mária Lórántfy, Regional Director, who described the operation of the ambulance service in Szombathely in details: the triage and care protocols applied by the OMSZ, rescue units, qualification requirements for staff, etc. It was followed by a simulation exercise (providing emergency care to an injured, unconscious person who fell from a scaffold), illustrating the step-by-step mechanism of a rescue operation. The Austrian experts were briefed about the documentation process, equipment, medicine supply and different types of ambulance cars used by their Hungarian colleagues, as well as about the communication process and emergency hotline between the emergency operator and the rescue crew.



Gyula Ocskay, Secretary General of CESCO, addressed the significance of legal accessibility, then Melinda Benci planning-analyst spoke about additional funding opportunities that would be available to finance specific implementation of cross-border cooperation or could be used for the continuation of the project. On behalf of the Interreg V-A Austria-Hungary Programme, Ágnes Gombás, Regional Coordinator, drew participants' attention to the Interreg funds to be available in the new 2021-2027 financial period to promote cross-border cooperation under priority PO4, which earmarks funds for healthcare topics, and the first calls are due in the second half of 2022.

Ferenc Weigl, manager for the Hungarian partner, National Directorate General for Hospitals, reported on the current status of the intergovernmental talks. Subsequently, Florian Lochner, Consortium Manager, from the lead partner Lower Austrian Health Agency (NÖ Landesgesundheitsagentur), shared their experiences with the Czech emergency services as a good practice, which has already been operating successfully under the Czech-Austrian bilateral agreement, and thus could serve as a model for the Heal Now project.

Participants discussed next steps and assessed needs of further project development. In the Heal Now project, bilateral exchange of experiences and dialogue among relevant health actors and stakeholders from the Austrian-Hungarian cross-border region is fundamental to achieve these objectives. Participants agreed to meet regularly from now on. So, the next workshop will take place at the end of October in St. Pölten Austria.

Heal Now project is implemented by the following partners:

- **NÖ Landesgesundheitsagentur** (Health Agency of Lower Austria)- **Lead Partner**
- **National Directorate General for Hospitals (OKFŐ)**,  
Project Partner
- **Province of Burgenland - Nordburgenland -Department 6** Region Burgenland **strategic partner**

PILOT:

- **Landeskrankenhaus Wiener Neustadt**  
Corvinusring 3-5, 2700 Wiener Neustadt
- **Soproni Erzsébet Oktató Kórház és Rehabilitációs Intézet**  
Sopron Medical Centre, Erzsébet Teaching Hospital and Rehabilitation Institute  
9400 Sopron, Győri út 15.

Further information: [HEAL NOW](#)

<https://www.interreg-athu.eu/en/>



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