



# ESZTERGOM - ŠTÚROVO

**MUNICIPAL REPORT**

 **Interreg**   
EUROPEAN UNION  
Danube Transnational Programme  
**DANUrB**

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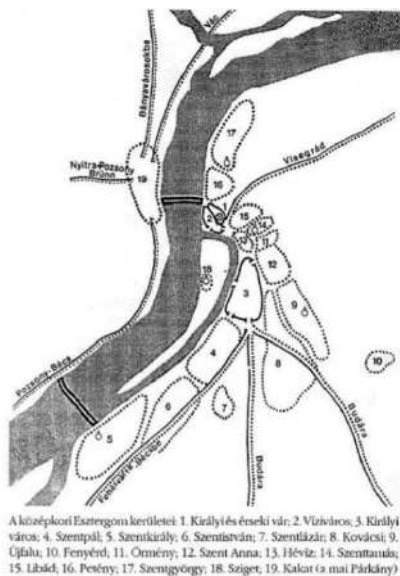
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# 1. HISTORY

## 1.1. THE DANUBE AND THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ESZTERGOM

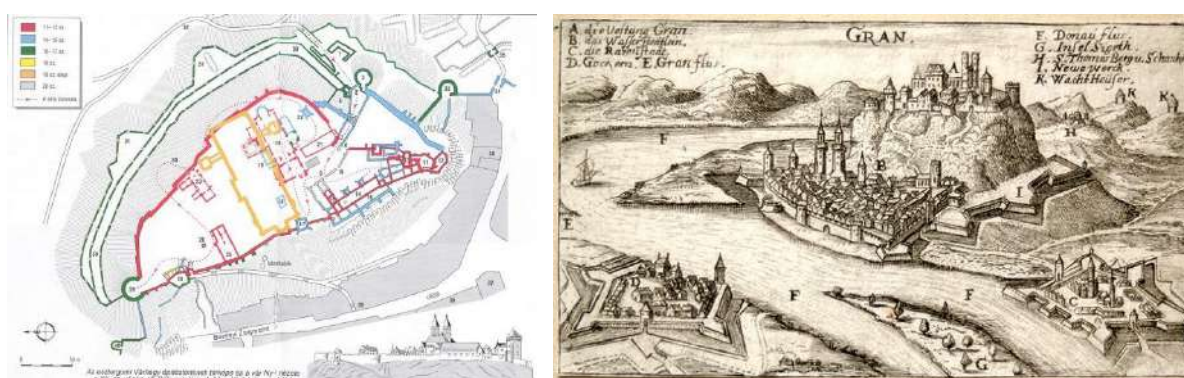
Under the Romans the Danube was the frontier of the Empire. Later its role as a defensive line vanished and gradually became an internal transportation channel interconnecting various regions within and outside the Carpathian Basin. That was the case also in the 10<sup>th</sup> century when the leading tribe (Megyer) of the Hungarians occupied the North-West part of the Basin and started to make efforts to extend its influence on more centrally located tribes and chieftains and, naturally, on their territories. For Prince Géza (972-997), as for his predecessors and the later rulers Esztergom, lying along the Danube Bend, proved to be the most advantageous location. These advantages of the area has been manifold, even if some of them have disappeared as the Danube became once more a frontier, that is, the border of Hungary.



1. fig. Left: Esztergom in the Middle Ages according to the archaeologist István Horváth - in *Országépítő* 1997/1 p. 4. Right: Map of North-West Hungary drawn by Lazarus secretarius: *Tabula Hungariae ed quator latera*, Ingolstadt 1528.

The geographic position of the otherwise unremarkable Castle Hill (Vár-hegy) became beneficial from at least two reasons. It stood at the confluence of a tributary (Garam), opening the way toward North. Even more important was that from Esztergom a relatively well walkable and - on horseback - rideable valley opened to South-East in the direction of the main strategic point, Buda (and also Óbuda, the Roman Aquincum) with its at least three river-crossings promoting further expansion towards the Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania. Two other important points

should also be considered. For Prince Géza, with his troops defeated by the imperial forces, thus looking for “rest and peace” from the West, Esztergom, relatively close to the former enemies offered an excellent position for his peace talks with Emperor Otto I. Meanwhile groups of highly dedicated missionaries started to move to the East along the Danube, together with some Slavic clergymen from North-East and South. Among them was Adalbert, a Polish origin bishop of Prague, ally of the Pope who supposedly also baptised Géza’s son Prince Vajk, who became the first King of Hungary. Under the rule of King Stephen I (1000-1038, Saint Stephen, canonized in 1083) missionary activities, evangelization went hand in hand with the forcible submission of the “pagan Hungarians”. Some Hungarian historians<sup>1</sup> even stress that the selection of the seats for the new bishoprics (Cyőr, Vác, Veszprém etc.) in most cases followed serious strategic considerations.



2. fig. Left: Historic buildings of the Castle Hill of Esztergom, drawing of István Horváth. Right: Inhabited and fortified parts of Esztergom and Párkány (Štúrovo) at the end of the 17th century (probably a copy of a coloured drawing from 1664). Legend: colours on the left figure: red: 11-13th cent., green: 14-15th cent., blue: 16-17th cent., yellow: 18th cent., orange: beginnings of 19th cent., grey: 20th century. Letters on the right figure: A: Castle of Esztergom, B: Watertown, C: “Razenstadt” – Town of the Serbs, D: “Gockern” (German name of Párkány, Štúrovo), E: River Gran (Garam in Hungarian), F: Danube River, G: Island, (“Sziget” in Hungarian), H: St. Thomas Hill, I: New stronghold, K: Watch-houses.

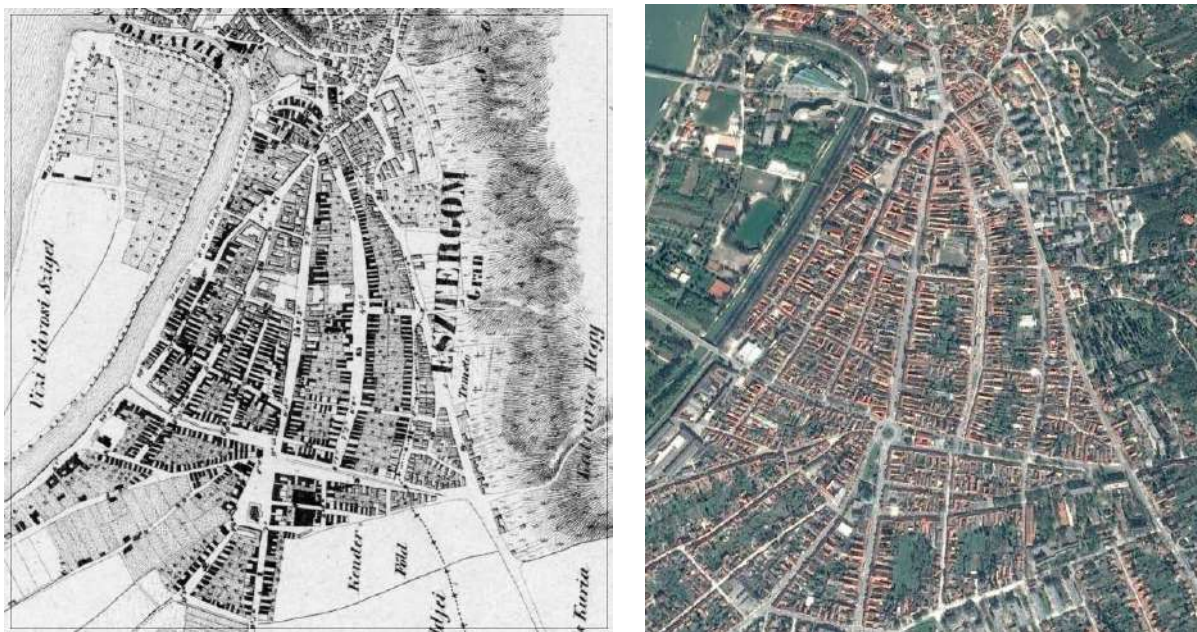
In the 11th and 12th centuries Esztergom grew into a flourishing medieval town. Some foreign visitors (Odo de Deuil, 1147 arriving with Louis VII, the crusader) mention only Esztergom among Hungarian cities, others (the Arabic geographer: Al-Idrisi) speak about more than 70 rich towns “with villages, forests and gardens”.

The scribes of the relatively few eminent personalities who visited Esztergom praise its wealth, the heavy traffic along the Danube, its opulent markets and, understandably, the lavish royal presents. But much less is written about the townscape, about the physical appearance of Esztergom. Based on extensive archaeological research (1. fig) the early urban fabric of Esztergom could be visualised as a loose network of relatively closed entities with various groups of inhabitants of foreign or local origin. Among them the so called Latini (Wallons, French, Italians etc.),



speaking a type of Neo-Latin language, constituted the dominant urban faction. They found their location in the prestigious Royal City (Királyi Város) of the town (No 3. on the map) not far away from the Castle Hill, the place of residence of both the Royal Court and the leader of the Hungarian Catholic church, that is, the medieval Royal and Archiepiscopal Palaces.

Until the High Middle Ages the royal and archiepiscopal residences (2. fig, left drawing) on the hill and along the Danube (B: Watertown on 2. fig), together with the affluent inhabitants of the Royal City (Királyi Város), the Latini, induced a demand of substantial size for goods and services, including also luxurious goods ifrom abroad.

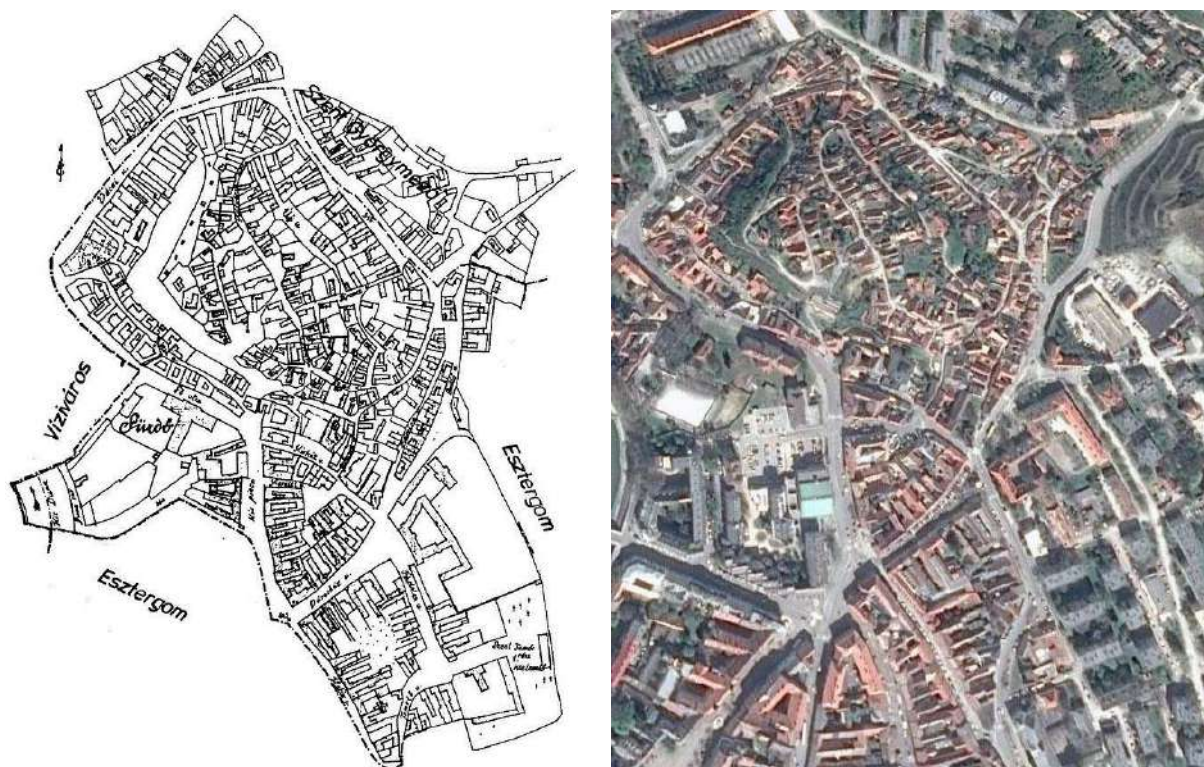


3. fig. Map of the Royal City (Királyi Város) of Esztergom after 1838 and the recent Google-Earth photo of the same area. On the old map a part of the Hévíz lake is yet observable, on the recent photo see the new road towards the bridge of the Danube and also the new developments on the site of the former lake.

This demand was met by the supply provided by the craftsmen, merchants and vendors coming from various ethnic and occupational groups and living in relatively isolated small districts along the Danube and the main traffic arteries running into the town as shown on 1. fig. In addition to the local population, the foreign inhabitants included also Armenians, Jews, and later Serbs, some of them maintaining contacts with places as far as Kiev. As in other medieval cities in Europe ethnicity and occupation were closely related.

But, as seen on 2. fig (right picture) this medieval socio-spatial arrangement of Esztergom substantially changed in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The intricate medieval network of the relatively independent entities vanished, only three basic districts

remained quasi intact: the Castle Hill (since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century again the seat of the archbishop of Esztergom), the Watertown (Víziváros, the archiepiscopal town) and the Royal City (actually the “civic town” – in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century called “Razenstadt”, Rácváros after the Serbian merchants arrived by ships to Esztergom). In the Turkish period, that is, from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, only these parts of the city were fortified, others – for instance the St. Thomas Hill east to the Castle Hill – couldn’t be safely inhabited. After the Turkish occupation lasting 150 years, German settlers arrived on the Danube and were settled by Maria Theresa in the deserted city.



4. fig Saint Thomas Hill. Buildings in a map from 1886 and recent layout on the space photo. On the old map the settlement on the hill is shown as a semi-independent community surrounded by „Víziváros” (Watertown, the archiepiscopal town) and „Esztergom”, the civic town. On the space photo the relative proximity of some new housing developments is observable in North and North-East. On the map the word „Füüdő” shows the site of the old bath and hotel. Imagine that new modernist citycentre was built on two „quasi-separated” cities: Saint Thomas Hill and Esztergom (the former Royal City).

It is well observable on 2. fig that the Royal District and the Watertown are markedly separated from each other. Between them a thermal spring flew out of the neighbouring hills into a small lake (“Hévíz negyed”, meaning Hot Springs district) up to the Danube. In the past this warm spring provided safe winter harbour and fishing area, and under the Turks and since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has prompted the development of a lively bathing culture in Esztergom.



The thermal spring lake started to be filled and built up in a relatively late period and in rather poor building quality. Finally, in the 1970s the site gave way to the construction of the modernist new city-centre through demolishing the old one. In the eyes of many local inhabitants this “structuralist” construction represents a “new barrier” between the old districts of Esztergom, and also toward the Danube.

In the last centuries only a few changes occurred within the internal fabric of the old districts of Esztergom (not counting the modernist development of the 1970s on the abandoned lake). A comparison of old maps of the Royal City (Királyi Város) and of the Saint Thomas Hill with their recent space photos shows startling resemblance. The 19<sup>th</sup> century plan of the Royal City (Királyi Város) only slightly differs from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century layout thoroughly studied by a Hungarian human geographer.<sup>2</sup>

While within the traditional city blocks even the old building stock remained almost intact, most new developments follow the borderline of the old city in a closely interconnected, “knitted” manner: new single family subdivisions, multi-story housing developments, residential building in the former vineyards – and naturally new workplace areas predominantly in the South-West peripheries of the city. Most of these extensions were realized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century including the huge site of the SUZUKI plant. Large-scale new touristic developments have been in progress in the Archbishopal Island (Prímás-sziget) between the Small and the Great Danube but the area is awaiting effective flood control yet.

## 1.2. ŠTÚROVO/PÁRKÁNY – THE HISTORY OF PAST CENTURIES

Although Esztergom and Štúrovo are real twin cities on the opposite banks of the river Danube, their urban history can't be viewed as a parallel process. The area on the left bank of the Danube was inhabited as early as the Neolithic. Roman sources mention a military garrison, Avatum on the border, *limes*, of the empire on the site of recent Štúrovo. *Marcus Aurelius* the philosopher-emperor wrote a part of his first book here „at the river Garam” when he led a campaign against the Quadi, but there is no real archaeological evidence about the actual site of the garrison. Hungarian sources refer to an early stronghold in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (*Kakath*), that grew in the Middle Ages into a settlement with some central functions. The Hungarian King Géza I. issued a document on donation of ten houses and some land to the abbey of Garamszentbenedek, other medieval sources mention regulations concerning harbour and salt duties.

The settlement was fortified after the Mongol invasion and was the site of some hostilities, among others when the *King Václav II.* came here with his troops and

wanted his son to be crowned as King of Hungary by the Archbishop of Esztergom. During the *Third Crusade* the German Emperor *Frederik of Barabarrossa* carried out negotiations with the Hungarian King from the opposite bank of the river. In the 16th century a stronghold was built here the possession of which frequently changed between the Hungarian armies of the Habsburg Kings and the Turks according to the ups and downs of the military operations.

It was just here that in 1683 the so called *Battle of Párkány* between the „United European Forces” (led by Charles of Lorraine and *Jan Sobieski*) and the Turks, retreating from Vienna, put a definitive end to the occupation of the Párkány area soon followed by the liberation of Esztergom, and in the following years the remaining parts of Hungary were also reconquered.

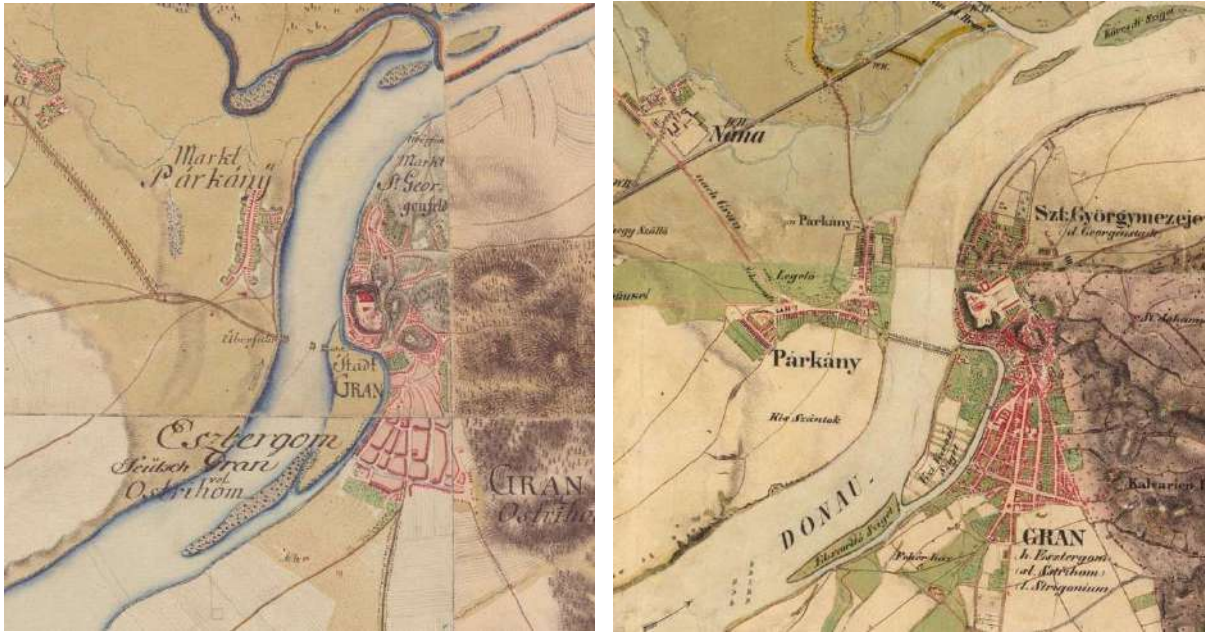


5. fig. Depiction of Esztergom on an engraving by Joris Hoefnagel from the late 16th century. Párkány a stronghold defended only by a wooden palisade, lies in ruins, while in the foreground Hussars (*huszárok*) are jousting.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Párkány experienced a slow growth. First some Serbian families migrated to the place, at that time a small „one-street village” running along the left bank of the Danube. (A similarity with Esztergom: there in the 18th century the Royal City was called „Rácváros”, that is, Serbian Town.)

While the first local census in 1696 counted only 6 houses in Párkány, in 1701 archbishop *Imre Eszterházy* (1663-1745) built here a Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint Emeric, son of the first Hungarian King. In 1724 the village was granted the right to hold markets by *King Károly (Charles) III.* (See Markt Párkány on the next map with a large open space, possibly the *market square* close to the river.) The settlement came back into the possession of the archdiocese of Esztergom in 1732, a subordinate position that hindered any appreciable urban development. (The development of Esztergom during the 18th century was also relatively slow.)





6. fig Maps of the first and second Military Land Survey of Párkány, Esztergom and its surroundings.



7. fig Maps of the third and fourth Military Land Survey.

As shown on the maps of the three Military Land Surveys of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Military Land Survey of Hungary from 1941, the street network of the current downtown area of Štúrovo took shape relatively early: an arched street connects the pontoon bridge on the Danube to two regional roads leading to *Nové Zámky* (*Érsekújvár*, *Neuhäusel* on the map) and *Levice* (*Léva*, *Lewenz* on the map), while the local railway, laid on the marshland of the river Garam (*Hron*) runs toward *Kamenice nad Hronom* (*Garamkövesd*). Consequently the oldest street lines and squares of



Štúrovo are: *Námestie Slobody, streets Hlavná, Bocskaiho, Želiarsky svah, Novocintorínska, Sobieskeho, Komenského, Nánanská cesta.*

Surprisingly, the opening of the Vác-Pozsony (Bratislava) section of the *Hungarian Central Railway Line* in 1850 did not bring about significant spatial growth of Párkány in the 19th century, and neither in the inter-war period of the 20th century. Compared to the the map of the second Military Land Survey (carried out between 1806 and 1869) to that of the third and fourth survey (made between 1869 and 1887 and in 1941, respectively) only small changes are observable. Looking at the map of 1941 it seems as if Nána gained a bit more from the railway than Štúrovo.



8. fig Map of Štúrovo from Google Earth. The city with the freight railway station, the paper mill at the river and the village Nána beyond the railway line, and the residential area of Štúrovo with the old, arched main street and the row of multi-storey residential blocks forming a new „city wall” around the low rise subdivisions.



While Párkány experienced only a small rate of spatial growth, in the second half of the 19th century substantial social and economic development took place in the city. The first factories processed the agrarian products of the area: they were mostly mills, and factories producing amyllum, paste and vinegar. The scope of urban infrastructure and services also widened: a post office and a savings bank were opened, and a voluntary fire-squad was also organised.

Replacing the former cable ferry (1762) and pontoon bridge (1842, 1851), a permanent bridge was built in 1895. This one, named after a Habsburg princess, Maria Valeria, was able to contribute to the planned common development of the twin cities Esztergom and Párkány/Štúrovo only for a short while. After the First World War, when Párkány became part of Chechoslovakia, the Prague government did not show much willingness to invest into a small Slovak/Hungarian city at the Hungarian border. (That's why the maps of the third and fourth geodesic survey look almost the same. In the 1910s the population of Párkány was about 3000.)

After the Second World War the situation changed radically. Separated from each other – the Maria Valeria bridge was exploded by the Germans, rebuilt only as late as 2001 – the twin cities, Esztergom and Párkány/Štúrovo began to experience the same fate, that is, a fast industrialisation. A large paper factory was built in Štúrovo, and due to an extensive housing program the number of inhabitants of the city grew to 14000 until 1990 (subsequently decreasing to the present population of about 11000). The urban character of Párkány/Štúrovo has been shaped in the second half of the 20th century under the state socialism, the study of which – as well as of the last 25 years – should be the scope of another research.

## 2. SPACE

### 2.1. LOCATION AND SETTLEMENT NETWORK

The Danube arriving from west turns to south and breaks between the mountains Pilis and Börzsöny. The last passage on the river was strategically important throughout history. It was here that the waterway of the Danube, the river Garam flowing into the Danube and the traditional commercial routes running in the valleys and passing the Pilis from south met. Already during the Ottoman Empire a pontoon-bridge was built here, later in the 18th century a cable ferry was put into use. In addition to its logistical and commercial significance, the military role of this place was often equally important as the border of the Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Turkish Empire.

Before the river enters the narrow valley, on the right the Basilica of Esztergom stands out from the landscape. At this point the spurs of the Pilis expand to the riverbank. The last peak rising above the water was crowned by the medieval royal castle and - from the 19th century - by the Basilica. During the Middle Ages a row of small villages developed around the Basilica which today form part of the city of Esztergom. On the other side of the river a single-street village grew up, which at this time was called Kakath (later Parkan).



9. fig: The topographical map shows the gate position of the twin-cities. (source: Puskás János Cartographia Kft. <http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/maps/shading/pj3.htm>)

Esztergom's prominence among the array of other Hungarian cities in the 12th century was due to its favorable position at the crossing of the international waterway of the Danube and the trade route linking Vienna, Bratislava, Buda and the Balkans. However, after the transfer of the royal residence to Visegrád and Buda, Esztergom

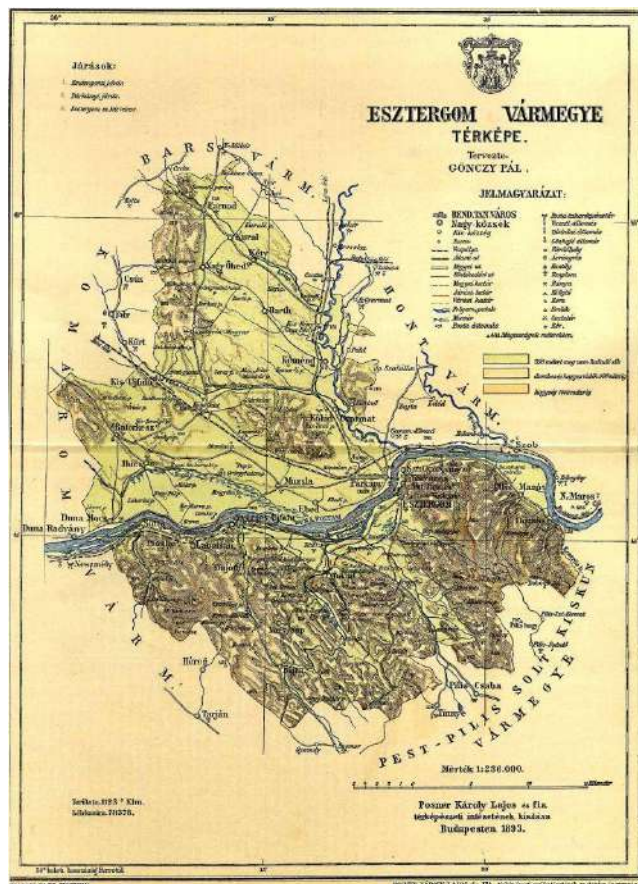


soon lost its administrative significance and became once again a medium-sized town with symbolic religious functions.

The construction of the railway line Vác-Bratislava (1850) reorganized the structure of the twin city. The main railway line ran on the left bank of the Danube, and the two settlements had a joint railway station west of Štúrovo. The lines toward Léva and Ipolyság started also at this point. This arrangement made essential the construction of a permanent Danube bridge which subsequently accelerated the development of Štúrovo along the binding axis. The Mária Valéria bridge was opened in 1895. With the help of the bridge, Esztergom's economic catchment area extended to the predominantly Hungarian villages on the other side of the Danube, which was well reflected in the territory of the County of Esztergom.

The Treaty of Versailles cut Esztergom and Štúrovo from each other and put both of the cities on the peripheries of Hungary and Slovakia, respectively. The situation was further worsened as the retreating German troops blew up the bridge in 1944. The seriously damaged construction was only rebuilt in 2001.

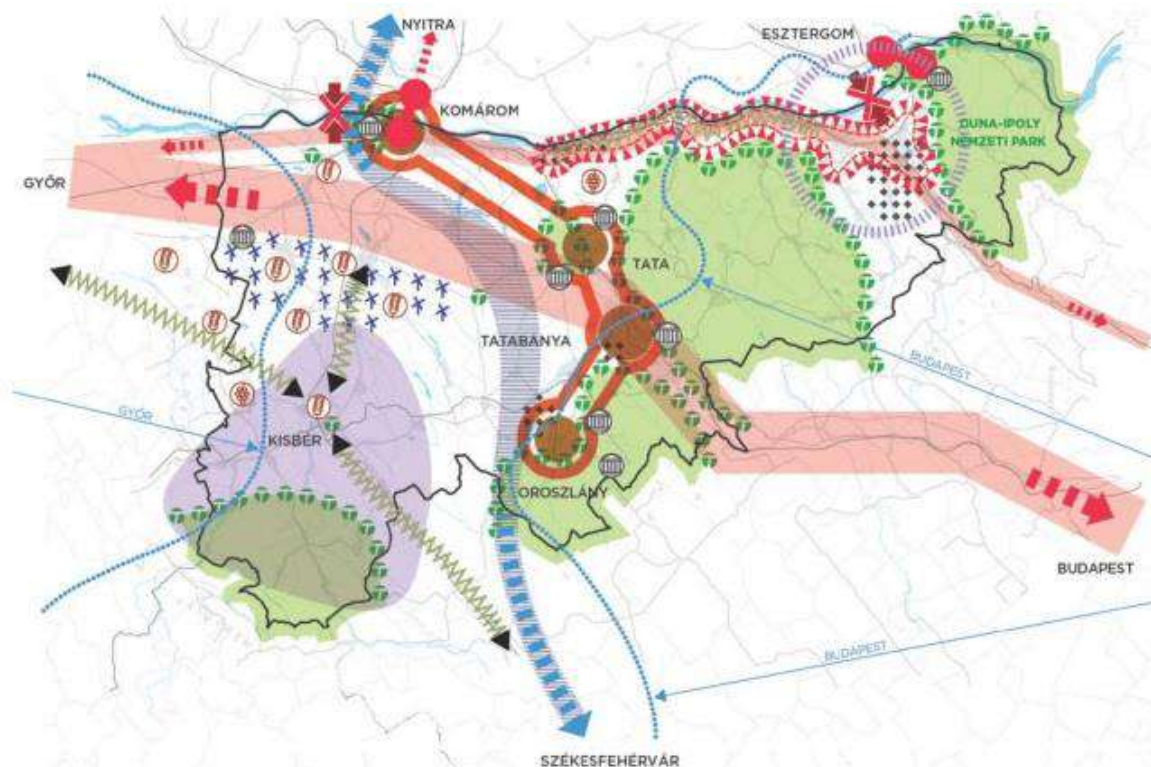
Another historical route bypassed the Pilis from south. Its medieval version passed the foot of the mountains and reached directly the city-center of Esztergom. Nevertheless the more modern version was built 10-12 kilometers further south. Between the two world wars the development shifted away from the border to this second axis, and Esztergom largely missed the industrialization and modernization of Hungary until the Second World War.



10. fig. Esztergom County in 1893 (source: <http://keptar.oszk.hu/html/kepoldal/index.phtml?id=499>)

In the following decades the Hungarian communist development policy preferred „proletarian” towns like Drog and Tatabánya to the „clericalist” Esztergom. Only second-rate lines connected the city to the railway and highway networks, replacing

the split infrastructure. Today, the almost continuous chain of industrialized small towns has become the most important development axis of the region, excluding Esztergom-Štúrovo from the economic flow..



11. fig: Value and conflict map from the Integrated Territorial Program of Komárom-Esztergom county, 2014 (source: <http://www.kemoh.hu/>)

In contrast, in Štúrovo, a large paper mill was installed during the industrialization in the sixties, which utilized the water of the Danube. The ten storey panel houses built for its 3 000 employees dramatically changed the landscape. The population of the city grew to over 14 000 but since the change of the regime it has been continuously decreasing. The role of the closed paper mill in the labour market was taken over by the Suzuki plant which opened in 1992 in Esztergom.

Since the revival of domestic tourism in the seventies, Esztergom has been seen as the western entrance of the well-defined Danube-region, the Danube Bend and several development strategies linked it in their region. In the nineties, attempts were made to broaden the profile of tourism with the construction of the thermal bath, but the catchment area of the bath built in Štúrovo proved to be much larger.

Today Esztergom has slightly more than thirty thousand residents and it is the center of the district of the same name which stretches west on the Hungarian bank of the river and is inhabited by some ninety thousand people. However it lost its central role

to cities situated directly on the infrastructural lines, like the smaller but more modern Drog, or Tatabánya, the seat county seat. Since the opening of the borders, Esztergom has been slowly reclaiming its central role in the surrounding area, primarily in the labor market, in the field of trade and in services. Štúrovo has been returning more and more to its old traffic juncture role and successfully expanding its profile in tourism.

However, infrastructural developments and cross-border programs like the DANUrB are essential to reintegrate Esztergom and Štúrovo with each other and into their regional and interregional context.

## 2.2. ACCESSIBILITY

Esztergom and Štúrovo lie between Budapest and Bratislava on the banks of the Danube, but their accessibility is very different from the two capital cities.

Esztergom’s overall accessibility links it poorly to Budapest because it is located on the edge of the functional and touristic agglomeration of the capital and the region Dunakanyar (Danube Bend). With ongoing traffic developments Esztergom can strengthen its role in the economy and tourism of the region.

The county’s main road (RMain road no. 10) linking Budapest to Bratislava and Vienna runs south-west to Esztergom in a distance of 12 km. Its physical condition has been improved during the last EU funding periods and further development of a highway is envisaged in the long-time strategies. The traditional Main road 11 following the track of the roman limes along the Danube passes through the cities of the Danube-Bend and Esztergom and joins the Main road 10 further west.



12. fig. Esztergom is provided on two opposite sides by regional and international railway lines. (source: <http://www.vasutallomasok.hu/terk/mav2005.jpg>)





13. fig The speed of the hydrofoil allows day trips to Esztergom both from Budapest and from Bratislava.

Depending on the selected route, Budapest is 45-65 kilometers away, consequently it can be reached in 80-90 minutes from Esztergom. This distance prevents greater commuting to the capital.

Bratislava is even further away. The shortest route is 174 km long, but the travel takes more than 3 hours due to the bad condition of the roads. As a result, with regard to commerce, labor market and tourism the twin cities gravitate to Budapest.

The situation of rail transport is more balanced because the passengers reach both capitals in one and a half hour with the international trains from the railway station of Štúrovo. Esztergom is also connected to Budapest by the main line No. 2, meandering between the mountains of the Pilis. Despite the recent renovation and electrification works on the line, the trains still reaches Budapest in more than an hour. It is because the train stations of both Esztergom and Štúrovo are located in about 20-30 minutes walking distance from the city centers.

Regional buses also need an hour and half or two on the Budapest-Esztergom route, serving in a row the settlements of the Danube Bend along the way. Their role is more important in the tourism traffic of the Danube Bend and in the traffic of the Esztergom catchment area. The regional bus terminal will be soon integrated into an intermodal node at the railway station, facilitating the transfers.

Shipping plays an important role in Esztergom's tourism (see the chapter on tourism). The cruisers of many international shipping companies on the Danube stop in the city and offer short city excursions to their passengers. Also, Esztergom is the terminus of the Mahart's (Hungarian Shipping Company) popular daily excursion boats to the Danube Bend in the summer season. The travel with the cruise ship takes 5 hours, with the hydrofoil 1.5 hours from Budapest to Esztergom. The pontoons of the passenger ships are located in the immediate vicinity of the tourist attractions, on the Danube downtown area. Recreational shipping is less widespread. A small port on the so called Little Danube arm provides places for yachts and small boats.

It is a serious shortcoming that the public transport of the two cities is not integrated. Not only that prices and timetables lack a unified system, but there is absolutely no bus service connecting the two cities! The lack of the transversal bus service not only prevents travel between the two city-cores, but the better use of the inter-regional bus- and railway-lines as well.

Thanks to the short distances between the city centers of Esztergom and Štúrovo, the pedestrian and bicycle traffic make up a large proportion of the local traffic, despite the poorly developed networks. Although officially the Eurovelo 6 crosses both Štúrovo and Esztergom, just a 6-kilometer section is built as bicycle route on the left bank of the Danube.

### 2.3. URBAN STRUCTURE AND LAND USE

The historical and spiritual center of Esztergom, the peak of the former Castle Hill and the monumental 19th-century Basilica crowning it dominate the landscape from afar. From west, the Danube's waves wash directly the foot of the hill. The suburbs around the Castle Hill – Szenttamás, Királyi Város, Hévíz, Szentgyörgymező, Víziváros – were formed in the Middle Ages independently from each other but later grew rapidly together.

The development of the city occupied first the flood-safe terraces of the Danube along a radial road network whose center is the former castle gate. The gardens and vineyards serving the city slowly climbed the slopes of the mountains Pilis, displacing the deciduous forest. This belt of gardens became today one of the city's unregulated housing expansion target area.

The Castle Hill was completely transformed during the 19th century by the construction of the Basilica and the connecting ecclesiastical buildings. It's artificial, megalomaniac, symmetrical plateau cut off the organic street network of the



settlement. Due to level differences, mono-functionality and inorganic urban links, it predominantly serves ecclesiastic and touristic functions.

The town's civic center was developed south of the Castle Hill at the starting point of the street network. Esztergom's triangular main square is defined by the two storey mass of the town hall. The city center was built in the 19th century with closed-row, 3-4 storey buildings. Leaving the inner city, the historical neighborhoods preserve this closed-row form, but the buildings become single storey and simpler.

The expansion of Štúrovo was not obstructed by morphology, so the built-up areas are constantly evolving around the former settlement center along the outgoing main roads. After the opening of the railway, the single-street village Štúrovo started also to take the form of a small town. The oblong main square was formed along the axis leading to the station, enclosed by a two-storey, closed row of buildings. New streets to the northwest and southwest of the main axis were built up with family houses.

Post-war development put an end to traditional forms of construction. Esztergom's skyline was transformed by several four-storey, freely formed housing estates. These estates were mostly planned on unbuilt areas, but unfortunately the historic center was also modified by a multifunctional, modernist ensemble. The competent renewal of this block is a key issue in the integration of the Castle District and the historical part of the town, in order to extend the tourist traffic. As for Štúrovo, the urban landscape had been significantly transformed by the paper mill installed directly on the shore of the river and by a modernist housing estate framing the city from the south.

Residential areas with private family houses have also expanded in Esztergom since the 1970s, mainly in the natural areas along the Danube-shores, at that time already in the form of a garden-city, with free standing buildings. The daily car traffic of their population puts a heavy burden on the public spaces in the city-center.

In the seventies, small industrial plants settled within the urban fabric, partly directly on the banks of the Little Danube. After the change of the regime, their abandoned sites represent important reserves for future urban development actions. Esztergom's land use policy changed in the nineties and the city designated significant areas in the south-west for new industrial facilities. The most significant player in the industrial park today is the Suzuki car factory.

The development of the Vadas Thermal Bath in Štúrovo started in the seventies north from the city center. The spa has become one of Slovakia's largest international wellness districts, attracting many Hungarian visitors.

## 2.4. THE ROLE OF THE DANUBE

Traditional residential areas in Esztergom and Štúrovo has been threatened by the floods of the Danube for centuries, especially in the southern parts. The 19th century was the century of floods with five such calamities, whereas two of them had a devastating impact on the life of these cities. The flood in March of 1838, recorded as bringing a hundred-year water level and also ice floe, caused a damage the consequences of which had been felt for decades. The maximum level of water on March 13, 1838, is recorded currently on many marble tables in Esztergom as well as in Štúrovo. A smaller flood, but also very devastating, was the flood of February 1876, when hundreds of houses collapsed, and 2000 citizens of Esztergom, 200 citizens of Štúrovo were required to live for a long term at the expense of the municipality and the donations of citizens who were not affected by flood. The consequences of these floods have raised the need for the construction of the dams and anti-flood barriers from Komárno to Štúrovo and the mouth of the river Hron.



14. fig. Historic map of Esztergom showing the maximum level of water during the flood in 1837 in Esztergom and the picture of the floods in 1876.

However, effective dams in Esztergom were first built after the Second World War following the line of the Little Danube. On this line a pleasant, popular small-town promenade has developed, extended by the promenade of the park under the Castle Hill. In Štúrovo an efficient dam system was built in parallel with the construction of the paper mill.

Despite the construction of this protection line along the Little Danube, several times a year the river floods the Prímás Island and the southern agricultural areas which are not protected. The island has also long retained its sporting and recreational function,



while the western coastline of the island preserved its natural character. However, the reopening of the Danube Bridge and the road leading to it changed this situation: in the north of the island constructions of large hotels and bathing establishments began.



15. fig. Flood damages in 2013 (source: <https://www.szeretgom.hu/content/78702-egesen-esztergom-kertvarosig-vezetnek-a-gatat>)

Planned moving of the flood protection line to the Great Danube is expected to have a similar impact on the island. The new dam eliminates the natural character of the shore and transforms the protected green space into a construction site. At the same time, the Little Danube becomes an urban water surface with regulated water level.

## 2.5. CHALLENGES

- To improve the livability of the twin-cities, to better integrate the regional labor market, to profit more from tourism it is indispensable to integrate the network and timetable of the public transport of Esztergom and Štúrovo. The Danube sites should become important points in the integrated public transport network, in order to improve their accessibility.
- The Eurovelo sections should be completed by common plans so that the twin-cities can accommodate international cycling tourism. The Danube shores are the most attractive for cycling tourism, so they should be preferred during planning.
- Also attention should be paid to the Danube shores in the development of public spaces. Their continuous walkability must be assured, and they must be linked to the important tourist destinations. Danube shores as important

recreational areas should be accessible on foot from all connected residential areas.

- Regarding the developing of the flood protection system, compromise has to be found between the usability of the shores, the protection of the landscape and the technical aspects. Protected green areas must be reserved for recreational functions.
- The protection of the Danube landscape should be a priority in the land use and building regulation of the twin-cities. Further construction activities on the green hillsides must be prohibited and special attention must be paid to the placement of high buildings.



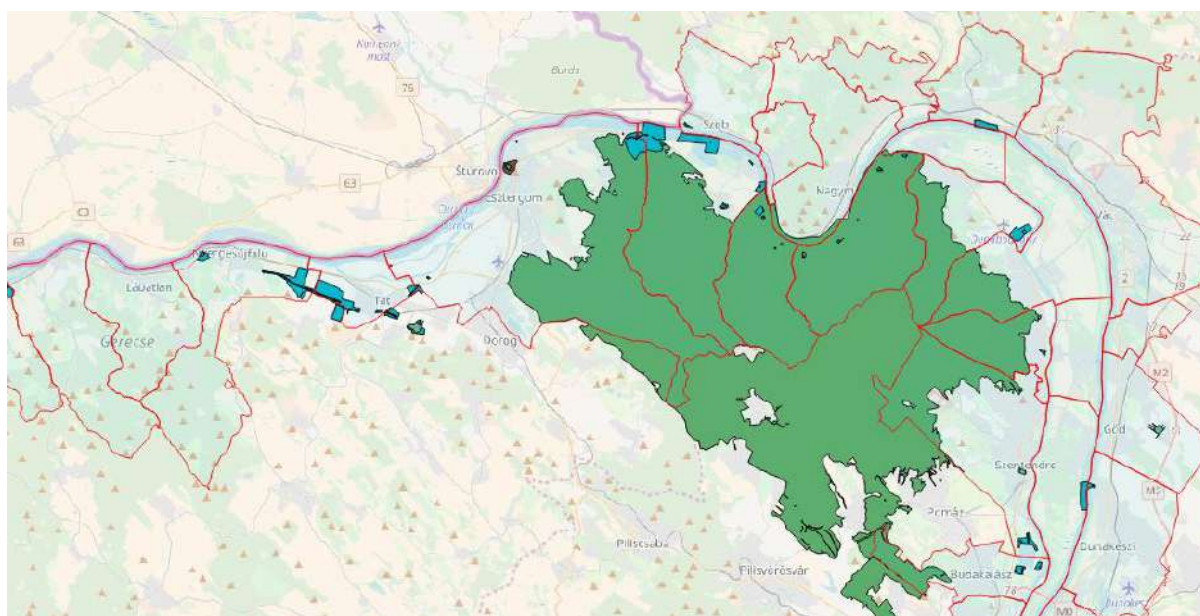
## 3. CULTURAL CAPITAL AND HERITAGE

### 3.1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF TANGIBLE HERITAGE

Although Hungary and Slovakia has a modest number of historic monuments as a result of their stormy history, Esztergom with Štúrovo is one of the few locations where the built environmental values can be considered invaluable, yet still their spatial distribution is quite unbalanced. As it is apparent from the history of these cities (see chapter 1) their rich past produced an extremely large number of protected heritage items, although they are mainly found on the Esztergom side.

In Hungary the registration of the built heritage items is carried out partly by the Departments of Construction and Heritage Protection at the County Government Offices and partly by the local municipalities.

The Departments of Construction and Heritage Protection at the County Government Offices are responsible for the registration of the national protection categories, namely the protected monuments, the conservation areas, the protected environments of the national monuments and the archeological sites. Beside that the local municipality has the right to declare in a statute local protection categories, namely protection of individual built heritage items and the protection of areas.



16. fig. Administrative area of municipalities along the Danube and the areas of the two sites on the World Heritage Tentative list in Hungary

In Slovakia the national heritage protection procedures and the registration of the built heritage items is in the competence of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak

Republic and the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic – a governmental body linked financially to the budget of the Ministry. The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic and the regional monuments Boards perform specialised public administration activities for the protection of monuments and historic sites. The competence of the Monuments Board within the state administration covers the whole territory of the Slovak Republic. The regional Monuments Boards perform public administration activities within the territories of their respective administrative regions.

The Central Register is kept by the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic and it consists of the register of movable cultural heritage monuments; the register of immovable cultural heritage monuments; the register of protected historic reserves; and the register of protected historic zones. Besides that the local municipality has the right and may decide on the establishment and professional registry of local sights situated in the municipality. Besides movable objects and immovable property, records on sights can also include works made together by nature and human activity, historic events, street names, and geographical and cadastral names pertaining to the history and personalities of the municipality. The municipalities must submit the list of recorded sights to the respective Regional Monuments Board for professional and documentation purposes.

In our actual case the area is defined by the administrative areas of Esztergom and Štúrovo (including their built up urban area and its outskirts), and currently it comprises the following:

- **2 sites on the World Heritage Tentative list**
  - Medieval fortification and the Basilica
  - Frontiers (limes) of the Roman Empire – Ripa Pannonica in Hungary
- **Nationally protected Monuments: 96 in Esztergom and only 1 in Sturovo (the Military cemetery from the the Second World War) out of which the two most notable are (all of them in Esztergom)::**
  - The buildings of the medieval fortification
  - The neoclassical church of the Basilica

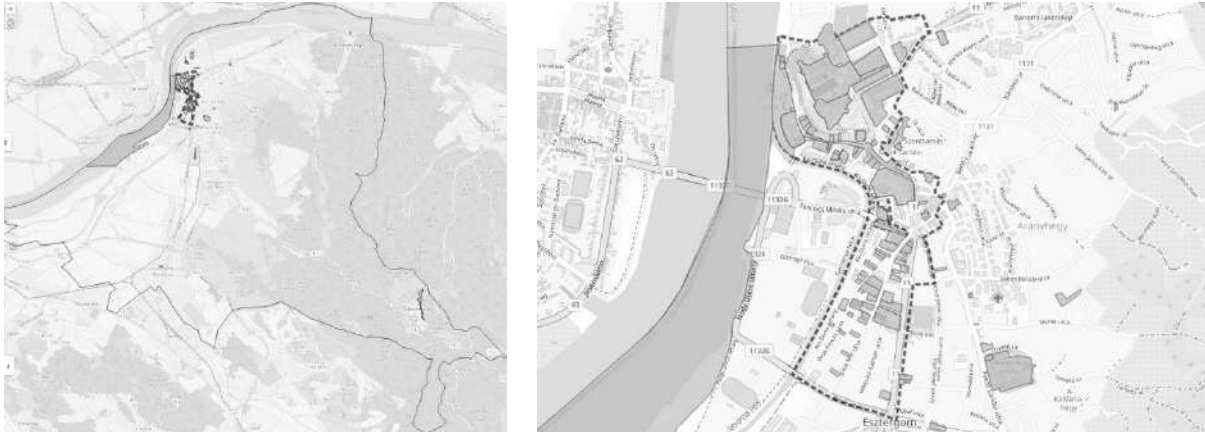
Other important monuments are:

- Medieval city walls of the Watertown (Víziváros)
- Vacation House of Babits Mihály
- Baróth-house (Old archiepiscopal palace)

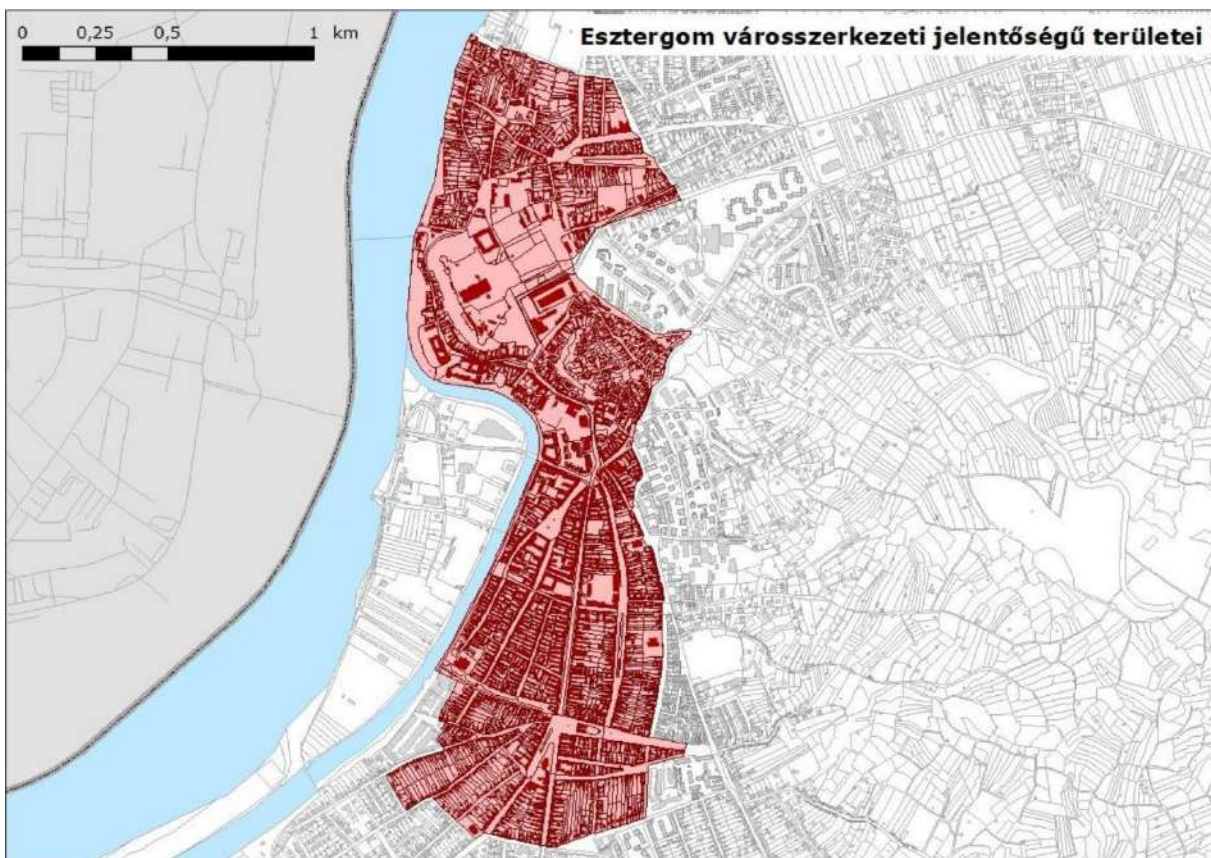


- Inner-city Franciscan church
  - Inner-city Roman Catholic Parish Church and presbytery
  - Benedictine Secondary School (today Bottyán János Secondary School)
  - Benedictine friary
  - Bibliotheka, Archdiocesan Library
  - Court house
  - Bischitzky-Müller-House (today Post office)
  - Dóczy-house (Former Votive Church and alms-house)
  - Archiepiscopal Palace and Christian Museum
  - Two Franciscan friaries
  - Frey-house
  - Bath Hotel
  - Greek Catholic Church (Serbian Church)
  - School house
  - Calvary
  - Canonical row of houses
  - Chapter house (today Danube Museum)
  - Round church
  - Kovácsi medieval settlement and the ruins of its church
  - Mattyasovszky-house
  - Meszéna-house
  - Ruins of the Roman watchtower
  - Sándor-palace
  - Darkgate tunnel and Primate cellar
- **3 built heritage items considered as “attached to a monument”**
  - **34 heritage items under generic monumental protection**
  - **One relatively large conservation area mainly including the historic city center of the city**
  - **83 protected environments**
  - **413 Archeological sites out of which**
    - 6 belong to the specially protected category
    - 102 belong to the highly protected category
    - 305 sites belong to the generic protection category
  - **359 other heritage protected by local statute**
  - **359 other heritage protected by local statute out of which**
    - 142 locally protected residential buildings in the Royal City (Királyi Város)

- 10 buildings of public institutions in the Royal City (Királyi Város)
- 162 locally protected residential buildings in other parts of the city
- 30 buildings of public institutions in other parts of the city
- 5 buildings of industrial heritage



17. fig Nationally protected monuments according to the official registry of the Department of Construction and Heritage Protection at the Government Office of Komárom-Esztergom County (monuments are designated by the extent of their parcel) on Openstreet map of the administrative area (left) and the inner city (right) (source: edited by the authors).



18. fig Areas of Esztergom with valuable and protected urban structure (source: Településképi arculati kézikönyv)

The large number of these items shows that practically the whole historic inner city, making up a relatively large part of the urban built up area, is under some protection, making the city a livingmuseum.

- **In Štúrovo only the military cemetery from the the Second World War is listed as a nationally protected monument in the General List of Monuments. However, several others are declared by the municipality as local sights:**
  - DANÚBIUS cinema, Hlavná 6
  - City gallery, Hlavná 6
  - House, Hlavná 8
  - Bookshop Bestseller from 1925, Hlavná 13
  - Former synagogue, Hlavná 32
  - Building of VÚB, Hlavná 2
  - Building of MsKS (former Katolikus legényegylet), Hasičská 25
  - Former court building, nám. Sv. Imricha 8
  - School building, Komenského 99
- **Cemeteries:**
  - Old civil cemetery, ul. Sv. Štefana
  - Jewish cemetery, ul. Sv. Štefana
- **Parks:**
  - Memorial Park, nám. Slobody
  - Park of Peace, near the polyclinic
- **Protected trees:**
  - Horse chestnut trees, 11 trees on Predmostie
  - London plane trees, 11 trees on Hlavná ul.
  - European yew tree, Komenského 18
- **Memorial tables, sculptures, small sacral architecture monuments:**
  - Memorial plaques on Hlavná ul.
  - Sculpture – „Young family“
  - Sculpture – „Mother with child“
  - Memorial to the Airmen of the Red Army fallen in the Second World War
  - Church of Saint Emeric of Hungary, nám. Sv. Imricha 8
  - Roadside cross, direction Kamenica nad Hronom
  - Roadside cross, direction Nána



- Roadside cross, direction ul. Komenského
- Roadside sculpture of Saint John of Nepomuk, ul. Pri kostole
- Calvary, ul. Pri kostole

The urban structure around Sobieskeho street, with the Church of Saint Emeric, is the oldest part of Štúrovo, as seen for example on the map of the First Military Survey (1763-1787). Cultural heritage values lie in the historical patterns of the arrangement of the housing lots, and in the character of low-storey houses with sloping roofs. Today these values of urban structure are threatened by new developments and constructions, which do not respect the character of the area.

The Main street (Hlavná street) is the second oldest street in Štúrovo, as seen for example on the map of the Second Military Survey (1806-1869). Its urban structure, especially the part of the southern building line, still preserves the patterns of historical lotting and is lined by low-storey houses. Some of the houses on the Main street possess architectural values and are protected as cultural monuments of local heritage – local sights.

## 3.2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

### Intangible cultural capital and heritage

First we have to define and clarify the most important notions in our research. Therefore we interpret cultural capital as that vast and compound field of culture which comprises three main pillars or sub-groups: material, cognitive and normative. From another perspective, we can call the first sub-group as tangible cultural capital, while the second and the third belongs to the intangible cultural capital.

Temples, buildings, various human made artefacts belong to the material/tangible group. While language, science, arts, knowledge, memories – as cognitive elements – and all kinds of beliefs are treated as in-tangible cultural capital, referring to those ideas, traditions, religion, practices, values and norms of the community, which hold them together and provide their identity (as normative elements).

Furthermore, we consider heritage such cultural capital – be tangible or intangible – that is valued and treated to be transferred to the next generations.

In the case of Esztergom, the most important intangible cultural heritage examples are:

- History and traditions related to the foundation of the city (Romans, Grand Prince Géza), birth, baptism and coronation of Stephen I of Hungary,

- Religion of Christianity,
  - being a centre of the Hungarian Catholic Church,
  - foundation as a archbishopric by Stephen I of Hungary
    - and all the related tangible, built and human made heritage, like the Castle and Basilica/ Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption,
    - the rich collections of the Christian Museum, the majority of which is still unknown, hidden in the storage rooms
- Historical events related to the Ottoman Empire, occupation and siege of Esztergom, like the heroic death of Bálint Balassa, the great Hungarian Renaissance poet.
  - Balassa memorial, thematic walks in the city (e.g. in the Day of Poetry)
  - Balassa Bálint Museum collection, programs and museum education
  - Özicseli Hadzsi Ibrahim-dzsámi, as a cultural centre with exhibitions, arts and music programs, like Renaissance music with old Hungarian music instruments
- Industrial/trade/agricultural crafts & knowledge
  - Esztergom is rich in various family based, intergenerational arts and handicraft traditions, like “kékfestők”, alcoholic beverages
  - The first trading settlement established by Grand Prince Géza,
  - Later the first mint established here in Hungary, operating as the only one for centuries
  - Ernő Rubik Sr., inventor and founder of the Esztergom Airport.
- Historical memories & tales of the city connected to the tangible, built cultural capital, famous people and their memories (Marcus Aurelius, Stephen I of Hungary, Bálint Balassa, János Bottyán etc...)

In the case of Štúrovo the intangible cultural capital and heritage is:

- related to historical events from the era of the Ottoman Empire, occupation and siege
  - The legend tells that in the small valley, today agricultural land, during the battles with Ottomans in 1683, around 1500-2000 cavaliers of the horse troops led by Jan Sobieski were killed. During the retreat, the Ottomans killed and buried here around 1000 captives, from these above 400 women and children. The valley is called the Valley of Laments, because the legend

- tells that at the night the cry of mothers and children, the clatter of arms, and the neigh of horses could be heard here.
- Historical memories associated with Jan Sobieski
  - related to historical events from the era of the Second World War
    - as reflected in the Military cemetery from the the Second World War, or in the Memorial to the Airmen of the Red Army fallen in the Second World War
  - traditional kitchen recipes of fish soup – *halászlé*

### 3.3. GENERAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF HERITAGE IN THE TWO CITIES

The main touristic and historical attractions of the cities attracting 1-1.5 million tourists every year are the medieval fortification and the classicist church of the Basilica in Esztergom and the Vadas Bath in Sturovo. Nevertheless these two monuments and attractions of the cities are very much separated from each other, the positive effect of the large number of visitors is not upgrading the functionless historic urban centers, neither the sometimes deserted and neglected Danube bank.

One of the great problems of the city of Esztergom is the dilapidated and sometimes functionless historic city center full of protected monuments. The refurbishment of the buildings with monument protection standards and filling them with new functions is costly, so more and more people leave them moving to the cheaper suburbs. As a result of this the large number of monuments do not have a positive effect on the Danube Bank either, although many visitors arrive on the river.

In Štúrovo, the fact that only one object is listed as nationally protected monument in the General List of Monuments and the several others are declared by municipality only as local sights means that the access to financial support from national funds to restore and maintain the heritage objects is limited. The urban zones around Sobieskeho street and the Main street with the patterns of historical lotting and the character of low-storey houses are not protected, so the new development often does not respect the historical character of the area, what reduces the general attractiveness of the heritage of Štúrovo.



**SWOT of attractiveness of heritage** in Esztergom and in Sturovo in relation to the Danube

Strength	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Two monuments with a magnet effect and large importance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Unmatched monument stock with nationwide importance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Well known place thanks to its monument heritage and historical importance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Wide range of possibilities as a result of the large monument stock</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using the two important monuments as magnets</li> <li>▪ Expected World Heritage Site – possibilities of upgrading the location through its newly defined importance as a WHS</li> <li>▪ Transform Danube banks from neglected areas to areas cooperating with heritage sites</li> </ul>
...	...
Weakness	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>No functional complexity connected to the monuments, many unused or neglected</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Expensive intervention is needed because of the bad state and high expectations in the case of a monument</b></li> <li>▪ <b>The city alone does not have the resources to revitalize its monument stock</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Too large financial investment needed to reach real results</li> <li>▪ City becoming a museum of monuments without local life</li> <li>▪ No real connection with the river</li> </ul>
...	...

### 3.4. IDENTIFYING HERITAGE RESOURCES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DANUBE

In this chapter we investigate heritage resources with a focus on the relationship between the Danube and local heritage. With this approach not only the physical proximity of the Danube is an important factor for the valorization but also the abstract connection defined by the complex system of tangible and intangible heritage items somehow connected to the river.

## Aspects of investigation

### Urban Riverside (Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube)

The public space zones in between the medieval city and the Danube in Esztergom and the city center and the river in Štúrovo have definitely great potentials. The areas are mainly underused and partly impacted by the formerly unprotected flood zones. The flood protection on the Štúrovo side has been resolved, while in Esztergom the local municipality is currently investigating the flood protection possibilities on the Primate (Prímás) island. The valuable areas mainly include the parks and riverside promenades along the river, and involve some partly used or neglected industrial sites as well.

When investigating these areas, the proximity of the river cannot be left out of consideration, which obviously influences the primary possibilities of the sites. The areas are mainly suitable for leisure activities, nevertheless with the strong influence of the surrounding heritage their value should also be utilized in relation to the proposed functions.

### Architectural and artistic heritage along the Danube

Although the spatial distribution of the architectural and artistic heritage in the two cities is quite unbalanced, their connection is beyond question. The main attractions of Esztergom have the best view from the Štúrovo side, while the Vadas Bath in Štúrovo well supplements the touristic scene of Esztergom. Although the general value of the architectural heritage in Štúrovo is lower, the well rehabilitated Main street (Hlavna ulica) shows the possibilities of heritage utilization.

### Danube as an economic resource / Heritage of the economy along the Danube

The two cities have traditionally been linked by their economy. The river by its nature has traditionally always been the most obvious transportation route and a source for basic resources (water, fishing). The opening of the Vác-Pozsony (Bratislava) section of the Hungarian Central Railway Line in 1850 (see also chapter 1) brought about a much more intensive cooperation between the two cities which became even stronger after the first permanent bridge opened in 1895. After the political transformations of the early 1990s the economic sector underwent significant changes and the long-time neglected former industrial sites close to the river are now looking for new uses in relation to the Danube, especially that nowadays more and more tourists arrive to the cities from the direction of the river.

The potential sites and topics include:

- Industries and their former premises share the need of intensive water usage (eg: Paper Works in Štúrovo)
- Industrial engineering constructions on the Danube mainly using the river as a transportation route (the coal loading pier in Esztergom)
- Fishing traditions only partly surviving because of the EU ban on industrial scale fishing in natural waters
- Tourists arriving through the river and their effect on the spatial use of the city

### **Socio-cultural life along the Danube - Danube related intangible cultural capital**

In 1996, the Society of Slovak-Hungarian Friendship was established in Štúrovo, related to the general efforts of citizens and authorities on both sides of the Danube River, leading to the recovery of the bridge destroyed in the World War II. The society appealed to the governments highlighting the importance of the reconstruction of the bridge and urged to rebuild it. This civil initiative is vital in organizing many activities connecting the two cities.

The town of Štúrovo, the cultural association “Štúrovo and its Vicinity” and Štefan and Viera Frúhauf of the foundation “Corymbo” has initiated the establishment of an art residency – the “Bridge Guard Residential Art and Science Centre”, in order to support artists, scientists and personalities who work on projects which place emphasis on uniting, connecting and bridging. Support consists of making possible a 3 to 6 months long residency in the “Bridge Guard” residential centre in Štúrovo. The post of the Bridge Guard requires a person whose work bridges boundaries of countries or eras, as well as mental, social, religious or political boundaries, and which connects different scientific fields. The idea is that the rebuilt bridge deserves to be saved from further destruction. To this aim, mental protection is more important than physical. As long as the mental connection between people is intact, the bridge is not endangered.

In Štúrovo several civil associations are active: Club of retirees Rozmarín, Štúrovo, Pensioners Club Nové storočie – New century, the local organisation of Matica slovenská, Párkány-Esztergom Baráti Egyesület, Párkány És Vidéke Kulturális Társulás, the local organizations of the Slovak Union of Disabled no. 99, Csemadok, the Society for the Help to People with Mental Disabilities, and the Cultural Association of Štúrovo and its Vicinity.



### 3.5. POSSIBLE HERITAGE ITEMS TO BE VALORIZED

	<b>Category in the DANUrB cluster of research</b>
1. Danube riverbank	Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube
2. Turkish Bath	Heritage of art and architecture
3. Archiepiscopal Palace and Christian Museum	Heritage of art and architecture
4. Primate-island (Primas-sziget), island peak	Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube
5. Bridge Guard house (Hídőrház)	Heritage of art and architecture
6. "Small-Danube" (Kis-Duna) Promenade	Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube
7. Bath Hotel and its environment	Heritage of art and architecture
8. Urban Block rehabilitation between the "Little Danube" Promenade and the Széchenyi Square	Heritage of art and architecture
9. Pumpkin House (Tökház)	Heritage of art and architecture
10. Industrial Area next to the Small Danube	Heritage defined by the economy at the Danube
11. Coal loading pier	Heritage defined by the economy at the Danube
12. Torch-lit procession on the Little Danube	Heritage defined by the socio-cultural life along the Danube
13. Historical bath culture	Heritage defined by the socio-cultural life along the Danube
14. Urban part of the Danube riverbank in Štúrovo	Heritage defined by the economy at the Danube
15. Natural parts of the Danube riverbank in Štúrovo	Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube
16. Urban Block rehabilitation between the Vadaš resort and the Danube	Heritage defined by the economy at the Danube
17. Urban Block rehabilitation between the Main street and Danube riverbank	Heritage defined by the economy at the Danube
18. Rehabilitation of the area of the small bay on the riverbank in Štúrovo	Heritage landscapes shaped by the Danube

## 4. TOURISM

### 4.1. TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS

**Esztergom** is one of the best-known towns in the Danube-bend region with an iconic role in Hungarian history. Due to its close location to Budapest, the Danube Bend is a popular place for day trips and therefore Esztergom is always full of tourists. The town welcomes more than one million visitors per year, thanks to its rich cultural heritage and its beautiful natural surroundings.

Despite the high number of visitors, sights worth to see do not receive equal amount of attention from tourists. The most famous place to visit is the cathedral on the Castle Hill with the internationally outstanding collection of the Cathedral Treasury. The Cathedral, as an international cultural and religious attraction, welcomes one million visitors a year. The Prímás Pince Turisztikai és Borkulturális Központ (Primate Cellar Touristic and Winery Centre), a visitors' centre and restaurant located on the east side of the Cathedral, offers quality experience for tourists.

It has nearly 400,000 guests per year. Next to the Winery Center, there is the Vármúzeum (Castle Museum) of great national importance that has 30,000 visitors a year. The most famous building of the Watertown (Víziváros) district is the Prímás Palota which was built as the residence of the archbishop of Esztergom. Within the palace, the Christian Museum expects its visitors with its globally unique religious art collection. It attracts 50,000 visitors a year. The importance of the whole area is demonstrated by the fact that its skyline is featured on the Hungarian 10,000 Forint banknote.

Compared to the above, other museums are less well-known. These are rather regional or local in their collections and focus on one theme or person (Danube Museum, Balassa Bálint Museum, Babits Mihály Memorial Museum). Visitor numbers vary between 5 - 8000. The Öziçeli Hacci Ibrahim Djami, which functions as a museum and a café, is an especially interesting little and unique place to visit. The list of worthwhile sights is long, the town is full of churches and other religion-related buildings. The downtown has a historical atmosphere, it abounds in cultural monuments, statues and works of art. The number of art galleries and other cultural functions is remarkable compared to the population of the town.

The town has excellent opportunities, but despite the numerous potential tourist attractions, only a fraction of the tourists visiting the cathedral explores other parts of the town.

The majority of the more than hundred heritage buildings in the town are abandoned and in need of reconstruction. Currently they are rather a burden to the town and less a motivation for the tourism sector.

Tourist attractions are tourism products based on the given area's strengths, which are able to catch the attention of tourists and make them eager to visit the area. The natural and heritage values of an area are merely the foundation for this, proper tourism management is necessary for increasing visitor numbers. Currently Esztergom does not utilize properly its opportunities. There is no conscious city marketing, attraction management, at the moment things happen in a random, spontaneous way.

**Štúrovo's** main attraction is recreational facilities, a thermal bath complex, as well as sports and hiking facilities (spa, water park) and cultural events (summer music festival, Simon - Judah exhibition - 400 years of tradition). The cultural and historical attractions of the town of Štúrovo are of local significance: these are the historical and ethnographic exhibition in the City Museum and the works of local artists in the City Gallery.

In terms of tourism, The Slovak Danube Region is interesting due to its rich offer of thermal springs, and its winery tradition, while other attractions include water sports, cycling, hiking and health tourism.

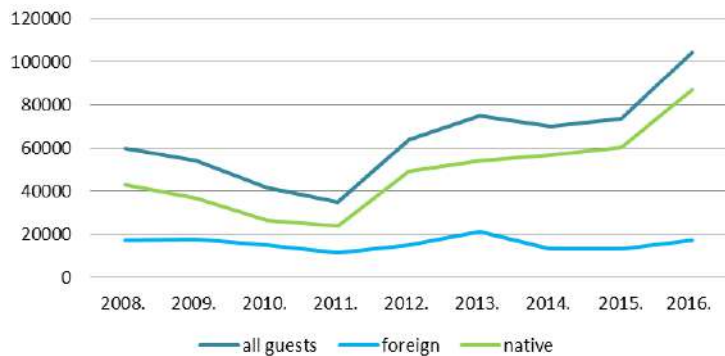
## 4.2. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

In **Esztergom** nearly 85% of the local tax income of the local government comes from the trade tax (2.8 billion HUF), whereas the tourism tax coming directly from tourism is only 12-14 million HUF a year, which is a low amount compared to the opportunities of the town. Currently tourism does not play a significant role in Esztergom's economy, but given the town's attractions, it definitely could.

There are accommodation capacities for around 1700 persons, but only 960 of these is a type of hotel. The camping has the biggest capacity (500), and the hotels are typically smaller. The three biggest hotels (Portobello Hotel, Bellevue Hotel, Schweidel Szálló), offer accommodation for 150-230 people, other hotels for less than 100. 53 % of all accommodation are pensions, 24% are hotels and 23% fall into the 'other' category.

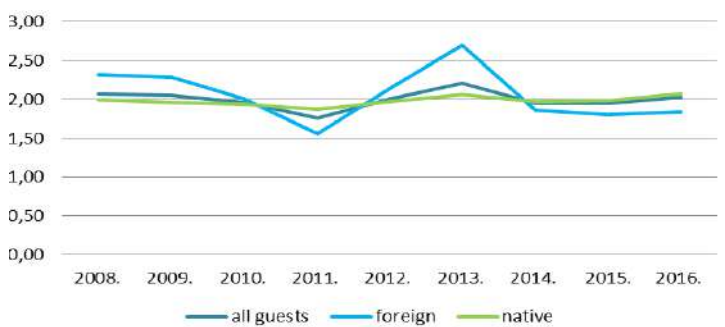


The number of overnight stays decreased after the last economic crisis, but it is again increasing, mainly thanks to Hungarian tourists. Between 2010 and 2016 there has been a 150% increase, in 2016 104,167 overnight stays were spent in Esztergom.



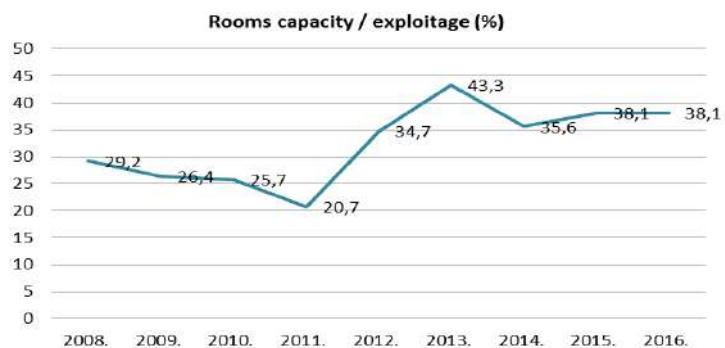
19. fig The number of overnight stays, Esztergom

The average time guests spend in the town is low and this number stagnates.



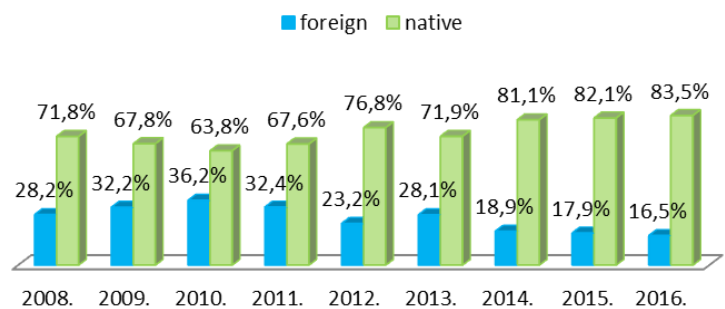
20. fig The average time guest spend, Esztergom

The hotel rooms were utilized to 38.1 % of their capacity in 2016, which is 14% below the national mean.



21. fig Rooms capacity / exploitation (%), Esztergom

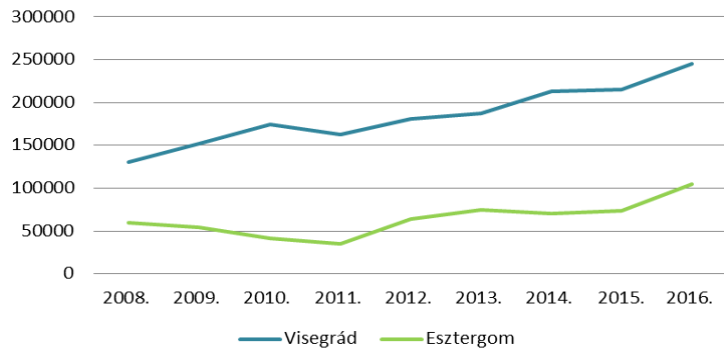
There is a tendency which shows a decrease in the number of foreign overnight stays, in 2016 it was only 16.5%. A reason for this might be that tourists from abroad arrive by plane and stay in a Budapest hotel, only visiting Esztergom for a day.



22. fig Foreign/native guests rate / commercial accommodation, Esztergom

Visegrád is a town with similar tourist attractions and is a rival for Esztergom in the region in terms of tourism.

The number of overnight stays of Visegrád in 2016 was 245,602, which is 135% more than Esztergom had.

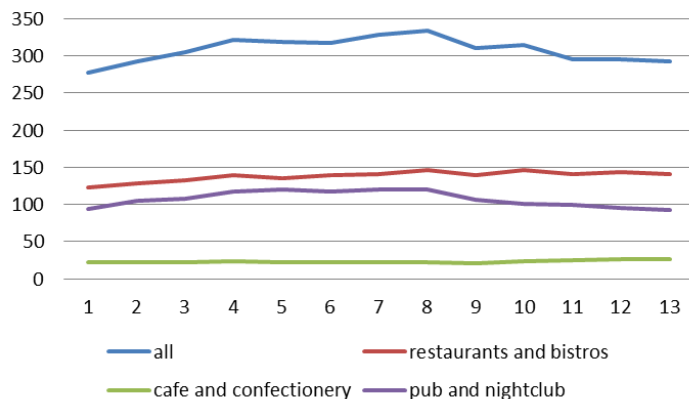


23. fig The number of overnight stays, Esztergom

It is important to note and consider that Visegrád has a similar historical and cultural profile, but the number of sights is less. Still, it is the 13th most popular Hungarian tourist destination based on the overnight stays registered in commercial accommodation venues.

Esztergom has more than 300 commercial catering establishments, which is a huge number compared to the population. It is particularly striking if compared to the neighbouring towns: Esztergom has nearly four times the population of Nyergesújfalu, and eleven times the number of commercial catering establishments.

The highest number of these is restaurants and bistros serving hot meals, and this number has increased by 14.6% between 2010 and 2016. These establishments are therefore used not only by locals but also by many tourists.



24. fig Types of commercial catering establishments, Esztergom

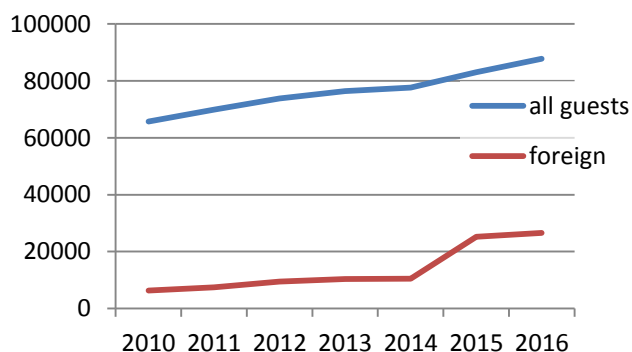
The large number of restaurants and free capacity of the hotels lead to the conclusion that Esztergom has typically one-day visitors instead of long-terms stays. Some of the visitors coming for a day trip are foreigners staying in a Budapest hotel or guests of an international river cruise. They typically spend very little time here after visiting the cathedral. The town is also a popular destination for school trips, these are again one-day visits in the spring and in the autumn.

In the city of **Štúrovo** there are hotel facilities, apartments, guesthouses and private accommodation. There are accommodation capacities for around 1813 persons, but only 585 of these is could be found in some kind of hotel. The apartments/bungalows

have the biggest capacity (628), whereas hotels are typically smaller. The biggest hotel (Vadaš) offers accommodation for 154 people, other hotels for less than 50. 19% of all accommodation establishments is a hotel, 13% a pension and 68% falls into the 'other' category.

- Hotel: Hotel Zahovay (44 beds), Hotel Park Atrium (46 beds), Hotel Green Center (40 beds), Hotel Guest Centre (32 beds), Hotel Eliot (24 beds), Thermal - Vadaš (154 beds), 340 beds in total
- Pension, hostel: 19 objects, 245 beds in total
- Apartment: Apartments - Vadaš (44 objects, 144 beds), Bungalows - Vadaš (484 beds), 628 beds in total
- Camping: 600 person.

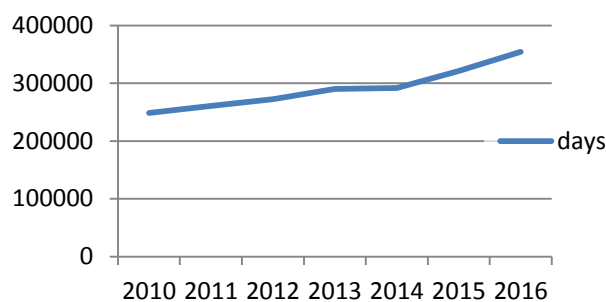
The number of accommodated guests (foreign and native, adult and children): The situation in Slovakia is comparable to Hungary. The number of accommodated guests decreased after the last economic crisis, but again it has increased from 65772 in 2010 to 87769 in 2016.



25. fig The number of accommodated guests, Štúrovo

The number of overnight stays annually (foreign+native):

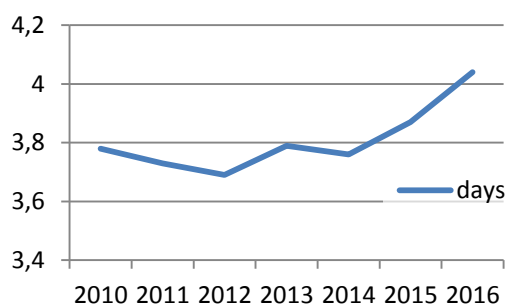
The number of overnight stays is increasing, mainly due to Slovak tourists. In 2016 it was 354 588 days, which is 42% higher than in 2010.



26. fig The number of overnight stays annually, Štúrovo

The average time guests (foreign+native) spent:

The average time guest spend in the town Štúrovo is increasing too from 3,78 days in 2010 to 4,04 days in 2016.



27. fig The average time guests spent Štúrovo



### 4.3. TRANSPORT POSSIBILITIES FOR TOURISM

The area is located on major international tourist transit routes - roads, railway lines and the Danube waterway. Since 2001 both cities have been reunited with the rebuilt Mária Valéria Bridge which has contributed to the development of tourism in both Štúrovo and Esztergom. The cities can be reached by public transport, by rail and boat. The waterway is especially attractive for hikers: there are daily excursion boat rides between Budapest and Esztergom in the summer and daily hydrofoil excursion boat rides between the two cities from April to October. With the hydrofoils the journey takes 1.5 hours.

The first community bicycle system was implemented in Esztergom in 2013. The system (EBI) started with 5 stations and 50 bicycles, and was initiated and funded by the local Neuzer bicycle factory without support from the local government. The company has been developing this since 2009.



The full system of EBI (Esztergom Bicycle) was completed by the spring of 2014 with a 50 million Forint budget. It operates with 10 stations and 160 dockings, while the number of rental vehicles goes up to hundred. The bikes can be rented with a rechargeable card which requires registration. This also shows that tourists enjoy using this service.

Štúrovo has a European Union tender for the establishment of a bicycle rental which was co-tendered with Esztergom. The financial support amounts to EUR 883 500, including both cities. The commissioning is expected before the end of 2018.

### 4.4. OPTIONS FOR A THEMATIC TOURISTIC NETWORK COOPERATION

The proximity of Štúrovo and Esztergom as well as their strong cultural and historical ties provide the opportunity to create an extremely valuable tourist area of international importance, consisting of a unique symbiosis of two types of tourism: on the Slovak side recreation in Štúrovo-Vadaš and on the Hungarian side cultural recreation in Esztergom.

In 2015, the Esztergom Tourism Development Association (TDA) was founded with the participation of experts, initiated by the city's local government. In the same year

the town of Štúrovo joined the regional association for tourism (RAT / Oblastná Organizácia Cestovného Ruchu Podunajsko – Dunamente).



28. fig. Tourist spots projected on Esztergom's urban structure.

The goal of both associations is to provide joint marketing and promotion of the Danube region. The Danube Region stretches along the Danube river, from Komárno to Štúrovo, which, besides its other natural conditions, predisposes it to the development of international cooperation between neighbors.

### Heritage Tourism

In **Esztergom**, the vast majority of tourists come to see cultural heritage which falls in the category of cultural tourism. It is important in terms of sustainability that heritage tourism sites offer a complex experience for visitors that is built on services. The main elements are the uniqueness of the site, its interactive presentation, displaying the everyday lifestyle, the unique experience, the connection between the nostalgic and the modern. Heritage buildings and sites become products through management and interpretation. In this case it is typical to seek authenticity, there is a desire for

local, real values and a rejection of any fake products. Heritage tourism is less seasonal and less cost sensitive, the target group travels more than the average. Besides the complex experiences the idyllic country atmosphere, the various countryside images could be appealing as well.

- Weekly guided walks - initiative of the Esztergom és Térsége Turisztikai Egyesület (Esztergom Tourism Development Association)

In **Štúrovo**, the City Museum and the Municipal Gallery are of local importance for cultural and tourism. Several traditional cultural and social events are taking place in the city: spring (May 1) and autumn, Šimon - Júda market (October), opening and closing of the summer season and the beer festival.

There is only a few and not very significant heritage in the city, but there are more attractive sights in the region. In the neighborhood of Štúrovo, there are other cultural monuments on the Slovak side of the Danube: the Bíňa Rotunda Church, the Castle of Želiezovce with the memorial room of Franz Schubert, the recently restored Castle of Belá, local wine cellars, Komárno (fortification system), Iža (roman camp), Virt (technical monument), Hurbanovo (observatory), Svodín (skanzen).

Restoring and exhibiting the damaged archaeologically important sites in the vicinity of Štúrovo can result in a potential cultural attraction. (This comprises the Mansion of Sárkányfalva, Fortress of Džigerdelen Parkan, Castle of Kokot, Castle of Kamenín, Fortress of Čenkov, Castle of Malej Mužle, Castle of Nána)

## Events

In Esztergom, urban events often relate to heritage tourism, they focus on historic traditions or create a new tradition associated with local attractions, such as the founding of St. Stephen's Day or concerts in the Basilica. There is a great tradition of organizing cultural festivals where not only cultural and musical programs, but also gastronomy plays an important role. Events from April to October take place in important areas of the city, among which are the sites of the Széchenyi Square and the Festival Island.

The major events in Esztergom:

- Lampionos felvonulás / Lampion Parade (April-May)  
<http://fesztivalsziget.hu/programok/lampionos-felvonulas.html>
- Ízek-Korok-Hangulatok / Flavors-Ages-Feelings (September)  
[www.izekkorokhangulatok.hu/](http://www.izekkorokhangulatok.hu/)



- Szent István Napi Bor és Zenei Fesztivál / St. Stephen's Day Wine and Music Festival (August)  
[fesztivalsziget.hu/programok/szent-istvan-napi-fesztival.html](http://fesztivalsziget.hu/programok/szent-istvan-napi-fesztival.html)
- Főtéri Kézműves Sörfesztivál / Main Market Craft Beer Festival (July) <http://iii-foteri-kezmuves-sorfesztival-esztergom.iranyadunakanyar.hu/>
- Borhíd Fesztivál és Borünnep / Wine Bridge Festival and Wine Festival (October) [www.borhid.com/](http://www.borhid.com/)
- Esztergomi Lecsófesztivál / Lecsó Festival (September)  
<http://fesztivalsziget.hu/programok/lecsofesztiv%C3%A1l.html>
- Esztergomi Szüreti Fesztivál / Harvest Festival (September-October)  
[www.programturizmus.hu/ajanlat-szureti-fesztival-esztergom.html](http://www.programturizmus.hu/ajanlat-szureti-fesztival-esztergom.html)
- Esztergomi Bazilika koncertek / Esztergom Basilica Concerts (May-September)  
[www.programturizmus.hu/ajanlat-esztergomi-bazilika-koncertek.html](http://www.programturizmus.hu/ajanlat-esztergomi-bazilika-koncertek.html)
- Mária Valéria Hídfutás, Esztergomi Futóhétféje / Mária Valéria Bridge-Run, Esztergom Running Weekend (September)
- Esztergomi Futóművek futóversenyek / running race (September)
- Termelői és Régiség Piac Esztergom / Local Market and Antiques Market in Esztergom (monthly)

In Štúrovo the renewed tradition of the 1950's, the AquaPhone. It developed after the destruction of the Maria Valeria Bridge had separated Štúrovo and Esztergom after World War II and there was no other connection between the families than messaging over water. In June, on both riverbanks musicians create a special performance which brings back a reminder of the power of messaging over the Danube.

The residents as well as the visitors of the Danube region like to attend a number of cultural events organized by various municipalities. Visitors to the region enjoy the local markets and fairs, which are held in the cities of Komárno and Štúrovo in the spring and before Christmas holidays.

The major events of the Danube region:

- Kravany nad Dunajom – The May Day (May); [www.kravany.com](http://www.kravany.com)
- Podunajsko – Spring wine cellars opening (June); [www.otvorenepivnice.sk](http://www.otvorenepivnice.sk)
- Štúrovo – Aquaphone on the Danube (June); [www.sturovo.sk](http://www.sturovo.sk)
- Kravany nad Dunajom – In vino veritas (June); [www.kravany.com](http://www.kravany.com)

- Moča – Days of Friendship Bridge (July); [www.obecmoca.sk](http://www.obecmoca.sk)
- Štúrovo – Štúrovo Musical Summer (July-August); [www.sturovo.sk](http://www.sturovo.sk)
- Kravany nad Dunajom – Canoe tourism (August); [www.kravany.com](http://www.kravany.com)
- Moča – Burčiak Festival (August); [www.obecmoca.sk](http://www.obecmoca.sk)
- Kravany nad Dunajom – Fishery Festival (September); [www.kravany.com](http://www.kravany.com)
- Cyclomarathon of Kravany nad Dunajom – Lábatlan (HU) (September)
- Mužla – The Harvest Festival (September); [www.muzla.sk](http://www.muzla.sk)
- Štúrovo – Šimon Júda’s market (october); [www.sturovo.sk](http://www.sturovo.sk)
- Štúrovo – Chrstmas market (December); [www.sturovo.sk](http://www.sturovo.sk)

## Gastronomy

The Danube region is rich not only in historical and natural monuments but also in local flavours. Winery also played a key role in the area’s economy. There are annual events such as wine competitions, cellar visits and wine tasting dinners. The Neszmély-Tata-Ászár wine region is situated along the upper region of the Danube spanning from Komárom to the Danube Bend, and Esztergom belongs to the Neszmély district. The inhabitants of the area had been growing grapes already in the Roman times. The soil is mainly brown forest soil formed on loess, the climate is cooler with more precipitation than the national average but the number of sunshine hours is also quite high. The wine region’s wines are mostly reductive in character, they are dry with a sharp acid content. The region mainly produces white wine varieties (chardonnay, Riesling, Irsai Olivér, Cserszegi fűszeres, Traminer and Muscat ottonel), whereas red grapes are only used for rosés.

Gastronomic specialities of The Danube Region are among the most famous and most outstanding culinary treasures of Slovakia. Its gastronomic features can be linked to the Hungarian cuisine.

The most popular foods of The Danube Region are goulash, perkelts, paprikáš, lečo, živánska, šomloi halušky or traditional Jókai bean soup. This particular soup is in the main attraction of multiple local gastronomic contests where the jury chooses the best cooked “*bablives*”. Traditional halászlé (*halászlé*), a fish soup, is cooked in southern Slovakia of carp. According to the taste and the density they add the fish eggs, roe or potatoes.

South of Slovakia and The Danube Region is an excellent location for growing heat-demanding vegetables.

The development of wine tourism supported by the already functioning Nitra royal wine route starting from Nitra County in two directions that converge in Štúrovo:

- the Podzoborsko - Tekovsko - Pohronská route (Nitra - Levice - Želiezovce - Štúrovo),
- the Južnoslovenská route (Nitra - Šurany - Dvory - Žitavou / Podhájska - Gbelce and Hurbanovo - Bátorové Kosihy).

There are also numerous vineyards in the region: in the municipalities of Nána, Mužla, Kamenný Mlyn, Kamenín, Luba, Belá and others in the Pohronska and Ipeľská region, visited mainly by the guests of the Vadaš Thermal Spa.

### Health Tourism

The units of the health tourism infrastructure are facilities which provide an area with the possibilities of exploring the attractive points of the given area and make good marketing use of them. They are popular both with tourists and the locals. Spas and baths are good examples. The thermal water-based facilities generate some of the biggest visitor numbers along the Danube and its agglomeration (Mosonmagyaróvár, Lipót, Győr, Komárom, Esztergom/Štúrovo, Visegrád, Leányfalu, Vác, Göd, Budapest, Dunaföldvár). Esztergom's Aquasziget belongs to this list. The bath complex of 15,000 square metres was finished in 2005 and has three individual departments: Spa treatments, Medical department and Spa pools.

- Aquasziget Thermal Bath & Spa / <http://www.aquasziget.hu/>

In the town of Štúrovo there are three hot springs. Thermal water has temperature of about 39,7°C, the total mineralization is 0.80g/l and has beneficial effects on the articular system and on allergic skin disorders. In Vadaš Thermal Resort and Spa there are thermal pools, water slides, beach and non-beach sports, aquazorbing, adventure park in the aquapark, and paddle boating, wakeboard and fishing at a nearby lake.

- Vadaš Thermal Resort and Spa, Šturovo

There are also very good conditions for specific sports - sport fishing, hunting, riding and hiking - as well as the development of various forms of rural tourism various such as agrotourism. The Danube Region is mostly characterized by its nature, offering opportunities for water sports such as rafting on the river Danube and Vág, water tourism and fishing.

The tourism development of the two cities has not been coordinated. Štúrovo is primarily the place of relaxation, while Esztergom has a more complex functional role.

## Bicycle Tourism

The EuroVelo 6 (River Route) is an important cycling route also for Hungary. The route follows the Danube through four countries. The infrastructure of the individual sections of the route have quite different quality: the German and Austrian sections are modern but the Hungarian parts are rather lagging behind. It would be beneficial to improve the quality of the Hungarian sections and create a continuous cycling route away from car traffic along the river. An example to follow is the infrastructure of the Donauradweg which forms the basis for cycle tourism in Germany and Austria.

Cycling tourists see exploration and active recreation as their holiday goals. They plan their routes to visit diverse places and reach as many sights as possible. A West-European survey showed that cycling tourists spend 15% more days than the average tourists because they pay for local services and products more frequently, as they are able to carry only a limited amount of luggage.

The Danube Bike Path belongs to the most beautiful cycling routes and is part of the European bicycle route Eurovelo6 having a total distance of 3,652 kilometers. The Slovak section running from Bratislava through Komárno to Štúrovo is 238 kilometers long. As the cycle path runs on the plain along the Danube, its intensity is relatively low, making it even more attractive to a wide range of cyclists.

In the area there are excellent conditions for cycling along the Danube, as well as in lowland and sub-mountain terrains. The following bicycle routes are available:

- Danubian international route running along the Danube to Austria, in the given area along its left bank and further on through the Danube to Esztergom,
- Around the Burda Mountains (Štúrovo - Kamenica nad Hronom - Chľaba - Leľa - Štúrovo),
- Small circuit through the Danube Bend (Štúrovo - Esztergom - Visegrád - Nagymaros - Szob - Salka - Štúrovo).

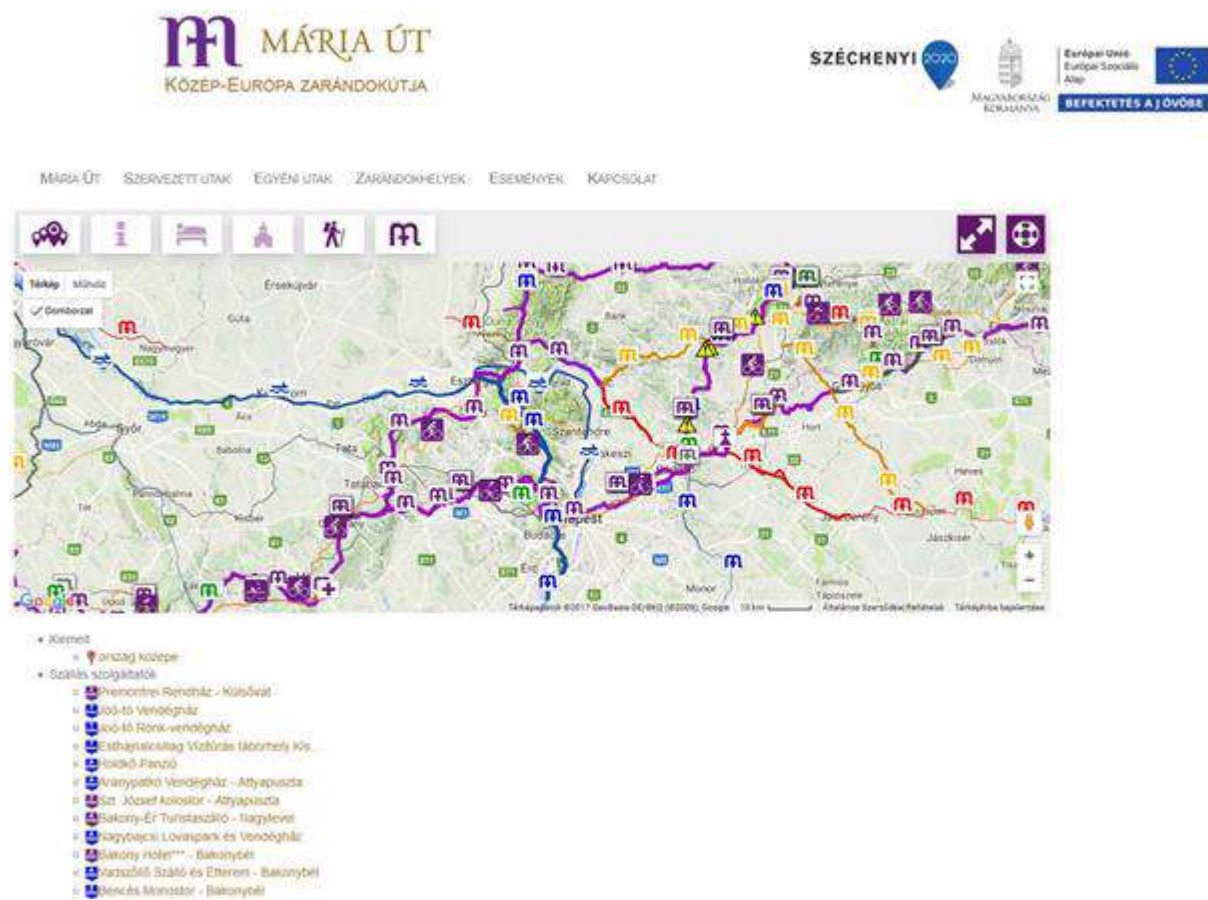
For cycling, it is also advisable to create routes along the rivers Hron and Ipľa and along the Pohronská Highlands.

## Religious Tourism / Pilgrimages

Religious tourism is a marketable touristic product which is based on religious motivation or church institutios. The main motivation is faith but more generally it also means the visiting of places of worship viewed as places of importance in terms of cultural heritage or art history. Visits to religious monuments, participation in



religious events and pilgrimages all belong to this category. Religious tourism shows a growing tendency worldwide, with a yearly 15% increase.



29. fig The information website of Mária Route

Mária Route is a pilgrim and tourist route throughout Central Europe. The 1400 km route does not merely connect places of worship but can support local tourism too, by creating a system for hidden sights which have so far remained less popular.

This thematic route was created based on the cult of the Virgin Mary which is strong in Hungary as well as on the Mary shrines located in the country and in the neighbouring countries, close to the borders. The route helps utilizing the regional touristic services better by attracting new target groups. The objective of the Mária Route Association is to establish a Central-European volunteer community, which creates and operates the Mária Route, the symbol of Christian values. The complete planned length of the spiritual and cultural walking and cycling route in the Carpathian basin is 1400 km, which runs mainly in natural surroundings. The route is already partially signposted, recommended accommodation sites welcome pilgrims and the design of a pilgrim guide with a map is underway. There is also a Mária Route informational and community website ([www.mariaut.hu](http://www.mariaut.hu)) and a Pilgrimage Register.

The Hungarian Pilgrim Route Association established a route similar to the Spanish El Camino, which is open to pilgrims from spring. This route has been established on three pillars: the Catholic Church, the 27 local governments providing support to it and a civilian organisation.

The Hungarian Pilgrim Route starts from Esztergom and ends in Máriagyűd-Pécs. It is 420 km long, and operates with GPS coordinates and signposts. Its 17 sections are open to individuals and groups for walking the entire length or just certain sections. Each section means 20-35 km walking in stunning natural surroundings, along places of worship, churches worth a visit and villages welcoming the pilgrims.

### Hiking

Esztergom and its surroundings offer great opportunities for hikers, the city is also a station of the National Blue Tour. There are 19 hiking trails around the city, leading mainly to the Pilis Mountains. The Visegrád Mountains between Esztergom and Pilismarót are steeply sloping down to the Danube, and the view from the Hidegtelek Cross and Sas Mountain offer a beautiful panorama of the Danube and the surrounding mountains. Búbánatvölgy is a popular place for excursions to Esztergom, the valley lies between the Szamár Hill and the Long Hill.

South of Slovakia, along the entire Danube Region stretches a protected area of Danube floodplains with a huge number of protected species of animals and plants. Near Štúrovo, at the confluence of the Danube and the Ipeľ, there is the large area of the Burda mountains. The region has great wealth and diversity of natural biotopes, particularly the remnants of floodplain forests with a specific fauna and flora typical for river, lake and wetland environments. In addition, there are meadow communities of salt marshes and drifting sands (nature reserves of Parížske Marsh, Čenkovská Forest steppe and Kováčské hills.) The Kováčovské hills (highest peak Burdov 388 m above sea level) are suitable for hiking, they offer views of the Danube Bend with the Carpathian Mountains (Pilis, Börzsöny).

## 4.5. CHALLENGES

- There is a sharp contrast between the county's tourist attractions and the number of commercial overnight stays. In spite of the outstanding cultural heritage, the architectural and natural merits, the spas, thermal baths, the Danube and wine regions, visitors spend little time in the county: in terms of overnight stays, Komárom-Esztergom is only 13th among the Hungarian counties.

- In Esztergom the main magnet for tourists is the cathedral, which typically means a one-day trip. Therefore just few of the visitors enjoy the opportunities the town has to offer (accommodation, gastronomy), and neither does the tourism attracted by the bath complex meet the expectations. Other services cannot improve the tourism sector.
- But the exploitation of tourism opportunities is a primary goal of the town. There are several factors which can provide enough attraction, such as cultural, religious, heritage and thermal water tourism as well as tourism related to business, culinary and wine experiences, or sports and recreation activities.
- To organise the more or less known, visited, and in some cases internationally significant yet often hidden places into a network connecting them to the existing (e.g. pilgrim routes) and to the new infrastructure (EUROVELO), as well as to strengthen the organisational network.
- The natural wealth hidden in the Danube Region, however, is still rather unknown and still waiting to be discovered. Eco-touristic potential of this area has been unnoticed, this offers an opportunity to create a link between this form of tourism and the economic growth of the region. Therefore, the focus on this form of tourism might seem like a good alternative to differentiate from others.
- Festivals based on historical traditions and gastronomy organized jointly by the two cities can offer a potential for tourism growth, which can be an attractive destination not only from both regions but also internationally.

## 5. STAKEHOLDERS' ANALYSIS

### RESEARCH GUIDELINES AND PLAN

#### 5.1. LOCAL/REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE DANURB PROJECT

The Danube can be interpreted as a rich and unexploited regional resource of the socio-cultural capital of Central-Eastern Europe, therefore our aim is to find and explore its elements for future cooperation, to strengthen regional identity and solidarity. We will conduct research from various perspectives, ranging from geographic-geopolitical through urban-architectural to socio-economic and socio-cultural perspectives.

These last two are essentially important with regard to the stakeholders' analysis. Since the Danube can be regarded as a source of peoples' and communities' everyday life and living (trade, industry, agriculture, arts and craft etc.), past, present and future. For instance, trade, agriculture and related industries and services. such as shipping and milling industry, ports etc., are millennia-old and very typical of many countries along the Danube, even if the last post-communist decades have brought a process of degradation and erosion in these areas. On the contrary - and from our point of view, fortunately - these sites and places - even in their run-down physical-architectural form - can provide us with opportunities for potential local community centered revitalization projects in the future.

When we scrutinize the role of the Danube from a socio-cultural perspective, we are interested in its forming and transmitting effects on the culture, identity and everyday life of the people, communities and settlements living nearby. We try to identify elements of their socio-cultural capital, inherited from the past and providing potential 'renewable' resources for present identity and community building. Therefore, our main objectives and aims (and preferably also our results): making the people and communities realize their richness with showing them the unexploited elements, hidden or forgotten cultural capital heritage related to the Danube, awareness raising, making these findings public and establish a regional cultural-educational network symbolized by the DANURB Socio-cultural Brand.

This work should be done only with the active participation of the local communities, for the "common good" and better life of these communities. Socio-economic development through culture and education is an axiom in development studies. We also acknowledge that tourism is an important and very effective tool in socio-



economic development, but it should not be the only one! International empirical studies and research have shown that “too much tourism” can be counter-effective and may disturb – or even harm – the life of the local people rather than make it better. Thus development plans, investments into the tourist industry and services – as in other areas – should be preferably publicly discussed with all interested parties, community members, that is with the “stakeholders”.

Local stakeholders of the communities are all those participants in the DANUrB project who „have a stake”,

- who have already been engaged in culture related activities along the Danube,
- who are interested in exploiting this rich regional resource in order to strengthen the local communities’ identity,
- who are ready to find and use hidden socio-cultural resources for a better economic and social return of their locality,
- and are ready to build regional cooperative networks for these purposes.

They are the local governments/municipalities, cultural and educational institutions, civil organizations, local entrepreneurs and even the local community members themselves. Local community stakeholders are the most important participants in the DANUrB project, as they know the best what is good for them, what is important for them, what can be helpful for them in the future.

Therefore it is very important right from the beginning to involve them not only in the research and valorization phase but also in the strategy building process, to build on their local knowledge, expertise and incorporate their perspective into the future planning. Besides the strictly speaking local stakeholders, the regional, so called “umbrella” stakeholders – having their center in the given locality – are as much important.

These are various civil initiatives, organizations (NGOs) with local stakeholder participants who are already networking, even beyond borders in the field of local development, culture, gastronomy and tourism. From the point of view of our regional networking objective, these umbrella stakeholders are extremely important, since they have already existing, formalized and



30. fig Ister-Granum EGTC

institutionalized regional social capital on which we can build and further develop the DANUrB project.

In the case of Esztergom - Štúrovo (Párkány), one of the most important and active cross-border, “bridging” regional non-profit organizations is the Ister-Granum EGTC, originally called “Eurohíd” (Euro Bridge) whose foundation - in the early 2000s - was directly related to the renovation of the Mária Valéria Bridge (built in 1895, reopened in 2001), once connecting the two cities, but destroyed in the Second World War.

A year after the inauguration of the Bridge, Ister-Granum organized many cross-border cultural programs such as the Regional Youth Theatre Festival, Folk Art Festival or the Ister-Granum Hall Football Tournament symbolizing the cross-border cultural cooperation of the micro-region’s settlements. Now Ister-Granum has more than 82 members in Slovakia and Hungary, primarily concentrating on local development projects.

In the recent years they have participated in various EU projects, like the LEADER or URBACT, have applied for new ones in strong cooperation with the municipalities of Esztergom and Štúrovo (Párkány) e.g. in the field of tourism and biking route development. And most importantly, they actively collaborate in the DANUrB project by providing information, taking part in civil and cultural stakeholders’ discussion and the Danube 2017 Day events.

### 5.3. WHO ARE THEY AND HOW TO INVOLVE THEM INTO THE DANURB PROJECT?

#### 5.3.1. Municipalities

First of all, **municipalities** are the most important stakeholders, with the following key participants:

- The mayor, vice-mayor - responsible for local/urban development - and the chief architect,
- Local/urban development and culture-related local government committees and their members, being also members of the local assembly, thus making the most important political-economic decisions, having impact on the fate of the local people and future generations
- Local government administrations with their professional workers who are „nods” in the local cultural institutional and entrepreneurial network, having useful data, information, contacts and relations (social capital).
- In our research these are the Esztergom and Štúrovo (Párkány) Municipalities.



31. fig Esztergom Municipality

and



Štúrovo (Párkány) Municipality

### 5.3.2. Civil, institutional and entrepreneurial network

Starting from this primary database we can further build our **civil, institutional and entrepreneurial network** with the help and contacts of the local stakeholders. Then we can organize various meetings, discussions (in many forms and methodology used, e.g. interviews, focus group discussions etc.) and involve them in the common work. Esztergom has been well known about her rich civil life since the change of the regime, with hundreds of various civil initiatives active in the field of culture, education, sport, environment protection etc.

Some districts – like Esztergom Kertváros – quite often organize local cultural events and programs for their own community. Although Štúrovo (Párkány) is a smaller town with 11 000 inhabitants, they have also many initiatives and programs offered by various cultural institutions (museums, galleries, NGOs), sport associations, folk and music ensembles.

#### Cultural (religious), tourism/sport and local development stakeholders

Museums, castles (+museums)

- Vár és Múzeum (Castle Museum, Esztergom)
- Duna Múzeum (Danube Museum, Esztergom)
- Keresztény Múzeum (Christian Museum, Esztergom)
- Balassa Múzeum (Balassa Museum, Esztergom)



32. fig Vár és Vármúzeum (Castle and Museum)

- Municipality Museum (Štúrovo/Párkány)
- Cultural centers : like Esztergom Cultural Center, local cultural centers in sub-districts of Esztergom, Municipality Cultural Center, Štúrovo/Párkány)
- Water sport clubs, like Esztergom Rowing Club or the TJ Dunaj Canoe Association in Párkány
- Otthon Segítünk Alapítvány (Home Start Hungary), ENÉKE Pensioners' Society (Esztergom)  
 Vinum Ister Granum Regional Wine Order of Knighthood (Esztergom)

### Religious institutions and churches

- they are extremely important as Esztergom is the centre of the Hungarian Catholic Church, seat of an archbishopric (established by , Stephen I, the first king of Hungary) and the most visited building is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption (called the Basilica)

### Art initiatives and NGOs

- Kaleidoszkóp Ház (Kaleidoscope House, Esztergom), Malom Művészeti Műhely (Mill Art Workshop, Esztergom)
- Balassa Bálint Társaság (Bálint Balassa Society, Esztergom)
- Mestská galéria Júliusa Bartu (City Gallery Júliusa Bartu, Štúrovo/Párkány)
- Danubius Kino (Danubius Movie Theatre, Štúrovo/Párkány)



33. fig Duna múzeum, (Danube museum)



34. fig Municipality Museum, Štúrovo (Párkány)



35. fig Esztergom Basilica



36. fig Kaleidoszkóp Ház (Kaleidoscope House)



37. fig Mestská galéria Júliusa Bartu (City Gallery Júliusa Bartu, Štúrovo/Párkány)



## Tourism and sport associations

- Esztergom és Térsége Turisztikai Egyesület (ETTE) (Esztergom Tourism Development Association)
- Evezős Egyesület/Rowing Club

## Other civil organizations interested in local and community development

- Civil Információs Pont (Civil InfoPoint),
- Nap-Út Alapítvány
- Otthon Segítünk Alapítvány (Home Start Hungary etc...)

## Educational stakeholders, educational institutions

- starting from kinder garden, through
- primary and secondary schools
  - Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet Óvoda, Általános iskola és Gimnázium (Esztergom), Gimnázium Štúrovo, (Štúrovo/Párkány) etc.
- higher education institutions (universities)
  - Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Esztergom Campus, Archeology Department etc.



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38. fig Esztergom és Térsége Turisztikai Egyesület (Esztergom and Region Tourism Development Association)



39. fig Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet Óvoda, Iskola és Gimnázium



40. fig Gimnázium, Štúrovo/Párkány

## Local entrepreneurs, companies and businesses

- Can be directly culture, tourism or gastronomy related entrepreneurs
  - Like Pálinka Patika, Özicseli Hadzsi Ibrahim-dzsámi (Esztergom)
  - Thermal Bath in Štúrovo/Párkány

- Or indirectly, sponsoring, supporting, initiating cultural and community building programs and projects
  - like the Suzuki car factory or the Neuzer bicycle manufacturer (Esztergom)



41. fig Pálinka Patika („Pálinka“ drugstore)



42. fig Neuzer Bicycle Company

**Finally, it is not easy to involve the citizens and the local community, especially not in a larger city. However, there are various techniques, how to have them share their opinion (e.g. questionnaires, civic forums, special „community juries“), how to involve them into the common strategy building (e.g. community planning).**

- As an example, the earlier mentioned ETTE local and regional tourism-related entrepreneurs' association has just recently conducted a survey among local citizens and businesses to investigate their opinion about the actual state of the art as well as their vision of the future development strategies in the field of tourism and cultural industry.

### 5.3. CONCLUSION

Esztergom and Štúrovo/Párkány has been historically strongly connected in the past. Both settlements have been inhabited for thousands of years (probably since the end of the Ice age), being important frontier towns and guard posts of a province of the Roman Empire, Pannonia (Solva/Esztergom, Párkány/Anavum). After the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian basin in the late 9th century, Esztergom became the residence of the Hungarian tribal leader and Prince, Árpád. While Kakathvár (Párkány) was created as a union of the settlements of Nána and Kakath, with an estate built for Prince Árpád in the 10th century. According to the legends, his son Vajk, later known as Saint Stephen, was born, baptized and later coronated as the first king of Hungary in Esztergom, for centuries the center of the Hungarian Kingdom. On the other side of the Danube, Kakath became a trading site frequently used by medieval traders from southern and western parts of Europe, but after the Turkish invasion in the late 16th

century, it became a fortress town of the Ottoman Empire and received her new name "Párkány ( after the Turkish "Dzsigerdelen parkani" meaning fortress).

After many centuries being part of the same empire, kingdom or country, the two cities now belong to two neighboring Central European countries, Hungary and Slovakia, both members of the EU. Nevertheless, the historical past connects them very strongly symbolically, sharing the same tangible and intangible cultural heritage, giving home to people with the same cultural background and speaking the same language as their mother tongue. Despite being citizens of two countries, this strong cultural connectedness and lack of the language barrier make easier to organize common cultural events and programs on both sides - as mentioned before -, by e.g. the Ister Granum, or other cultural stakeholders, like the Duna Múzeum (Danube Museum), Kaleidoskop Ház (Kaleidoscope House) in Esztergom, and the Municipality Cultural Center or the Library in Štúrovo/Párkány. The EU Interreg DANUrB project would like to continue the "bridging" process by further strengthening the already existing contacts between the various culture-related stakeholders on both sides, symbolically and literally using the Maria Valéria bridge over the Danube (see e.g. the 2017 Danube Days in Esztergom- Štúrovo/Párkány).

## 6. DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to present the touristic and cultural potential of the Danube and the Danube-sides in the regional, local development and settlement plans related to Esztergom and Sturovo.

### 6.1. THE NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

#### 6.1.1. THE ROLE OF THE DANUBE IN ESZTERGOM'S ACTUAL URBAN PLANS; ESZTERGOM IN THE NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT (ORSZÁGOS FEJLESZTÉSI ÉS TERÜLETFEJLESZTÉSI KONCEPCIÓ - OFTK)

Esztergom has played an important role both in the Hungarian and Catholic Church history through generations on the mental map of Hungarians. As such, it has been a popular destination of organized group- and family programs.

The visits were usually limited to the small part of the city area, mainly focusing on the attributes of the Church history past. Under state-socialism, because of its role as a historical ecclesiastical center, the city was neglected and underdeveloped which undermined its continuous and very unequivocal "brand" and caused an identity crisis.

More than 25 years after the change of the regime, the city is still unable to redefine itself. This challenge and the search for identity can be traced in the plans, as well.

The visions of tourism-scenarios are looking for Esztergom's lost attraction that is linked to the past, its services and spatial uses. However, what once was enough as a tourist and cultural offer is no longer sufficient. It is also shown by the unfavorable trends in tourist data. Nevertheless, in response to questionnaires, many of the locals still define their city today as the 'center of the Hungarian Catholic Church' and also as a 'prominent site of Hungarian history'.

This conception is still trying to exploit or revive the potential of the Basilica and its surroundings, but there is no spiritual and tourist reserve that would be competitive at local or international level.

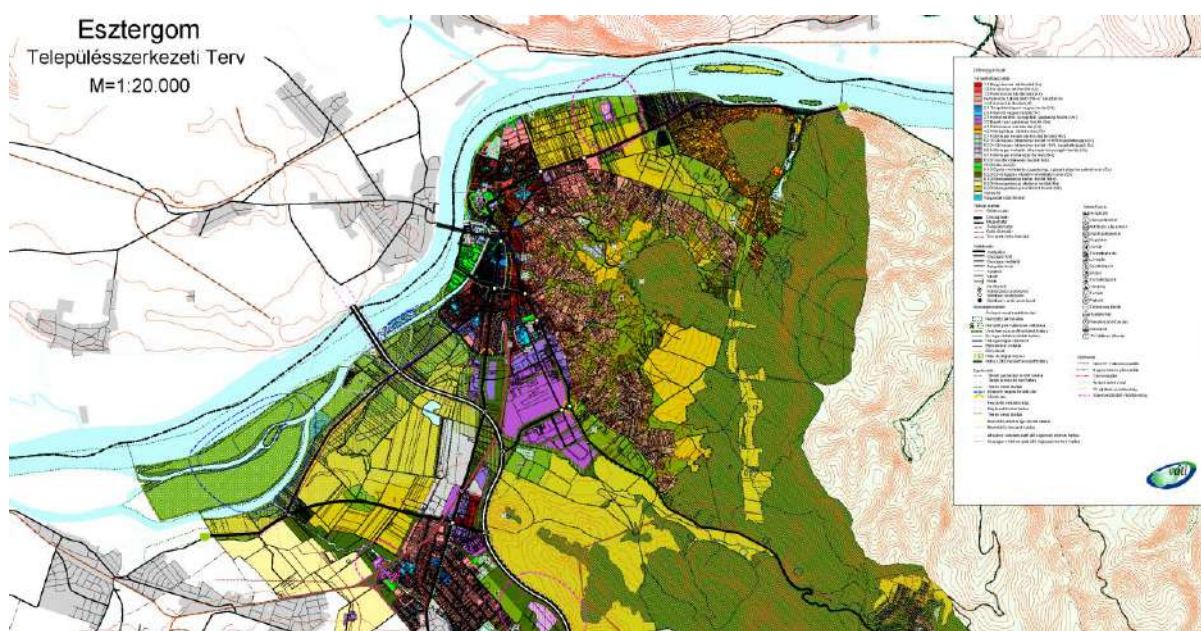
The answers given by them do not look for or find contemporary, future-oriented solutions.

In their vision, the role of the Danube is not sufficiently defined. The river itself is only an attraction to arrive to the city. The tourist programs focusing only on the Basilica are not inspiring enough to invest in the widest range of riverbank development.



The questionnaires also show that, with regard to the relationship of Esztergom and the Danube, locals consider the impact of the river on the cityscape as the most important one, but the role of tourism is not considered to be of unique importance. At the same time, the first two ideas that were mentioned in connection with their town are: the Basilica and the Danube (bend / coast).

It tells a lot. The fact that the previous Regulatory Plan was issued in 2007 is also revealing. Upgrading of the settlement plans is currently underway. (<http://docplayer.hu/19021704-Egyeztetesi-dokumentacio.html>)



43. fig. Esztergom's settlement plan (VÁTI)

Analysis, situation assessment and problem recognition have been made, but there is no real up-to-date response; neither at a conceptual nor at a regulatory plan level.

One of the foremost goals is organizing the network structure of important sights (structurally and physically), especially with regard to the less known heritage sites.

The existing touristic offer consists of cultural, sacral heritage (Basilica, important museums, churches, protected monuments or even street views), a Danube side promenade with unique view to the river, the Castle of Esztergom nominated for world heritage listing and spa tourism. But this range should be expanded, by considering architectural and cultural heritage with special natural facilities joined together. Pilis and Visegrád mountains in Esztergom are Nature 2000 areas (territorial code: HUDI10002) Duna-Ipoly National Park also extends into Esztergom's surroundings.

Because of this, and to improve the accessibility and walkability of the town the construction of EUROVELO 6 bicycle route is necessary. There are already built bicycle path sections but part of these do not fit the EUROVELO's requirements. Nowadays in Esztergom there is only a 6 km long bicycle path, everywhere else cyclists are forced to ride on the roads.

It would be a big step to have the full EUROVELO 6 line along the Danube bank in good quality. The Feasibility Study is ready, and financial support is hoped to be attained from the Development Fund. Just as the National Regional Development Concept (OFTK) states, the most fundamental problem of Esztergom is its weak accessibility.

Other than bicycle path development, a further solution could be the more effective use of the river's capacities.

### 6.1.2 ŠTÚROVO IN THE NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic<sup>3</sup> strives for the enforcement of the principles of sustainable development using the whole positive development potential of the SR. It is a basic long-term conceptual document of the implementation of the Slovak regional policy. It determines objectives and priority areas of regional development and principal ways of their fulfilment. The basic level of implementation of the National Strategy are the regions as administrative units co-created by the structure of settlements in their territory.

Štúrovo belongs to the Nitra region defined by the National Strategy as a predominantly rural, slow growing region, with adequate attractiveness and position, with average degree of preparedness for innovation and average competitiveness, and with the possibility of cross-border cooperation with Hungary.

In terms of tourism the Nitra region does not belong to the most visited regions of the Slovak Republic. It has a low accommodation capacity and achieves one of the lowest numbers of visitors within the country. However, according to the National Strategy the geopolitical position of the region allows intensification of foreign investment and international cooperation. According the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic the Nitra region is suitable for further development of traditional balneology using the geothermal springs and for development of ecological rural tourism. It also has a strong potential for cross-border tourism and building cross-border settlement conglomerations.

According to the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic the development potential of Nitra region is supported by its supraregional links to fast growing regions and the shipping route on the Danube with the riverports in Komárno and Štúrovo.

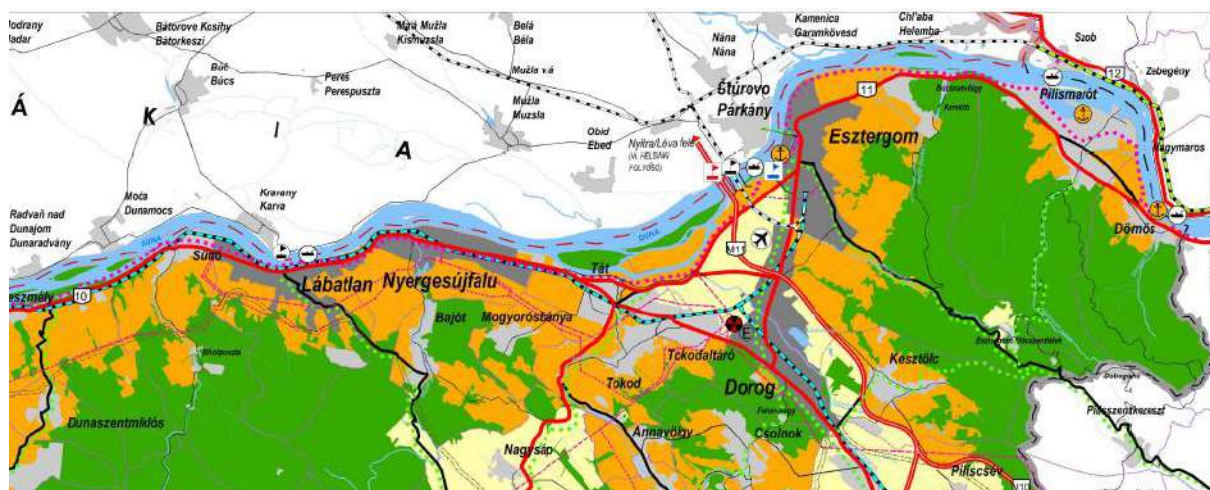
## 6.2. REGIONAL PLANS

### 6.2.1. ESZTERGOM IN THE KOMÁROM-ESZTERGOM REGIONAL PLAN (Megyei Területrendezési Terv)

The revision of the County's Regional Plan was finished in 2011. The plan, among others, ascertained that the position of Esztergom could be strengthened, through the Danube-Bend (Dunakanyar)'s touristic appeal, as an important element of Budapest's agglomeration area. The plan emphasizes the potentials of pilgrimage-tourism, especially regarding the Maria Route, which passes through the county and Esztergom, connecting areas of Esztergom-Kertváros and Pilisszentlélek. A strategy utilizing the Danube is a priority for the county plan.

Esztergom has a several kilometers long Danube-shore, but most of it is inadequate for any social life and activities. It would be desirable for both urban and community reasons to enhance and renovate this area that can be suitable for social functions.

The plan background has been lacking for a long time. The Structural Plan of the city was changed 14 times during 10 years. So, in 2015, the City Council decided to make a new Development Concept and also a City Strategy in the hope that the correct legal project approach can make a positive impact on the city's development.



44. fig. Detail of the regional structural plan in the Komárom-Esztergom Regional Plan (by Város-Teampannon Kft) <http://www.terport.hu/teruletrendezes/teruletrendezesi-tervek/megyek/komarom-esztergom-megye-teruletrendezesi-terve>



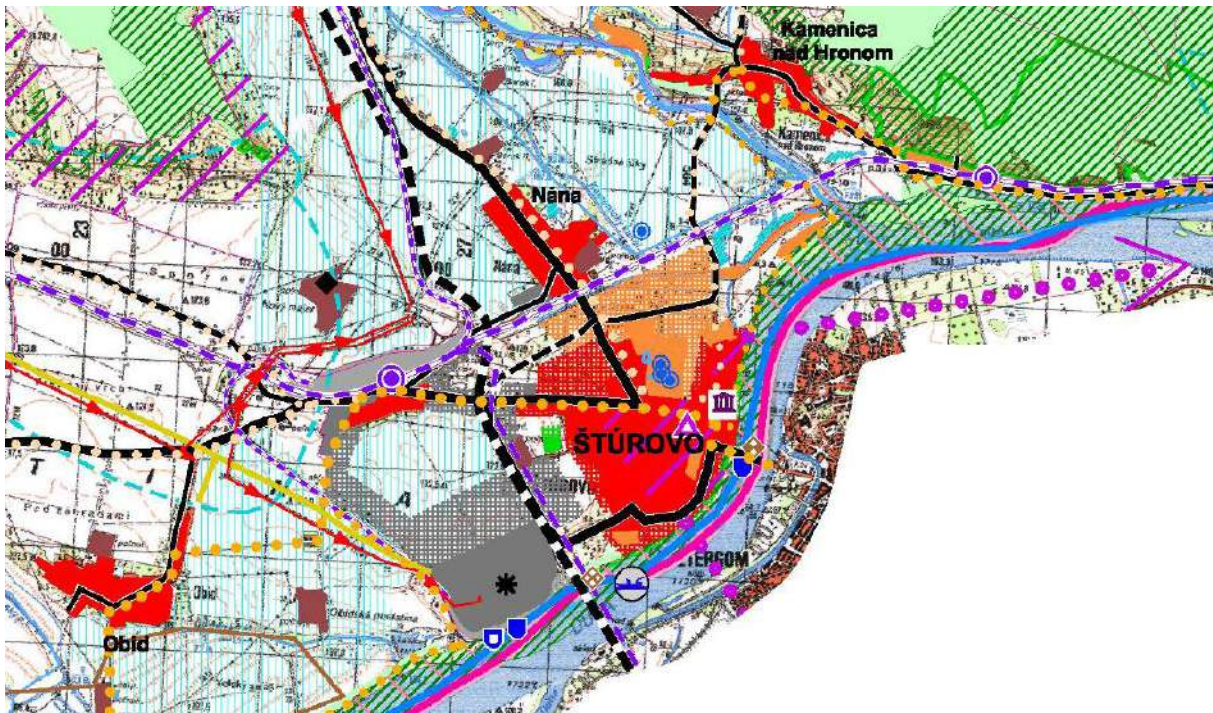
## 6.2.2 ŠTÚROVO IN THE REGIONAL PLAN – THE SPATIAL PLAN FOR THE NITRA REGION

The Spatial plan for the Nitra Region was elaborated in 2012<sup>4</sup>, and its Changes and Amendments no. 1. have been elaborated in 2015.<sup>5</sup>

The substantial part of the Spatial plan for the Nitra Region focuses on the conception of protection and use of the cultural heritage and conception of tourism development.

According to the plan the Nitra Region possesses the potential for knowledge tourism, water recreation, water sports and water tourism, walking tourism, cyclotourism, peri-urban recreation, transit tourism, and wine tourism related to vineyards.

The regional plan proposes to develop the hierarchical and interconnected system of cycloroutes to interconnect the cities with recreational potential and historical and cultural heritage, to enhance tourism. In Štúrovo the regional plan proposes the trace of the EUROVELO 6 cycling route connecting the city center of Štúrovo with the railway station and the village Obid. The regional plan also proposes local cyclo-connections, appropriately equipped with accompanying amenities.



45. fig. Štúrovo in the Spatial Plan for the Nitra Region, with main road and bridge corridor, corridor of Eurovelo 6 and areas proposed for recreation, tourism and sports (orange colour).



The new communication corridor with the new bridge across the Danube is proposed by the Spatial plan for the Nitra Region in Štúrovo, because the re-opening of the Bridge of Maria Valeria caused concentration of the heavy transit traffic in the city centre. For the transit tourism is important the road no. 76 from Štúrovo to Pohronie.

According to the Spatial plan for the Nitra Region in Štúrovo the most important forms of tourism and recreation are water camping – in the thermal spa Vadas, at the riverbanks of the Danube and the Hron and the wine tourism centred around the wine cellars in Chľaba and near Kováčovské hills.

The Spatial plan for the Nitra Region proposes to develop a new public port in Štúrovo, which may positively influence the tourist attraction of the Danube.

### 6.3. INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

#### 6.3.1. ESZTERGOM - INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (2015)

One of the most important current legal plans for Esztergom is the Integrated Urban Development Strategies<sup>6</sup>. In this plan right the first named goal, among the comprehensive, medium-term thematic priorities defined, is the making of better use of the Danube's tourism potential and the making of the Danube coast more attractive, concerning the liveable city, general long-term concept. In the social priorities the 1.1 point is the revitalization of the public spaces of the city which is absolutely necessary. It was one of the most fundamental conclusions of the city analyses as well.

Some statements of the importance of the Danube's future role can also be found also among the – nowadays insufficiently exploited – economic priorities of the document.. First of all, Esztergom should have a higher-level tourism, worthy of its heritage potential. It is clear that many of the listed goals seen as essential to reach that level - developing of the facilities intended for sports and recreation; better touristic transport utilization of the Danube expanding cultural, tourism and leisure program offerings, more intensive and conceptual physical connection of tourist attractions etc. – are connected directly with the utilization/exploitation of the potential of the Danube.

There are different aspects also from the point of view of the built environment and the natural environment (Priority no. 3). It is needless to emphasize the importance of creating an attractive urban environment offering more kinds of different uses for the tourists, and at least as much for the local people. The biggest actual question of

the realization of this complex goal – with the context of the Danube - is the risk-reduction of flooding.

The flood of the Danube has always been and - nowadays still - is a big problem for Esztergom.

There is a Danube dam system, built of stone more than 100 years running along the city center and also a promenade (Kis-Duna sétány). It is one of the most beautiful, charming parts of the city, but unfortunately having only visual contact with the water and being without any physical accessibility to it because of the dam itself. On the other hand, this “water” is not the real River Danube but one of its branches, bordered with a plane row of trees. Moreover it gives the feeling of having a half urban and half natural character thanks to the huge size green area of the Primás Island situated on the other bank.

There are several islands within Esztergom's administrative boundaries, but the Primás Island has special spatial situation in the urban structure and tissue therefore having a distinct role amongst the others .

On average, there are more floods every four to five years, during which the major or complete area of Primás Island is flooded, often with an occasional water height of 1-3 ms. The decisions about the flood protection had already been made for many years but the exact line and the method of the construction is changing. The projected dam line in the actual urban plan is in the middle of the island on a high charge. Nowadays it seems to be quite sure that a mobil-dam system at the outer edge of the island will be created. There is also a new national regulation which makes it necessary to reconsider the safe flood protection of the settlement, flood protection works and the flood control along the whole Danube section affecting the settlement.

The planned system will influence the riverbanks. On the bank of the Danube it will affect more the view rather than the usage; in general local people rarely use this bank in full length.

Nevertheless, the most delicate question will be the one on the north section, which is the site of one of the most important “city-gates” of Esztergom, right the first where a visitor arriving from the Danube might enter.

At the same time, the new dam constructions can radically change the banks of the Kis-Duna (“Little-Danube”). It will be opened in a different way to get directly, physically near the river-water and will be a big responsibility to invent and accept a

new urban space concept focusing more on the Danube and the river and the use of the riverbanks.

Prímás Island can be supposed to be the place of major transformations in the future.

Because of the consequences of the flood-danger now, its large area is underused, sometimes abandoned by romantic but neglected green. At the same time, there are numerous sports courts owned by different local sports clubs.

Solving the flood defense of the city and especially the Primás Island, new opportunities will be offered for the city for recreation, for new community spaces, for repair and revitalization of urban green areas, for filling unused, function-lost buildings with new functions and for reusing the brown-field sites (on the Island and the South part of the city on the site of the former ampoule fabric) and expansion of the cycling network. All these named and listed aims are mentioned in the Integrated Urban Development Strategies as medium-term thematic targets.

The priority of the flood protection measures is emphasized also by the Regional Land-Use Plan (Területrendezési Terv) linked to the Danube Strategy.

The Integrated Urban Development Strategies specify 6 action areas, 3 of which are physically connected with the Danube.

1. The rehabilitation of the city-center
2. St. Stephen Memorial (integrated tourism development the place of birth and death of St. Stephen)
3. Protection and development of the Danube,

It seems that the last one is directly linked to the future use of the river and the riverbanks but also the first two have among their most important thematic goals „Making the Danube more attractive and make better use of its tourism potential.”

It is worth detailing more the area mentioned last.

- The action area is running alongside the whole city, mostly on its periphery or in the residential area mostly built up without permissions.
- The territory's function is to protect the city from floods and to utilize it as public places for free time and leisure opportunities.
- The action area projects are focusing on how to make better use of the opportunities offered by the Danube.
- Firstly, it can be started with the reusing of the different ports to enlarge the number of tourists arriving in the city.

- Secondly, it is necessary to build the waterway tours (for example Lábatlan-Pilismarót) and infrastructure of the resting places of the Danube waterways.
- The third principal topic is the construction of the international cycle path EUROVELO 6 along the Danube. It would be a new means of arriving to Esztergom for the tourists. There are several Roman watchtowers in the action area, which are prominent world heritage sites.
- The Primás Island and the Elisabeth Park are perfect spots for every type of recreational activities for both the local people and the tourists. These would offer a large opportunity of social life programs as well as individual sports activities.

At the same time, it is impossible to ignore that the new protection flood system has also a risk. There are many privately owned plots on the island and it will be very difficult to control the private-intentions.

Some of the thematical goals mentioned in this area are:

- Making the Danube more attractive and making better use of its tourism potential;
- Renovation of the degraded, abandoned territories and buildings lacking function;
- Creating issues for the open-area communal activities;
- Strengthen active time and sports life
- Support leisure events
- Develop and improve the quality of public education
- Development of services and attractions for tourism
- Physical connection of tourist attractions
- Development of leisure and sports tourism
- Tourism utilization of water accessibility
- Expand cultural, tourism and leisure program offerings
- Solving the flood defense of the city
- Creating leisure time community spaces
- Creating infrastructure for urban tourism
- Fixing urban green areas



- Utilization of listed buildings for touristic purposes
- Expanding the bicycle road network

In the document, the relationship with Štúrovo is mentioned not more than twice - both times in connection with infrastructure development projects (among the Investment Network Projects; 2020 - 22)

- in the section on the preparation of the construction of the road-network elements on the Garam to Štúrovo (TEN-T-CEF road development);
- the preparation of the approval and implementation plans of the new Danube Bridge of Štúrovo-Esztergom;

### 6.3.2. INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF ŠTÚROVO - IN THE PROGRAMME OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF ŠTÚROVO

The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo<sup>7</sup> has been elaborated in 2008. It is the basic medium-term programme document for the city. It sets the main thematic priorities, which are crucial for the socio-economic development of the city.

The strategic part of the document is divided in the following priority axes:

- Development of tourism
- Diversification of economy
- Civic amenities, services for citizens and appearance of town
- Infrastructure
- Cross-border cooperation

In this programme document, the priorities in the tourism development are given specific attention.

The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City Sturovo characterises Sturovo as a spa town, with the number of visitors in the Vadaš resort in the peak summer season around 12000. This function is tied to many recreational and sport activities (tennis, minigolf, water bicycles, volleyball, rowing, fishing, and others). The Danube offers possibilities for cruises, there are canoe, motor boat and swimming sport clubs in Štúrovo. Kováčovské hills are suitable for walking tourism and hiking, with marked tourist routes.

The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo highlights the aim to use the potential of the river Danube for tourism development.

The potential of river Danube for tourism development stems from the function of the river as the main waterway, and from its importance for recreation and sport.

The main thematical goals mentioned in this area are:

- Development of the new passengers port, which could be used also for water sports (for example canoe, kayak). The port will create favourable conditions for development of recreational activities on the Danube both for citizens and for visitors, it will improve the possibilities of sailing and cruises on Danube. The overall benefit of the port lies in enhancement of the positive image of Sturovo and in creating the closer relationship with the river. The port is understood as one of the main development impulses of Sturovo. It will enable the big tourist boats to stop in Sturovo what will bring the new category of visitors in the city. The need is to create also additional products of tourism in the city, to attract the visitors to spend more time in Sturovo,
- Revitalisation of the embankment to create an attractive pedestrian zone,
- Creation of the new water sport and recreational complex of national importance, with amenities for sport and recreational functions, for the canoeing at the level allowing organising international competitions. To achieve usability of the complex all the year round, the complex in winter season could offer possibilities of recreational fishing.

The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City Sturovo stresses also the importance of effective management and propagation of the city as attractive destination, with a strategy of destination marketing using the important tool of on-line propagation.

Development projects mentioned in the The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo in the Priority Axis 1 – Development of Tourism are:

- Finalization of the construction of the Danube cyclo-route and its connection to the city
- Connection of the city to the Pohronska cyclo-route
- Creation of services and amenities for cyclo-tourists in the city
- Support to the use of thermal spa Vadaš all the year round
- Construction of the new personal port
- Construction of the new sport and recreational complex for water sports

- Relocation of the museum to the pedestrian zone
- Elaboration of document – Strategy of tourism development
- Joint management and propagation of tourism destination Sturovo – Esztergom
- Construction of amusement park or theme park
- Construction of casino
- Elaboration of urban study for the twin-city Sturovo – Esztergom
- Elaboration of common strategic development document of the two cities
- In the Priority Axis 3 – Civic amenities, services for citizens and appearance of town the document recommends regeneration of public spaces, enhancing the attractiveness of the city to citizens and visitors, for example:
- Creation of Danube corso – revitalization of the embankment with pedestrian and cyclo-ways, elements of small architecture
- The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City Sturovo stresses the importance of effective collaboration of the two cities Sturovo – Esztergom in tourism development. According the Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City Sturovo, Esztergom is characterised by important historical and cultural heritage monuments, and Sturovo with the possibilities of recreation. Together with these products they can respond the various demands of the broad spectrum of visitors.

## 6.4. REGULATORY PLANS

### 6.4.1. REGULATORY PLANS OF ESZTERGOM

In Esztergom, the Regulatory Plans were made for individual city districts. The decisions of the Regulatory Plans concerning the Danube appear only in the Plans of the waterfront districts (Víziváros, Királyi Város, Primássziget, Szentgyörgymező). These plans typically contain regulatory requirements, the regulatory framework for further conceptual decisions, but do not include the most important information for our research. In addition, several plans are 10 years old or even older.

There is little information on touristic developments around the Danube. Nevertheless, some important elements of the Plans need to be highlighted.

- the ideal areas for touristic development are specified as the Danube sides of Szentgyörgymező and the Primás Island;

- Primás Island is considered as a potential catalyst for regional tourism, defined as a green area, a place of recreation, tourism, accommodation, exhibitions, congresses, education, health- sports- and transport facilities (ship stations);
- new ports proposed in Watertown (Víziváros), below the Castle Hill,
- the construction of the thermal bath is named as the first important step of the development of tourism. Now we know, as the bath was built in the meantime, that its operation doesn't produce any of the results that were hoped for. The competition of the Štúrovo bath obviously plays an important role in this case.
- the plans include the potential bathing utilization of the Danube, according to the decline of contamination levels.
- the document also refers to the recurring contradiction of recreation and industrial development.

#### 6.4.2. REGULATORY PLANS OF ŠTÚROVO – THE MASTER PLAN OF THE CITY ŠTÚROVO

The Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo<sup>8</sup> was completed in 2008, the Changes and Amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo no. 1 in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

The main aim of the master plan is to create the optimal model and regulate the urban development of the town in near future. The plan covers mainly these areas:

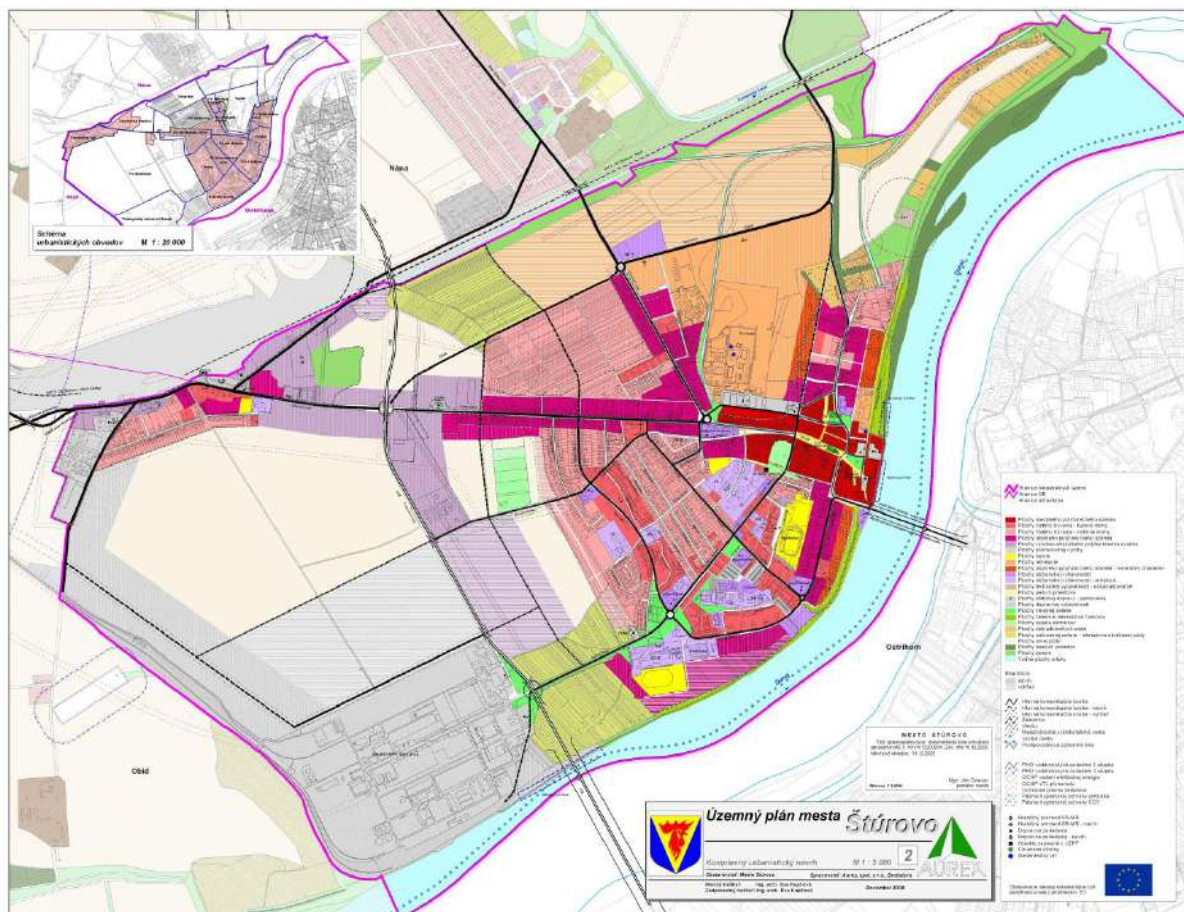
- Spatial regulation and functional land use
- Demographic potential
- Social infrastructure (civic amenities)
- Flats and housing fund
- Cultural and historical values
- Recreation, sport and tourism
- Public transport
- Public technical infrastructure
- Environment and landscape and nature protection

The master plan reflects the current urban structure of the city as a result of the long term differentiated historical development. The proposal of the new areas for spatial development belongs to the main task of the future development guidance. The master plan applies differentiated approach and stabilizes the urban parts with traditional functional and spatial characteristics. Interventions are proposed:

- in the stabilized areas in the form of reconstructions, and additions respecting the character of built up areas;



- in development areas of existing urban blocks by functional and spatial transformation, by development of transport and technical infrastructure;
- in new development areas by effective use of disponsible areas with respect to the environmental conditions.



46. fig. Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo – defining the optimal model of the city development – proposing the new bridge across the Danube, development areas connected to the Danube with various functions and the new recreational areas around the thermal Spa Vadas.

The following urban block regulations in the master plan are very important for the tourism development and for development of connections with the Danube:

- The urban block UO1 – The port is understood as polyfunctional public space with functions of commerce, service, housing and transport. This space will have the character of a city center, continuously connecting the pedestrian zone of the Main Street with the embankment, and with the personal and sport port.
- The urban block UO2 – Near Sobieskeho Street is proposed for development of connections with the Danube using the recreation potential of the green area along the Danube, and for development of polyfunctional housing with

accommodation offered in apartments. The flood protection barrier offers possibility to develop a cycling route.

- The urban planning conception for the urban block UO4 – Dunaj housing estate defines the uses of the green river embankment for recreational purposes, too.
- In the urban block UO37 – Vadas the master plan enhances the recreational and tourism functions by intensification of the use of the current area of Vadaš, by proposing the new entrance on the north. The further spatial development of the Vadaš resort is proposed towards north, up to the railway corridor, in the area of urban block UO 34.
- In the urban block UO34 – Near Nánska Cesta II the further spatial development of the Vadaš resort is proposed for various recreation and sport functions related to bathing.

The master plan expands and develops the main ideas and urban planning concepts which are involved in the higher level regional plan and conceptual programme documents – for example the intention to develop the port, the creation of the new road, bridge and cycling infrastructure.

The master plan declares that its main aim is to develop Štúrovo into an important tourism and recreational center attracting transit tourism and prolonging the stay of tourists in the city.

## 6.5. CONCLUSION

### (THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE PLANS BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ŠTÚROVO)

- The most important conclusions of the different levels of the Esztergom-plans are that a new brand and vision of urban future is needed, with the participation of the local residents. The role of the Danube should be clarified for the whole city and the tourism potential must be formulated at the urban level, without an exclusive focus on the Basilica
- It is not enough to look at Esztergom in the development concepts as a part of the Danube Bend, but as one of the twin cities (with Štúrovo).
- The plans and the strategic documents of all levels - the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic, the Spatial plan for the Nitra Region, the Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo and the Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo stress the importance of the

cross-border cooperation and the importance of common collaboration of the two cities, Štúrovo and Esztergom in tourism development.

- One of the objectives defined by the Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo in the Priority Axis 1 - Development of Tourism is the development of the Common Strategy for Tourism Enhancement. The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo recommends to develop this strategy as a medium-term document financed from the municipal budget with the support from the programme of cross-border cooperation.
- The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo declares, that the cities do not need competition in the field of tourism, on the contrary, they can use the possibilities of mutual cooperation for mutual benefit. After the reopening of the Mária Valéria Bridge the cities should appeal to the visitor as one city. The common management and propagation of the tourist destination Štúrovo- Esztergom, the strategy of marketing the sum of attractions in both cities and in their vicinity can affect and prolong the stay of the tourists in the region.
- The mutual collaboration and the strategy for tourism enhancement are not restricted only to relationships and activities of the municipalities. The participation of different subjects and stakeholders, enterprises, entrepreneurs, civic organizations, associations and citizens is important. These activities can be supported by various European, national or private grants, too.
- The tradition of mutual collaboration is nurtured by many civic organizations and societies in Štúrovo, for example the Society of Slovak-Hungarian Friendship, or by the Regional Association of Tourism Podunajsko - Dunamente.
- The Priority Axis 5 in the Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo is the Cross-border Cooperation. The geographical vicinity, the bridge connection, the knowledge of language create good preconditions for the cross-border cooperation.
- The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo in the Priority Axis 5 proposes also the elaboration of the Common Strategic Development Document for the two cities, which could identify the sectoral development strategies of both cities and consequently transfer them into the common cross-border projects.

- The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City Štúrovo in the Priority Axis 5 recommends elaboration of the common Urban Study for the Twin City Štúrovo – Esztergom, which could coordinate urban development of both cities.

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<sup>1</sup> Szende, Katalin: Stadt und Naturlandschaft im ungarischen Donaauraum den Mittelalters, in Stadt und Umwelt, [https://www.academia.edu/5004280/Stadt\\_und\\_Naturlandschaft\\_im\\_ungarischen\\_Donaauraum\\_des\\_Mittelalters](https://www.academia.edu/5004280/Stadt_und_Naturlandschaft_im_ungarischen_Donaauraum_des_Mittelalters)

<sup>2</sup> Lettrich, Edit: Esztergom népességszámának és társadalmi rétegződésének alakulása az 1750-1945 közötti időszakban, in Demográfia, 1959.

<sup>3</sup> National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic (Národná stratégia regionálneho rozvoja Slovenskej republiky) <http://www.mpsr.sk/index.php?start&navID=1&navID2=1&sID=67&id=2558>

<sup>4</sup> Spatial plan for the Nitra Region (Územný plán regiónu Nitrianskeho kraja) planners: Aurex s.r.o., Bratislava 2012

<sup>5</sup> Spatial plan for the Nitra Region – Changes and Amendments no. 1. (Územný plán regiónu Nitrianskeho kraja – Zmeny a doplnky č.1), planners: Aurex s.r.o., Bratislava 2015

<sup>6</sup> ITS (Integrált Településfejlesztési Stratégia - KDOP-6.2.1/K-13-2014-0002; planners: KD-ITS Konzorcium; Esztergom – Budapest – Székesfehérvár, 2015.)

<sup>7</sup> Programme of Economic and Social Development of the City of Štúrovo (Program hospodárskeho a sociálneho rozvoja mesta Štúrovo), planners: Aurex s.r.o., Bratislava 2008

<sup>8</sup> Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo (Územný plán mesta Štúrovo), planners: Aurex s.r.o., Bratislava 2008

<sup>9</sup> Changes and Amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Štúrovo no. 1 (Územný plán mesta Štúrovo – zmeny a doplnky č. 1), planners: Aurex s.r.o., Bratislava 2013