



Bilateral Initiative on Historic Parks and Gardens

Final report from the project

Pre-defined Bilateral Initiative No.: CLTBFPI-02

EEA/NORWAY GRANTS 2014 - 2021



THE EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS represent the contributions from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to reducing economic and social disparities in Europe, and the strengthening of bilateral relations between Norway and the 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe that receive the grants. The grants are used to fund projects within fields such as the environment, climate, health, research and cultural heritage. Currently, there are seven countries that choose to prioritise cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage is an important resource for local and regional development. Projects such as the reparation and maintenance of cultural heritage monuments and sites, can create jobs and contribute to increased tourism and beneficial business conditions. They also create social meeting places. Bilateral initiatives can provide important platforms for professionals in the cultural heritage field to meet and exchange knowledge, methods and ideas.

Culture is the largest EEA Grants program area in Slovakia with 17 projects and several bilateral initiatives within the cultural heritage field.

Introduction

In Slovakia today there are about 400 historical parks and gardens which are listed on the General Inventory of Cultural Monuments which is run by Monuments Board of Slovak Republic. 2/3 of them are in bad shape, damaged or lacking the necessary maintenance and sensible use.

Whilst parks and gardens are perceived mainly as an important part of the cultural-historical and natural heritage of our country, their role in delivering key environmental values i.e. maintaining favourable microclimatic conditions or assuring water retention in the urban environment, is vital and has become increasingly recognised as part of the climate change debate.

Their economic values are also critical, both directly and indirectly – well maintained parks and gardens can stimulate the creation of local services and businesses, having a positive impact on the real estate market – and social values. By building healthy communities we can prevent many socio-pathological disorders, we can provide opportunities for employment or volunteering and create safe places for the meeting of ideas, cultures, and people from different nations.

In the following introduction to the values of parks and gardens, we should also not forget the important role of parks and gardens for human health – both physical and mental.

However, in spite of all this evidence in favour of looking after our historic green spaces, many of them are in a poor, even critical, physical state. Lots of these gems are on the edge of their existence!

To improve the state of historical greenery in Slovakia, the non-profit organisation National Trust has been very active in this field since 2007, and has organised many projects and initiatives like the Open Parks and Gardens Weekend, the creation of a database of historical parks and gardens in Slovakia, WISE TREES project about the importance of ancient trees in our parks and gardens or providing practical advices and help to the owners and administrators of historical parks and gardens (Lednické Rovne, Koch ´s garden, Prúger-Wallner garden, Arboretum in Liptovský Hrádok, etc.).

As National Trust is very active in the field of historical parks and gardens and interested in garden policies in other European countries, we were very happy to use the opportunity for bilateral

co-operation with the partners from Norway within this pre-defined bilateral initiative supported by EEA/NORWAY GRANTS 2014 – 2021.

Also the organisations from Norway working in the area of historic parks and gardens are facing many similar problems and challenges in this field. This is why this topic was chosen for the co-operation and knowledge exchange.

Two interesting study trips to selected parks and gardens in Norway and later in Slovakia for a group of 20 experts and students from both countries was prepared and organised within this initiative. During these study trips, the participants discussed all relevant topics and learned from each other.

Bilateral initiative on historic parks and gardens promoted the exchange of good practices and original experiences as well as networking in the field. Other topics for future possible co-operation like management, maintenance, interpretation and presentation of historic parks and gardens in Europe were also discussed. All participants were very interested in the use of new technologies in the field of landscape architecture, gardening and the involvement of young generation – gardeners, landscape architects and craftsmen.

Partners of the project

National Trust n.o.

National Trust n.o. is a non-governmental, non-profit organization. Its mission is to protect the cultural and natural heritage - the historic environment of Slovakia.

Since 2006, National Trust n.o. has been intensively dealing with issues related to historical parks and gardens. We believe that despite the unfavorable condition of many parks and gardens, it is still possible to restore these sites and keep them as well-maintained and highly valued locations by people of our society. Through the activities of our Landscape and Garden Culture Centre, we aim to spread the ideas of active protection of historical parks and gardens, support the necessary research and education in the area, and provide concrete help to owners and managers of parks and gardens in Slovakia.

Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren)

The Directorate for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren) is responsible for the management of cultural heritage, cultural environments, and cultural landscapes of historic importance in Norway. Riksantikvaren is also part of Norwegian environmental management. Riksantikvaren is Norway's primary authority regarding cultural heritage and is responsible for implementing the

responsible regarding the cultural heritage work that takes place in municipalities, county authorities, the Sámi Parliament, the Governor's Office on Svalbard and the cultural heritage management at museums. It is the decision-making authority for the protection of cultural heritage monuments and sites.

Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering (FHLE) is one of the 6 faculties of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. The FHLE offers full education in the field of Horticulture, Landscape Engineering and Landscape Architecture at all 3 levels of the study. The study program

Landscape architecture is recognised by IFLA EUROPE (International Federation of Landscape Architects). Education, research, workshop activities, topics of bachelor, diploma, and PhD theses are connected with actual trends, needs and demands of the professional society. The main

topics in the field of landscape architecture include the development of green & blue infrastructure in all their form in cities and landscapes, adaptation to climate changes, revitalisation of the rivers, brownfields, countryside, research of recreational

assessment of the urban and open landscape, digitalizing of the urban and open landscape and research of the historical gardens and parks and proposals of their reconstructions. FHLE SUA Nitra has a close cooperation with the Association of Garden Design and Landscaping, Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Academy of Sciences.



Initiative's objectives

1. Exchange of know-how and practical experience, skills and strengthening the bilateral co-operation between partners from Norway and Slovakia in the area of conservation, management, maintenance and interpretation of historic parks and gardens – cultural landscapes
2. Preparation for the possible common projects and more systematic co-operation in the future like for example the creation of The Centre of Garden Culture and Landscape in Europe.

Within the initiative two study trips one to Norway and one to Slovakia to selected historical parks and gardens and two workshops were organised:

1. STUDY TRIP TO NORWAY

During the study trip to Norway, we visited the following localities:

Austrått



Austrått is a manor house in Ørland municipality in Trøndelag county, Norway. Since the 10th century, Austrått has been the residence for many noblemen, noblewomen, and officials who played a significant role in Norwegian history.

In the late 17th century, the designed manorial landscape included a hunting park, two gardens next to the manor house, a harbor, large areas of agricultural and pastoral farms, a mill, fishing huts and game keeper's huts, among other buildings and features. Beginning in the 1870s, as incorporated farms achieved independence from the manor house, the property was divided into smaller parcels. Austrått's profile as a noble residence was lost. Gardens and hunting parks fell out of use and their features and layouts gradually disappeared. Today, visitors see only the manor house standing on an open field. The manor house and surrounding garden are state property, protected for their cultural and historical interest and biodiversity.

Ørland peninsula has a rich cultural history, as well as unique natural characteristics. The landscape is today dominated by the air base, which has displaced several farms. Around the perimeter of the peninsula are several protected areas for wetland birds. In the former hunting park is a protected area of forestry and cultural landscape, scattered with Viking-age tombs. Atop a hill in the middle of the grove is Austrått Fort, a coastal artillery built during World War II, a military heritage site today. All these heritages are protected under different frameworks and for different reasons.

Rusasetvatnet



The former mill lake of the Austrått estate. In 2013 the lake was restored as a wildlife habitat for birds and a recreational area for the local population. A great example of community involvement, using local contractors, and involving NGOs in communication and events. In 2023, the Rusaset-project was chosen to represent Norway as a contender for the

Landscape Award of the Council of Europe; an award intended to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, of their role and of changes to them.

Rein Abbey

Once a part of the Austrått estate, Rein Abbey lies just an hour inland from Ørlandet. The former abbey showing only remains of structures among later buildings, now a private home and farm. The ruins themselves are owned by the Norwegian National Trust.



Hiort-Engan



The site of a former baroque garden complex approximately 6 km outside Røros. Today only traces of the garden remain. There is situated a folly known as Hiort church, a wooden hay barn shaped like a church.

The World Heritage site Røros Mining Town is linked to the copper mines, established in the 1644. The site comprises the Town and its industrial-rural cultural landscapes. Hiort-Engan is the site

of a baroque garden complex approximately 6 km outside Røros. The garden was laid out in the period 1759-1780 by Peder Hiort, the director of Røros Copper Works.

Within a few decades after the mines came into operation, deforestation, pollution and high density of people and animals became a growing problem in the city. Several managers acquired their own residences where they moved with their family, servants and livestock during the summer to avoid the crowding in the town. Simple mountain farms were gradually developed into summer residences, with representative residential farm buildings and gardens with avenues, follies and sculptures.

The layout of Hiort-Engan was inspired by European ideals with V-shaped avenues leading into a square courtyard, framed by two main houses, a barn, a stable and a servants house. Today only traces of the garden remain. Most recognizable are several wooden structures or follies, thought to have also been used as haylofts in the autumn/winter. The largest one is a small wooden chapel called Hiort Church, adorned with faux windows and bell tower.

Hiort-Engan has special interest and value as a baroque garden today because of its location in close to pre-Alpine climate.

Church in Røros



We also visited the Hiort family chapel adjacent to Røros Church with its little garden with trees and shrubs. Plans are being made to revitalize this small garden, which would also be a welcome green space in the city centre. Røros Church is a centrepiece of the World Heritage site. It also plays a paramount role in the protection of the wooden city – for more than 20 years heat sensitive cameras have guarded the whole city from the church tower.



2. STUDY TRIP TO SLOVAKIA

During the study trip in Slovakia we visited the following parks and gardens:

English-landscape park in Rusovce



English-landscape park in Rusovce is situated in the suburb of Bratislava, in Rusovce municipality. It is located on the right side of the Danube River. The park is a part of the manor area, surrounded by a forest of more than 40 hectares. The forest around the mansion and its outlying areas were gradually transformed into the form of a park by different owners.

Nowadays, the mansion and the park are administered by the Governmental Office of the Slovak Republic, and at the moment it is not accessible to the general public. However, it has been in the process of renewal to become publicly available. The forest part of the park, which starts behind the canal of Rusovce, is being used for recreational purposes.

English Landscape Park by Art Hotel Kaštieľ Tomášov

The Manor in Tomášov is one of the most representative Baroque aristocratic residences located in the area of southern Slovakia. It was built between 1776 and 1779 and since 2011 Art Hotel Kaštieľ has been located there.

A vast English park surrounds the mansion on the outskirts of the village of Tomášov, only 20 km from the centre of Bratislava.

The park is currently being continuously renewed with new trees while preserving its original character and it's also used for picnics and organizing cultural and social events.



Prüger-Wallner's Garden in Bratislava



Prüger-Wallner's Garden was created at the end of the 19th century. It is named after the Prüger-Wallner family, owners of the famous Carlton and Savoy hotels. Heinrich Prüger, the owner of the garden was a world-famous hotel manager.

The fragmented landscape of the garden was arranged around the villa as an ornamental garden in a natural landscape style (representational part), the remaining part of the plot served

as a kitchen garden. After World War II, the owners left Slovakia (moved to England) and the garden gradually fell into disrepair.

In 2013, National Trust started to organize volunteer brigades to save the Prüger-Wallner garden. Today, the garden is owned by the City of Bratislava, and it also includes the community garden Prügerka, which is managed by National Trust n.o.

Koch's Garden in Bratislava

Koch's Garden is an integral part of Koch's Sanatorium. It was built by MUDr. Karol Koch (prominent doctor) in the years 1929-1930. The project was developed by distinguished architects Dušan Jurkovič, Jindřich Merganc and Otokar Klimeš. The sanatorium building with the garden is a protected cultural monument. It belongs to the best works of Slovak functionalism.



Until recently, Koch's Garden was usually accessible to the public only during the Open Parks and Gardens Weekend, which has been organized by the National Trust since 2007. Always before the event, volunteers of the National Trust cleaned the garden as much as they could, tidied it up, took away the waste, and paved its paths.

In 2021, the current leadership of the Capital City of Bratislava took real steps that led to the property and legal settlement of Koch's Garden. Garden is now open to the public during opening hours.

Baroque Gardens by the Bratislava Castle

The Bratislava Castle is one of the important historical monuments of Slovakia. It was built on a hilltop above the River Danube and has been the dominant feature of Bratislava for centuries. The castle is a big rectangular white and red building with distinctive towers on all four corners.

The castle reconstruction to its 18th-century appearance started in 1953 and lasted till the 1980s, another reconstruction started in 2008. This

included the restoration of the Baroque Castle Garden based on historical documents and original plans from the 18th century, which started in 2014 and finished in 2016 and since then it has been open to the public.



Garden of the Albrechts' Family



The Albrecht's House is a creating centre in the heart of historic Bratislava. The former house of the Bratislava Cathedral Chapter became in 1945 the home of one of the best-known artistic families in the 20th century in Slovakia - the Albrecht family.

The garden in the form that we can see now was established in August 2019 as part of the exterior of the cultural centre.

Workshops:

WORKSHOP I.

The first workshop of the initiative was held in Galåvolden farm outside Røros.



WORKSHOP II



Workshop II was held at Liszt garden in Liszt Pavilion in University Library in Bratislava.

SUMMARY of the Norwegian (WORKSHOP I.) and Slovak (WORKSHOP II.) workshops

What have we learned?

- All historical gardens are equally worthy of protection.
- Historical gardens and parks are often a part of a broader context of other cultural heritage sites or environments, but traditionally they have not always been included in the official protection of these sites.

What do we need to know more about?

- It is good to have an overview of historical gardens and their current condition, like the one presented by the Monuments Board of Slovakia. Norway has no equivalent overview.
- There is not enough knowledge about the available historical sources that could shed more light on historical gardens. Both where to find the sources and how to use them.
- Garden archaeology is a small field in Norway and there is potential for strengthening the knowledge about garden-specific methods and theory within the archaeological community.
- Traditional skills in garden conservation and management are lacking and disappearing. The existing professional networks are small and vulnerable. There is also too little awareness about historical gardens in associated fields such as landscape architecture.
- There is an ongoing debate about different approaches to restoration of historical gardens, and which types of projects are good and bad examples.

What could be the future for the sites we have seen?

- Lack of financial support is a challenge for historical gardens. It is important to be aware of the resources available when considering what measures can be taken. The goal is not necessarily to restore these gardens to a former state, but rather to keep them from losing their value. Removing overgrowth can often be enough to see former structures.
- Using new technology such as photogrammetry and 3D scanning can make parts of a garden such as sculptures or other elements available for study. It is also possible

to tell the story of how a garden once looked at using modern technology like augmented reality, but this could be expensive and have a short lifespan.

- Raising awareness about a site among local stakeholders like owners, local politicians and neighbours could contribute to raising the status for these gardens.

Some key takeaway points from the project that were good:

- Some of the participants had existing cooperation like the National Trust and the University of Nitra on the Slovak side, and NTNU and NMBU on the Norwegian side. The University of Nitra and NMBU also had existing contact through NELA, European Network of Landscape Architecture Archives.
- Some of the participants from the universities noted that this study trip was a welcome opportunity to work concretely with the subject of historical gardens in a way that is difficult to facilitate, finance and organize in an otherwise busy schedule.
- The study trip was a good networking opportunity not only between Slovak and Norwegian side, but also internally for the Norwegian group.
- Three students participated in the study trip and they were happy to be a part of the project.

Possible points to follow up on:

- There is a lot of interest between the participants in capacity-building projects tied to knowledge about historical gardens and garden conservation, and there is some overlap in already existing projects. There might be potential to work together on such projects and strengthen bilateral cooperation on the topic.
- Garden restoration projects: sites like the ones we visited can be rejuvenated or revitalized in different ways, almost all of them costly and time-consuming. Concrete proposals for the restoration of historical gardens should be robustly rigged projects with several stakeholders and long timelines. Involving the local decision-makers and local communities is also vital for the success and continued life of the gardens.

CONCLUSION

Historic green spaces are often part of a larger cultural environment, but they do not always have the same protection as, for example, buildings. Many green spaces are covered by protected areas around other cultural monuments, but not based on their uniqueness.

There are different professional approaches to the restoration and revitalisation of historic green spaces and there is insufficient specialist expertise among those who work with management and management. In addition to gardening, architects, landscape architects, archaeologists, and cultural heritage managers must be familiar with the professional discourse when making decisions that affect the protection and management of the facilities. Green spaces are holistic facilities, often with a large time depth. At the same time, a garden or park is a collection of living plants and structures that stand outdoors, and can easily change expression over time. It is therefore important to have knowledge of how to read and understand a historic green space. Garden archaeology is a small field in Norway, and there is potential to enhance knowledge of garden-specific methods and theory in the archaeological community. New methods such as Lidar, laser scanning and photogrammetry are being developed in both countries.

Lack of financial support is a challenge for the management of historic gardens. It is important to be aware of what resources are available when assessing what measures can be taken. The goal is not necessarily to restore these gardens to a previous state, but rather to prevent them from losing their value.

We are very happy that after the planned study tours to Norway and Slovakia, we can identify to a better extent the partner's potential and needs in the given topic of historic parks and gardens. Our communication due to personal meetings and new friendships will be on a high level of bilateral cooperation. We found that after the visits immediately we gained knowledge and skills and incorporated them into our daily work and practices. We will agree on more systematic cooperation in the future too. All ideas and knowledge and also all practical experiences gained from our bilateral exchanges we can use in the process of creation of our Centre of Garden Culture and Landscape in the near future. This Centre should deal with all kinds of issues related to historic parks and gardens - like presentation and interpretation of values of parks and gardens, creation of management plans

for historic parks and gardens, environmental education, and work with the young generation, volunteers, scientific research in this field and also providing practical advice and help to

owners and administrators of historic parks and gardens and also the international cooperation of all kinds in this topic.



