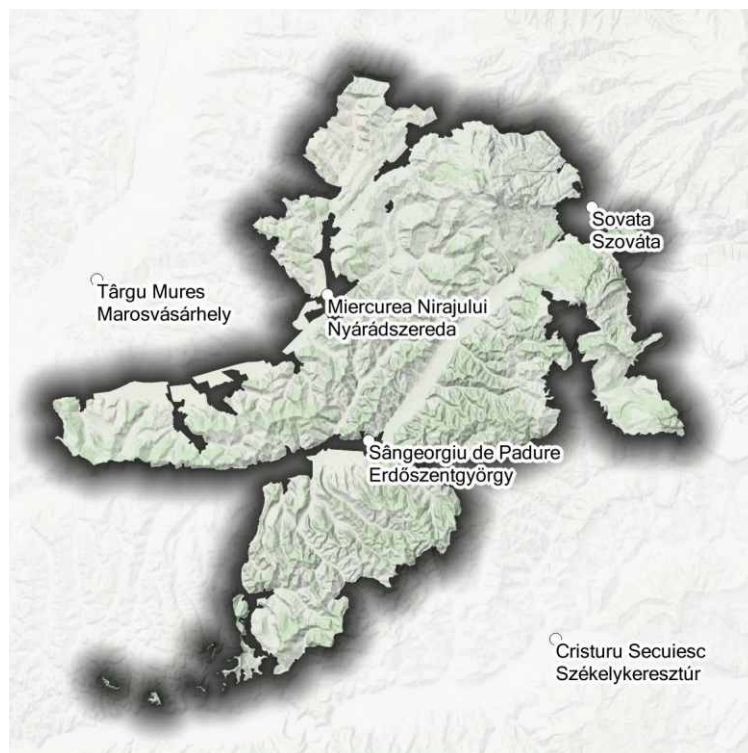


The natural heritage of Niraj-Târnava-Mică region, like the lesser spotted eagle, the corn crane, the European otter, the different Orchidaceae species, the pastures and meadows are just some examples of the elements that build a habitat rich, unique mosaic landscape of an outstanding European cultural value.

Apart from its beauty, the highly natural, mosaic habitats provide several outstanding ecosystem services that locals can be proud of.



Project area along the rivers Niraj and Târnava Mică in Mures, Sibiu and Harghita counties.

Detailed information on the research and the results are available on the project website and at the project partners.

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How is nature contributing to our development?

Mapping and assessing ecosystem services in Niraj-Târnava Mică region



MINISTERUL MEDIULUI, APELOR ȘI PĂDURILOR



What are ecosystem services?

Ecosystem services are all those beneficial and often vital “services” that nature provides for society. These services are indispensable for a healthy functioning of the society and the economy. Nevertheless, they are disappearing very quickly, which could end up with the loss of 14,6 million workplaces, or with the decline of the GDP by 7% in the European Union. This is why it is important to assess and to protect them.

There are three main types of ecosystem services:

Provisioning services: Materials provided by nature that can be used directly (e.g. water, food, firewood, fodder, pharmaceutical raw-materials)

Regulating services: Make human life more secure and more liveable (e.g. climate regulation, flood protection, erosion protection, pollination, water purification)

Cultural services: Non-material services, contributing to human’s mental and spiritual development (e.g. bonding to the landscape, tourist attraction, artistic inspiration)

Services of the Niraj-Târnava-Mică region

Some examples of the most important services:

Aesthetic and tourist value: The beauty of the mosaic landscape and the images of the villages are an important value in the eyes of the locals. It provides still unutilized opportunities for eco-tourism.

Services connected to water: An adequate water flow and a good ecological status of the rivers and streams are the basis of the right amount and quality of drinking water as well as irrigation water.

Rivers ensure the nutrition of flood areas, and natural riparian vegetation prevents soil erosion.

Orchards: Extensive fruit production is a disappearing tradition in the area. Fruits not only provide directly consumable food, but also maintain a traditional farming system that contributes to the diversity of landraces.

Game: The highly natural cultural landscape is also an attractive habitat for big game species; this provides hunting possibilities for locals and tourists.

The goal and elements of the project

The goal of the project is to assess and map the most important ecosystem services so that they can be accurately taken into consideration in the decision making process. Understanding the local context and the region’s most important features is supported by a legal study. We elaborate metrics for the selected services based on the knowledge of the locals, and we draw up long-term scenarios. Local residents and stakeholders have the best knowledge about the region and its opportunities. Besides, they are the ones who are mostly affected by land use changes.

Concerned people are involved in the research in various ways in order to present their opinion:

- Conversations and questionnaires in order to identify the most important ecosystem services in the area;
- Setting up a Stakeholder Advisory Board for providing feedback and for following the process of the research;
- Workshops about ecosystem services;
- Conferences about the results;

Based on the results we provide suggestions for local and regional land use, which can positively affect future decisions concerning the region.