



## Contribution from Palkonya



### Agriculture, tourism and partnership in regional development

## VILLÁNY -SIKLÓS WINE ROAD

### Summary

The WINE ROAD is a micro-region that one can walk in a day. The Wine Road, using the opportunity of wine- and rural tourism, influences the boom of the local economy. promotes quality wine production and offers an opportunity for family businesses. It is a kind of school for the wine culture. its skills contribute to the improvement of the quality of life.

The Villány-Siklós Wine Road Association was founded in 1994, as the first such organisation in Hungary. based on examples from Europe. The founders were seven municipal governments, non-governmental organisations, private persons and entrepreneurs (they were 18 altogether). In 1998 the self-governments and entrepreneurs of further three settlements joined the programme. The positive effect of the wine road on the development of the local economy, the growth of the number of jobs and the sustainable development of the micro- region of 10 000 inhabitants can be demonstrated by the results achieved during the past seven years.

### Objectives

The objectives of the Association are the establishment of the wine road. the promotion of quality wine production, the development of wine- and rural tourism, the preservation of the vineyards and the ecological image of the Villány wine region. the extension of the market and demand for the local quality wines, the protection of the arts, cultural, monumental and folk architectural values, together with the articulation and representation of the interests connected to the above-written. In order to achieve this, the Association collects and co-ordinates the communal, infrastructural, economic and business development, also nature and environmental protection programmes. It harmonises the initiatives of the municipal governments. the enterprises, NGOs and the private persons' initiatives, it designates the applicable financial resources and knowing it all it works out recommendations for the definition of the priorities of the development objectives.

### Training

The balanced and high-quality operation of the wine road programme is fundamentally influenced by the professional competence of the managers of the programme and the participants therein. The training provided a good opportunity for the partners to meet and get to know each other's ideas. The courses were organised locally in the villages, the participation was free of charge.

The most important results expected from the training were:

- the introduction of traditional and new technologies in wine production
- ability to meet the new market requirements, marketing skills,
- shaping of the supply elements into a marketable "product"
- preservation of the unique features, the local and cultural characteristics
- tourism, catering and business skills
- education of the civilised consumption of wine

The syllabus of the trainings was as follows: wine culture, tourism skills, behaviour and environmental culture, business skills, marketing, municipal development and micro-regional co-operation.

The training was implemented in two places with 170 participants in the first occasion, in the following year further 50 students attended the training. Forty per cent of the students have started wine road businesses since then, or have been operating or working for such businesses.

### Business development

The people living in the area are willing to make considerable sacrifices, nevertheless this is too little for them to simultaneously start investments that mutually reinforce each other. This is why an incentive financial support, an interest-free credit was built into the programme, which the entrepreneurs could use for the establishment of the adequate infrastructure of guest reception. The entrepreneurs who were in partnership with the NGO, signed a contract with it and the supporting bank and adapted to the requirements of the programme could hand in applications. The possibility to apply for interest-free credit, the conditions for the transfer of the money brought those potential entrepreneurs to the surface who increased the tourism capacity of the wine road. Among the conditions stated in the loan contract made by the bank there was the compliance with the qualification criteria of the wine road.

As a final result of the tender, which was announced twice, a total of 89 assisted small enterprises work now in the Villány-Siklós Wine Road.

## Qualification

The Villány-Siklós Wine Road created its qualification system in 1996. The criteria only concern the service providers of the wine road, although the qualification of the village accommodations is based on the national system. A qualification committee consisting of experts regularly examine the quality of the services. The aspects surveyed are the opening hours, dealing with the guests, equipment, ability to provide information and the conditions of wine tasting and wine sales. Over the past seven years 134 enterprises have applied for this qualification in the wine road and 89 of them have received it. (The other Hungarian wine roads created since then use the same qualification system.)

## System of information signs

The system of information signs is the first palpable appearance of the wine road. They draw the attention of the tourists to the wine road, and allow the accessibility of the sights of interest and services of that. The association features the qualified service providers only. The road signs use the same logic and graphic system as the services catalogue of the Villány-Siklós Wine Road. An easier orientation of the guests is allowed by a central information office.

## Marketing

The marketing goals of the wine road are as follows: the expansion of the range of guests, the increase of the length of stay of the tourists and the extension of the money-spending possibilities. These are all managed by the office of the wine road, taking the aspects of sustainable tourism development into consideration. The main tasks are the further development of the range of products offered by the service providers of the wine road, attraction of new markets and guests and the establishment of a guest-friendly regional image. The marketing tools involve publications, a website, a video film, appearance at trade fairs, advertisement campaigns in the media and the organisation of study tours.

The Villány-Siklós Wine Road Association visits 10 to 15 trade fairs annually. It sends hundreds of thousands of its publications to those interested, and it makes promotion films, books and CD-s of its supply. As a result of the annually repeated advertisement campaigns, the number of consumers interested in the civilised consumption of wine has multiplied, and the tourism season now lasts all year long.

## Results and perspectives

To date the Villány-Siklós Wine Road Association has 120 members, who operate a total of 76 qualified wine road services in the ten associate settlements. Wine cellars, rural accommodations, restaurants, boarding houses and hotels are at the disposal of the guests, who can taste wines in 1954 places, have access to 452 beds and 985 chairs in restaurants. Over the recent seven years, the number of enterprises have grown tenfold and now the whole year is tourism season here. The majority of the entrepreneurs are local inhabitants, and several generations take part in the

work. The demand for quality wines is increasing in the domestic market, as well. Wine tourism contributes to the improvement of the Hungarian wine consumption culture and the quantity of wine sold locally is ever increasing. The presence of guests makes the municipal governments pay attention to villagescape protection and implement complex development programmes. In order to market the increased tourism capacity, the association opened a separate travel agency which spends its revenues on the implementation of non-profit objectives (e. g. regional marketing).

Coming from its role, the association, which was the first of its kind in Hungary, gives a significant support to the creation of new wine roads. Due to this activity, in the recent two years alone, five new wine road associations have been founded in South Transdanubia: the Szekszárd, the Tolna, the South Lake Balaton, the Zala and the Mohács-Bóly Region White Wine Road. The co-operation of the six wine roads and the introduction a single regional system of qualification requirements and information signs, created by the example of Villány, can amount to the birth of the South Transdanubian Wine Road Network by the next tourism season. The establishment of the Villány-Siklós Wine Road is of historical significance for the development of the region, defining the directions of the development in the coming 50-100 years.

(Leonora Becker, mayor of Palkonya, manager of the Villány-Siklós Wine Road)