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PRESS RELEASE

The historic railways in Košice and Nagybörzsöny succeeded in a joint cross-border project

Košice, XX January 2021- The historic narrow-gauge railways in Košice and the northern Hungarian village of Nagybörzsöny have scored together in broad competition and obtained European funding for their further development. In Košice, they plan an extensive repair of the track, the purchase of new wagons for passengers or the repair of the boiler of the oldest operational narrow-gauge steam locomotive U36 003 known as Katka. The forest railway in Hungary will repair a locomotive, reconstruct a historic wagon and build a new amphitheatre in the village, too. The joint project of the Košice Children's Historic Railway and the Forest Railway in Nagybörzsöny received a financial injection from the Interreg program.

The project entitled *"Narrow gauge railways as a unique gates to nature and cultural heritage"* has a total budget of 409 590.- EUR. The Košice railway will receive from community budget **174 352.-** euros. The project officially started on January 1 this year and will last until April 30, 2022. The project is funded by the European Union by the European Regional Development Fund through the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme in amount of 348 151,50.- euros.

"On the children's railway in Košice, we will focus on three larger activities. The aim is to repair the almost kilometre-long section of the line, including bridges, to procure two new summer wagons and the necessary and demanding repair of the steam boiler of the popular Katka locomotive," said Ľubomír Lehotský, chairman of the Košice Children's Civic Association. In addition to these activities, railway enthusiasts from Košice will restore and repair an electric locomotive, which they managed to obtain from Switzerland.

The implementation of the project will also be a significant impetus for the further development of the forest railway in Nagybörzsöny, Hungary. *"We will get another passenger car and repair one of the locomotives, which should increase the capacity of our forest railway,"* says Oszkár Paulik, the mayor of the village north of Budapest. In addition to direct investments in the railway, the local council will also restore the open-air natural amphitheatre and illuminate the rare church of St. Stefan. The municipality received **173 799,50.-** from community budget.

The historic narrow-gauge railways are part of the common cultural heritage of Central Europe. Both railways involved in the project are currently important tourist destinations in their regions, the railway in Košice is visited by more than 50,000 tourists a year. The fate of narrow-gauge railways in Central Europe was still uncertain in the 1990s, and many of them were in danger of liquidation. However, thanks to the constant efforts of enthusiasts and the help of investments from European Union funds, they have managed to start their renewal and current development.

