

### The service tree, the tree of the Slovácko Region, Municipality of Tvarožná Lhota and NGO International Exchanges (INEX) – Voluntary Service of the White Carpathians

The project aimed to restore the cultural landscape of the Slovácko region, focusing on the cultivation, dissemination and promotion of traditional fruit trees, and in particular the service tree (*Sorbus domestica*), with the participation of local authorities and people of the region, often volunteers. It has revealed the importance of this species, which had almost fallen into oblivion, but which had economic importance in the past and was also an outstanding characteristic feature of the regional landscape. The project made it possible to co-ordinate the rescue of species of ancient fruit trees, particularly the service tree, by appealing to the participation of residents, local and regional authorities and other partners. Several achievements have been completed: a Service Tree Museum, educational trails and an arboretum were built; a gene pool was created from rare fruit trees and old fruit trees were treated. Seedlings were obtained and grown, and then trees were planted within the network of the regional system of ecological stability (an essential part of a green infrastructure in the Czech Republic). More than 100 villages of the Slovácko Region – the traditional seat of the service tree – have subsequently followed this approach.



The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe conferred a special mention of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention for the 4th Session of the Award 2014-2015 on the organisers of the project. It enabled the restoration of the cultural landscape of the Slovácko Region through the regeneration and promotion of the historical fruit tree species, the Service tree. Central to this effort is the participation of the local residents and community partners. The large and diverse number of activities emanating from this truly local project is a great example of how an idea can keep evolving. It demonstrates the power that awareness-raising campaigns, when supported by co-operation between local and regional authorities, can have for the restoration of a landscape, in a sustainable development perspective. Highlighting the contribution of traditional fruit tree species to the feature of landscapes in many territories, the project represents an important source of inspiration for promoting the protection of the traditional fruit trees' gene pool diversity. It thus becomes an excellent example of grass root efforts to mitigate the negative effects on globalisation of landscape, standardisation and market commercialisation of agriculture.