

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS FOR FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

INTERREG V-A ROMANIA-HUNGARY PROGRAMME

Priority Axis PA2: Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove bottlenecks (Cooperating on accessibility)

Investment priority Ip 7/b: Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to Ten-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes



RESTRICTED CALL FOR PROPOSALS

"Partnership for a better future"

www.interreg-rohu.eu

Version 1.1

January 2017

Dear Applicant!

As indicated in the title, this document provides information and guidance regarding the rules and procedures to be observed by applicants when planning their projects and stresses out the main elements the applicants shall be aware of when dealing with a cross-border project. However, it does not replace other documents. Applicants are invited to carefully read the documents listed in the application package, in order to be able to prepare their applications in compliance with the rules governing this Programme, including relevant community and national legislation.

Please note that clarifications, errata, amendments/corrigenda may be published on the Programme's website: www.interreg-rohu.eu.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INFORMATION.....	4
1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME	4
1.2 Programme STRATEGY	5
1.2.1 Priority Axes, Investment Priorities, and their Specific Objectives	5
1.2.2 Programme indicators	6
1.2.3 Horizontal Principles.....	8
1.3 Programme implementation structure	11
1.4 Financial Allocation for the Call for Proposals	12
1.5 Revenue Generating Projects	14
CHAPTER 2. RULES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS.....	16
2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE CALL	16
2.2.1 General eligibility criteria	20
2.2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants	20
2.2.1.2 Eligibility of actions (operations)	25
2.2.1.3 Eligibility of costs/expenditure	29
2.2.2 Specific eligibility criteria for eligible costs/expenditure.....	31
2.2.2.1 CONCEPT NOTE	32
2.2.2.2 FULL APPLICATION	34
CHAPTER 3. HOW TO APPLY.....	38
3.1 PROCESS OVERVIEW	38
3.2 LIST OF MANDATORY ANNEXES TO THE CONCEPT NOTE / FULL APPLICATION.....	40
CHAPTER 4. ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS.....	46
4.1 CONCEPT NOTES	48
4.2 FULL APPLICATIONS	51
4.3 SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS	53
4.3.1. Selection of the CN	53
4.3.2. Selection of the FA.....	55
4.4 COMPLAINTS.....	56
5. CONTRACTING	59
5.1 PRE-CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS	59
5.2 CONTRACTING	60
6. ANNEXES	61

CHAPTER 1. General information

The current guide applies to the preparation of project proposals for Flagship Projects to be submitted under the Interreg V-A Romania–Hungary Programme, within a restricted Call for proposals, further detailed, in Chapter 2.

It is intended to help the applicants to prepare the content of the project proposal.

It is the most practical level of documentation needed for the successful submission of a project under this programme. This guide provides information on how to fill in the application, budget and related forms, the application procedure, the project selection criteria, the decision procedure and other practical advices.

Please bear in mind at all stages that this is a different Programme from the previous Hungary-Romania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013.

Consequently, please be aware that rules of this Call for proposals are different from those launched within the afore-mentioned programme.

Therefore, please read carefully this Guide in order to avoid confusion!

Also, please bear in mind that this Call for proposals only concerns Priority Axis PA2, solely Investment priority 7/b.

Future Calls for proposals for Flagship Projects will be launched for amounts not committed under the present Call and for the rest of the Priority Axes (PA1, PA2-Ip 7/c, PA3 and PA4).

1.1 Overview of the programme

This programme is financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund and co-financed by Romania and Hungary through contributions from state budget and from project beneficiaries.

The programming document (hereinafter referred to as the Cooperation Programme) drafted jointly by the two countries through a wide partnership with national, regional and local stakeholders, was approved by the European Commission on 9th of December 2015. It sets out the general framework of intervention of ERDF in the Romania – Hungary cross-border area.

The programme's eligible area includes 4 counties from Romania (Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș) and 4 counties from Hungary (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád).

The Cooperation Programme document and its annexes are available on
www.interreg-rohu.eu, www.mdrap.ro,
[https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/palyazati dokumentaciok1](https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/palyazati_dokumentaciok1).

1.2 Programme strategy

In compliance with the EU regulatory requirements, a set of 6 Thematic Objectives (TO) were selected by the planning and programming bodies:

1. TO6 – Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
2. TO7 – Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
3. TO8 – Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
4. TO9 – Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
5. TO5 - Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. TO11-Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

and the **focus of the Programme** has also been identified: TO6, TO7, TO8 and TO9.

For further details on the Programme' strategy, please refer to the Cooperation Programme' document (including annexes).

1.2.1 Priority Axes, Investment Priorities, and their Specific Objectives

Priority Axes (PA) are afferent to each Thematic Objective selected for financing during the programming phase.

Relevant for the present Call is PA2 (Ip 7/b).

For each PA, Investment priorities (Ip) were selected, each having its Specific Objective (SO) to attain, as reflected by the table below, highlighting the ones relevant for the present Call:

Priority axis	Investment Priority	Specific Objective
PA1 - Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources (Cooperating on common values and resources)	6/b Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements.	Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies
	6/c Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area
PA2 - Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove	7/b Enhancing regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure,	Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T

GUIDE for APPLICANTS
INTERREG V-A ROMANIA – HUNGARY

Priority axis	Investment Priority	Specific Objective
bottlenecks (Cooperating on accessibility)	including multimodal nodes	infrastructure
	7/c Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility	Increased proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport
PA3 - Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)	8/b Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources	Increased employment within the eligible area
PA4 - Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)	9/a Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and transition from institutional to community-based services	Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area
PA5 - Improve risk-prevention and disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)	5/b Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems	Improved cross-border disasters and risk management
PA6 - Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)	11/b Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions	Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities

For further details please refer to the Cooperation Programme' document (including annexes).

1.2.2 Programme indicators

Programme level indicators are set per *specific objective*, thus, are directly linked to the *Investment priority*. For each SO, a *result indicator* has been set, and then, one or two *output indicators*, conducive to the expected result.

The indicator matrix at programme level, highlighting the ones relevant for this Call, reads as

follows:

Investment priority	Result indicator	Output indicator
Ip 6/b	Water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area	Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)
Ip 6/c	Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions
		Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status
Ip 7/b	Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T	Total length of newly built roads
		Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads
Ip 7/c	Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border	Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved
		Total length of newly built bicycle road
Ip 8/b	Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population	Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training
Ip 9/a	Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area	Population having access to improved health services
		Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment
Ip 5/b	Quality of the joint risk management	Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services
Ip 11/b	Intensity of cross-border cooperation	Number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives
		Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives

Please bear in mind that for the present Call only Ip 7/b is relevant, and applications can solely be submitted under this Ip.

Please refer to the FACT SHEET in Annex I of the present Guide for detailed information on the Programme' indicators for Investment Priority Ip 7/b.

Nevertheless, the focus in the 2014-2020 programming period is on the results. The Programme results are measured by indicators. The **performance framework** is one of the tools to achieve a result-orientation of the ESI Funds. It is a table in which a set of milestones and targets is defined for each priority in the programme.

The achievement of milestones will be assessed by the European Commission in 2019 and in case of failure, it could lead to the suspension of payments. The achievements of final targets will be assessed in 2024 and might form the basis of financial corrections.

Indicators measure whether the project has achieved its objectives or not. In this

respect, **each project must contribute to the achievement of the programme indicators (both output and result indicators).** The choice of appropriate indicators and the way your project contributes to the Programme results is important for the project and its selection by the Monitoring Committee.

Therefore, result oriented projects, with tangible results, coordinated with the national/regional/local strategies and with high impact on the eligible area shall be selected.

In addition, the **environmental indicators** set during the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure for the Programme are to be taken into account.

Relevant for this Call are the followings:

Environmental issue		Monitoring indicators (that result from the relevant environmental objective)*
1.	Air and fighting climate change	I5: Number of sustainable routes in the eligible area

* The additional SEA environmental indicators are marked with bold type letters.

Please refer to Annex II of the present Guide for the Performance Framework and Environmental Indicators for the Programme.

For further details on programme indicators and performance framework please refer to the 'Cooperation Programme' document (including annexes).

1.2.3 Horizontal Principles

Horizontal principles refer to priorities agreed by the Member States of the European Union, which are embedded in various forms in all the EU policies. The horizontal principles are referring mainly to sustainable development and energy efficiency, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including equality between men and women.

The following horizontal principles shall be observed by all applicants in the development and implementation of their projects:

1. **Sustainable development** – development process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The environmental protection is an integrated part of the development process. In designing and implementing the project, the applicants should aim at a balanced use of resources, appropriate choice of logistics and raising public awareness on sustainable development issues (e.g. by inserting messages on printed materials or in the e-mails).

In addition, challenges brought by the **climate change** shall be duly taken into account. Climate change - a great concern at global and EU level – should be another key element of which the applicants should be aware of. The main factors contributing to climate

change are greenhouse gases deployed in the atmosphere from energy and non-energy sources. Projects should at least avoid making use of such sources, and additionally support the fight against climate change.

Special attention on the above is needed under PA1, **PA2** and PA5.

In order to ensure sustainable development, the followings will be used as general guiding principles:

- Due attention will be paid to the environmental protection requirements, climate change mitigation and adaptation.
 - **In case of transport development, the aspect of smart regional mobility should be promoted.**
 - **In case of road constructions silent road surface for road constructions in populated areas can be requested.**
 - In case of purchasing vehicles for the improvement of the transport conditions, silent modes shall be taken into account when selecting.
 - In case of investments negatively affecting nature, fauna and flora, and biodiversity, only those projects should be selected, where investments are accompanied by compensatory measures and damage mitigation.
 - In addition, wherever relevant, in the case of investment projects the following requirements will be considered:
 - for projects involving purchasing products, those products should comply with the energy efficiency requirements set out in Annex III of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) for products subject to public procurement;
 - if a project involves building, construction and renovation, requirement to prove cost-optimal levels of energy performance according to Directive 2010/31/EU.
2. **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination** - a fundamental right, ensuring the access of every person, on free and equal basis, in the areas of public life such as in the workplace, in education, or in accessing goods and services. Especially projects under PA3, PA4 and PA6 need to deal with this aspect.
3. Equal opportunities refer to preventing any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation or on any other similar criterion. This also includes Equality between men and women, specified below. **Equality between men and women** – special attention on this aspect is to be paid for projects under PA3 and PA6.

The projects will have to apply the gender mainstreaming and promote the fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities in their activities. The projects shall promote equal opportunities for all in order to tackle the barriers faced by minorities, the disabled, and other vulnerable groups.

In order to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination, at least the followings will be taken into account:

- Only those projects could be selected, which are non-discriminatory and transparent and take into account gender equality and non-discrimination principles.
- In projects, where it is feasible, preference may be given on the social inclusion of people living in deep poverty.

During the design of the details of the project, the principles of transparency, equal treatment, non-discrimination, national integrity and sustainable development will be met.

Therefore, in development of your projects, please have in view the followings:

- The inclusion of relevant features related to the profile of persons involved in the projects, e.g. on gender, ethnic origin, age, occupation and education level, disabilities etc.;
- The evaluation of actions for the involvement of potentially discriminated groups in project implementation e.g. related to flexible working arrangements, representation arrangements, provisions for persons with disabilities etc.;
- Consideration of the different needs and intended and unintended impact of the project on different groups, e.g. vulnerable population with disabilities, returning and internal migrants etc.;
- Consideration of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in project implementation, e.g. concerning the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Action Plan, definition of equal opportunity targets, provision of equal opportunities training or diversity management courses, provision of supporting services;
- Provisions for an equal access to the project's outputs and benefits for all members of the society;
- Consideration of the different starting positions of the target groups based on gender (existence and extent of differences between women and men and the implications of these differences for the specific policy area etc.) and intended and unintended impact of the operation of the project on those groups in the project concept;
- Consideration of equality between men and women in project implementation, e.g. through inclusion of gender mainstreaming provisions, concerning the special needs and circumstances of men and women employees, introducing flexible, individual arrangements for female employees including childcare, information about these provisions in advertisements for job opportunities.

Please be informed that the observance of the horizontal principles shall be taken into account during projects assessment. Projects which propose explicit measures with positive impact on one or more of them, even in terms of raising public awareness, may be awarded additional points.

However, accomplishing the minimum requirements of law in the fields of promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women and sustainable development is mandatory and will not be extra scored.

For further information please refer to the Cooperation Programme document.

1.3 Programme implementation structure

According to the EU Regulations, the two partner states in the programme - Romania and Hungary - have established a number of bodies forming the implementation and monitoring mechanism of the programme. The most relevant bodies for the potential beneficiaries are:

Managing Authority (MA) – the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds - is responsible for managing and implementing the operational programme in accordance with EC Regulations and the principles of sound financial management. The Managing Authority signs the ERDF subsidy contracts with the Lead Beneficiaries as well as the co-financing contracts with the Romanian project beneficiaries (for the co-financing granted from the Romanian state budget). The Managing Authority took over the role of certifying the expenditures (role of Certifying Authority).

National Authority (NA) - the Prime Minister Office from Hungary – is the counterpart of the Managing Authority and will sign the co-financing contracts with the Hungarian project beneficiaries (for the co-financing granted from the Hungarian state budget).

Monitoring Committee (MC) is formed of representatives at national, regional and local level from both countries, supervises the programme and selects the projects.

Joint Secretariat (JS) is based within the Cross Border Cooperation Regional Office Oradea for Romania-Hungary Border - BRECO, situated in Oradea (Romania). It assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective duties and is the main contact point between the programme and the potential/project beneficiaries.

Info Points (IPs) are established in Hungary, in each of the HU 4 eligible counties, and develop information and monitoring related activities, having as main role to serve as local contact point for potential/project beneficiaries (tasks related to information and monitoring).

For further details on programme implementation structure please refer to the Cooperation Programme.

1.4 Financial Allocation for the Call for Proposals

The total budget of the programme for the entire 7-year programming period is of EUR 231,861,763.00, of which EUR 189,138,672.00 is represented by EU contribution through the European Regional Development Fund. The remaining EUR 42,723,091.00 are national contributions from state budgets and project beneficiaries.

In line with the requirements provided for in the Commission' "Aide Memoire on the strategy, management, financial & control arrangements"¹ for ETC programmes, a maximum of 50% ERDF allocation may be made available for Flagship projects.

Following the territorial analysis and consultations with the stakeholders and potential beneficiaries, when drafting the programming document, it has been decided that the share of ERDF resources dedicated to the Flagship (strategic) projects is within 50% of the ERDF funds allocated to the Programme.

The estimated **total amount allocated for this Call for proposals**, including national public and private funding is of **EUR 14,088,908.00²**, broken down as follows:

Investment Priorities	Community Funding ERDF	National counterpart*	Total estimated funding
	(a)	(b)	(a)+(b)
Ip7/b	13,925,083.00	163,825,00	14,088,908.00

*Includes the contributions from Romanian and Hungarian state budgets, and local/private budgets from both countries, respectively, expected own contribution, as estimated during the programming period; this represents the minimum total *national counterpart*, which may be increased by higher own contributions of the project partners.

Taking into account the categories of intervention, the ERDF allocation for this Ip is broken down as follows:

Code	Amount (€)
030. Secondary road links to TEN-T road network and nodes (new build)	8,355,050.00
034. Other reconstructed or improved road (motorway, national, regional or local)	5,570,033.00
Total	13,925,083.00
<u>The total ERDF amount may not be exceeded, under any circumstances.</u>	

¹ http://admin.interact-eu.net/downloads/8525/Aide_Memoire_on_the_strategy_and_management_financial_and_control_arrangements.pdf

² Estimated based on the financing plan of the Cooperation Programme.

Therefore, accounting for this limitation, overall, no more than 2 projects may be selected for financing under this Call.

Any amounts not contracted under the present Call shall be automatically transferred to open call(s).

The above allocation is based on the followings:

- ✓ The rate of ERDF financing within a project is maximum 85% of the total eligible project budget.
- ✓ The rate of national state budget co-financing is maximum 13%³ of the total eligible budget for Romanian beneficiaries, other than Central Public Authorities that are financed through the Romanian state budget, and maximum 10%⁴ for Hungarian beneficiaries, except bodies that are financed from the Hungarian state budget, where the maximum rate of national co-financing is 15% of their total eligible project budget.
- ✓ Each Beneficiary has to bring an own contribution to the project, that shall be minimum 2 % in case of Romanian Beneficiaries, other than Central Public Authorities for which the contribution is fully ensured by the Romanian state budget, and 5 % in case of Hungarian Beneficiaries other than Central Budgetary Organs in Hungary who do not need to provide own contribution.

Each Project Beneficiary has to ensure the financial resources necessary for the implementation of the project until the reimbursement of ERDF funds.

The following table reflects an allocation scenario at project potential beneficiary level, based on financing sources:

Financing sources	Romanian Central Public Authorities	Romanian Beneficiaries other than Central Public Authorities	Hungarian Central Budgetary Organs as Beneficiaries	Hungarian Beneficiaries other than Central Budgetary Organs
ERDF	Max. 85%	Max. 85%	Max. 85%	Max. 85%
But not more than € 11,815,000.00 / project				
State contribution	Min. 15% -	Max. 13%	Max. 15%	Max. 10%
		But not more than 15.2941% from ERDF	But not more than 17.6470% from ERDF	But not more than 11.7647% from ERDF
Own contribution		Min. 2%	Min. 0%	Min. 5%

³ This rate is depended on the granted ERDF, and may vary accordingly. Whereas the rate of ERDF decreases, the national co-financing drawn from the state budget is proportionally decreased as well.

⁴ Idem no.4, above.

Major projects, as defined by Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, article 100, are not supported under this Call. Thus, even there is no limitation regarding the own contribution, the maximum **total project budget (ERDF + State Contribution + Own Contribution) for one flagship project cannot exceed € 50,000,000.00.**

1.5 Revenue Generating Projects

Revenue generating projects may be financed under the present Call for proposals.

However, it must be kept in mind that the goals of Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme relate to general public interests and well-being, thus envisaging and strongly encouraging ***not for-profit*** projects and activities.

The EU Regulations applicable to 2014-2020 period do not provide for a definition of "revenue" as only **"net revenue"** needs to be taken into account for the calculation of eligible expenditure.

Net-revenues are not eligible.

According to Article 61 CPR (EU Regulation No. 1303/2013) **"net revenue means cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods and services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by the users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payments for services less any operating costs and replacement costs of short-life equipment incurred during the corresponding period."**

This means that operating costs and replacement costs of short-life equipment (as referred to in Article 17 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014) decrease the net revenue in case the revenue remains unchanged.

In addition, operating cost-savings generated by the project shall be treated as net revenue (except where the operation cost-savings are the only source of revenue for the operation). The eligible expenditure of the operation shall be reduced taking into account the expected net revenue by applying one of the methods set out in Article 61(3) (or alternatively Article 61(5)) of CPR, as complemented by Articles 15 and 16 of the above-mentioned CDR.

Eligible expenditure on revenue-generating projects shall not exceed the current value of the investment cost less the current value of the net revenue from the investment over a specific reference period for:

(a) investments in infrastructure; or

(b) other projects where it is possible to objectively estimate the revenues in advance.

The net revenue generated during implementation of the project, resulting from sources of revenue not taken into account in determining the potential net revenue of the project, shall be deducted from the eligible expenditure of the project, no later than in the final payment claim submitted by the beneficiary.

Where it is objectively not possible to determine the revenue in advance, the net revenue generated within three years of the completion of a project, or by the deadline for the submission of documents for programme closure, whichever is earlier, shall be refunded to the MA and/or to NA according to the ERDF and national state budget contributions.

The implementation of the provisions mentioned above is done by the following measures:

- In the Application Form for the second phase (FA), the applicants shall mention if their project is revenue generating.

Whereas the project's budget annexed to the Application Form shall not include the net revenue, net revenue shall be mentioned however, as potential, in the Application Form. The budget template provided in e-MS allows the applicants to fill in such information.

- In the implementation phase, a monitoring of the generated revenues shall be done throughout the implementation period of the project or for the next 3 years following the completion of the project.

CHAPTER 2. RULES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2.1 Description of the Call

The present Call for proposals is a targeted restricted call, aiming at implementing flagship projects, with significant impact on the eligible area.

The financing under the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme shall be made available to potential beneficiaries through a transparent and competitive process.

The present Call is designed based on the following **main features**:

1. The application for flagship projects is designed as a **two-phase process: I. - the Concept Note – development, and II. - the Full Application - implementation**, as it follows:

Concept Note (CN) – the best Concept Notes will be selected in order to be supported for developing full applications; therefore, subsidy contracts will be signed, focusing only on activities related to the elaboration of the full application and related supporting documentation (such as feasibility studies, , consultancy services, translation services, etc.)

Full Application (FA) – full project proposals will be assessed and in case of compliance with the requirements of the FA, will be finally selected in order to be implemented; therefore, dedicated subsidy contracts will be signed with the Lead Beneficiaries of the selected projects.

Each phase will be followed-up by a specific subsidy contract.

2. The **minimum threshold** for the **total project budget of a flagship project will be € 6,470,600.00.**

The maximum **total project budget (ERDF + State Contribution + Own Contribution) for one flagship project cannot exceed € 50,000,000.00**. The maximum limits for ERDF and the State Contribution are presented in chapter 1.4. Financial Allocation for the Call for Proposals. There is no limitation regarding the own contribution.

Thus the amount of the ERDF contribution to a project will not be less than € 5,500,000.00 and cannot exceed € 11,815,000.00, for both phases (CN and FA).

Out of the total project budget, a **maximum of € 350,000.00 (maximum € 297,500.00 from ERDF) per project may be allocated for the first phase – Concept Note** – dedicated to the development of the full applications.

For the Romanian Beneficiaries:

Please note that an **advance payment**, in accordance with the national legislation, of the Romanian national co-financing may be granted to Romanian beneficiaries for their part of Concept Note budget, while the reimbursement of the rest of the funds will be conditioned by the approval and contracting of the Full Application. The same

percentage for the advance payment will be applied for the implementation of the Full Application.

For the Hungarian Beneficiaries:

Please note that an **advance payment** of maximum 100% of the Hungarian national co-financing may be granted to Hungarian beneficiaries for their part of Concept Note budget, while the reimbursement of the rest of the funds will be conditioned by the approval and contracting of the Full Application. The same percentage for the advance payment will be applied for the implementation of the Full Application.

On the other hand, **in case of failure, the advance payment that might have been granted would have to be refunded.**

This means that, in case of failure to enter into implementation under the Full Application specific subsidy contract, the Concept Note contract(s) shall be terminated and the advance granted under CN shall need to be refunded.

3. **Regarding the project implementation period**, all flagship projects must have the total project duration (development Phase + implementation Phase) **between 24 - 42 months⁵**, on condition that the final reimbursement claim for the implementation phase is submitted according to the Subsidy Contract. **Out of the minimum / maximum implementation period**, a period of **maximum 6 months** is dedicated to the development of the Full Application, respectively to the **CN**.
4. As stated within the approved CP, the procedure shall ensure the **balanced allocation** of funds available for flagship projects among the 8 eligible counties, **considering all the Calls for proposals for FSP**. Nonetheless, the financing under the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme shall be made available to potential beneficiaries through a transparent and competitive process.
5. The Programme is launching the present Call for proposals with **deadline for submitting Concept Notes until 24th April 2017**. The **Full Applications** may be submitted any time after the implementation of the CN phase, but not later than **1 month after the end of the implementation period of the Concept Note**.
6. Having in mind the total allocation available for this Call that may not be exceeded, and considering the provisions of the Cooperation Programme document and its annexes, both in terms of funding available and targeted indicators, the **number of projects that may be supported**, pending on the total budgets and amounts available **is 2**.

The following scheme is a chronological demonstration of the main milestones.


Phase	Estimated Duration/Date	Explanation
Launching the Call for Proposals	3 months	Restricted competitive call dedicated to Flagship Projects, designed in two phases (Concept Note and Full

⁵ As the applicants planned and stated in the Application form

GUIDE for APPLICANTS
INTERREG V-A ROMANIA – HUNGARY

Phase	Estimated Duration/Date	Explanation
		Application)
Deadline for submitting Concept Notes	24 th April 2017	Concept Notes will be submitted via the electronic system eMS, by the Lead Applicant.
Assessment and selection of Concept Notes	3 months	Concept Notes will be assessed and the best ones selected for further implementation. Notifications on approval of Concept Notes are sent out to the Lead Applicants.
Contracting the implementation of Concept Note (the FA development phase)	1-2 month(s)	The implementation of the CN can start on the date of the Notification for approval, while concluding the subsidy contracts will still be running, on the beneficiaries' responsibility.
Implementation of the CN	Maximum 6 months	This phase is strictly dedicated to the development of Full Application.
Submission of Full Applications	no later than 1 month after the end of the implementation period of CN	FA will be submitted via the electronic system eMS, by the Lead Applicant.
Assessment and selection of Full Applications	3 months	Full Applications will be assessed and in case of compliance with the requirements of the FA, will be selected for implementation. Notifications on approval of Full Applications are sent out to the Lead Applicants.
Contracting the implementation of Full Applications (the project implementation phase)	1- 2 month(s)	The implementation of the project can start on the date of the Notification for approval, while concluding the subsidy contracts will be still running.
Contracting under conditions of Full Applications (e.g. in case of expropriation)	Maximum 3 months after the notification of approval for FA	The applicants will have to prove compliance with the formulated conditions in maximum 3 months after the notification of approval for FA, or otherwise be excluded
Implementation of the full project	24-42 months (including the duration of the CN implementation)	The implementation of the FA can start on the date of the Notification for approval, while concluding the subsidy contracts will still be running, on the beneficiaries' responsibility.

The achievement of the output indicators, as established for this PA2 MUST be fulfilled through the supported projects, proving proportionality between the estimated necessary costs and the targeted values of indicators!

 **Please see further details in the dedicated FACT SHEET, attached in Annex I. to the present Guide.**

Please keep in mind that all necessary information regarding the priority axes, investment priorities and the related specific objectives, as well as the output indicators and the estimated ERDF allocation of funds on each category of intervention is available also in the Cooperation Program (CP).

The final version of the document can be accessed at the following links:

www.interreg-rohu.eu,

www.mdrap.ro,

www.brecoradea.ro,

[www.palyazat.gov.hu/palyazati dokumentaciok1](http://www.palyazat.gov.hu/palyazati_dokumentaciok1)

2.2 Conditions and criteria for selection of projects

2.2.1 General eligibility criteria

The submission of projects is open to all potential beneficiaries and projects that meet the eligibility criteria set-out below. These eligibility criteria shall apply for the entire programme duration.

Due to management and financial capacity needs, one applicant will be selected as Lead Beneficiary in max 3 projects and in total in 6 projects, in the context of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

Each project may have Project Applicants and Associated Partners; their role is explained below. One of the Project Applicants shall be designated as the Lead Applicant responsible with submission of the project proposal and the relation with MA on behalf of the entire partnership. The Lead Applicant shall be established in one of the two participating countries to the programme. The specificities and detailed criteria for the selection of projects will be presented further on, and in the dedicated FACT SHEET/annexes; nevertheless, there are a number of important general principles that need to be reflected in the selection criteria under all Ips. These include:

- ✓ respecting the principle of sustainability, justified demand for the new capacities created;
- ✓ cost-efficiency of the supported actions;
- ✓ clearly justified contribution to the SO of the relevant Ip;
- ✓ preventing programme level double-financing of projects / operations (examples may include institutional development, road development, water management);
- ✓ creating added value;
- ✓ clear cross-border impact, synergies of the interventions;
- ✓ respecting the horizontal principles, i.e. sustainable development, non-discriminations and equal opportunities, where relevant.

The eligibility criteria, with regard to the selection and implementation of flagship projects are related to the *potential applicants, actions (activities / operations)* and *costs*. General eligibility criteria, mandatory for all projects regardless the priority axis they are submitted under, are the following:

2.2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants

In the framework of the present programme only legal entities, as identified below, can apply for financing and become Lead Beneficiaries or Beneficiaries, who are established based on the relevant national public or private law and act in the purpose of public benefit.

Natural persons cannot apply for funding.

Political parties/organisations are not eligible! Private bodies, with exception of NGOs are not eligible!



Important!!!

- 1. All projects must have at least one Project Applicant on the other side of the border⁶, which must fulfil the same eligibility criteria.**
- 2. The maximum number of Project Applicants in one project is 8 (eight). Not complying with this provision will lead to the rejection of applications.**

In specific cases and based on sound justification, in addition to the Lead Applicant and Project Partners, Associated Partners can also be involved to support the implementation of the project, if their experience or field of competence constitutes an important input of added value for the project. Associated Partners must prove their field of competence is relevant for the project.

The maximum number of Associated Partners in one project is 4 (2 in Romania and 2 in Hungary).

Associated Partners shall not receive financing and will not bear direct responsibility for the preparation and management of the project activities, but may contribute to its professional implementation.

The Associated Partner will not be involved in contractual relationship with Managing or National Authorities and will not be fully involved in the implementation of the activities of the project nor financially.

- 3. It is expected that when a partnership is designed, only partners who can make an important and real contribution in achieving the proposed indicators will be invited in the partnership.**
- 4. The (Lead) Applicant must have legal competencies in the project relevant field.** For all projects, it is compulsory that the applicant has among its attributions, according with its statute or according to the national legislation, the implementation of the proposed activities or it must prove that it has a partnership agreement with the institutions competent to implement such activities, according with its statute or according to the national legislation.
- 5. The applicants must prove stable and sufficient sources of finance to ensure the continuity of their organization throughout the project and to play part in financing it.**
- 6. The applicants must demonstrate that they have not received financing support from public funds in the past 5 years before the deadline for submitting the applications under this Call for proposals for the same operation / project in terms of objectives, activities and results.**

⁶ For EGTC, please see item 8, below.

- 7. All applicants involved in the project have to prove their professional, operational/administrative and financial capacity to manage their share of activities in the field of action they are applying for and must have direct responsibility for the preparation and management of the proposed actions both from a professional and from a financial point of view, not acting as intermediaries.**
- 8. The Project Applicants and Associated Partners⁷, if it is the case, have to be entities falling into one of the following categories:**

- a. Public bodies, and
- b. Public equivalent bodies, governed by public law.

A body governed by public law means a body:

- ✓ Established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - ✓ Having legal personality, and
 - ✓ Financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those bodies; or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.
- c. State-owned companies
 - d. Non-profit bodies: non-profit legal body established under the private or public law, acting in the general public interest.
 - e. European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) introduced by Regulation (EC) 1082/2006, as further amended and complemented by EC Regulation 1302/2013, and established according to the national legislation of Romania and Hungary are considered eligible in case they satisfy the eligibility criteria applicable for each applicant, excluding the necessity to have a cross border partner.

EGTCs have to meet the following criteria:

- ✓ To be established by legal persons governed by public or private law having their seat on the territory of Romania or Hungary;
- ✓ To have its seat located in the eligible Programme area;
- ✓ To have incorporated in its statute as objective and field of activity the contribution to the development of the Romania - Hungary cross-

⁷ In case an Associated Partner fails to comply with the eligibility rules of the present Call for proposals, the project can be approved by the Monitoring Committee under the condition that the respective associated partner is eliminated as such.

border programme area, and references to the field to be addressed by the proposed project.



It is mandatory that the Lead Applicant is a public body!

In order to be eligible, in terms of location, the Applicants / Associated Partners must have their seats or a regional/local branch registered in the eligible programme area, i.e.: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timis counties in Romania, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád counties in Hungary.

In case the entity's headquarter is registered outside the eligible programme area, but there is a regional/local branch office **with a legal entity** in the eligible programme area, then the regional/local branch shall apply for financing and in case of contracting, it shall be the beneficiary. The regional / local branch office needs to prove its existence and the relation with the headquarter.

Exceptions are also possible – in the case of **public entities** not having their legal seat in the eligible area, **but having legal competencies for implementing operations in the programme area.**

Two situations are identified:

1) In case the public entity's headquarter is registered outside the eligible programme area and its branch office is not a legal entity, the respective public entity may apply and, in case of contracting, it shall be the beneficiary. In this special case, the public entity shall also meet the following criteria:

- ✓ The regional/local branch office needs to prove its existence and the relation with the headquarter.
- ✓ The legal representative of the main entity shall nominate the person responsible for acting in the scope of the project implementation.

2) In case the public entity's headquarter is registered outside the eligible programme area without a branch office in the eligible area, the respective public entity may apply⁸.

Partnerships not involving strong commitment and contributions (observing all four criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing) from all applicants shall be rejected!

Please be aware that partnership may not change between the Concept Note and the Full Application phases. Only modifications generated by legislative changes, where the powers, prerogatives and liabilities of the beneficiary concerned are taken over by the legal successor (i.e. reorganisation/restructuring etc.), may be accepted.

⁸ Central authorities with competencies in the eligible area are eligible applicants and may implement projects in the Programme area.

Also, partnerships having more than one applicant with previous average weighted financial execution rates (taking into consideration the value of their budgets) of less than 50% for all projects financed under HURO Programme 2007-2013 will not be accepted for financing!

Additionally, such an applicant cannot be the leader of the partnership!

This is an example for calculation the average weighted financial execution rates for an applicant that was beneficiary in 3 HURO projects:

Project number	Contracted total funding	Total amount validated	Percentage	Financial execution rates
Project 1	1,237,723.00	781,765.63	63.16	61,04 %
Project 2	20,000.00	0	0	
Project 3	187,325.00	100,258.76	53.52	

$$\text{Financial execution rates} = \frac{781,765.63+0+100,258.76}{1,237,723.0+20,000.0+187,325.0} \times 100 = 61.04 \%$$

Only one subsidy contract per phase can be granted to a Lead Applicant. This means that in case a certain entity submits two Concept Notes, only the one with the highest score will be selected for developing and submitting the Full Application. However, the same entity can be Partner Applicant in other applications.

Potential applicants shall be excluded from participation in the present Call for proposals if:

- ✓ they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- ✓ they, or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them, have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- ✓ they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify, including by decisions of the European Investment Bank and international organizations;
- ✓ they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;

- ✓ they, or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them, have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- ✓ they are subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 1 (16) of the Regulation (EU, EURATOM) 1929/2015, amending Regulation 966/2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union;

Applicants are also excluded from participation in the present Call for proposals or the award of financial support if, at the time of the call for proposals, they:

- ✓ are subject to a conflict of interests; the conflict of interests represents any circumstances that may affect the assessment or implementation process, in an objective and impartial manner. Such circumstances may result from economic interests, political or national preferences or family connections;
- ✓ are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat as a condition of participation in the call for proposals or fail to supply this information which might have led to a different decision of the evaluators/ Managing Authority during the assessment process;
- ✓ have attempted to obtain confidential information or influence the assessment bodies or the Managing Authority during the assessment process of current or previous calls for proposals.

In the cases referred above, the exclusion applies for a maximum period of ten years, from the time when the infringement is established or from the date of notification of the judgment.

In the signed "Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration" / Associated Partners Declaration included in the application pack, applicants / associated partners must declare that they do not fall into any of the above categories.

The Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat may request, during the assessment of project proposals or in the phase of contracting additional documentary evidence and argumentations regarding the eligibility of applicants!

2.2.1.2 Eligibility of actions (operations)

As defined in Art. 107 para. (1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of European Union, a measure is considered state aid if it meets, on cumulative bases, *all* of the following criteria:

- 1. the beneficiary is an undertaking (is engaged in economic activity)**
- 2. the measure is financed from the state budget or is imputable to the state**
- 3. the measure confers an advantage to the beneficiary**
- 4. the measure is selective**

5. the measure effects the trade and competition between the Member states – within the Union.

The measures under the Investment Priorities 7/b do not constitute State aid as at least one of the above-mentioned criteria are not met.

Also, in the COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION on the notion of State aid pursuant to Article 107(1) TFEU, the paragraph 18 of the respective document states that:

- a) activities that intrinsically form part of the prerogatives of official authority and are performed by the State do not constitute economic activities.
- b) It follows from the case-law that Article 107 TFEU does not apply where the State acts “by exercising public power” or where public entities act “in their capacity as public authorities”. An entity may be deemed to act by exercising public powers where the activity in question is a task that forms part of the essential functions of the State or is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject.

This is a restricted call, seeking to support projects with a strong strategical character, proving a significant impact on the eligible area and addressing large-scale target groups. In this sense, these projects will have to demonstrate:

1. The project will ensure a relevant contribution to the Programme objectives, addressing the key needs and development challenges identified in the eligible area. Therefore, it is mandatory that strategic projects address common territorial challenges and opportunities in the programme area. Moreover, studies, statistics or other relevant documents must show that there is a real demand for the project, or at least that it is a priority in terms of development plans.

The project idea should be acknowledged and/or supported by the relevant authorities on national / regional / county level, key professionals and the targeted local communities! Maximum score will only be given to strongly supported projects.

2. Strategic projects must clearly contribute to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional / county) contingency; to be in synergy with other key interventions;

The Concept Notes shall be accompanied by Compliance letters from relevant authorities / bodies at national / regional / county level (ministries and other units, acting under their subordination, coordination or under their authority, public authorities on regional / county level). It is mandatory to provide at least one letter from Romanian authorities (county, regional OR national level) and one from Hungarian County Councils, as required by the national legislation. The letter will include proper justification of the projects (non) compliance. Please find the compliance letter template attached as Annex V.2.

Applications for Concept Note shall be accompanied by extracts of relevant strategies and/or other relevant development strategic documents, proving the project's compliance from this point of view!

3. A project can assume a strategic value when it is based on a strong and balanced partnership on the two sides of the border, extended to a substantial part of the eligible territory and demonstrate significant impact on large target groups.
4. A strategic project should produce a long lasting effect, creating permanent structures and services, producing permanent shifts in the local markets, capable to ensure a long term growth. The projects must provide added-value on activities already finished in the field or represents the beginning of activities that will be undertaken on a long term.
5. Strategic projects must be best-practices in their key areas of intervention; capitalising previous successes should be a strong characteristic of all flagship projects. Therefore, projects should make use of available knowledge and build on existing results and practices.
6. Strategic projects should make a positive contribution to the programme horizontal principles: equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, sustainable development, access for disabled persons.
7. All projects should demonstrate their contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies. In this context, additional points will be granted to projects that contribute to the objectives of the EUSDR⁹ strategy.
8. The importance of the cross-border approach to the topic addressed should be clearly demonstrated. In this matter, all 4 cooperation criteria shall be fulfilled: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing. Minimum 2 joint criteria must be fulfilled in case of Associated Partners.
9. The quality of the project proposals, as reflected in their compliance with the selection criteria, is very important in order to ensure that the Programme delivers concrete and visible outputs and results that tackle, in a cross-border and integrated manner, the challenges and needs affecting the programme area. **Projects focusing solely on research (with no applicable output), or exclusively on exchange of experience, or projects not indicating the concrete and sustainable follow-up of “soft” activities (studies, surveys, action plans etc.) will not be supported by the Programme.**
10. The project must be in line with the Priority Axis PA2, results sought and specific objectives, as stipulated in the Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary Programme (CP).

When developing the project proposal, for both CN and FA, the applicants should keep in mind the Performance framework of the respective PA. The key implementation steps defined by the targets set for the 2018 milestone are also

⁹ The EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the EC on 08 December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council on 24 June 2011. The Strategy was developed by the Commission together with the Danube Region countries and stakeholders in order to address common challenges.

relevant. The applicants demonstrating contribution ¹⁰ to the achievement of indicators or the key implementation steps set for 2018, will get higher score in the quality assessment for CN. The CN application will refer to indicators or key implementation steps targeted for FA.

Also, please be informed that the applications demonstrating a level of proportionality lower than 40% between the output indicators and the estimated costs of the project shall not be recommended for support.

11. In case of projects that involve the production of studies or analyses, it is important that beneficiaries take stock of the knowledge already available and results from other projects co-financed by European funds across Europe, and take all measures necessary to avoid double-financing. In addition, beneficiaries will be required to present their plans to capitalize on the results of the project.

In compliance with the provisions of art. 65(6) CPR (EU Regulation No. 1303/2013), projects shall not be selected for support where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for funding under this Programme is submitted by the applicant, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made by the beneficiary.

For infrastructure actions, the applicants must prove they have the legal right to perform the project activities in the specific location, through the following documents which must be provided by the applicant(s) and that the following rules are observed:

- ✓ the legal act (e.g. government decision, law, government ordinance, decision of local counties, etc.) or contract stating the fact that the land and/or building/item of infrastructure is in concession/ administration / owned by the applicant;
- ✓ it must be proved that the land and/ or building/ item of infrastructure is owned or that the duration of the concession/ administration contract is for at least **5 years after the estimated month of the financial closure of the project¹¹**, and that the owner has given it's written agreement saying that the applicant may perform the infrastructure actions on/ in the relevant land/ building/ item of infrastructure.
- ✓ declaration from the land and/or building/ item of infrastructure owner that the land and/or building/ item of infrastructure is:
 - free of any encumbrances;
 - not the object of a pending litigation;
 - not the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.

In case the land and/or building/item of infrastructure are in concession/ administration, the owner and the concessioner/administrator will provide the declaration.

¹⁰ Consideration to be given when filling-in the description in the Workplan > Workpackage List

¹¹ The date of the last financial transfer on project level.

- ✓ documents related to the registration of the land and/or building/ item of infrastructure in the relevant public registers (Title deed, not older than 30 calendar days, issued by the Land Registry. In case of land acquisition (purchase/expropriation), the applicants will have to provide the Title Deed in **maximum 3 months** after the notification of approval for FA, or otherwise be excluded).

The projects which have initiated investments in infrastructure (even not physically completed or fully implemented) before the application for funding under the Programme are not eligible.

No investment shall be placed outside the eligible area!

Just as well, in compliance with the approved CP, **any newly built cross-border infrastructure will become operational right after the completion of the project and shall remain operational at least for 5 years from the financial closure of the respective project.**

Selection of projects that include **cross-border road infrastructure is conditional to a prior bilateral agreement with the commitment of the Member States to set up Schengen-compatible border-crossing checkpoints** (or other existing solutions according to the legislation in force at the time of submission of the project applications) **at the completion of any such projects and to operate it for at least 5 years from the financial closure of the respective project or until the enlargement of the Schengen zone.**

When the national legislation requires signature of bilateral agreement in case of CB infrastructure, for projects financing CB infrastructure other than roads, those bilateral agreements have to be in force at the time of submission of project applications.

NOTE: The eligibility of an activity does not confer eligibility on the expenditure made for the implementation of that activity.

2.2.1.3 Eligibility of costs/expenditure



The general rules for eligibility of expenditure under Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme are described in the ***Programme general rules on eligibility of expenditure***, to be found on the programme's website, www.interreg-rohu.eu.

Expenditures have to be eligible in order to be covered by financial support. Afferent costs are eligible if they comply with the following general and cumulative conditions:

- ✓ cost is directly related to the project, is necessary for initiating and carrying out the operation;
- ✓ costs must comply with the principles of sound financial management (principle of efficiency, effectiveness and economy) in particular value for money and cost-effectiveness;

- ✓ cost is in line with the provisions of the subsidy contract, co-financing contracts / national and European legislation;

NOTE: Procurements shall comply with national regulations applicable at the time of the launch of tendering procedures and, irrespective of the amount or type of beneficiary, with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment.

- ✓ For private eligible beneficiaries there are special requirements in relation to public procurement procedures, as follows: in HU, all bodies dealing with EU money have to comply with the national legislation on public procurement; in RO, private bodies (NGOs) will have to comply with the special regulations described in the Project Implementation Manual. cost is committed by the beneficiary after submission of the Concept Note/Full Application; also, in order to be eligible, the expenditures must be incurred after approval by the Monitoring Committee, but until the last day of implementation period included; the costs have to be paid out at the latest in 30 calendar days after the end of the project implementation period; exception to this rule is made only for preparation costs, which must be incurred between 1st January 2014 and the date of the submission of the Concept Note; in order to be eligible, preparation costs must be paid out no later than 60 calendar days after the CN approval by the MC.

NOTE: Projects' implementation may be started after the approval of the project by the MC (but this will be on the risk of the applicants)!

Nevertheless, the costs will be eligible only in case the project is finally selected for financing and subject to the conclusion and execution of the subsidy contract.

- ✓ all costs incurred must be free from bias and conflict of interest; that is the case when a decision is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, or where any economic interest or any other interest is shared with another person;
- ✓ cost is borne by the beneficiary, respectively is paid out by the beneficiary and is recorded in the beneficiaries' accounts and tax documents, is identifiable and verifiable, and is backed up by legal and valid supporting documents, except for any office and administrative costs that are reported as a flat-rate cost; cost is verified and validated as eligible by the first level controllers;
- ✓ all expenditures must comply with the principle of real costs, with the exception of the costs calculated as flat rates;
- ✓ all expenditures relate to activities that have not been financed from other financial instruments and/or other public funds;
- ✓ all expenditures are supported by invoices or other documents with equivalent probative value directly attributable to a certain project beneficiary with the exception of the costs calculated as flat rates;

NOTE: The Lead Applicant / Project Partner / Associated Partners or their employees cannot act as a contractor or subcontractor that provides works, services and products within the project.

- ✓ As a general rule, the eligible expenditures shall be incurred related to activities implemented in the eligible programme area, respectively on the territory of the following 8 counties: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș from Romania; Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád from Hungary.

Exceptions from this rule are made for activities and related expenditures with a significant importance and impact in the Programme' area, directly implemented for the benefit of the Programme area. Total amount for such activities and expenditures shall be limited to maximum 10% of the support from the ERDF at project level.

This aspect shall be duly verified during the assessment and selection procedure, thus presented and accepted in the approved Concept Note / full Application Form, part of the future subsidy contract.



No investment shall be placed outside the eligible area!

The following cost categories, presented in the budget tables as main budgetary lines, are to be considered eligible:

- a) Staff costs;
- b) Office and administrative expenditure;
- c) Travel and accommodation costs;
- d) External expertise and services costs;
- e) Equipment expenditure;
- f) Infrastructure and works.

Costs not in compliance with the rules on the eligibility of expenditures are ineligible and shall be covered from own financial sources, apart from the project' budget.

2.2.2 Specific eligibility criteria for eligible costs/expenditure

Besides the general eligibility rules regulated by the *Programme general rules on eligibility of expenditures* on programme's level, specific rules are applied for this Call. **These specific rules prevail over the general ones, and are hereby detailed below.**

2.2.2.1 CONCEPT NOTE

Preparation costs:

In case of flag-ship projects, only phase I – Concept Note, dedicated to the development of the Full Application - shall cover preparation costs. Phase II – implementation – shall not cover any additional preparation costs.

NOTE: *Staff, office and administrative, and equipment* related costs are not eligible under preparation costs. Therefore, only *travel and accommodation* and *external expertise and services*¹² costs are to be eligible as preparation costs under Concept Note budgets. Exceptionally, the costs for all mandatory certificates/permits in order to comply with the rules of the present Call will be accepted under *Infrastructure and works* budget line (e.g. urban planning certificate).

Please be informed that external expertise/services for elaboration of the Concept Note itself are NOT eligible.

Also, in case of already existing Feasibility Studies / Technical Projects, the Feasibility Study / Technical Project itself or its revised version shall be valid according to the national legislation (the document must bear the date of elaboration/revision). Any other submitted studies, technical plans, etc. shall also not be older than one year. Multiyear documents, adopted as such will also be considered.

NOTE: The rate of the eligible preparation costs is not limited as percentage / amount of the total eligible Concept note budget. Preparation costs, as well as all other eligible costs, will be reported only once, into the sole Project / Partner Beneficiary Report, to be submitted upon Full Application contracting.

External expertise and services costs:

Costs are eligible only if related to the use of external expertise: services paid from the budget of the projects, ordered from and completed by an external party; the service must directly relate to the supported activities.

External services costs for Concept Notes are eligible based on specific needs of each project and they will be properly documented, according to the national legislation/programme's procedure related to public/direct procurement.

The types of expenditures included under this budget line (a non-exhaustive list) are provided in article 6 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014, but for this phase, shall read as it follows:

¹² Including costs for translation of necessary documents for submission of the Application.

- (a) studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concepts¹³, design plans);

Indicative examples:

Consultancy, surveys preparation, technical assistance related to infrastructure and works:

- (i) Feasibility studies, including – if the case - geotechnical, geological, hydrologic, hydro-geotechnical, photometric and stability surveys, concerning the investment location;
- (ii) Design and engineering, including technical projects, detailed technical plans, documentation necessary to obtain the necessary endorsements and authorizations, impact assessments, location studies/appraisals, including their technical verification;
- (iii) Documentation for Approval of Intervention Works for existing infrastructure/construction;
- (iv) Other studies, including traffic studies, opportunity studies, according to the objectives of the project proposed to be financed;
- (v) Impact assessments, location studies/appraisals, etc.

- (b) translations;

Indicative examples:

- (i) Translation of the Application Form, including the supporting documentation;
 - (ii) Interpretation services as support for technical meetings among beneficiaries;
- (c) legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;

Obs. Any such costs will be strictly related to the development of the Full Application and its supporting documents, while detailed in the Concept Note budget.

- (d) other specific expertise and services needed for projects.

Indicative examples:

- (i) Elaboration of the Full Application;
- (ii) Consultancy services/legal assistance in order to prepare tender documentation and / or application of the procedure for awarding of procurement contracts;

NOTE: External service contracts cannot be concluded with employees directly employed by the Beneficiaries. Project beneficiaries / Associated Partners or their staff cannot be contracted as an external expert or a subcontractor. In case of Romanian Beneficiaries only service contracts can be concluded, civil contracts are not acceptable.

¹³ Other than the Concept Note to be submitted under the call.

NOTE: The Beneficiaries have the obligation to inform the contractors that the intellectual property rights for any result/studies of the financing contract will belong to the beneficiaries.

The beneficiary is alone responsible for the quality / accuracy of the Feasibility Study / Documentation for Approval of Intervention Works / other studies towards the MA.

Travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers shall be declared under this budget line. In case only the travel and accommodation costs are reimbursed to the external expert (not receiving fee), the contract shall state that only travel costs and accommodation costs supported by invoices will be paid.

If applicable, the deliverables respect the information and publicity requirements of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

Expenditure on external expertise and services cannot be split among the project beneficiaries, i.e. common/shared costs are not allowed.

Infrastructure and works:

Under this budget line, only the costs for mandatory certificates/permits in order to comply with the rules of the present Call will be accepted (e.g. urban planning certificate).

In case of road infrastructure, the costs of land acquisition (purchase/expropriations) may be included in the CN budget up to 5% of the ERDF estimated costs for the relevant investment objective. The total estimated costs for the investment objective will be calculated according to the General Estimate of costs necessary for the investment / construction works, part of the Feasibility Study/DAIW, available as Annex VI.3/VI.4.

Please note that the market price of a property (land), in case of road construction, will be established exclusively by a professional certificated evaluator. This will be a condition for the eligibility of the acquisition related costs!

2.2.2.2 FULL APPLICATION

In case of flagship projects, only phase I – CN - development - covers preparation costs. This excludes the possibility that phase II – FA - implementation - covers any preparation costs itself.

Just as well, please be aware that one CANNOT apply for phase II - FA without going through phase I - CN.

External expertise and services costs:

All general conditions, as stated above, and in the Programme general rules on eligibility of expenditures, are applicable.

The types of expenditures included under this budget line are as follows:

- (a) studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, design plans, handbooks);

Indicative examples:

Surveys preparation, technical assistance, consultancy, related to infrastructure and works:

- (i) Design and engineering, including technical projects, detailed technical plans, documentation necessary to obtain the necessary endorsements and authorizations, impact assessments, location studies/appraisals, including their technical verification;
- (ii) Site supervision - is limited to 5 % of the total works contract.

- (b) technical assistance from the designer;

- (c) translations;

Obs. Translations required by the project management activities – from / to English, Hungarian and Romanian languages;

- (d) IT systems and website development, modifications and updates;

- (e) promotion, communication, publicity or information linked to the project;

Indicative examples:

- (i) Printed/audio-video materials: flyers, brochures, catalogues, TV and/or radio spots, promotional films, etc.
- (ii) Project publicity: ads in the local, regional, national or EU media; promotional materials (pens, folders, etc.), temporary and permanent billboards, etc.

- (f) financial management;

- (g) services related to the organization and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation);

Indicative examples:

- (i) Project opening/closing conferences;
- (ii) Projects dedicated events, depending on its specific objectives: e.g. seminars, other specific conferences, EU Day, Earth Day, etc.

- (h) participation in events (e.g. registration fees to events organized by third parties);

Obs. Only costs related to the participation of projects staff members will be eligible.

- (i) legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;

- (j) intellectual property rights;

- (k) travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;

Obs. Unless they are covered by dedicated services contracts.

- (l) other specific expertise and services needed for projects;

NOTE: External services contracts cannot be concluded with employees directly employed by the Beneficiaries. Project beneficiaries / Associated Partners or their staff cannot be contracted as an external expert or a subcontractor.

In case of Romanian Beneficiaries only service contracts can be concluded, civil contracts are not acceptable.

Infrastructure & works related costs:

In case of road infrastructure, the costs of land acquisition (purchase/expropriations) may be included in the budget, up to 5% of the ERDF estimated costs for the relevant investment objective. The total estimated costs for the investment objective will be calculated according to the General Estimate of costs necessary for the investment / construction works, part of the Feasibility Study/DAIW, available as Annex VI.3/VI.4.

The following table summarises the distinction between cost categories eligible for the two phases of the present Call:

Eligible expenditures	CONCEPT NOTE		FULL APPLICATION
	Preparation costs	Implementation costs	Implementation costs
Staff	-	✓	✓
Office & administrative	-	✓	✓
Travel & accommodation	✓	✓	✓
External expertise and services	✓	✓	✓
Equipment	-	-	✓
Infrastructure & works	✓	✓	✓

PROJECT BUDGET	EUR 0 – EUR 350,000.00	Minimum EUR 6,470.600 <u>minus CN budget</u>
-----------------------	-------------------------------	---

! Given that some costs can be included in different budget lines (e.g. license fee for the use of software needed for the project, annual insurances for vehicles purchased and used for implementation of project tasks etc.) please read carefully ***Annex III. Programme general rules eligibility of expenditures*** to properly budget the expenditures for activities.

When you design the schedule of spending forecast, pay attention to the provisions of the Subsidy Contract, attached, regulating that in case of under-spending compared to the spending forecasts, the MA, at the half of the implementation period, is entitled to decommit the project by reducing the original project budget and the corresponding ERDF contribution.

Attention! In case there are deviations from the estimated amounts for the planned activities, in order to ensure the project's sound financial management and focusing on reaching the envisaged output indicators, the Programme recommends these are of maximum 20%. However, in case such deviations occur, the budget chapters shall not be affected.

Be advised that the Application Form is structured based on work-packages, which comprise activities and sub-activities, either on project level (WP Preparation, Management and Communication) or on partner level (WP Implementation and Investment). For each activity/sub-activity you shall provide enough details in terms of methodology of implementation, estimated deliverable and indicative budget.

If summed-up, all the indicative amounts on activity/sub-activity level equal the related budget chapter, on partner level. Consequently, the summed-up partners budgets equal the project budget.

According to the Subsidy Contract, any modifications of the budget lines (in this case to be read as chapters) will require addenda. However, the subdivisions (activities/sub-activities) budgets can, therefore, as already explained, be modified up to a threshold of maximum 20%.

CHAPTER 3. HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted through the electronic monitoring system - eMS.

The eMS system can be accessed on the following link: <http://ems-rohu.mdrap.ro/app/main?execution=e1s1>

3.1 Process overview

As there are two or more partners of an operation in a cooperation project, one of them shall be designated as the Lead. The Lead Applicant/Beneficiary¹⁴ shall be established in one of the two participating countries to the programme.

However, all applicants in a project must sign a pre-agreement to be enclosed to the submitted CN application that stipulates the rights and duties of the applicants.

Moreover, all applicants should dispose of the knowledge, resources and capacity to fulfil their designated tasks. The applicants must state their financial and administrative capacity to manage their share of the project.

For both phases - CN and FA- the same applicants will need to sign a partnership agreement (please see annexes IX.1 and IX.2) before the Lead Applicant will be in the position of signing the subsidy contract for CN or FA phase, with the MA.

How to complete the Application Form is detailed in Annex IV.: "eMS - Application Instructions"

☑ Make sure you fill-in by computer, correctly and completely, the CN / FA and its annexes and annex all related documents. The annexes are part of the CN / FA.

Applications and annexes must be submitted using the standard templates included in the Applicant's Guide (pay particular attention to observing the limit of characters imposed in the template of Application Form; "characters" include space).

Modifying the standard templates of the CN/FA or its annexes will result in the rejection of your application!

The application and its annexes must be filled in using English. The supporting documents issued by national/local authorities or other bodies shall be attached in the original language accompanied by a translation in English (**translations provided by certified translators are required only for documents relevant for quality assessment, please see chapter 3.2.**).

Where the format of the annexes requires, they should be signed and stamped by the legal representative of the lead applicant or of the applicant to which the annex refers (in case of annexes which should be annexed for each applicant) or by an empowered person (a letter of empowerment will be attached) wherever this is requested by the standard templates.

¹⁴ The tasks of the Lead Applicant/Beneficiary are provided in article 13 of the REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 of the EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013

The CN and the FA Applications will be submitted online, in the eMS system. The applicants prepare the original Application dossier, with all the supporting documents and with the relevant documents signed by the legal representatives.

The Application will be filled-in online, than printed, signed and stamped and will have attached all the documents from the original dossier (held at the Lead Applicant premises). The whole package will be scanned and uploaded into the eMS system. Depending on the size of the documentation, it is recommended to create as many scanned files as necessary. A file cannot exceed 50 MB. The original scanned version of the application, signed and stamped, along with all annexes will prevail, in case any technical error occurs. All documents will be page numbered continuously and a table of content¹⁵ will be attached, clearly indicating the page number and the number of pages of each document.

Each page (the number of page will continue from the CN/AF until the last page of the last annex) shall be signed and stamped, in a visible place (without overlapping other numbers/ letters/ images). The first and last page number of each annex should be specified in the Table of content.

Before the submission of the application, the applicant will need to click on **"Check Saved Project"** to activate the automatic checks. If any issues are found, such as missing or wrong data, the applicant will need to correct this before save and check it again. **Only after all checks are okay, the applicant will be able to submit the application by clicking the "Submit checked project" button.**

Note. If a field is mandatory to fill in, it is enough to place a character in the field and the eMS system will consider it as completed. The applicant is alone responsible for the quality / accuracy of data entered into the fields of the eMS system.

After submission, the Lead Applicant will receive an automatic email confirmation. **Once submitted you are not able to make further changes to your application.**

The Concept Note application can only be submitted until <24st April 2017>, 16:00 hours Bucharest time (EET).

Please take time zone differences into account!

After the deadline, the applicant cannot create an application nor can send an application previously created. In such a case, the error message **"Submission after deadline"** will be sent by the eMS system. Consequently, the application will not be registered as submitted into the system and it shall not enter into the assessment and selection process.

For any problems you might experience with the eMS, please contact the Joint Secretariat at joint.secretariat@breacoradea.ro, or by telephone at +40 259 473 174 or +40 359 436 529 during office hours: 9:00 to 17:00.



If you have any question regarding the rules of this Call, we strongly recommend you to send your questions up to 21 working days before the deadline, to the

¹⁵ A template is provided as Annex V.11 for CN and Annex VI.7. for FA.

following e-mail address:

joint.secretariat@brecoradea.ro

Any other questions received after this interval may not receive an answer / in due time, considering the necessary time for processing.

Final answers shall be released (published) not later than 11 working days before the submission deadline.

Upon closure of the CN phase, the Joint Secretariat organizes the assessment and selection process, in compliance with the criteria and methodology approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Once contracted for CN, the Full Application may be submitted under the dedicated continuous call, and the Joint Secretariat will organize the assessment and selection process, in compliance with the criteria and methodology approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Full Application will be submitted on on-going basis, no later than 1 month after the end of the implementation period of the Concept Note, 16:00 hours Bucharest time (EET).

Please remember to take time zone differences into account!

After submitting the application (Concept Note or Full Application), the Lead Applicant will see the project status in the column "Project_state" of the table "List Of Projects" as **Subm = Submitted**.

Now the application will enter in the assessment phase (Administrative and Eligibility check) by the Assessment Working Group, while the Lead Applicant can check the status of the application in the eMS (*My projects* section) and answer to the clarifications send by the members of the Assessment Working Group.

Please note that the clarifications will be send officially using the e-mail section of the eMS as an attached letter of clarification, and the Lead Applicant will respond only through e-mail from eMS.

Errata, amendments to the Application package which will be sent after the deadline and/or without being explicitly requested shall not be considered.

We strongly advise you to keep an eye on your eMS e-mail in order to be able to respond to any clarifications may be requested during the assessment phase! Also, please keep in mind that the notification of either rejection or approval of your application will be send via eMS e-mail system.

3.2 List of mandatory annexes to the Concept Note / Full Application

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
Pre-agreement of applicants stating their commitment to the development	✓	-

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
<p>and implementation of the related project in terms of capacity and necessary resources (see Annex V.1).</p> <p>Please note this document will not be the subject of completion.</p> <p>To be provided in EN language.</p>		
<p>Partnership declaration, signed and stamped by all involved parties/entities (see Annex VI.1), separately submitted by each of the partners.</p> <p>Please note this document will not be the subject of completion.</p> <p>To be provided in EN language.</p>	-	✓
<p>Compliance letters from competent authority/body at national/ regional/ county level shall be included, at least one letter from Romanian authorities (county, regional OR national level) and one from Hungarian County Councils as required by the national legislation, i.e. Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds, Ministry of Culture, National Park Directorate, Environmental and Water Management Directorates, State Forestry Service / National Forest Administration Romsilva, National Administration Apele Române, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, County Councils, etc. (see Annex V.2). The letter will include proper justification of the projects (non) compliance.</p> <p>To be provided in EN language.</p>	✓	-
<p>Extracts of relevant strategies and/or other relevant development strategic documents, proving the project's compliance as such (i.e. National Health Strategy 2014 – 2020, General Master Plan on Transport, counties' strategies, etc.).</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	-
<p>Copy of the establishing documents of the Applicants / Associated Partners: Articles of Association, Statutes, Deed of foundation, establishing resolution law, or equivalent documents according to the national legislation etc.</p> <p>Exception: public institutions / authorities do NOT need to submit this document!</p> <p>Additionally, establishing documents will be provided for the related branch / field office, etc., that will prove its existence and the relation with the headquarter.</p> <p>With regard to Churches in Hungary: In case the religious organization is listed in the register kept by the Minister of Human Capacities (http://egyaz.emmi.gov.hu/), the extract issued by the Minister must be attached. In case the Church is not listed in the register, official confirmation issued by the Main Church must be attached.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	✓ ¹⁶
<p>PROJECT (LEAD) APPLICANT DECLARATION¹⁷ (see Annex V.3 for the</p>	✓	✓

¹⁶ For FA (Full Application), to be submitted for Lead Applicant and all Project Applicants/Associated Partners (if the case) also, ONLY if the establishing documents have been modified since submission of the Concept Note application pack

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
Concept Note / Annex VI.2 for Full Application). Please note this document will not be the subject of completion. To be provided in EN language.		
Associated Partners Declaration (see Annex V.7 for the Concept Note / Annex VI.6 for Full Application) To be provided in EN language.	✓	✓
Total project estimated budget (see Annex V.4) To be provided in EN language.	✓	-
Programme' output indicators – project commitment (see Annex V.5) To be provided in EN language.	✓	-
Environmental indicators (see Annex V.6 for the Concept Note / Annex VI.5 for the Full Application) To be provided in EN language.	✓	✓
The official statement of the relevant decision-making body regarding the support of the project and the availability of the own contribution for the planned investment, during the implementation of the project (e.g. County Council Decision, Local Council Decision, Board of Directors Decision , etc.); the document will have to be issued after the official launch of the call for proposal. This requirement does not affect the eligibility of the preparation costs estimated in Concept Note budget. To be provided in RO/HU language.	✓	✓

¹⁷ The Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration will be submitted by each of the applicants and it will cover the following facts:

- Reality of the data provided within the application
- Applicants do not fall into any of the categories for which shall be excluded from participation in calls for proposals, according to EU Financial Regulation 966/2012. The document will be provided by all partners, signed and stamped.
- Applicants commit themselves and the activities.
- Conformity regarding the double financing of the operations are enclosed;
- Applicant(s) VAT status are enclosed;
- Possible generated revenues are enclosed;
- Partners contribution to the project's budget;
- Public funds have not been received in the previous 5 years before the submission deadline for the same operations/projects in terms of objectives, activities and results.
- Compliance with the obligation on ensuring project sustainability and its operation for at least 5 years after the financial closure of the project;
- Compliance with the horizontal principles and contribution to the objectives of the EUSDR.

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
<p>In case of Romanian applicants: Justifying document stating the method of representation (according to the national legislation)</p> <p>In case of Hungarian applicants: Original specimen of signature containing the method of representation of the legally authorized representative(s) of the applicant organizations/institutions certified by a public notary in original language. Please note this document will not be the subject of completion. To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	✓
<p>Letter of empowerment (if the case): For RO applicants: signed and stamped by the legal representative of the applicant institution. For HU applicants: certified by a public notary. Please note this document will not be the subject of completion. To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	✓
<p>The job descriptions for all positions included in the proposed management team AND/OR the Terms of references, in case the management is externalized¹⁸. To be provided in EN language.</p>	✓	✓
<p><u><i>In case of Romanian Beneficiaries:</i></u> Urban planning certificate (<i>certificat de urbanism</i>).</p> <p><u><i>In case of Hungarian Beneficiaries:</i></u> Preliminary declaration of construction works according to the template provided in Annex V.8., signed by a certified architect. To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	-
<p>Feasibility study (see Annex VI.3)¹⁹ / Documentation for approval of intervention works (see Annex VI.4) according to the mandatory format²⁰, including geotechnical, geological, hydrological, hydro geotechnical, photometric and stability surveys concerning the investment location, where relevant, according to the national legislation.</p> <p>The Feasibility study / Documentation for approval of intervention works or its revised version should be valid according to the national legislation at the time of submission of the application for the present Call for Proposals (the document must bear the date of elaboration/revision). However, this/these documents(s) should be submitted as supporting documents to the Application Form and should be accompanied by the legal</p>	-	✓

¹⁸ Flagship Projects are projects of significant complexity and the capacity of the partners is of high importance in the efficient and sustainable management of the projects; therefore, the Programme strongly recommends avoiding the externalization of the project management. Moreover, maximum score will be granted only to applications ensuring the management staff.

¹⁹ Shall be submitted for new investment objectives. The template is provided by RO legislation. The attached version is an unofficial translation and it is subject to modification depending on legislative changes.

²⁰ Shall be submitted for intervention at already existing investment objectives. The template is subject to modification depending on legislative changes.

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
<p>agreements and approvals (e.g. Local/County Council Decision, proof of the reception of the service, etc.).</p> <p>For the projects involving the construction / upgrading / modernization of transport infrastructure, a <i>traffic study</i> must be presented containing data on the current and the estimated traffic.</p> <p>To be provided in EN language.</p>		
<p>Other relevant studies/surveys, not older than one year (evaluations, strategies, design plans, opportunity studies, impact assessment, location studies, etc.). Multiyear documents, adopted as such will also be considered!</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	-	✓
<p>Title Deed²¹ (<i>extras de carte funciară/tulajdoni lap másolat</i>) issued by the Land Registry, not older than 30 calendar days, of each real estate (land and/or building) affected by the investment.</p> <p>In case the land and / or building is in concession/administration, it must be proved that the duration of the concession/administration of the land and/or building is based on a long term contract/enactment (i.e. min. 5 years after the estimated month for the financial closure of the project) and that the owner of the real estate has given his written agreement that the applicant is free to perform the investment.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	✓
<p>At least the administrative act²² approving the opportunity to develop the technical documentation / plans / design for the investment objective subject to the grant application is attached, or a document of a similar value, in case the road infrastructure.</p> <p>(i.e. Government/County/Local Council Decision for approval the start of the preparation of the planned investment/design of the feasibility study related to the planned investment)</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	
<p>Affidavit regarding the land acquisition (purchase/expropriation) process, in case the road infrastructure involves purchase/expropriations (see Annex V.9)</p> <p>The document will state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that the respective applicant understands his/her obligation to complete the purchase/expropriation process and to submit the Title Deed in maximum 3 months after the notification of approval for FA, ensuring they understand the consequences in case they fail; - that the maximum expenditure budgeted for purchase/expropriations will be no more than 5% of the ERDF estimated costs for the investment objective. <p>To be provided in EN language.</p>	✓	

²¹ Exceptions are considered Title Deeds for road construction where purchase / expropriation is necessary, in case they are not yet available due to non-completion of the purchase / expropriation procedures. However, the applicants will have to provide the Title Deed **in maximum 3 months after the notification of approval for FA**, or otherwise be excluded

²² According to the national relevant legislation („Elrendelő” for HU Applicants, Hotărâre de Consiliu Local/Județean, etc for RO Applicants)

Mandatory information/documents for submitting an eligible application	CN	AF
<p>In case the road infrastructure involves land acquisition (purchase / expropriations):</p> <p>For RO applicants:</p> <p>Government/county/local council Decision approving the start of the purchase / expropriation procedure and the approval of the technical and economic indicators for the respective investment</p> <p>For HU applicants:</p> <p>If available, the Building Permit OR the proof that the process of obtaining the building permit has started, issued by the competent authority.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>		✓
<p>Declaration from the land and/or building/ item of infrastructure owner and from the concessioner/administrator stating that the land and / or building / item of infrastructure is free of any encumbrances, not the object of a pending litigation, not the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU language.</p>	✓	✓
<p>Copy of the bilateral agreement with the commitment of the Member States to set up Schengen-compatible border-crossing checkpoints (or other existing solutions according to the legislation in force at the time of submission of the project proposals) at the completion of any such projects, and to operate it for at least 5 years or until the enlargement of the Schengen zone, for projects that include cross-border road infrastructure.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU/EN language.</p>	✓	
<p>Copy of the bilateral agreement, in case of CB infrastructure, for projects financing CB infrastructure other than roads; the bilateral agreement have to be in force at the time of submission of project proposals.</p> <p>To be provided in RO/HU/EN language.</p>	✓	
<p>RO applicants: Template MMP, signed/stamped by Environmental Protection Agency at county level, according to Ministry of Environment and Forests Ordinance 3427/2012²³, requested based on GO 445/2009 in reference to public and private projects impact evaluation on the environment. (Annex V.10).</p> <p>To be provided in RO language.</p>	✓	

²³ Formular referat emis de Ministerul Mediului și al Pădurilor, conform Ordinului Ministerului Mediului și Pădurilor 3427/2012

CHAPTER 4. Assessment and selection of Applications²⁴

This is the description of the assessment and selection process of Flagship Projects. These are strategic projects of key importance that address the most important needs of the eligible area. They are intended to help to achieve the programme's expected results, through reaching the output indicators and, therefore, have a tangible impact on a significant part of the programme area.

General principles of the assessment and selection:

The assessment and selection process within the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme will be carried out with regard to:

- a) Transparency
- b) Equal of treatment
- c) Non-discrimination
- d) National integrity
- e) Sustainable development

The assessment and selection procedure promotes the fulfilment of these principles and excludes any opposite behaviour or action.

Flagship projects must fulfil the following key criteria:

- to have a strategic relevance having impact on the border region;
- to contribute to fulfilling the objectives and targets of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme;
- to have a clear cross-border dimension;

The strategical character of an intervention is also given by the amount of support from the relevant stakeholders in its key area of intervention. Competent authorities, with relevant related expertise are expected to provide compliance letters for the projects submitted under this Call for proposals. It is mandatory to provide at least one compliance letter from Romanian authorities (county, regional OR national level) and one from Hungarian County Councils, as required by the national legislation. The letter will include proper justification of the projects (non) compliance.

On the other hand, the projects should be acknowledged and/or supported by relevant authorities, key professionals and the targeted communities. Maximum score will be granted only to projects proving significant such support. Support letters will be assessed in the quality assessment.

Also, submission of documents stating that the project proposal is compliant with the regional/county strategic development approach is mandatory.

With regard to the selection of flagship projects, the following basic general rules apply:

²⁴ Assessment and selection period alone may last up to 3-4 months for CN and 3 months for FA after given deadline/submission. Applicants shall take this into account when planning project activities and related events, as no project can be scheduled to start before its prospective approval.

- the Investment priorities²⁵ where flagship projects are expected, are identified already in the planning phase and stated within the approved CP.
- the total budget of all flagship projects supported may not exceed 50 % of the total ERDF programme budget.

The projects must have direct CBC impact, which shall be understood in terms of proving all four of the following cooperation criteria²⁶: joint development, joint implementation, joint financing and joint staffing.

The maximum points in the assessment will be granted for partnerships properly proving all four cooperation criteria!

Also, the associated partners, if the case, will have to prove the fulfilment of at least two cooperation criteria!

Nonetheless, for the entire assessment and selection process, all applicants need to consider that:

Any attempt to obtain confidential information or to influence the Programme' structures and assessors within the assessment and selection process will lead to disqualification!

The clarifications provided in the assessment phase cannot bring new elements that would alter the initial content of the Application Form.

You will be excluded in case it is proven that you are guilty of serious misleading of the assessors by providing false information, that are being taken into consideration in the assessment process or if you did not inform the evaluators on issues that would have led to a different decision of the assessors.

The present restricted call is launched to select flagship projects, with the following main procedural steps:

²⁵ Please see specifics of each Investment priority in the related Fact Sheets.

²⁶ Joint development – means that the project must be designed in common by partners from both sides of the border. This means that project proposals must clearly integrate the ideas, priorities and actions of stakeholders on both sides of the border. The Lead Beneficiary is the coordinator of this process but should include other partners from the beginning of the development process;

Joint implementation – means that activities must be carried out and coordinated among partners on both sides of the border. It is not enough that activities run in parallel. There must be clear content-based links between what is happening on either side of the border and regular contact between the two sides. The Lead Beneficiary is responsible for ensuring that activities are properly coordinated, that schedules are kept and that the right quality levels are achieved;

Joint staffing – means that the project should not duplicate functions on either side of the border. Therefore, regardless of where the person is located, there should be one joint project manager, one joint financial manager etc., (of course more staff may be required for larger projects). These staff will be responsible for project activities on both sides of the border. The Lead Beneficiary is generally the employer of core project staff;

Joint financing – means that there will be only one contract per project and therefore there must be one joint project budget. The budget should be divided between partners according to the activities carried out. A project with 0 Euro or very small financing from one side of the border cannot be considered as having joint financing. There is also only one project bank account for the ERDF contribution (held by the Lead Beneficiary) and payments representing EU support are made from the programme to this account. The Lead Beneficiary is responsible for administration and distribution of these funds and for reporting on their use. Match-funding should come from both sides of the border and illustrates the commitment by each partner to the joint project.

4.1 CONCEPT NOTES

All the Concept Notes submitted between the first day of this Call for proposals and the established deadline will be included in the assessment process.

All CN will be assessed and selected according to the assessment criteria previously approved by the MC.

The assessment of CN will be carried out in two steps:

First step, **administrative and eligibility check**²⁷ is carried out by internal assessors from the Joint Secretariat and Info Points.

The purpose of the eligibility and administrative assessments is to:

- Verify that the proposal fulfils minimum requirements of the Programme;
- Avoid further assessment of ineligible project proposals;
- Ensure equal treatment of all proposals to be selected for funding.

We draw your attention that, in compliance with the set eligibility criteria, the following documents shall be submitted with the Concept Note application form, by the given deadline. If any of the following is not submitted, the application will be subject for rejection:

- **Pre-agreement** of project applicants stating their commitment to the development and implementation of the related project in terms of capacity and necessary resources (see Annex V.1);
- **Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration** (see Annex V.3 for the Concept Note / Annex VI.2 for Full Application);
- In case of Romanian applicants:
Justifying document stating the method of representation (according to the national legislation).
- In case of Hungarian applicants:
Original specimen of signature containing the method of representation of the legally authorized representative(s) of the applicant organizations/institutions certified by a public notary;
- **Letter of empowerment (if the case),**
For RO applicants: signed and stamped by the legal representative of the applicant institution.
For HU applicants: certified by a public notary.

Clarifications and/or completions will be requested by the JS within the administrative and eligibility check, in a single round. The requests will be made in writing to the Lead Applicant, who will have **7 working days** to submit the necessary documents/clarifications.

²⁷ The assessment grid for the CN administrative assessment is presented in ANNEX VII.1 CN Administrative and eligibility grid.

Please be aware that all related communication will be made through the eMS (the electronic system).

Whereas the deadline is not met, or the documents/clarifications submitted are not satisfactory, or prove incompliance with the formal and eligibility requirements, the CN will be rejected.

Failure to comply with the formal requirements (administrative compliance) and established eligibility criteria will lead to the rejection of the project proposal; thus, the Concept Notes that do not fulfil the formal requirements and eligibility criteria shall not be passed for the quality assessment.

Exceptionally, in case the proposal is not fully compliant in the case of the costs limitations (criteria B20÷B23), the project proposal will be passed for quality assessment under the condition that the necessary budget-cuts²⁸ will be made in the quality assessment phase.

Second step, is the **quality assessment**²⁹ carried out by external assessors contracted by the MA.

This Call is dedicated for strategic projects! Therefore, considerable contribution to the programme's output indicators is expected and will receive higher scores during assessment!

Make sure the expected results are correlated with the estimated budget!

E.g. A project with a total estimated budget covering 50% of the Ip will ideally contribute with minimum 50 % of the output indicators of the Ip!

The table below reflects an example of how to calculate the proportionality between the contribution to the Programme's output indicators and the estimated project budget. The scope of the example is to clarify the criterion A.9. Quality assessment grid (Is there proportionality between the ratio of estimated output indicators of the operation and total output indicators per Ip versus ratio of costs of the operation and the total allocated budget per Ip?). The presented scenario is for a project submitted under Ip 7/b for newly built roads:

	Project 1	Project 2
A. Total funds allocated for Secondary road links to TEN-T road network and nodes (new build) (EUR)	9,829,470.00	9,829,470.00
B. Total length (km) of newly built roads (programme specific output indicator)	16,00	16,00
C. Unit cost (EUR/indicator). Please see the Annex I. Fact sheet	600.000	600.000

²⁸ If during the assessment, an assessor considers that a cost is non-eligible, it will propose budget-cuts, and the project will be approved under condition. So, the approved budget will not contain non-eligible costs.

²⁹ The assessment grid for the CN quality assessment is presented in ANNEX VII.2 – CN Quality assessment grid.

D. Total project budget (EUR)	7,000,000.00	9,829,470.00
E. Estimated length of newly built roads / project (km)	11.00	14.00
F. Total project budget / total funds allocated for Ip 7/b1 (D/A %)	71,21%	100,00%
G. Project indicator (estimated length) / total indicator for Ip (E/B)	68,75%	87,50%
H. Proportionality between the output indicators and the estimated costs of the operation (G/F)	96.55%	87.50%
I. Numerical assessment (points)	15 points	12 points

IMPORTANT!!!! PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE RELEVANCE OF YOUR PROJECT IDEA, ITS STRATEGICAL POTENTIAL AND THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE CROSS-BORDER APPROACH ARE ASSESSED EXCLUDEVILY IN THE CONCEPT NOTE PHASE.

Therefore, please consider the fact that the CONCEPT NOTE Application Form is mainly focused on gathering information upon the project to be developed. Several sections in the CN Application Form are dedicated to the whole PROJECT proposal to be developed in case the Concept Note is selected for support.

Considerable contribution to the Programme's result and output indicators is expected and will receive higher scores during assessment!

Applicants will be strongly advised to properly ground all estimated costs, so that the projects are not over budgeted. Also, all the activities will have to link directly to the costs, while leading to the envisaged results and contributing to the programme's output indicators.

The recommendation for support will be also based on how the Concept Note tackles the output indicators stated in the Performance Framework of the Programme. The key implementation steps defined by the targets set for the 2018 milestone are also relevant.

If certain information is not very clear, supplementary clarifications, but not completions, will be requested only once during the quality assessment. The Lead Applicant is invited to submit this information within a deadline of maximum 5 working days.

In case the Lead Applicant does not provide the supplementary clarification within the deadline as required, the Full Application will assessed be based on the initial information.

Only projects with a score of at least 65 points (out of a total of 100) will be proposed for approval. Also, the minimum threshold for the strategical assessment criteria will be 50 points (out of a total of maximum 80 points).

The Concept Notes are ranked by Investment Priorities in descending order, taking into account the scores awarded, and considering their contribution to the programme's indicators (output and result).

In case two or more Concept Notes under the same Ip obtain equal scores, the ranking of the Concept Note to be financed shall be made taking into account the following criteria, in the mentioned / listed order:

- a. the score obtained for Strategic criteria (Quality Assessment Grid for CN/section A);
- b. the score obtained for criterion regarding the proportionality between the ratio of estimated output indicators of the operation and total output indicators per Ip versus ratio of costs of the operation and the total allocated budget per Ip (Quality Assessment Grid for CN, section A, criterion A.9.);
- c. the one addressing directly the Performance Framework Output Indicators.

4.2 FULL APPLICATIONS

Full Applications will be submitted on on-going basis, no later than 1 month after the end of implementation period of the relevant Concept Notes. All Full Applications submitted in this range of time will be included in the assessment process, in a continuous manner, this approach will ensure an efficient decision-making process, in terms of time and resources.

All FA will be assessed and selected according to the criteria previously approved by MC.

Please note that no fundamental modification of your project proposal is allowed between the Concept Note and the Full Application phases, in terms of objectives, results and targeted indicators.

Just as well, please be aware that partnership may not change between the Concept Note and the Full Application phases. Only modifications generated by legislative changes, where the powers, prerogatives and liabilities of the beneficiary concerned are taken over by the legal successor (i.e. reorganisation/restructuring etc.), may be accepted. **Also, the estimated budget for your intervention in the FA should suffer modification of maximum + / -10% as opposed to your estimations within the CN, and up to the limit set by programme.**

The assessment of FA will be carried out in two steps:

First, administrative and eligibility check³⁰ carried out by internal assessors from the Joint Secretariat and InfoPoints. The purpose of the administrative and eligibility check is to verify that the Full Application fulfils the minimum requirements of the Programme.

If not all requirements are complied with, the project proposal will be deemed ineligible and a quality appraisal will not be undertaken. The Lead Applicant will be notified.

Where there is a ground not very clear to reject the Full Application, the JS may decide to ask for supplementary information or clarifications to the Lead Applicant, in the administrative and eligibility check. The Lead Applicant will be invited to submit this information within a deadline of *maximum 10 working days*. Supplementary information/clarification will be requested only once during the formal assessment process.

³⁰ The assessment grid for the FA administrative assessment is presented in ANNEX VII.3 - FA Administrative and eligibility grid.

In case the Lead Applicant doesn't provide the supplementary information, documents or clarification within the deadline as required, the Full Application will be automatically rejected. Whereas the documents/clarifications submitted are not satisfactory, or prove incompliance with the formal and eligibility requirements, the FA application shall be deemed rejected.

In case the proposal is not fully compliant, as for instance in the case of the costs limitations (criteria B12÷B16), the project proposal will be passed for quality assessment under the condition that the necessary budget-cuts³¹ will be made in the quality assessment phase.

We draw your attention that, in compliance with the set eligibility criteria, the following documents shall be submitted with the Full Application form, by the given deadline. If any of the following is not submitted, the application will be subject for rejection:

- **Partnership declaration**, signed and stamped by all involved parties/entities (see Annex VI.1),
- **Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration**³² (see Annex V.3 for the Concept Note / Annex VI.2 for Full Application).
- In case of Romanian applicants:
Justifying document stating the method of representation (according to the national legislation).
- In case of Hungarian applicants:
Original specimen of signature containing the method of representation of the legally authorized representative(s) of the applicant organizations/institutions certified by a public notary;
- **Letter of empowerment (if the case)**,
For RO applicants: signed and stamped by the legal representative of the applicant institution;
For HU applicants: certified by a public notary .

Second step, the **quality assessment**³³ is carried out by external assessors contracted by

³¹ If during the assessment, an assessor considers that a cost is non-eligible, it will propose budget-cuts, and the project will be approved under condition. So, the approved budget will not contain non-eligible costs.

³² The Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration covers the following facts:

- *Reality of the data provided within the application*
- *Applicants do not fall into any of the categories for which shall be excluded from participation in calls for proposals, according to EU Financial Regulation 966/2012. The document will be provided by all partners, signed and stamped.*
- *Applicants commit themselves and the activities.*
- *Conformity regarding the double financing of the operations are enclosed;*
- *Applicant(s) VAT status are enclosed;*
- *Possible generated revenues are enclosed;*
- *Partners contribution to the project's budget;*
- *Public funds have not been received in the previous 5 years before the submission deadline for the same operations/projects in terms of objectives, activities and results.*
- *Compliance with the obligation on ensuring project sustainability and its operation for at least 5 years after the financial closure of the project;*
- *Compliance with the horizontal principles and contribution to the objectives of the EUSDR.*

the MA.

IMPORTANT!!!! PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE MATURITY OF YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL IS ASSESSED EXCLUSEVILY IN THE FULL APPLICATION PHASE.

The relevance and the strategical character of your project idea are only assessed in the Concept Note phase.

Regarding the quality assessment of FA, each application will be scored against technical and financial assessment criteria and given a maximum score of 100 points.

If certain information is not very clear, supplementary clarifications, but not completions, will be requested only once during the quality assessment. The Lead Applicant is invited to submit this information within a deadline of maximum 5 working days.

In case the Lead Applicant does not provide the supplementary clarification within the deadline as required, the Full Application will be assessed based on the initial information.

Only projects with a score of at least 65 points (out of a total of 100) will be proposed for approval.

Projects implementing positive specific measures to clearly promote of horizontal themes³⁴ shall get higher score during assessment!

The Full Application, selected to be supported for financing, is approved by the Monitoring Committee. The decision of the MC is communicated, in writing, by the JS to the Lead Applicant.

The best Full Applications will be therefore selected to be supported for financing under this Call.

4.3 SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

4.3.1. Selection of the CN

The highest scored Concept Notes will be proposed for financing, under the condition that they obtain at least the minimum set scores (65 points – overall; 50 points – for the strategic criteria) for the quality assessment also, their budgets shall contain only eligible expenses which do not exceed the limit set forth for the present Call.

Based on the ranking list made by JS, the MC makes decision on financing projects. The selection of the Concept Notes will be finalised after JS conducts the checks and calculations for ensuring that the condition stipulated in the approved CP on ensuring a *balanced allocation of funds among the 8 eligible counties* is respected (taking into account ALL the Calls for proposals for flagship

³³ The assessment grid for the FA quality assessment is presented in ANNEX VII.4 - FA Quality assessment grid.

³⁴ Accomplishing the minimum requirements of law in the fields of promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women and sustainable development is mandatory and will not get higher score.

projects), depending on the *total projects estimated budgets* (see Annex V.4). The admitted variation is of +/- 10%, considering the maximum 11,815,000.00 ERDF estimated allocation per county.

In case the maximum limit is exceeded in one or more counties, the budgets of project parts of those counties will be decreased proportionally to their share to the total budget per county.

Those budget cuts will be approved as conditions by the MC.

The final list of Concept Notes³⁵, selected to be supported for financing under each Ip, is approved by the Monitoring Committee.

After the MC decision (approval, approval with condition, rejection, reserve list) the MA/JS notifies the Lead Applicants about the decision of the MC. If the budget cut is a condition, during the pre-contracting phase they have to adjust their budget accordingly.

There are two options provided:

1. to increase their own contribution to compensate for the oversized ERDF, or
2. to manage the project in the limits of a decreased budget and adapt the full application accordingly

However, the modifications shall not affect the results and/or the output indicators described in the project proposal.

A dedicated subsidy contract will be concluded for each Concept Note, regarding the development of the Full Applications. With a total maximum budget of 350,000 EUR and maximum 6 months duration of implementation for each contract, this process is designed to lead to mature, complex flagship project proposals, including all relevant supporting documentation.

In case a Concept Note contracting fails, the next one from the reserve list under the given Ip, if any, shall be invited to move forward and enter the contracting phase.

In the situation the *reserve* also fails for contracting purposes, and there is no alternative under the reserve list, the amount shall be automatically transferred to Open Calls.

The reserve list contains Concept Notes which have obtained the minimum total score of 65 points (out of 100) per total and minimum 50 points (out of 80) for the strategic criteria, but due to limited available budget of the Call, cannot be proposed for financing.

The projects which have scored less than 65 points (out of 100) per total and/or less than 50 points (out of 80) for the strategic criteria in the CN phase, are considered rejected.

³⁵ At the proposal of the Joint Secretariat and Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee should decide to create a reserve list. Any project that has reached the minimum thresholds mentioned above can be included on the reserve list.

The list of Concept Notes proposed for financing shall be approved at the first meeting of the Monitoring Committee, organized following the completion of the assessment process.

Within maximum 3 working days after the decision of MC, the JS sends notification letters to all the Lead Applicants who have submitted project proposals which were analysed within the respective assessment session and were successful. For applicants whose proposals were put on reserve list or rejected, the deadline for communication is 5 working days from the MC decision.

The decision of the Monitoring Committee is followed by the pre-contractual phase and further MA and JS shall begin the contracting process, in order to conclude the contracts.

As a general rule, during the contracting stage the JS shall ensure all communication with beneficiaries in view of gathering all necessary supporting documents.

Since the focus on 2014-2020 period is on the results, please note that if the on-going analysis during the selection process shows that the programme's indicators (in theory, by contracting) are tackled in a percent of at least 110%, so that the indicators from the Performance framework are secured (including the financial ones), the Monitoring Committee may decide to stop contracting although the financial allocation was not entirely reached.

4.3.2. Selection of the FA

The Full Applications are included in the assessment process in a continuous manner. Therefore, each FA recommended for funding / rejected as a result of the quality assessment, shall be submitted also in continuous manner to the Monitoring Committee for approval, in written procedure. The approach will ensure an efficient decision-making process, in terms of time and resources.

For Full Application phase, the projects proposed for financing are those projects which have obtained the minimum score (65 points) in the quality assessment and whose budgets contain eligible expenses which do not exceed the limit set forth for the present Call.

Also, having in mind that a balanced allocation of funds is to be ensured among the eight eligible counties, the final selection of projects will be conditioned by the estimate county allocation of € 11.815.000, 00. Therefore, as the estimated total budget for the intervention in the FA is allowed to suffer modification of maximum 10% as opposed to the estimations within the CN, and up to the limit set by Programme and in case, due to these deviations, the county allocation is overtaken, the related amounts will be cut proportionally from the respective projects budgets. The selection of the project proposals will be therefore conditioned.

The projects which have scored less than 65 points in the FA phase are deemed rejected.

The decision of the Monitoring Committee is followed by the pre-contractual phase and further MA and JS shall begin the contracting process, in order to conclude the contracts.

The same logic applies as concerns communication from JS to Lead Applicants as above.

Whereas there are firm recommendations of the external assessors impacting / conditioning the approval and contracting of a FA, the respective project may be put forth for approval by the MC “under conditions”. The MC decision shall also stipulate the deadline when conditions must be met, and this shall not exceed 3 months after the notification for approval of the FA. Contracting of such project may occur only when these conditions are fully satisfied.

If, for any reason, the FA fails to be contracted, the full amounts shall be automatically made available to Open Calls.

4.4 COMPLAINTS

In accordance with Art 74(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 “Member States shall ensure that effective arrangements for the examination of complaints concerning the ESIF are in place”.

The procedure established will cover complaints against decisions taken by the Programme during the project assessment and selection process, with the purpose of effectively examining complaints.

The decision of the MC can be appealed by the applicants, by sending the notification to the MA. Only the project’s Lead Applicant as the one representing the project partnership affected by the funding decision is entitled to file a complaint. It is therefore the task of the Lead Applicant to collect and bring forward the complaint reasons from all project applicants.

The complaint must be submitted by the Lead Applicant in no more than 10 working days from the date of receiving the rejection letter sent by the JS. Any complaint received later than 10 working days will not be taken into consideration.

The complaints shall be formulated in respect to the provisions of the procedure presented below. The template of the complaint is attached to this guide (please see Annex X.3).

The complaint should be lodged in writing by e-mail, mail or fax to the MA, and may only be lodged against the following criteria:

- ⇒ The outcomes of the quality assessment of the project proposal (CN or FA phase) do not correspond to the information provided by the Lead Applicant;
- ⇒ The project assessment and selection process failed to comply with specific procedures laid down.

The complaint shall include:

- a. name and address of the Lead Applicant;
- b. reference number of the project proposal which is a subject of the complaint;
- c. clearly indicated reasons and justification for the complaint, including listing of all elements of the assessment which are being complaint and/or failures in adherence with procedures limited to those criteria mentioned above;
- d. signature of the legal representative of the Lead Applicant;

e. any supporting documents;

- ✓ the relevant documentation shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting the complaint and may not alter the quality or content of the assessed project proposal;

No other grounds for the complaint than indicated above will be taken into account during the complaint procedure.

A complaint will be rejected without further examination if submitted after the deadline set above or if the formal requirements are not observed. Should the complaint be rejected for this reason, the MA conveys this information within 5 working days to the Lead Applicant.

Within maximum 10 working days after the receipt of the complaint the MA confirms to the Lead Applicant in writing having received the complaint. The complaint will then be examined by the MA assisted by the JS on the basis of the information brought forward by the Lead Applicant in the complaint, and technical examination will be performed regarding the merit of the complaint. Then, the complaint is forwarded to the Complaint Panel to be convened for this purpose by the Head of the MA.

The members of the Complaint Panel are nominated by the MA, ensuring impartiality of members of the Complaint Panel towards the case under review. Meetings of the Complaint Panel are called by the Head of the MA, and the panel examines the complaint based on:

- the complaint, with the technical examination by the MA;
- the original project proposal and all supporting documents;
- all documents relating to the assessment of the project proposal;
- any other document requested by the Members of the Complaint Panel relevant to the complaint.

The MA and the JS are invited to the meeting to present the position of the technical examination and the Lead Applicant may also be invited for a hearing.

The decision if the complaint is justified or needs to be rejected is taken by the Complaint Panel, desirably by consensus. However, if consensus cannot be reached, the decision shall be deemed adopted if at least 2/3 of the members present at the meeting agree with it.

In case it is justified, the case will be sent back to the Monitoring Committee to review the project application and its assessment. The MA communicates the decision of the Complaint Panel to the Lead Applicant within 10 working days.

The decision of the Complaint Panel is final, binding to all parties and not subject of any further complaint proceedings within the Programme based on the same grounds and in the same Phase of the procedure.

The complaint procedure - from the receipt of the complaint by the MA to the communication of the Complaint Panel's decision to the Lead Applicant - should be resolved within maximum 90 calendar days.

Any attempt to obtain confidential information or to influence the Programme'

structures and/or the members of the Complaint Panel within the review process will lead to your disqualification!

The clarifications provided in the review phase cannot bring new elements that would alter the initial content of the Application Form.

You will be excluded in case it is proven that you are guilty of serious misleading of the Assessment Working Group / Complaint Panel by providing false information, that are being taken into consideration in the assessment and selection / review process or if you did not inform the Assessment Working Group / Complaint Panel on issues that would have led to a different decision related to your application(s).

5. Contracting

5.1 Pre-Contractual conditions

The process of projects' assessment and selection ends with the Monitoring Committee's decision regarding the selected / rejected projects³⁶. Following the issuance of the said decision, the MA and JS shall begin the contracting process.

As a general rule, during the contracting stage the JS shall ensure all communication with beneficiaries in view of gathering all necessary supporting documents and provide all the support to them in order to perform this task. The JS shall make sure that all the documents received from the beneficiaries comply with the requirements of the GfA, before submitting it to the MA.

Within 3 working days from the issuance of the decision of the MC for the selected projects, the JS will notify the beneficiaries upon the selection of their projects. For the Beneficiaries whose projects have been rejected, the term for sending the notification will be of maximum 5 working days. At the same time, JS shall update in the eMS the status of the projects.

Following the decision of the MC regarding the selected projects, JS shall perform on site visits to all Lead Beneficiaries and the selected project beneficiaries for the purpose of establishing the coherence of the Application Form with the actual state of fact at beneficiary's premises and in order to prevent contracting errors or frauds. On-site visits shall be performed to:

- all Lead Beneficiaries and, as the case may be, to the project beneficiaries, based on a risk analysis, and
- to all Beneficiaries, regardless their quality within the project, having investment activities and expenses.

During the pre-contracting stage, respectively the preparation phase of the on-site visits, recommendations of the Assessment Working Group shall be introduced, and the JS shall request a declaration regarding the beneficiaries' acceptance that JS could operate budgetary adjustments, e.g. recommendations of the Assessment Working Group regarding the project, budget cuts, correction of arithmetical errors etc., if applicable, as well as additional contracting documentation, according to the relevant procedure. The beneficiaries shall upload into eMS the documents requested by the JS. During the on-site visits, the JS shall verify the conformity of uploaded documents with the original-ones.

Whereas a project has been put forth for approval by the MC "under conditions" for FA phase, whilst the MC decision shall also stipulate the deadline when conditions must be met (not exceeding 3 months from the JS' notification), pre-contracting of such project shall also imply verification of whether these conditions are fully satisfied, in the said deadline.

In order to satisfy itself of the sound management of the contracting process, at any stage the MA may request additional documents from the beneficiary. The JS must ensure that the documents are submitted to the MA in due time according to specific MA requirements.

³⁶ Including projects on reserve list, for CN.

The contract models annexed to this Guide are only indicative; the final version of all contracts will be presented to the beneficiaries of the selected projects in the pre-contractual phase.

5.2 Contracting

The JS shall prepare and submit to the MA the subsidy contracts with Lead Beneficiaries, within 15 working days after the date of the on-site visit/ receiving the complete contracting documentations.

The subsidy contracts will be signed by the MA and by the Lead Beneficiaries, while the co-financing contracts will be signed by MRDPAEF and Romanian Beneficiaries. For Hungarian beneficiaries, on behalf of the Prime Minister's office, the PMO / SZPO will sign co-financing contract.

Following the signature of financing contracts by the MA's representative, the contracts will be sent to JS, in order to be signed by Lead Beneficiaries/ Beneficiaries.

After the signature of the financing contracts by both parties:

- an original copy and the annexes thereto shall be given to the Beneficiary, based on delivery and receiving protocol / cover letter.
- an original copy, with MA internal endorsements, and the annexes thereto shall be sent to MA, within 3 working days, after the signature of contract by the Beneficiary / JS receives the signed contract from the Beneficiary.
- an original copy remains to the JS, who also has the obligation to archive all contracting documentation.

NOTE: The Beneficiary will be at all times obliged to present for audit/control purposes all files, documents and data about the project for the both stages: Concept Note – contract and Full Application - contract.

In case of major differences between the technical project and the Feasibility study/DAIW, it is possible to be required the repayment of part of amounts received under Concept Note stage.

6. Annexes

I. FACT SHEETS ON INVESTMENTS PRIORITIES AFFERENT TO THE PRESENT CALL

- 1. Fact Sheet 2_7b**
- 2. TEN-T Analysis**

II. Programme' Performance Framework and Environmental Indicators

III. Programme general rules on eligibility of expenditure (including General Matrix of costs)

IV. eMS – Application Instructions

V. CONCEPT NOTE

Annex 0 Application Form

Annex 1 Pre-Agreement template

Annex 2 Compliance letter

Annex 3 Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration

Annex 4 Total project estimated budget template

Annex 5 Programme' output indicators – project commitment

Annex 6 Environmental indicators

Annex 7 Associated Partner Declaration

Annex 8 Preliminary declaration of construction works

Annex 9 Affidavit in case of land acquisition

Annex 10 Template MMP for RO applicants

Annex 11 Table of content

VI. FULL APPLICATION

Annex 0 Application Form

Annex 1 Partnership Declaration template

Annex 2 Project (Lead) Applicant Declaration

Annex 3 Feasibility Study – template (where the case)

Annex 4 Documentation for Approval of Intervention Works – template (where the case)

Annex 5 Environmental indicators

Annex 6 Associated Partner Declaration

Annex 7 Table of content

VII. Assessment grids

VIII. Partnership Agreement templates

IX. Framework subsidy contracts

X. Other

1. List of abbreviations & Glossary of terms

2. Relevant regulatory framework

3. Complaint template