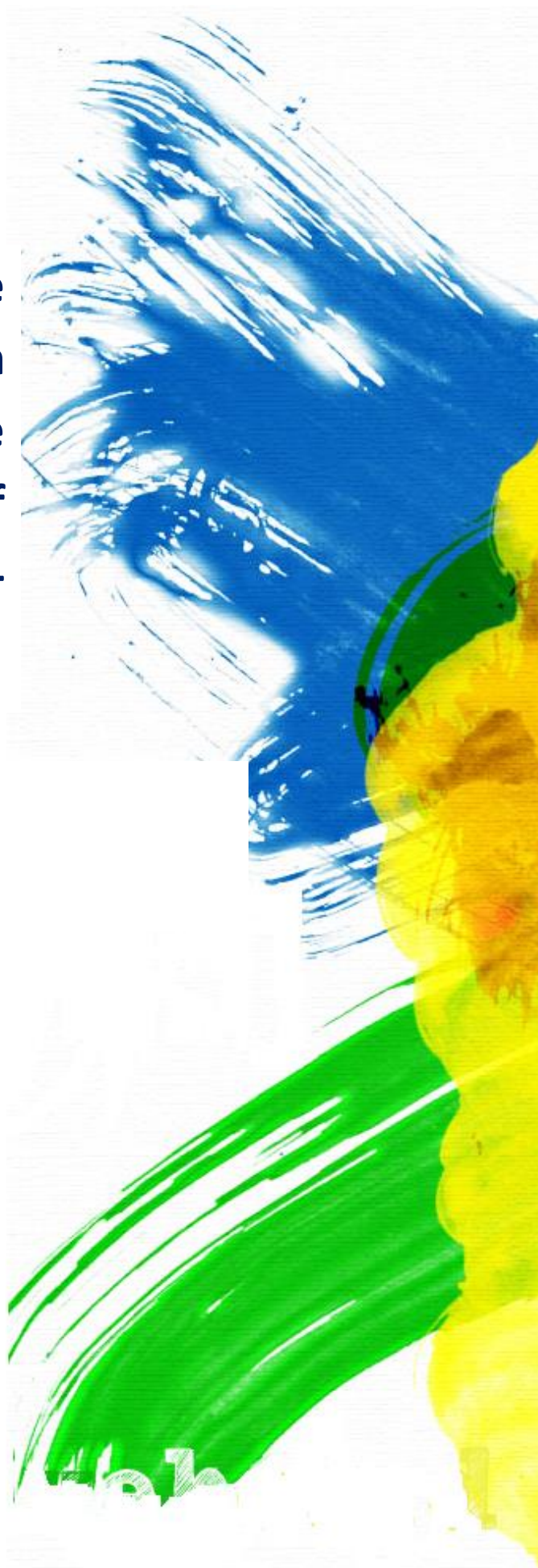


“Evaluation of the communication activity in order to support the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania- Hungary Programme”

SYNTHESIS

October 2017



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Glossary

BRECO	Regional Office for the Cross-Border Cooperation for the Romanian-Hungarian Border Oradea
CA	Contracting Authority
CfP	Call for proposal
eMS	"Electronic Monitoring System" platform
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequent Asked Questions
FG	Focus Group
Gantt	Calendar of activities
IR	Inception Report
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme
MC	Monitoring Committee
MRDPAFE	Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds
NA	National Authority of the Programme from Hungary
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TO	Technical Offer
ToR	Terms of Reference
VIM	Visual Identity Manual

1. Information about the contract

Title of the contract:	Evaluation of the communication strategy in support of potential project beneficiaries for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme
Number of the contract:	246/26.06.2017
Beneficiary:	Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds
Scope of the contract:	Performing the evaluation of the communication activity in support of the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme
Provider:	SC ACZ Consulting SRL
Implementation period:	29.06.2017 – 30.11.2017

The contract was concluded for a period of 5 months from the day following the provision of the performance guarantee of the contract and includes:

- 3 months for implementing the contract activities:
- 2 months required only for the approval of final deliverables and for the final payment within the contract

Objectives of the contract

1. analysis of the degree of information regarding the identity of Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary Programme and the funding opportunities provided.
2. assessing the quality of the documents used for information, assessing the degree of satisfaction of the direct potential beneficiaries of the programme regarding the work carried out by the management structures of the programme and comparing the results of the evaluation in the eight counties of the eligible area.
3. developing a set of useful recommendations for the next information sessions, including what is foreseen for the next period.

2. Methodological details

2.1. Methodological aspects for the desk research

The desk research conducted within the contract is referring, on the one hand to the literature review, which represented the basic starting point for the analyzes that were carried out within the contract, as well as to the analysis of the materials related to the communication activities, transmitted by the programme authorities. The purpose of this activity was to develop a set of useful recommendations for the following information sessions, including the recommendations that are foreseen for the next period.

The materials submitted by programme authorities and analyzed by the team of experts are: the informative materials used to promote the programme (infographics, leaflets, newsletters, press releases, Info Days Agendas and Workshops), the Annual Implementation Reports of the programme, the programme Communication Strategy, the approved version of the Interreg VA Romania-Hungary Programme, the Visual Identity Manual.

We specify that the materials transmitted by the programme authorities and analyzed by the Consultant in the desk research were considered sufficient to formulate the preliminary conclusions that contribute to the achievement of the research objectives as defined in the Terms of Reference:

- Assessing the quality of the documents used for the information activities;
- Developing a set of useful recommendations for the information sessions, including what is foreseen for the activity of the next period.

The preliminary results obtained from the desk research are further validated by the results and findings obtained in the field research, respectively by applying the questionnaires among the potential direct beneficiaries of the programme, by conducting the interviews with potential beneficiaries and by organizing the Focus Group with the authorities involved in the management of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

2.2. Methodological aspects related to the survey

Within the contract "Evaluation of the communication activity in order to support the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme", two surveys were conducted (one among the potential beneficiaries of the Program, and the second one among the members of the Monitoring Committee of the programme) between September 5th, 2017 - September 15th, 2017, according to the calendar of activities approved through the Inception Report.

The methodology that was used for the application of the survey among the potential beneficiaries is presented below:

1. Total sample: 600 subjects were contacted, representative for the category of the potential beneficiaries (local and central public authorities, regional public authorities, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, non-governmental organizations, religious units, etc.) for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme. The respondents are potential beneficiaries from the 8 eligible counties of the programme, namely: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș (from Romania) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád (from Hungary).

2. Minimum number of completed questionnaires necessary for the analysis: minimum 180 questionnaires at the level of the eligible Programme area, covering all the categories of potential beneficiaries in each eligible county

3. Creating a database of potential beneficiaries for sending the questionnaires: The provider has built a database of 773 potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, ensuring that all the categories of potential beneficiaries are included in this database, while ensuring the coverage of the entire eligible territory of the programme.

4. The method to apply the questionnaires: The questionnaires were applied on-line, by sending them to the representatives of the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

ACZ Consulting uploaded the questionnaire on its web page, which created the possibility to fill in the questionnaires on-line and to automatically transmit the answers indicated in the questionnaires to an online centralized database managed by the Provider on its server. After uploading the questionnaire on its webpage, the Provider sent e-mails to the potential beneficiaries included in the created database, which shortly presented the role of the survey, as well as the invitation to fill in the questionnaire at the indicated link. The questionnaires were developed in the three languages of the programme (English, Romanian, Hungarian) in order to facilitate its completion by the potential beneficiaries from both countries.

5. Characteristics of the questionnaire: the questionnaires proposed to be used within the survey have the following characteristics:

- The questionnaires aim at collecting both subjective data (opinions and perceptions of potential beneficiaries on different aspects related to the communication activities), as well as collecting objective data or identification data (age, level of education of respondents, etc.), so as to allow the correlations between the variables;
- Considering the form of the questions, the questionnaire contains both closed and open questions. The closed questions are both dichotomic (yes / no) questions and multiple pre-coded questions that provide a progressive scale of responses.
- The questionnaire addresses several topics of interest specific to the communication activities.

6. Creating the SPSS database: as a result of applying the questionnaires for the minimum sample of respondents established for the quantitative research, the data and information collected through the questionnaires were downloaded into a centralized SPSS database. Based on the data collected through the questionnaires and downloaded in the SPSS database, the results and conclusions obtained from the quantitative research under the contract were drafted.

The methodology that was used for the application of the survey among the members of the Monitoring Committee of the programme is presented below:

1. Total sample: 48 institutions / organizations, members of the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

2. Creating a database of potential respondents to whom the questionnaires were transmitted: The Provider built a database of 48 members of the Monitoring Committee, representatives of institutions/organizations from Romania (25), Hungary (22) and the European Commission (1).

3. Distribution of the questionnaires: ACZ Consulting transmitted 48 emails, distributed as follows:

- 25 questionnaires to institutions / organizations in Romania;
- 22 questionnaires to institutions / organizations in Hungary;
- 1 questionnaire to the European Commission.

4. The method to apply the questionnaires: The questionnaires were applied on-line, by sending them to the representatives of the member institutions / organizations within the MC of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

ACZ Consulting uploaded the questionnaire on its website, which offered the possibility to complete it on-line and to automatically transmit the answers indicated in the completed questionnaires to an online centralized database managed by the Provider on its server. After uploading the questionnaire on its webpage, the Provider sent e-mails to the MC members included in the created database, which contained a brief presentation of the role of the survey conducted, as well as the invitation to fill in the questionnaire on the specified link. The questionnaire was developed in English (the official language of the programme) to facilitate its completion by the MC members from both countries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme and by the representative of the European Commission.

5. Characteristics of the questionnaire: the questionnaire proposed to be used within the survey has the following characteristics:

- Considering the form of the questions, the questionnaire contains both closed and open questions. The closed questions are both dichotomic (yes / no) questions and multiple pre-coded questions that provide a progressive scale of responses.
- The questionnaire addresses several topics of interest specific to the communication

activities.

6. Creating the SPSS database: as a result of applying the questionnaires, the data and information collected through the questionnaires were downloaded into a centralized SPSS database. Based on the data collected through the questionnaires and downloaded in the SPSS database, the results and conclusions obtained from the quantitative research among the MC members were drafted.

2.3 Methodological aspects for conducting the interviews

Within the contract "Evaluation of the communication activity in order to support the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme", there were conducted interviews with the potential beneficiaries, between September 5th, 2017 - September 15th, 2017.

1. **The sample (main list and reserve list):** 48 entities from the categories of potential direct beneficiaries of the programme. As no funding contracts were signed within this programme at the time of this evaluation, the key actors proposed to participate in the interviews were selected from the database of project ideas transmitted by the JS, completed within the project generation sessions organized so far, taking into account the fact that they match with the categories of eligible beneficiaries under the various intervention priorities of the programme.
2. **Distribution of interviews:** all 8 counties in the eligible area of the programme were targeted, and for each county at least one interview was conducted, being covered all the main categories of potential beneficiaries, namely: representatives of public authorities, representatives of NGOs, representatives of other categories of beneficiaries.
3. **Method of selecting the entities included in the sample:** There were selected key organizations who have participated in the sessions for generating project ideas organized within the programme. In the lists where the information was available, the interviewees were selected from the entities which had a budget established and a partner for the project idea, these elements indicating a high degree of maturity and a greater likelihood of materializing the project idea in a grant application
4. **Justifying the number of interviews and distribution by counties:** it was planned to ensure an equal distribution of the interviews at the level of the eight counties in the eligible area, ensuring the representativeness of each category of potential beneficiaries, in order to collect the most relevant answers.
5. **Method of realizing the interviews:** the interviews were conducted online (via video conference or Skype); for the situations in which the participants in the main list did not have the electronic means to organize the interview, it was agreed to realize the interview by telephone. The Provider transmitted prior to the interview an address signed by the Managing Authority of the programme, explaining the purpose of the research, which was accompanied by the interview grid developed within the contract.

2.4 Methodological aspects for the organization of the Focus Group

Within the contract "Evaluation of the communication activity in order to support the potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme", there was held a Focus Group with the authorities managing the programme, established for 27th of September 2017.

1. **Role of the Focus Group:** The provider proposed to organize a focus group that brought together the representatives of the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat in order to present the results of the communication activities evaluation, obtained by applying the questionnaires and conducting the interviews with potential beneficiaries of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary

Programme. Also, the main objectives of this focus group are:

- Identifying the programme managing structures' opinion on ensuring the correct information regarding the identity of the programme and the opportunities offered in the eligible area of the programme;
- Identifying the programme managing structures' opinion on how to transmit information on ensuring the economic and social impact of the projects proposed for funding;
- Assessing the degree of satisfaction towards the press relations activities of the entities with attributions in the implementation of the programme;
- Analyzing the opinion of the programme managing structures on how to identify and use the favorite information channels: online - email, newsletter, site, social media / events, press conference, briefings, training seminars etc.

2. Organization of the Focus group: The focus group is organized on a date previously agreed with the Contracting Authority and it will be held on-line (Skype / videoconferencing system).

ACZ Consulting has already developed a proposal for the Focus Group grid which represents the starting point for the Focus Group discussions.

3. Preliminary results obtained from the research

3.1. The desk research

3.1.1. The analysis of the programme's documents

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme is regulated, in what concern the communication activities, by documents that define the objectives proposed for the information and communication actions.	The existing documents are clear, have well-defined objectives and present concrete measures to be taken in the field of communication.	In general, it is recommended that the programme documents / reports, where possible, present the results of the communication activities carried out with a greater level of detail.
2. The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme documents present indicators for the communication activities, both in terms of proposed and achieved values.	The objectives established at the level of the programme documents are easy to monitor and are designed to allow the presentation of the implementation stage of the communication activities carried out by the programme's structures.	
3. Programme documents provide detailed information on the proposed and implemented communication activities.	From a qualitative point of view, the programme documents create the necessary framework for focusing the communication activities to the areas of interest for all the potential	

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
	stakeholders.	
4. At the level of the programme documents, different target group categories are addressed by the communication activities carried out within the programme are approached.	The differentiated presentation of the communication activities (including proposed and achieved indicators) per stakeholder categories allows the orientation of the information and communication measures in the directions in which there is a need and interest.	

3.1.2. The analysis of the events organized within the programme

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. The information sessions were organized on the same topics both in Romania and Hungary.	Information and communication events within the programme were organized in a non-discriminatory manner, addressing the same topics of discussion and using the same presentations for potential beneficiaries in the two eligible countries.	The information and communication activities organized under the programme should continue to be held in a permanent way and the programme authorities should continue to provide individual answers to certain requests from the potential beneficiaries.
2. The organizing period of these events was mainly focused around two important moments (February 2017 and June 2017), represented by the launch of the two	The information sessions were organized at key moments where the transmission of information to potential beneficiaries of the programme was of high interest and relevance. Thus, it is noted that the programme authorities	

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
calls for projects.	ensure the process of informing the potential beneficiaries in a targeted way and taking into account the needs of the potential beneficiaries.	
3. There were organized both information and communication events with potential beneficiaries of the programme focused around a specific theme (launch of project calls), as well as project generation sessions or eMS trainings.	The information and communication within the programme has been carried out both at specific moments, during the planned events, as well as in ad-hoc or continuously, whenever it was needed or requested by the potential beneficiaries (individual meetings with them, support provided through online channels or by phone).	
4. The information and communication events were organized in all the counties in the eligible area of the programme, ensuring the participation of all the categories of potential eligible beneficiaries.	From the perspective of the coverage of the counties in the eligible area of the programme, it is observed that there is a tendency for the highest level of participation in the county where the information events are held (valid both for Romania and for Hungary), without being able to conclude that some counties have a higher participation than others.	
5. The Info Points in Hungary have been actively involved in the dissemination and communication of the programme information.	The Info Points have an important role in the implementation of the communication activities in the eligible area of the programme in Hungary. The Info Points are	

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
	<p>established within each county and operate in three counties starting with spring of 2017, and the Info Point in Debrecen is functioning from September 2017. The Info Points were involved, under the coordination of JS, in organizing events on the Hungarian side of the border in the context of 2nd round of Calls for proposal, in organizing the annual event dedicated to the European Cooperation Day 2017 and in providing information to the potential beneficiaries in Hungary, when requested.</p>	
<p>6. An analysis conducted at the level of potential eligible beneficiaries participating in events shows that the local/county authorities/administrations and their institutions are the most recurrent categories of beneficiaries with the highest representation in all the information sessions organized under the programme.</p>	<p>The potential beneficiaries represented by the public authorities showed the highest level of interest for formal communication represented by the organization of official information and communication events within the programme.</p>	

3.1.3. The analysis of information and communication materials

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. Maximum score was given for the following tools used in the communication activities, considering the 5 criteria analyzed (Graphics and visual elements, Clarity of the formulation, Layout of the information / structure of the instrument, Facilitation of the message sent to the reader, Utility of the information presented in terms of the desired results achieved): poster; infographics; stickers; newsletter; online press releases; agendas of the organized events.	The posters, infographics, stickers, newsletters, online press releases, event agendas used within the programme comply with the MIV's visual identity rules and are elaborated and structured in an optimal way, and are relevant and present interest to the target audience.	Not applicable.
2. The final score awarded after the evaluation of the leaflet is 4 (the maximum being 5), this tool being underscored at the criteria: Layout of the information / structure of the instrument; The understanding of the message sent to the reader; The usefulness of the information presented in terms of the desired results achieved.	The flyer is a useful tool for promoting the types of investments/ projects supported through the programme, which has as its target group, thorough its nature, the general public. The information contained in the flyer is relevant but far too detailed, it is necessary to sort it so that it is easier for the reader to understand the message.	It is recommended to simplify the information presented in the leaflet by removing the following types of information that is not widely known / understood by the general public: the result and output indicators specific to each Investment Priority; the section "What does a quality project mean?" Increase the font size used for the rest of the text in the flyer.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
3. The final score awarded after the evaluation of the invitations to the organized events is 4,8 (the maximum being 5), this tool being underscored at the criterion: Clarity of the formulation.	The invitations to participate in the events are organized in an appropriate manner in terms of the structure and type of information transmitted. Some minor spelling errors have been identified in the text of the documents.	Carrying out an additional verification of the document text before transmitting it to the invited participants, in terms of spoken language and spelling.

3.1.4. The analysis of the online instruments

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. The findings related to the evaluation of the official website of the programme can be consulted in the text box "General evaluation" in point 1 of this subchapter.	The official website of the programme presents the information of interest in a complete and correct way using attractive graphics and visual tools that capture the reader's attention. Certain sections of the website can be optimized in terms of the structure of the information presented to facilitate their understanding by the reader. Also, certain features of the website can be improved, such as the timing of information	To optimize how the information is presented on the official website of the programme, the following is recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The programme priorities in the Programme section - Priority Axes could be presented using toggle content (the name of all the investment priorities would first appear on the page and the reader would click on the priority interest and would open under the title only the interest for that priority). They might also include a link to the specific infographic; – Under the sections Legislation RO and Legislation HU it would also be helpful to include links to those documents so that they are easily accessible to readers; – The Gallery section - Photos / Video of the events could be structured using toggle content to reduce the loading and scrolling time of the page (in this version of the website it is expected to upload all the photos from the events in order to browse the page); – The News and Events section should be

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
	and communication events.	<p>completed with a sub-section (Online registration of the participants to the events) to increase the awareness of this tool among website readers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The button and the search field should be positioned in the header of the page to make it more visible for the website readers; - The size of the main page slider should be reduced - when opening the website, it would be advisable for the reader to directly view the three link sections now positioned under the main slider; - The font color for "Details" on the main slider should be changed because the current version of the website is confused with the background color (blue); - The button commands to ensure the accessibility of people with disabilities should be translated into Romanian and Hungarian for the respective versions of the website; <p>It is recommended that the calendar of events is updated, both by indicating the events organized so far, as well as the events planned for the next month, i.e. data of particular significance (example of launching and closing a Call for projects).</p> <p>It is recommended to update the following sections so that information and documents are provided in a unitary way in the three languages in which the sections of the website are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documents - EU legislation: the first document on State aid guidelines is missing in Romanian and Hungarian languages - Documents - eMS documents: the last document from PPT presentations is missing in Romanian and Hungarian languages - Media: In English and Hungarian, fewer consultation documents are available compared to the Romanian version of the page
2. The findings	The information	In order to facilitate the understanding and access to

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
related to the evaluation of the MA website are presented in the text box "General evaluation" in point 2 of this subchapter.	presented at the level of the MA website is comprehensive and the level of detail and transparency is appropriate. The way information is structured and displayed, however, requires improvements to facilitate the understanding of information and identifying information of interest for the readers.	information contained on the page, the following web site updates are recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it should exist a navigation menu or at least a page structure presented in the header that includes links, direct to the page, to various sections of interest for the reader; - it would be useful to create an archive of information in the <i>News</i> and <i>News and Events</i> sections for 2015, 2016; - The information presented in the News sections should be structured on topics to facilitate an easier browsing (e.g.: Call for Proposals, Programme Implementation, Other); - The information should also be available in English (programme implementation language).
3. The findings related to the evaluation of the Facebook page of the programme can be consulted in the text box "General evaluation" in point 3 of this subchapter	The Facebook page of the programme is constantly updated and provides information of great interest on the programme's activities to the followers, with a focus on the future to the increase in the number of followers.	It is recommended to include a link to the programme's Facebook page in the newsletters, in the header of the page under the programme logo and in the footer before the slogan of the programme, together with a short impact text such as: "Be always informed about Interreg V-A Romania- Hungary!" followed by the Facebook symbol, which is clicked through the Facebook link of the programme.
4. Information on the programme can also be found on	Due to the construction of the URL: 2014.huro-cbc.eu, the website is easily confused with	It is recommended to close the 2014.huro-cbc.eu website as it is important for the public to be directed and to access the official website of the programme in order to guarantee full and accurate information about the activities of the programme.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
the 2014.huro-cbc.eu website, which was created by the managing authorities of the previous Hungary-Romania Cooperation Programme.	an official website of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme by the general public.	If the domain administrator (the person who created the website) cannot be contacted, it is recommended to contact the domain vendor (web domain management company) to discuss possible solutions for closing this website. Provider and contact person information can be found at https://www.whois.com/whois/huro-cbc.eu - the "Technical" section.
5. There are two platforms for identifying potential partners, one available on the official website of the programme and one on the SC (BRECO) website.	Two tools have been created successively to identify potential partners, but they have not been integrated, currently they operating individually.	In order to avoid confusion that may be created among the potential beneficiaries and considering the importance of targeting the public to the official website of the programme, it is recommended to close the existing potential partners' identification platform on the BRECO website, and to migrate the existing information to the new platform on the official website of the programme.

3.2. The survey conducted among the potential beneficiaries

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. All the categories of potential beneficiaries who responded to the questionnaire considered one of the following online communication tools to be useful: Newsletter, programme's website, Facebook programme's page. This finding is also applicable from a territorial perspective for all counties in the eligible area of the programme.	The online communication tools are preferred by most types of potential beneficiaries, from each county.	Increasing the number of newsletters and newsflashes sent to the contacts of the JS database.
2. Apart from respondents in the Chambers of commerce category, all categories of potential beneficiaries indicated promotion in written and television media as the least useful means of information and communication on the activities of the programme.	Promoting by written mass-media and local, regional and national television is not a relevant means of communication and information for the potential applicants within the programme.	Limiting or eliminating measures and actions to promote the programme through written mass-media and television media at local, regional or national level.
3. Most respondents appreciate that information on the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary programme is accessible to an average extent, from the perspective of the language and terminology	The way of presenting the information on the programme is relatively optimal, being identified a need to simplify the terminology used to improve its understanding among all potential beneficiaries.	Simplifying the way of presenting the information and the terminology used in communication and information activities (a general presentation of the interest topics in a less technical language and indication of the sources where can be consulted more detailed

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
used to present them.		information by those interested).
4. The potential beneficiaries who repeatedly access the programme's website and the Facebook page of the programme consider that the newsletter and information events organized in the territory are very useful.	It is necessary to consolidate and summarize the information provided to the potential beneficiaries through the Website and the Facebook page of the programme, through the newsletter and information events organized in the territory, in order to increase the information of the potential beneficiaries.	Continuous updating of the Website and the Facebook page of the programme, with information of interest and also the transmission of newsflashes to the JS contact database at the key moments of the programme implementation (launching a Call for proposals, publishing a corrigendum, publishing list of selected projects).
5. The average level of information on the activities developed through the programme is 6.2 (considering a scale from 1 to 10, 1 = very little informed, 10 = very well informed). The counties which recorded the lowest average level of information were Bihor and Csongrád.		
6. The programme's logo is recognized to a high or very high extent by most of the potential beneficiaries.	The measures to ensure visual identity within the programme have been effective and correctly applied.	It's not necessary.
7. The degree of knowledge of the various tools / modules available on the programme's website (the Partner Search Module; the online registration form for attending events) is higher among visitors who have visited the website multiple times,	The tools / modules existing on the programme's website (Partner Search Module, the online registration form for attending events) are not always identified by visitors at first access to the website, being necessary the increase of their visibility.	The tools could be personalized or positioned differently at the level of the website, in order to increase their visibility (for example, the module for the Partner Search could be included as a button with the text "Search partners" - similar to the one for people with disabilities, placed under the latter, visible on the

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
compared to visitors who have visited the website once.		<p>right side of the website at the opening of any page;</p> <p>At the level of the online registration platform for attending the events it may be included a pop-up window to appear when the visitor accesses the "News and Events" section, in which to be presented the events in the next 1-2 months and where the visitor to have the option to register for participation)</p>
8. The respondents to the questionnaire indicated that it would be beneficial to increase the number of field information events (information sessions, Partner Search Forums, eMS training sessions, Q&A sessions)	There is a need for continuous information shown by potential beneficiaries within the programme. Dissemination of information through communication events is considered to be very important, the potential beneficiaries being interested in attending as many of these events.	Increase the number of field information events (information sessions, Partner Search Forums, eMS training sessions, Q&A sessions).

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
9. Regarding online communication tools, the respondents to the questionnaires indicated the need to increase the access to information in national languages (Romanian and Hungarian).	A significant part of the potential beneficiaries of the programme do not have the ability to write and speak English (the official language of the programme). However, given the character of all ETC programmes, the notion of cooperation is initiated, first and foremost, from a common understanding of information and the ability to interact in a language known to all parties involved. Thus, English has not to be associated with an obstacle that should be overcome, but with a means of guaranteeing cooperation and communication between the partners involved in the implementation of the project in both countries. Increasing the knowledge of English language at the level of potential beneficiaries is a topic that is assimilated to the development of administrative capacity and can be addressed through other programmes funded through European funds.	<p>Considering that some information is already available in Romanian and Hungarian languages (e.g. all the information on the official website of the programme, the flyers), this source of information should be promoted among the potential beneficiaries who request the access to the information in the national languages.</p> <p>As far as possible, it is recommended to translate into national languages the key information for each Call for proposals (eligible types of beneficiaries, eligible activities, and eligible costs).</p>

3.3. Survey conducted among the MC members

The questionnaire applied among the members of the Monitoring Committee of the programme aimed at identifying a strategic perception regarding the adequacy of the communication activities planned at the level of the Communication Strategy and carried out within the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

The questionnaire was sent to all the members of the MC (48 representatives - members and alternates). During the research process, there were collected 13 responses from the MC members. The applied questionnaire was structured in the following sections:

1. General information about the institution / entity represented;
2. Communication and the related activities implemented within the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme;
3. The information within the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme;
4. Information about the respondent to the questionnaire.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
It is important to train the potential beneficiaries about the use of eMS, types of eligible expenditure within the programme, and lessons learned from project implementation.	It is necessary to support the potential beneficiaries by organizing repeated trainings on the use of the eMS platform and to clearly distinguish the eligible types of expenditure.	Increase the number of training sessions on using eMS and set up a dedicated module in the online helpdesk (possibly a different address from Skype) to provide answers to potential eMS users.

3.4. Interviews with the potential direct beneficiaries of the programme

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
1. The potential beneficiaries encounter difficulties in using the eMS platform, especially in relation to the specific module for filling in the budget of the project.	Particular attention has to be paid during training sessions on the use of eMS and the preparation of the budget.	Supplementing the time spent on explaining the project budget module during training sessions on the use of eMS.
2. The online helpdesk sessions via Skype are not accessible to all the categories of potential beneficiaries, especially for public authorities who can not install / use this	Considering the importance of the online communication tools, it is necessary to identify a solution that allows potential beneficiaries to access online helpdesk without the need to install applications / programs	Install a "livechat" application (a plug-in that can be installed by the administrator of the Website), that works directly on the official website of the programme.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
programme at their workplace because of the system administrator restrictions.	on the computers.	
3. From the point of view of the detail of the information communicated, the Applicant's Guideline was generally regarded as a relatively complex document, as it may refer to several different investment priorities in terms of the subject matter of the funding. Also, a series of essential information for the project is only found in the annexes of the Applicant's Guideline.	In order to facilitate the understanding of the information contained in the Applicant's Guideline by the potential beneficiaries, it is necessary to restructure the document, in order to make clearer connections between it and the types of investments covered by the Call for proposals.	Include the information from the Factsheets in the Guideline for applicants, under the specific subchapters of the related Investment Priorities, individually positioned after Chapter 1. General Information to ensure an increased visibility level.
4. From the point of view of the degree of transparency, following the submission of the applications for funding and the closure of the Call for proposals, it was pointed out that the applicants no longer have access to information on the respective Call for proposals.	In order to increase the degree of transparency in relation to the Calls for proposals launched, it is important to inform the potential beneficiaries, after the deadline for the submission of projects, about the number of submitted applications that will enter the administrative evaluation stage and their total budget.	Publishing statistics on the programme's website about the number of submitted projects and their total budget within a maximum of 1 month from the deadline, for submission of projects in the framework of a certain Call for proposals.
5. The calendar of the Calls for proposals launched so far has partly overlapped with the holidays period at the level of the public authorities and institutions	The calendar of the various Calls for proposals should be done considering the most favorable periods, from the perspective of the time available to potential	The calendar of the Calls for proposals, should be prepared so that the deadline for submission of the application not to be in the proximity of legal holidays for public

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
(August), limiting the administrative capacity of potential beneficiaries to prepare applications and identify partners. Also, in relation to the timing of the Calls for proposals, the publication of any corrections must be made in good time before the deadline for submission.	beneficiaries for project preparation.	authorities and institutions (the deadline should be preferably set at least 1 week before / after such a period and not in August). The publication of the corrigenda should be made no later than 2 weeks before the deadline set or, if later, to extend the deadline for submission.
6. The participants in the interviews declared that they are interested in the Q&A sessions organized during information events.	The direct interaction sessions with the programme's authorities (Q&A sessions) are considered very relevant in order to obtain information of interest and clarifying specific situations.	It is recommended to continue to allocate significant time for interactions between potential beneficiaries and structures involved in the management of the programme, by continuing to organize Q&A sessions in the context of information events.
7. The potential beneficiaries consider that they can get relevant information from other entities that have already implemented projects and who have faced the same rules and the same implementation context.	It is noted a need to disseminate information on the implementation of successful projects (at a later stage of implementation of the programme, taking into account that there are no selected and implemented projects at the time of the current evaluation).	In order to increase the degree of interactivity of the information and communication sessions, it is recommended that in the future (after the implementation and completion of the first projects) to directly involve beneficiaries in the information events by inviting them to present successful stories, in order to disseminate positive results of the projects and of the programme.
8. As a result of the interviews, it was found that the publications (posters, flyers, etc.) are not used very often by the	Printed publications present a high degree of attractiveness and efficiency among the potential beneficiaries.	It is recommended to transmit the publications electronically, so as to increase efficiency and cover a broader target group.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
potential beneficiaries in printed format.		
9. The potential beneficiaries know about the Partner Search Tool, but they are interested in detailed information about the entities included in the database.	The Partner Search Tool is considered effective, but should contain more information about each individual entity.	Regarding the Partner Search Tool, it would be useful to have a profile / CV of each institution that would allow a link to other projects developed by each partner, considering these reference elements to be necessary in selecting partners

3.5. Focus group with the Programme's managing bodies

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
At the level of the JS, a series of actions have already been implemented to enhance the communication activities with potential beneficiaries such as increasing the online issues of newflash and implementing direct communication with applicants through the eMS platform.	The authorities involved in the management of the programme have started implementing the recommendations contained in this evaluation report, thus confirming the usefulness and applicability of the evaluation.	Not the case.
Online communication and information are the preferred means of information for potential beneficiaries, compared to the printed materials.	High importance is to be given to optimize online tools and means of communication.	Increasing the number of newflash issues and newsletters transmitted to the database with potential beneficiaries' existing at the level of the JS.


4. Ensuring the communication with respect to gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development

Gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development are a set of horizontal principles that have been integrated into all the communication activities undertaken so far under the programme.

From the perspective of gender equality and non-discrimination, were found the following:

- participation to information and communication events and training sessions was free for all interested persons irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, etc.
- the information published on the programme's website and Facebook account is public and accessible to all the interested parties
- the official websites of the programme and of the MA are accessible to people with visual disabilities, with specific website applications for changing the font size, text color, etc.
- Within the presentations of the launched Calls for proposals, the structure of the funding applications was presented, including a section on horizontal principles (equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women), which is scored in the qualitative assessment of the projects.

From the perspective of sustainable development, were found the following:

- information on the activities of the programme is disseminated and made available to the public concerned, mainly by online means;
- Within the presentations of the launched Calls for proposals, the structure of the funding applications was presented, including a section dedicated to horizontal principles (sustainable development, use of green procurement, use of green infrastructure, consideration of long-term cost opportunities), which is scored within the qualitative assessment of the projects;
- the emails sent by the JS include in the electronic signature the text: :  Before printing, think about environmental responsibility, thus encouraging a friendly environment approach by reducing the amount of paper used.

5. Conclusions and recommendations regarding the communication and information activities to support potential beneficiaries at programme level

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter were formulated on the basis of the assessment findings as presented in chapter 3 of the report, considering their correlation and transversal processing in order to formulate some aggregated and verifiable conclusions and recommendations from several sources of information, according to the applied research methodology. At the end of the different sections of chapter 3, the correspondence between the findings of the research and the conclusions, respectively the recommendations formulated, is presented. The conclusions and general recommendations resulting from the correlation of all research results are presented below.

5.1. CONCLUSIONS resulting from the analysis performed

- The existing documents within the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme are clear, have well-defined objectives and present concrete measures to be taken in the field of communication.
- The objectives established at the level of the programme documents are quantifiable and easy to monitor and are designed to allow the presentation of the implementation stage of the communication activities carried out by the programme's structures.
- From qualitative point of view, the programme documents create the necessary framework for directing the communication activities towards the areas of interest for all the potential applicants.
- The differentiated presentation of the communication activities from the Communication Strategy of the programme (including proposed and achieved indicators) by target groups categories, allows the orientation of the information and communication measures in the directions in which there are needs and interest.
- The Info Points in Hungary have an important role in implementing the communication activities in the eligible area of the programme in Hungary. The IPs are established within each county and operate in three counties starting from the spring of 2017, and the Info Point in Debrecen is functioning since September 2017. The Info Points were involved, under the coordination of JS, in organizing events on the Hungarian side of the border in the

context of the second round of Calls for proposal, in organizing the annual event dedicated to the European Cooperation Day 2017 and in providing information to potential beneficiaries in Hungary, upon request.

- The posters, infographics, stickers, newsletters, online press releases, agenda of the organised events, used within the programme, comply with the visual identity rules according to the VIM and are elaborated and structured in an optimal way, ie are relevant and of interest for the target group.
- The Leaflet is a useful tool for promoting the type of investments / projects supported through the programme, having as target group, by its nature, the general public. The information contained in the leaflet is relevant but far too detailed, being necessary to sort the information so as to be easier for the reader to understand the message.
- The official website of the programme presents the information of interest in a complete and correct way using attractive graphics and visual tools that capture the reader's attention. Certain sections of the website can be optimized in terms of the structure of the information presented to facilitate their reading. Also, certain features of the website can be improved, such as the calendar of information and communication events.
- The information presented at the level of the MA website is comprehensive and the level of detail and transparency is appropriate. The way information is disposed and displayed, however, requires improvements, in order to facilitate the understanding and the identification of information of interest by the readers.
- The Facebook page of the programme is constantly updated and provides information of great interest on the programme's activities to followers, in the future, the increase of the number of followers, being important.
- Two tools have been created successively to identify the potential partners, but they have not been integrated, currently operating individually.
- The tools / modules existing on the programme website (Partner Search platform, online event registration platform) are not always identified by the visitors at the first access of the website, thus requiring the increase of visibility of these tools.
- The Partner Search tools is considered effective but should contain more information about each registered entity.
- Given the importance of the online communication tools, it is necessary to identify a solution that allows potential beneficiaries to access the online helpdesk without the need to install applications / programs on their computers.
- In order to increase the degree of transparency in relation to the launched calls for proposals, it is important that the potential beneficiaries are informed, after the deadline for the submission of projects, on the number of submitted projects that will enter the administrative evaluation stage and their total budget.
- Planning the timing of the various Calls for proposals should be done considering the most favorable conditions in terms of the time available to potential beneficiaries for project preparation.

- It is necessary to support the potential beneficiaries through repeated trainings on the use of the eMS platform and to clearly distinguish the eligible types of expenditure.
- The manner in which the information on the programme is presented is relatively optimal, but a need to simplify the terminology used in order to improve its understanding among all potential beneficiaries is identified.
- The promotion in written and television media at local, regional and national level is not a relevant mean of communication and information for the potential applicants within the programme.
- The potential beneficiaries prefer direct information (information events) and online information sources (official programme's page, e-mail, newsletter). The online communication tools are preferred by most typologies of potential beneficiaries, regardless of the county of origin.
- There is a need for continuous information shown by potential beneficiaries within the programme. Dissemination of information through communication events is considered to be very important, the potential beneficiaries being interested in attending as many events as possible.
- The projects generation sessions, that encourage the interaction with the programme authorities are considered very relevant for obtaining information of interest and clarifying specific situations.
- It is considered to be very useful for the promotion of the programme the dissemination of information on the implementation of successful projects (at a later stage of programme implementation, taking into account that there are no selected and implemented projects at the time of conducting this evaluation).
- The programme authorities' opinion is that the organized events, the programme's web page, the newsletter and the e-mail were the most appreciated means of communication and information among potential beneficiaries, aspect highlighted also by the analysis of satisfaction questionnaires applied to potential beneficiaries participating in various events organized. In the same context, it was also mentioned that the communication actions were mainly directed towards the transmission of electronic messages, since the population show a lower interest in the printed information.

5.2. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS on future communication activities

- In general, it is recommended that the programme documents / reports, where possible, present the results of the implemented communication activities with a higher level of detail.
- It is recommended to simplify the information presented in the leaflet by removing the following types of information that is not widely known / understood by the general public: the result and output indicators specific to each Investment Priority; the section "What does a quality project mean?".
- To optimize how the information is presented on the official website of the programme, the following is recommended:
 - o Programme priorities presented within the section *Programme - Priority Axes* could be presented using toggle content (the name of all investment priorities would first appear on the page and the reader would click on the priority of interest and would open under the title only the information of interest for that priority). To their presentation it might also be included a link to the specific infographic;
 - o Within the sections *RO Legislation* and *HU Legislation* it would also be helpful to include links to those documents so that they can be easily accessible to readers;
 - o Section Gallery - Photos /Programme's Video Events could be structured using toggle content to reduce the loading and scrolling time on the page (in this version of the website it is necessary to wait in order to upload all the photos from the events and to browse the entire page)
 - o Section *News and Events* should be completed with a sub-section (Online Registration of Participants to Events) in order to increase awareness of this tool among website readers;
 - o The button and search field should be positioned in the header of the page to make it more visible to website readers;
 - o The size of the main page slider should be reduced - when opening the website, it would be advisable for the reader to directly view the three link sections now positioned under the main slider;
 - o The font color for "Details" on the main slider must be changed because the current version of the website is confused with the background color (blue);
 - o Button commands should be translated into Romanian and Hungarian, for the respective versions of the website, in order to ensure the accessibility of persons with disabilities
- It is recommended to update the calendar of events with an indication of the events organized and carried out so far, as well as with the events planned for the next month, respectively the dates of particular significance (e.g. the launching and closing date of a Call for proposals).

- It is recommended to update the following sections so that information and documents are provided in a unitary way in the three languages in which the sections of the website are available:
 - Documents - EU Legislation: The first document on the State aid guidelines is missing in Romanian and Hungarian
 - Documents - eMS documents: the last document from PPT presentations is missing in Romanian and Hungarian
 - Media: In English and Hungarian, fewer consultation documents are available compared to the Romanian version of the page
- Regarding the webpage of the programme, in order to facilitate the understanding and access to the information contained on the page, the following website updates are recommended:
 - there should be a navigation menu or at least a structure of the page presented in the header that contains direct links to the page, to various sections of interest to the reader; it would be useful to create an archive of information presented in sections News and Events for years 2015, 2016;
 - The information presented in section News and Events should be structured on topics in order to facilitate an easier browsing (e.g.: Call for Proposals, Programme implementation; Others);
 - The information should also be available in English (programme implementation language).
- It is recommended to include a link to the programme's Facebook page in the newsletters, in the header of the page under the programme's logo and in the footer of the page previous to the slogan associated with the programme, along with a short impact text such as: "Always be informed about Interreg V-A Romania- Hungary!" followed by the Facebook symbol, which through selection (click) is connected to the Facebook account of the programme.
- It is recommended to close the 2014.huro-cbc.eu website as it is important for the public to be directed and to access the official website of the programme in order to guarantee a full and accurate information about the activities of the programme.
- In order to avoid the confusion that may be created among potential beneficiaries and considering the importance to direct the public to the official website of the programme, it is recommended to close the existing Partner Search platform on the BRECO website, ie to migrate the existing information to the new platform on the official website of the programme.
- The tools could be individualized or positioned differently on the website, in order to increase their visibility (for example, the Partner Search module could be included as a button with the "Search Partners" text - similar to the one for people with disabilities, placed under the latter, visible on the right side of the website at the opening of any page; for the online registration to participate to events, a pop-up window may be included when the visitor go to the "News and Events" section where events in the next 1-2 months are listed and where the visitor has the option to register for participation).

- The continuous update of the programme's website and Facebook account, with information of interest for the beneficiaries and the transmission of newsflashes to the JS contact database, in the key moments of the programme implementation (launching a Call for proposals, publishing a corrigendum, publishing the list of selected projects).
- Publishing statistics on the programme's website on the number of submitted projects and their total budget within maximum 1 month from the deadline for submission of projects within a certain Call.
- Planning the calendar for the Calls for proposals so that the deadline is not in the vicinity of free legal days for public authorities and institutions (preferably the deadline will be set with at least 1 week before / after such a period and not in August).
- The publication of the corrigendum shall be made no later than 2 weeks before the deadline or, if later, the deadline for submission should be extended accordingly.
- Regarding the Partners Search Tool, it is considered useful to have a profile / CV of each institution, so as to allow the creation of a link with other projects developed by each partner, considering these reference elements to be necessary in selecting partners.
- Installing a "livechat" application (a plug-in that can be installed by the administrator of the website) that works directly on the official website of the programme.
- It is recommended to increase the number of newsletters and newsflash issues sent to the contacts contained in the JS database.
- Increase the number of training sessions on using eMS and set up a dedicated module within the online helpdesk (possibly a different Skype address) to provide answers to potential beneficiaries regarding the eMS use.
- Supplementing the time spent explaining the project budget module during training sessions on the use of eMS.
- Increasing the number of on-site information events (information sessions, partner search forums, eMS training sessions, Q&A sessions).
- Given that a number of information is already available in Romanian and Hungarian languages (e.g. all the information on the official website of the programme, the programme leaflet), this source of information should be promoted among the potential beneficiaries requesting access to the information in the national languages.
- In order to increase the degree of interactivity of information and communication sessions, it is recommended that in the future (after the implementation and completion of the first projects) the beneficiaries are directly involved in the information events, possibly by being invited to present those successful projects, in order to disseminate positive results of the projects and of the programme. The programme's management bodies are considering the presentation of examples of good practices also through the newsletter and brochures to be published, capturing the impact of projects on the financed domains (e.g. the health sector).
- Including the information in the factsheets in the Applicant's Guide, in subchapters dedicated to the related Investment Priorities, individually positioned after Chapter 1. General information to ensure a high visibility.

- It is recommended that the publications to be transmitted electronically, in particular, so as to increase efficiency and cover a broader target group.

It is worth mentioning that the implementation of some of the recommendations was already started by the programme authorities, based on the preliminary discussions with the evaluation team.

The opportunity to implement the recommendations provided at the level of this Evaluation Report will be analyzed within the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme. After the consultations, there will be defined the optimal approach to implement the recommendation and the responsibilities of each authority involved in the management of the programme (Managing Authority, National Authority, Joint Secretariat), as well as the timetable for implementation and monitoring.