

Summary of conclusions regarding the workshops organized within bilateral meetings for Programming Period 2020+

July 29th – August 1st, 2019

Between 29.07.2019 – 01.08.2019, the Managing Authority of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, with the support of the Hungarian National Authority, organized a series of 4 workshops in the framework of the bilateral technical meetings dedicated to preparing the programming period 2020+. Relevant local stakeholders in the 8 eligible counties were invited to attend the meetings, in order to bring their input to identifying fields of major interest in the area.

Invitations were addressed to county councils, municipalities, local competent authorities in intervention fields like healthcare, education, environmental protection, risk prevention and emergency situation management, employment, water management, culture and cultural and religious heritage a.s.o. in Romanian counties, as well as representatives of correspondent institutions in Hungary, along with Non-Governmental Organizations in both Member States, trying to keep a balanced representation of Romanian and Hungarian regional/local levels.

The meetings took place in:

- Timisoara, for relevant stakeholders in Timis and Csongrád counties (July 29th);
- Arad, for relevant stakeholders in Arad and Békés counties (July 30th);
- Nyíregyháza, for relevant stakeholders in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu-Mare counties (July 31st);
- Debrecen, for relevant stakeholders in, Hajdú-Bihar and Bihor counties (August 1st).

The annexed agenda gives an overview on the subjects tackled.

New legislative aspects provided for in the proposals for 2021-2017 programming period regulations, as well as main differences as compared to current

programming period were presented, pointing out, among others, the temporal and financial constraints imposed by the actual regulations proposals, such as:

- Shorter negotiation process – 9 months from the approval on legislative framework to submit the cooperation programme;
- a smaller allocation of funds for ETC programmes: 2.5% instead of 2.75% for the current period;
- change in allocation of funds methodology for ETC Programmes, based on number of inhabitants within the limit of 25km along the border (in such case, only 2 residential cities in Romania, i.e. Satu Mare and Oradea, and one small town in Hungary, i.e. Gyula, would fall within this limit);
- no initial pre-financing and a reduced pre-financing rate;
- fewer claims for payment to be submitted to COM – 4 per years;
- adopting the N+2 rule, instead of N+3, which would result in a major risk of decommitment;
- lowering the ERDF co-financing rate from 85% at present, to 70%;
- non-eligible VAT, except for operations with less than 5 mil. euro total costs.

Having regard to the above-mentioned aspects, the Managing Authority identified and proposed several measures, already taken or to be undertaken, to accelerate the implementation process of the future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary for the period 2021-2027. Among these we could mention:

- early technical meeting between MA and HUNA on February 14th ,2019;
- consultative inter-ministerial meeting, June 19th, 2019;
- drafting, consulting with HUNA and launching the ToR for the acquisition of specialized expertise services for programming – external expertise will be contracted for the elaboration of the future cooperation programme document - in progress;
- organizing 4 workshops/technical meetings with relevant stakeholders in the eligible area - 29.07.2019 – 01.08.2019, aiming at identifying main regional/local needs, challenges and fields of interest (ongoing/current ones)

- identifying strategic projects to be listed in the programming document;
- establishing the Programming Committee (the Romanian party has already approved the institutional composition, as starting point in negotiations with Hungarian side);
- finalizing and submitting the Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary for the period 2021-2027, as soon as the new Regulations are adopted by the COM, but after its approval by the Member States;
- launching the Calls for proposals as soon as possible, (even before the COM adopts the programming document);

The 5 Policy objectives, namely:

- (1) A smarter Europe
- (2) A greener Europe
- (3) A more connected Europe
- (4) A more social Europe
- (5) A Europe closer to citizens

proposed by the COM for the 2020+ programming period and main indicative actions were detailed and the recommendations issued and directions specified by the COM in relation to Romania-Hungarian border (Border Orientation Paper) were presented and discussed.

At each of the 4 workshops, the discussions addressed common fields of interest and specific project ideas, as well as methods for identifying new partners or consolidating the existing partnerships.

Upon MA kind request, each participant/institution filled in a questionnaire related to their interest in one of the 5 policy objectives proposed for the next programming period and, if relevant, presented their new project ideas. The result of options checked in the questionnaires in relation to the 5 Policy Objectives, as well as several project ideas (main fields of interest) are presented in the annex attached to this summary.

The 94 filled-in questionnaires and the conclusions of the 4 technical meetings, as well as other relevant information provided by the possible applicants in the context of future programme *are to be made available to external experts* contracted for drafting the future programming document.

Specific aspects highlighted in each technical meeting

Timișoara: 29.07.2019, 41 participants, representatives of institutions/authorities in Timiș and Csongrád counties

- to include the hospitals/healthcare institutions among eligible applicants under PO 1 – A smarter Europe, in order to support telemedicine and e-health platforms;
- rehabilitating thermal baths under PO 2 - A greener Europe, but this activity could fall under state aid incidence. The recommendation was to elaborate projects dedicated to green transport (low-carbon emissions), alternative sources of energy, energetical efficiency, etc;
- supporting the construction of Timisoara-Szeged rail connection (proposed by Csongrád county's representative), but it had been emphasized that such investment might overpass the entire available allocation for the programme or that the technical documentation, to be approved, need to ensure the continuity / having ensured the investment financing;

Arad: 30.07.2019, 46 participants from Arad and Békés counties, President of Arad County Council and HUNA representatives

- MA underlined that the programming period 2020+ should be characterized by innovative solutions, team-work, performance and accelerated rhythm;
- HUNA found the proposals for new regulations as restrictive and imposing especially financial constraints (for example in terms of allocation of funds) and stated that HUNA intends to negotiate, together with other MSs, the proposed regulatory framework;
- the MRDPA representative (Mrs. General Deputy-Secretary), expressed her hope that at least the N+2 rule, ERDF co-financing rate and pre-financing conditions could be modified;
- in relation to PO 3 - A more connected Europe, Arad County Council representative mentioned a strategic project proposal at county level for

upgrading/modernizing several county roads, but, at the same time, the interest in cycling paths and cyclo-tourism is also very high;

- in relation to PO 4 - A more social Europe, Arad county reiterated the interest in developing healthcare infrastructure, while Békés county was more interested in prevention financing measures.

The main conclusions of the meeting in Arad were: HUNA would propose rather PO 5, PO 2 and PO1 to be selected for the next Programme, the migration subject shouldn't be addressed by the Programme, in HU view.

Nyiregyhaza, 31.07.2019, 49 participants from Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare counties

- Satu Mare Inspectorate for Emergency Situations thanked for MA's involvement in solving problems arisen in projects implementation;

- Moftin Municipality requested a more efficient cooperation with Satu Mare IES and better financing conditions so that smaller localities could access European funds;

- Tășnad Mayor mentioned the rejection of its project proposals due to administrative reasons and proposed a more flexible approach for the future;

- Ministry of Internal Affairs' representative expressed the intention to capitalize on present projects and proposed a *strategic project* on emergency situations management, fighting crime on border region and migration issues.

Debrecen, 01.08.2019, 47 participants from Hajdu-Bihar and Bihor counties, with high-level representation of Bihor County Council through Mr. President and of Debrecen Municipality through Mr. Vice-Mayor.

- the State aid issue was approached and the Head of MA expressed the Romania position for the next programming period, i.e. ETC programmes to be exempted from State aid incidence; HU position is the same in what regards the exemption

- a project proposal under PO 2 – A greener Europe, related to sewage system for agriculture lands was brought into discussion by the representative of National Administration of Land Reclamation – Bihor county branch, but RO MRDPA recommended such project to be implemented under European Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development;

- regarding PO 3 – A more connected Europe, Oradea Metropolitan Area proposed a project related to acquisition of electric buses flotilla and the operation thereof on Oradea-Debrecen line. The project could be implemented under the specified PO but the conclusion was that special attention should be paid to specific requirements in the field.

Information on these events were disseminated through announcement posted on RO MRDPA site and relevant images and messages were posted on Facebook and ROHU site, on the occasion of each event.

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Centralized table in relation to questionnaires (Policy Objectives options and several project ideas)