

# **Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Programming Committee Meeting of the INTERREG PROGRAMME between ROMANIA and HUNGARY for the period 2021-2027**

**Venue:** Nyiregyhaza, Hungary

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2019



Partnership for a better future

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	INSTITUTION
Péter KISS-PARCIU	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Hungary
Roxana PANAITE-RACOVITȚĂ-JALOVA	Head of Managing Authority (2014-2020) – MPWDA -Romania
Nikoletta HORVÁTH	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Hungary
Valeria CENACCHI	European Commission - DG Regional and Urban Policy
Georgiana MANOLE	Managing Authority (2014-2020) – MPWDA-Romania
Adriana IVANCEA	
Claudia ZDRENGHEA	Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration, Romania
Daniela ALBU	
Răzvan Victor PIRONESCU	
Nicolae NEAȚĂ	
Sava Constantin DIAMANDI	Ministry of External Affairs, Romania
Paul PANTIȘ	Regional Development Agency – North-West Region
Adriana DEACONU	Timiș County
Gabriela CHIRICHEU	Arad County
Sándor PÁSZTOR	Bihar County Council
József SZABÓ	
Csaba PATAKI	Satu Mare County Council
István Tamás JANKÓ-SZÉP	
Mihai CIOBANU	Audit Authority within the Romanian Court of Accounts

Iadran NICOLICI	
Iulia GUGIU	Ministry of European Funds (MEF), Romania
Aurelia FEDORCA	Association of Romanian Towns
Arabela Liana BU	
Mihai Sorin PASCU	Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Banat and Crisana „Excelsior”
Isidora RADULOV	University of Agriculture Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat King Michael I of Romania
Adina HORABLAGA	
Monica TEREAN	Joint Secretariat (JS)
Livia BANU	
Dóra DÉKÁNY	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Hungary
András STEFANIK	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Hungary
Mónika KOMÁDI	SA expert for HU party
Adrienn FUTÓ	Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC. (SZPO)
Áron SZAKÁCS	Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC. (SZPO)
TÍMEA KÓSA	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Council
Zsuzsa MIHÁLIK	Hajdú-Bihar County Council
Anikó NAGY-SZÖLLŐSI	Békés County Council
Eszter Anna CSÓKÁSI	Csongrád County Council
Alíz NAGYVÁRADI	Ministry of Finance - Hungary
Nóra SEBESI	Info Point (IP) - Szeged

Gábor BALOG	Info Point (IP) - Békéscsaba
Viktor FEKETE	Info Point (IP) - Nyíregyháza
Mónika SEMJÉNINÉ HUSZTI	Info Point (IP) - Debrecen
Adriana GHIȚĂ	Joint Secretariat
Monica ARDELEAN	
Edith RACZ	
Cristina VESA	
Monica SAV	
Mihaela COZMA	
Marius OLARIU	
Sebastian STURZ	
Cosmina RARET	
Liana NASTA	
Carmen CHIRILĂ	

## A G E N D A

### - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE -

on preparing the Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary, for the  
period 2021-2027

13 November 2019

Nyiregyhaza, Hungary

**10<sup>30</sup> – 11<sup>00</sup>**

(local time)

#### Registration and welcome coffee

#### Rules of Procedures

**11<sup>00</sup> – 12<sup>00</sup>**

- ✓ Presentation
- ✓ Discussions and approval

#### Discussions over the draft Regulations proposals

**12<sup>00</sup> – 12<sup>45</sup>**

Introduction on new Regulations for 2021-2027 period (drafts)

- ✓ Outline of main differences as compared to current programming period
- ✓ Constraints and limitations
- ✓ Policy objectives for 2020+

Consultations on areas of common interest

**12<sup>45</sup> – 13<sup>00</sup>**

Coffee break

**13<sup>00</sup> – 13<sup>30</sup>**

#### Presentation of the Border Orientation Paper

- ✓ Outline of main findings & Orientations
- ✓ Programme's position

#### Programming Calendar

**13<sup>30</sup> – 13<sup>50</sup>**

- ✓ Proposed actions
- ✓ Accelerating measures for future Programme implementation

**13<sup>50</sup> – 14<sup>00</sup>**

#### Conclusions and closure of the meeting

**14<sup>00</sup> – 15<sup>00</sup>**

*Lunch*

**15<sup>00</sup>**

*Site visit*

#### Observation:

No other topics were added to the Agenda

At the beginning of the meeting, participants signed the attendance sheet.

## Welcome speech, introduction of the PC members and presentation of the Agenda

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ**, head of the Interreg V-A Ro-HU Programme Managing Authority, opened the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Programming Committee (PC) for the Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary for the period 2021-2027 by greeting and thanking all participants for attending the meeting. She mentioned that she represented also the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration and expressed her hope for a successful meeting. The first Programming Committee meeting, represents an important achievement of 2019, successfully ending up a series of programming-related events (technical meetings and dedicated bilateral workshops) organized by the MA in collaboration with the programme bodies during the year. Special thanks were formulated for the participation of COM representative and Deputy State Secretary of Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade at the meeting. The COM representative was invited to take the floor.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI**, the European Commission representative, welcomed the initiative of organizing the meeting and noticed the programming process advance as compared to other borders. She mentioned that although the new EU Regulations were still proposals and no deadline regarding their adoption could be specified, the programming related meetings and discussions were very important for identifying common needs and challenges, common ideas and objectives. In this regard, the Border Orientation Paper (BOP) issued by the COM for Romanian-Hungarian border aimed at helping the process. She thanked for being invited and hoped for a fruitful meeting.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked the European Commission representative for her kind words and iterated the intention to involve in the programming process as many stakeholders as possible. She gave the floor to the Deputy State Secretary of Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Mr. Péter KISS-PARCIU** firstly referred to the current programme and appreciated MA's efforts and the undertaken measures, expressed his hope in a successful implementation thereof and underlined the importance of lessons learnt in relation to the next programming period. He thanked the 2014-2020 MA for organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Programming Committee meeting and for starting the programming process as early as possible, mentioning the 4 workshop sessions taking place during summer. Certain needs/objectives had been already identified, on which the programming work could be based on, Mr. KISS-PARCIU said. In his opinion, for a successful programming process and in order to properly address the actual needs of the programme area, like environment and tourism, a clear timetable had to be established and clear objectives to be identified. Mr Deputy State Secretary also mentioned the important changes occurred in the last 7 years in terms of private investments on both sides of the border,

investments having a cross-border impact, as well as the recent transport infrastructure development, both factors possibly affecting the people living in the area. The analysis of those aspects that the future programme could benefit from and commonly addressing them, could result in a positive impact on both sides of the border. In addition, Mr. KISS-PARCIU highlighted the importance of local stakeholders like counties, Euroregion organizations and EGTCs in the development of the region. He mentioned that new innovative tools to tackle legal obstacles/issues were to be developed and used for the programming process. Moreover, he proposed to consider both the lessons learnt and examples of good practices identified in other CBC Programmes Hungary was part of, such as B-LIGHT scheme including financing options for SMEs on the Croatian border, to be analysed in case the support to SMEs would be considered, or Small Project Fund on the Slovak border section, when designing the future programme. He concluded by expressing Hungarian party availability for a close cooperation, in order to have a fast programming process and for identifying those aspects that could bring the most benefits to the eligible area.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked for Deputy State Secretary's intervention and reiterated the importance of capitalizing on results and make usage of the lessons learnt, this being a progressive process, considering also the great responsibility assumed in programming and strategic planning of the next period. She also mentioned that both MSs had already defined the institutional componence of the Programming Committee, members and observers, yet, further consultations and even new members/observers could be added. In Romania, the following institutions have voting right: Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration, MA of Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, County councils of Arad, Bihor, Satu Mare and Timis. The head of the 2014-2020 MA stated that Romanian party envisaged a vast consultation process, taking into account the civil society and other local relevant stakeholders. In this respect, several observers were nominated in the PC, such as: the Audit Authority, Ministry of European Funds, Ministry of Finance, Association of Romanian Cities, The National Council for Fighting Discrimination, the 2 Development Agencies in the area: North-West region and West region, as well as entities acting in the environmental protection domain (Excelsior Association), representatives of the business sector (Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Arad), and academia representatives of the (University of Agriculture Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat), the last 3 entities being nominated following a transparent selection process, based on received offers. Afterwards, Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ invited Hungary to present the composition of Hungarian institutions of the PC.

**Mrs Nikoletta HORVÁTH** took the floor and presented the Hungarian delegation, members and observers of the PC. Starting from the premises that it should be a progressive process, several horizontal ministries were involved among which Ministry



of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Department for Cross-border Cooperation Programmes - National Authority for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme), Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ministry of Finance, as well as Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC. (SZPO) – part in the Hungarian CBC programmes for the last 15-20 years. At local level, all 4 eligible counties in Hungary - Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád counties were nominated. Based on BOP recommendations regarding macroregional strategy, Hungary included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Department for Water Diplomacy and the Danube Region Strategy and also the Association of Cities with County Rights among PC observers. Mrs. HORVÁTH specified that green NGO, Csemete Foundation has been also asked for nomination. She referred that Mr. Deputy State Secretary mentioned the Euroregion organizations and other entities to be involved in the programming process. DKMT Euroregion as entity with specific attributions will be also involved in order to fulfil the partnership principle in the composition.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** thanked for the support and mentioned that, in Romania, the Macro-Strategy for Danube region is managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so the coordination of the future programme with the Danube strategy is ensured in Romania, as well.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** intervened, stating that for EU COM the Partnership principle was very important, so more institutions/partners/stakeholders should be involved in the programming process from the very beginning, in a more active way, in order to bring their technical expertise, intelligence, openness and feed-back and to increase the ownership of future projects, thus contributing to a more strategical approach. EU COM representative suggested that for the 2020+ period, the voting panel could be enlarged as to allow more stakeholders participating in the programming and monitoring process. In Mrs. CENACCHI's opinion, the future programme could overcome obstacles - not always of financial, but also of legislative and administrative nature - only if local needs and short-comes were well known. She expressed EU COM availability to take part in the PC meetings, whenever possible.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** confirmed the intention to have a bottom-up approach when designing the future programme, to have a comprehensive participative consultation process, to organize thematic workshops on each Policy Objective proposed by the new regulations and to involve relevant stakeholders in that specific domain. She mentioned that, as previously discussed with the colleagues within the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, due to the dynamic, progressive character of the process, and to the extent that new options are identified following selection of relevant Policy Objectives for the Programme, other members/observers could be also nominated in the PC, in order to reach the best formula.

After the participants introduced themselves, the discussions continued and the Chair thanked all structures involved in the current programme's implementation for the efforts undertaken so far (that could only be the result of a team-work), helping thus to the achievement of the targets set for 2019, to be further detailed the next day, during the 7<sup>th</sup> MC meeting.

Further, **Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** presented the main topics on the PC Agenda: adoption of the Rules of Procedure – the main object of the meeting; discussions on the EU regulations drafts – underlying the main differences, simplification measures, etc; opinions regarding Border Orientation Paper - a document issued by the COM for Romanian-Hungarian border and intended to be used as a starting point for the programming-related discussions; the programming calendar – settling the main deadlines of the process, yet taking into account that the adoption of the final version of EU Regulations might affect such deadlines. She also mentioned the steps already undertaken, such as bilateral technical meetings and dedicated workshops organized at local level, in the eligible area, namely in 4 counties (1 event for 2 pair-counties), 2 in Romania and 2 in Hungary.

As no objections and/or proposals regarding the topics on the Agenda were formulated, the Agenda was considered approved by consensus.

Afterwards, the Chair, representing also the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well, started the discussions on the first point, i.e. the Rules of Procedure (RoP) – the main methodological and procedural framework for the Programming Committee activity, specifying that the document and related annexes had been previously agreed with Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and sent to the PC members for analysis and consultation. Mrs. RACOVIȚĂ proposed the participants to discuss each article of the RoP, in order to decide upon main tasks thereof, on aspects related to the chairpersonship and secretariat of the committee, as well as on the decision-making and voting process,

As regards the decisional process, it was highlighting that most of the latest MC decisions were taken by consensus, proving thus the good cooperation between the two Member States. She further explained that other provisions of the document referred to internal communication, used language, templates to be filled in and submitted by the participants and validity period of the document that ended upon Cooperation Programme's approval by the European Commission.

Following consultation with Hungarian delegation, several modification proposals occurred after the RoP's submission to the PC members, among which, the modification of the number of days allocated to PC members for making observations/proposals on documents. Consequently, Mrs. RACOVIȚĂ gave the floor to HUNA.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** presented the Hungarian party proposals, namely:

- modification of Art. 4.1) - regarding the chairpersonship, that, for further meetings, should be made based on rotation principle or as decided by the two MSs (meaning that even two consecutive meetings under the same chairpersonship being also possible);
- modification of Art. 7.4) - regarding the deadline for submitting proposals for modifying the Agenda of the meeting, that should be extended from 7 to 5 working days prior the meeting date, as well as the consequent modification from 5 to 3 working days to communicate the Agenda;
- modification of Art. 9, point 1) - regarding the working language, in the sense that communication in national languages should be also allowed;
- to introduce on the members' list the Csemete Egyesület and DKMT for the Hungarian delegation.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked Mrs. HORVÁTH for the intervention and specified that, following consultation with Romanian delegation, the following conclusions have been reached:

- agreement on Art. 4, point 1), for ensuring an appropriate consultation process and a strong partnership;
- agreement on Art. 7, point 4), for ensuring sufficient time for PC members to draft and submit observations/proposals;
- agreement on Art. 9, point 1) to use both national languages, Romanian and Hungarian, yet the documents should be prepared in English;
- the PC members' list would be updated according to HU delegation proposal and adding also COM representative, as observer.

Further on, the **Chair** proposed the modification of Art. 6, point 1) regarding the quorum, which would be met if the number of institutions therein specified were represented instead of *being present*. Mrs. **RACOVIȚĂ** argued this proposal was useful as, in practice, in case of delegated votes, the quorum could be met if relevant institutions were represented. HU delegation asked for a short break to consult each other on the new proposal, and then agreed upon it.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked HU delegation for the agreement and asked the participants for any other proposals/observations.

**Mr. Mihai PASCU**, "EXCELSIOR" Association, intervened, specifying that EU COM and RO and HU Ministries intention to include more NGOs and other private bodies in the programming process was very useful. He proposed a larger openness towards the civil society / NGOs, even to introduce such entities among the PC members with voting right, considering that such an approach could result in a better programming process.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** thanked for the intervention and re-iterated the availability to involve all relevant entities in the programming process, entities having specific competences in different domains, then she gave the floor to **EU COM representative** who considered that active participation of relevant stakeholders and constructive debates are very important. Also, she drew attention that the contribution of organizations involved in different other domains, like digitalization and creative industry, might be very helpful, due to the cross-cut thereof with domains relevant for the future programme objective.

The **Chair** asked again for proposals/observations on RoP.

**Mr. PASCU** made an observation of technical nature, proposing to modify the wording in Art 6, point 4) so as to be clear if PC observers were allowed to give opinion on documents launched for approval through written procedure. After several discussions, the issue was clarified, as the mentioned paragraph referred to the voting members' initiatives and to the voting process and not to consultations.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** intervened in the discussion, showing that in point 2) of Article 6, it was clearly specified that observers had no voting rights.

**Mr. PASCU** thought that specification in Art. 2, point 1) that PC is composed of voting members and observers could create confusion.

**Mrs. Claudia ZDRENGHEA**, from the Legal Department within MPWDA took the floor and explained that, according to Article 2, point 6) the advisors should provide assistance to PC members/substitutes. Such assistance could be used for sharing opinions and recommendations with voting members, before a decision is made.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** took the floor again and proposed to mention under paragraph 5, Article 2, reference to voting members and observers.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** said she understood Excelsior Association representative's concern, but that was rather a problem of trust than of RoP, and showed the importance of taking into account all relevant opinions and being as transparent as possible in relation to decision-making process.

**Mr. Mihai PASCU** explained previous recommendations were only partial taken into account and expressed his hope for involving the NGOs and other relevant stakeholders in the decisional process, at least in the MC of the future programme.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** thanked for the interventions and re-assured the participants upon Romanian party intention to involve private entities and civil society in the process, that being the reason for having at the first PC meeting representatives of central, regional but also local stakeholders. She underlined that the presented document was a first proposal, agreed upon by the 2 MSs, but the membership of the PC could be enlarged and other relevant stakeholders could be involved in the programming process, based on policy objectives further selected for the future programme.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** completed the discussions stating that each MS had the right to nominate the PC members and mentioning that environmental organizations and other civil society representatives were usually involved in the programming process of different programmes from the very beginning.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** re-iterated the openness to a large and active participation of relevant stakeholders in the programming process, yet she underlined that the decision-making process had to be very efficient, a series of simplification measures and more focused approaches being taken into account in this respect.

Mrs **RACOVÎȚĂ** submitted the RoP to PC members' approval with those modification needs articulated and, as no objections were raised, the document was considered approved by consensus.

### Presentation on the new legislative framework (EU Regulation drafts)

Further on, **Mrs RACOVÎȚĂ** gave a short presentation on the draft EU Regulations, under consultations between EU COM and EU Parliament. She specified that main issues to be presented were: general aspects of the Cohesion Policy, the 5 Policy Objectives, and details on implementation of future programmes, programming calendar and simplification measures to be undertaken.

As regards the Cohesion Policy, the Head of the MA of Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme underlined the following aspects:

- ✓ a smaller budget, mainly due to the Brexit, resulting in a considerable grater pressure on MSS' co-financing budget and important efforts to be undertaken by the future MA in order to ensure the appropriate cashflow at both Programme and projects' level; consequently, MA's responsibility will be greater as compared to current period;
- ✓ the new regulations adoption at the end of 2020, conditioned by the approval of the multi-annual financial framework. Nevertheless, the MA of Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme decided to start a parallel process for necessary documents preparation, as confirmed by the already undertaken actions such as bilateral technical meetings, dedicated workshops and the present Programming Committee meeting;
- ✓ the 9 months deadline for submitting the cooperation programme to the COM for approval, if not, the allocated budget could be re-allocated to other programmes and the communities in the eligible area would be affected. In this respect the 2014-2020 MA/ Member States will take all necessary steps in order to have a shorter negotiations and programming process, to the benefit of future

programme, and, in general terms, all stakeholders involved in the programming process should understand this aspect;

- ✓ a simplified, unique regulation for all 7 cohesion funds
- ✓ a simplified common provisions regulation
- ✓ an intermediate assessment at mid-term (2025), in order to reshape the programme according to the real needs resulted from the programme implementation. This intermediate assessment replaces the actual performance framework. Currently, an interim Programme's evaluation is in progress, and the capitalization of identified results could be used as good practice example for future programme;
- ✓ the financing of programme conditioned by the horizontal principles, like human rights observance in the related MS implementing it. This is an important aspect, because the EU COM could decide not to finance programmes implemented by MS where such rights are not observed;
- ✓ avoiding overlaps between programmes, in order to ensure coordination between mainstream programmes and other EU financed programmes, in order to have a synergetic approach. In this respect, the support of relevant Ministry of European Funds, observer in the Programming Committee, Romanian delegation, is needed;
- ✓ simplification - the key word for the next programming period in terms of thematic objectives, output and result indicators, simplified cost option. In this context worth to be mentioned all simplification and acceleration measures undertaken by the MA<sup>1</sup>/Programme in the course of the current implementation, approach addressed to both programmes' structures and the beneficiaries;
- ✓ increased flexibility as regards programme's modification process, an approach already used by the MA of Interreg V-A Ro-Hu as regards implemented projects within the current programme;
- ✓ simplification of the management and control system, designation being no longer necessary in case the Programme's structures 2014-2020 are kept for the next programming period;
- ✓ control performed based on a risk assessment analysis, approach already successfully implemented by the Programme in the current period;
- ✓ the possibility to avoid the designation process if the same structures are kept, as the draft regulations clearly stipulates that no designation process (that usually takes a lot of time) will be necessary unless the current designated structures are changed;

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<sup>1</sup> Through its instructions and coordination actions



- ✓ the subsidiarity principle, (principle already observed by the Member States, from the very beginning of the programming period) – regarding the importance of local level stakeholders' involvement, for a bottom-up approach in designing the future programme, as the local stakeholders have to decide upon existing needs at the lowest level (e.g. small communities).

Although the legislative framework is still under consultations, the two Member States, upon 2014-2020 MA's initiative, started the programming process in parallel, being – according to EU COM representative statement - one of the first cooperation programmes at EU level, in this respect.

Further, Mrs. **RACOVÎȚĂ** presented each of the 5 Policy Objectives and the related interventions to be performed, as well as the output/result indicators. She also mentioned the recommendations formulated by the COM in the Border Orientation Paper, which were to be used as a starting point in drafting the new programme.

As regards the interventions to be supported under the first Policy Objective, *a smarter Europe*, and the involvement of SMEs, Mrs. **RACOVÎȚĂ** brought into discussion the State Aid issue, which, although benefiting from a legislative framework developed by Romania at national level, still presents a series of difficulties. Such difficulties were encountered from the development of a proper mechanism at Programme level to the delays caused by this issue in launching/assessing/contracting process, especially due to the fact that all other CBC Programmes implemented by Romania and Hungary<sup>2</sup> have no State Aid relevant projects. Major risks in implementing State Aid relevant projects are still to be considered, due to the fact that previous experience in this respect is poor and legislative framework cannot always apply to ETC programmes as such. Consequently, the 2014-2020 MA's representative recommendation is to carefully and closely analyse the SA aspects when choosing the Policy Objectives of the future programme, in order to avoid the unnecessary delays in Programme's implementation, but to ensure an efficient start thereof. She asked the Hungarian part to provide information on handling State Aid issues in Hungary and gave the floor to Mrs. **HORVÁTH**.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** explained the process in Hungary, developed with the State Aid Monitoring Office (SAMO) assistance. Thus, a legislative framework has been elaborated at national level for all cooperation programmes listing possible state aid regime under each priority axes; further, the calls for proposals were approved by the SAMO from state aid point of view and submitted applications were internally checked at programme level. She mentioned that, unclear aspects were addressed to SAMO, if the case and the colleagues received trainings. In conclusion, Mrs HORVÁTH summarized the information: Government Decree 44/2016 and approved Calls for Proposals at national level and self-State Aid declarations and internal checklists at

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<sup>2</sup> N.B: In Hungary, there are only few cases of state aid related projects under de minimis / GBER / SGEI.

Programme level. At the same time, she emphasised Hungary's efforts, undertaken together with Romania and other Member States, to exclude State Aid relevance in case of the ETC programmes, but the COM proposed to include ETC programmes' financing under GBER with a higher financing limit, which could be favourable.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVITĂ** confirmed that Romania shared the same stand-point as Hungary in relation to leave out ETC programmes from State Aid incidence and mentioned the steps Romania undertook in that respect. As the SA legislative framework was still unclear, she considered the aspect a sensitive-one, to be taken into account when selecting the future interventions.

Further on, the Chair informed the participants on the interest shown by potential applicants in the innovation in healthcare domain, as resulted from the programming workshops, the bilateral technical meetings and the national-level programming meeting.

The interventions under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Objective, *a greener Europe*, especially those related to Nature 2000, sustainable eco-tourism, protected areas and water sources along the border were also mentioned in the BOP (available on Programme's webpage). The Chair explained that, in relation to investment in cultural and natural heritage, the Hungarian party expressed its particular interest in such domain, as specified in the first stand-point sent to Romania. The MA of Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme mentioned the emergency situations representing also an important domain of interest, proved by the requested financing in the current period, that was 3-4 times higher than the available allocation for such interventions. The representative of the Hungarian delegation explained that, following analysis performed at local level, the preservation and conservation of natural and cultural heritage proved to be an important domain of interest for the Hungarian party.

In relation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Policy Objective, *a more connected Europe*, the BOP mentions an intervention in relation to Arad-Szeged railway, yet, due to relatively small budget of the programme, only preparatory actions could be supported in this respect, if they were in compliance with relevant national strategies, specified Mrs. **RACOVITĂ**. She added that other orientations pointed at alternative transport systems and also an interest in bicycle paths was identified during the 4 workshop sessions held in summer.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Policy Objective, *a more social Europe*, was also referred to in the BOP, main interventions aiming at social/educational/healthcare infrastructure, cross-border healthcare services, promoting bilingualism, primary and secondary education, and mobility of the workforce.

The main accent in relation to the 4<sup>th</sup> Policy Objective was on healthcare infrastructure development, domain also of great interest in the current period, the number of applications submitted and the requested financing being considerable higher as compared to other investment priorities, the Head of the 2014-2020 MA underlined.



*A Europe closer to citizens*, the 5<sup>th</sup> Policy Objective, opened to various intervention fields should be taken into account for the next programming period, **Mrs RACOVIȚĂ** said and invited the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to give an opinion on the subject.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** took the floor and made some clarifications related to PO 3, investments in transport, which although having the most relevant cross-border character, should not be selected as such, due to legal issues (e.g. Schengen conditions), instead preparatory activities for railway links should be considered as of high cross-border relevance. To this aspect, **Mrs RACOVIȚĂ** added the financial constraints. **Mrs. HORVÁTH** continued with opinions on PO 5, mentioning joint territorial strategies identification and implementation.

The future funds, in Hungarian party opinion, should be distributed between strategic calls - for drafting and implementing strategies - and open calls related to: natural and cultural heritage and tourism; economic development in digitization and smart technologies, (after further assessing SA impact on this type of interventions); and investments in environmental protection. **Mrs. HORVÁTH** further explained that under PO5 functional areas and joint strategies were to be created by county-pairs partnerships and to be implemented with a special tool or through a strategic project. As in the next programming period only well-designed strategic project could be successfully implemented, Hungarian party thought to a pre-checking of such projects, based on a pre-settled template, they are working on the template and they will share it with PC members. She also added that certain aspects related to PO 5 needed to be further clarified by the COM and it was still to analyse how the implementation of strategic projects would be feasible. In what concerned the financial allocation, Mrs HORVÁTH continued, as no budget had been established, we need to plan budget and strategic projects in modules, Hungarian delegation proposed to allocate 40% of the total budget to implementation of joint strategies, while the rest of 60% to be used for open calls.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked Mrs HORVÁTH for the intervention and confirmed the need for a clarification by the COM in relation to PO5. She specified that for an early programme start, the strategic projects should be listed in the cooperation programme, such position being shared by Hungarian part as well.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** intervened in discussions, confirmed that PO5 was still under internal COM consultations and interventions under such PO were still to be clearly defined. In this respect, Mrs. RACOVIȚĂ specified that the BOP mentioned the lack of important statistic data in some parts of the eligible area, so, in her opinion, under PO5 projects to solve this issue could be implemented within the future programme.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** informed the participants on the finalization of ToR for programming services, after a complex consultation process with the Hungarian party.

Further, **Mrs RACOVITĂ** invited the Romanian counties to express their opinion as regards the domain of interests for the future programme, and concluded by the intervention fields identified for the next programming period, namely: investment in healthcare, bicycle paths, cultural heritage and regenerable resources. She also encouraged the county-pair partners to further discuss and cooperate on identifying common needs, in order to speed up the programming process.

**Mr. István Tamás JANKÓ-SZÉP** took the floor and asked for clarifications in relation to the 5+2 years programming principle, as the RoP mentioned that the PC ended its tasks upon PC being adopted by the COM, thus it had to be clarified the body in charge with programming process for the +2 years period.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** clarified the 5+2 years principle, but specified that it had not been adopted yet and, furthermore, the RoP could also be modified, if needed. The principle aimed at ensuring the modification of the programme upon COM recommendations, if necessary.

**Mr. István Tamás JANKÓ-SZÉP** considered the wording "*eliminating overlaps between PA and programs*" was not appropriate.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** explained that investments in the same type of topic should be made in a synergetic way.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVITĂ** specified the wording could be found in the EU regulation drafts and it indeed referred to coordination with other programmes, which at national level is ensured by the Ministry of European Funds, observer in the PC.

**Mr. István Tamás JANKÓ-SZÉP** raised the issue of the 70% ERDF contribution mentioned in the regulation drafts.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** replied that such aspect, proposed by the COM, was still under negotiations. Yet, the overall budget allocation for the future programme could be decreased, considering the circumstances, the current COM proposal being of up to 70% ERDF co-financing.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** took the floor and stated that negotiations process was still ongoing and underlined that, as no Multiannual Financial Framework have been adopted so far, the discussions were very difficult. Still, she informed the participants that the Parliament proposed an increase of the ERDF co-financing rate up to 80% and the elimination of 5+2 programming.

**Mr. Mihai PASCU** wanted to know which type of organizations had an input in the programming process/ participated in workshops and **Mrs RACOVITĂ** answered that all information are uploaded on the Interreg V-A Ro-Hu Programme's site by the JS, who managed the process, and a Summary of conclusions related to programming workshops held in summer could be found therein, in the [post 2020](#) dedicated section.

**Mrs. Valeria CHENACCHI** drew the attention that the bottom-up process was important but also the strategic thinking have to be considered for the sustainability of the future projects. She gave the example of a good practice strategic project implemented by France and Belgium, proving the strong cross-border character thereof, but at the same time, she underlined the importance of small, people-to-people projects, as well.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** invited the participants to a lunch-break, and specified the meeting would be resumed at 15:00.

#### LUNCH-BREAK

The meeting was resumed at 15:00.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** proposed to continue the presentation of the meeting as concise as possible, in order to be able to have the site visit right after the meeting. The presentation included financial details, constraints, the budget and methods regarding the allocation for the future Programmes and the recent 25 km rule, taking into account the population from the eligible area in the mentioned limit. Such an approach would result in a considerable bigger contribution of the Romanian party to the financial envelope of the future programme, fact that should entail corresponding benefits. Mrs RACOVIȚĂ clarified that the *25-km rule* is affecting only the allocation of the future Programme, not the eligibility of applicants. MA of the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme ensured the participants that all the necessary steps to assure the co-finance from the Romanian state budget at the right percentage will be undertaken. She emphasized the huge responsibility for the next MA in keeping the suitable cash flow for the proper implementation of the Programme, considering also the still unclear State aid and ERDF/national co-financing issues.

**Mr István JANKÓ- SZÉP** needed a clarification from the representative of the EU COM on the recent proposal regarding the 25 km from the border rule, related to the financial allocation.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** clarified the misunderstanding of Satu Mare County Council representative regarding the most recent regulation proposed by the Commission in relation to the population living near the borders and the need to develop such regions, and underlined there were still ongoing negotiations and discussions in this respect, at the highest level. An allocation criterion had to be established especially when there are financial limitations.

**Mr István JANKÓ- SZÉP** kindly asked for more information on the principle based on which the COM proposed the 25 km rule when allocating programmes' budgets.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVATH** declared that the 25 km rule is still under negotiation, such as the allocation for the future programmes and the Multiannual Financial Framework.

**Mr István JANKÓ- SZÉP** thanked for being informed about the negotiation, but he thought that *people living within 25 km from the border* rule was based on a principle he wanted to know.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** clarified that the principle behind such rule was *no people – no need of investment*, but it has to be further discussed, as, at the same time, border areas should be made more attractive for the people, in order to make them stay or even return in the area. She reminded that COM rule on the 25km within new regulations, was still a proposal, and regulation drafts were to be adopted the next year. She also mentioned COM intention to create a Q&A section for all technical questions that needed reply.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked COM representative for clarifications and agreed that such rule was not in the favour of the 8 counties in terms of budget, especially for the Hungarian counties, as no county residence might fall under that limit in Hungary.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** added some outlines based on the Chair's presentation related to the 5 POs, she encouraged the participants to address the COM all unclear aspects in order to be clarified as soon as possible and having all the legal requirements internally agreed upon. Also, she mentioned that embedding the cooperation in the mainstream programmes, could bring add value to the cross-border cooperation and Interreg. All these would be an opportunity to develop some synergies, with greater impact on partners, projects and policies. Besides the legal framework, the EU COM proposed a new tool called European cross-border mechanism, trying to facilitate programmes' implementation, by focusing on administrative simplification, legal and administrative harmonization, overcoming the technical problems or obstacles. The mechanism provides that partner MS in a cooperation programme could choose the legislation on one MS to implement the programme. As a third point, she mentioned the interspecific objective on governance, promoting cross-border governance, for which a 15% allocation is provided, the development of long-term strategies, to institutionalize and stabilize the cross-border development. Projects could envisage data collecting, improve administrative capacity, the enlargement of the portfolio as regards NGOs. Mrs. CHENACCHI also underlined the need of investments with clear cross-border character, not only mirroring-kind type of investments, and for ensuring the cross-border dimension, the strategic approach was very important. As the major challenge of the area is the decreasing population, with impact on all other aspects, such issue has to be solved by development of the area, by making investments, in order to make population stay.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked for all information shared especially on the criteria related to population, the measures to be taken into account in order to make the border area more attractive, the investments to be performed in order to avoid decrement of population in the eligible areas. Awareness of the migrations from the East

of Europe to the West, caused by the conditions in the health-care system, the need of accurate statistic data are other important issues for the next programming period.

All five Policy Objectives and related interventions have to be thoroughly analysed (including from the State Aid point of view) when designing the future programme.

### Border Orientation Paper

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** thanked the COM for the efforts undertaken in issuing the BOP. She mentioned that some statistical data needed to be updated, and in this respect the National Institute of Statistics have been involved. Mrs. RACOVÎȚĂ showed that, even if the COM didn't require an answer in relation to BOP, Romanian party already initiated a short document expressing Programme's opinion, to be sent to the COM, on the recommendation and orientations therein presented, ensuring the COM that all orientation directions specified would be further taken into account. Mrs. RACOVÎȚĂ reiterated Programme's intention to send the Position on BOP to the COM, after being updated with all relevant data. No objections were raised by the participants in this respect. She further asked the Hungarian delegation for more adds in this respect.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVATH** thanked for the information delivered by Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ and welcomed the hard work done by the Commission in issuing the BOP, which can serve as basis for further programming discussions. The Hungarian delegation had some updates regarding the EGTCs and ensured the participants that all technical observations are going to be send via email, in order to have all updates and corrections.

Although not compulsory, the Programme decided to send the COM its position in regard to the BOP, including necessary updates.

### Programming Calendar

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** continued the meeting with the presentation of the programming calendar, mentioning the efforts the Romanian Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration already undertook in initiating the necessary preliminary phases related to programming process, among which, the previous technical meeting with Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, taking place in February 2019 and the 4 events organized for the 8 eligible counties, in summer. She shortly presented the main milestones in the calendar, which will be however conditioned by the approval of the EU Regulation. The proposed deadline for submitting the programme document to COM approval is December 2020. Several acceleration measures have been proposed by the Chair, among which: elaboration of Guides for



Applicants in parallel with the programme document and launching the calls before CP is approved by the COM, yet with submission deadline at mid-2021, when the CP could be approved, a smaller number of calls launched, an extended approach in what concerns the simplified costs option, an immediate start of programme's implementation, based on acquired experience and continuity, etc.

**Mr. Péter KISS-PARCIU** thanked the Chair for the presentation of the calendar and for the efforts undertaken in relation to ongoing programme and for the initiative to start the programming process as early as February 2019 and for organizing the workshops in summer. At the same time, as a general remark, he mentioned that Interreg programmes should speak up and present their opinions and observations in relation to the proposed legislative framework for 2020+. In addition, he brought into discussion the issue of managing the future programme, informing the participants that an official letter has been recently sent to Romanian Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration, in order to express Hungary's availability and offer its service to host the future Managing Authority, based on rotation principle. Nevertheless, he ensured all structures on the full support for the programming process and implementation of currently running programme, as well.

In relation to programming calendar, **Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** requested more meeting of the PC before next October. Another proposal was related to uploading the relevant RO and HU programming strategies on the existing dedicated section on the RO-HU Programme website, mentioning that HU party already submitted such strategies to the Joint Secretariat, as well as other observations related to linkage to the mid-term evaluation process which could be linked to each other, therefore evaluation results might be used for programming.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** requested a clarification on the thematic discussions dedicated to POs to be selected by the programme.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** clarified, explaining that a much more detailed calendar was attached as supporting document, containing a better view of the inputs. She underlined that the calendar would be constantly updated, in order to reflect the dynamic of programming process, that surely requests other meetings as well.

**Mrs. Eszter CSÓKÁSI** engaged in the conversation and asked for clarification on the programming document and if it needs the professional expertise, moreover if the PC has the possibility to formulate an opinion as regards the terms of reference for programming services.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVÎȚĂ** replied to all previous questions, first on the calendar, pointing out that all proposals will be taken into account and dedicated workshops on POs, as well as technical meetings of the PC members will be added. The expenditures of such events will be supported from the TA budget of the current programme, and the procedures are going to be observed. Mrs. RACOVÎȚĂ continued on answering the

previous questions, about the terms of reference for programming services, that was subject of several rounds of consultations between the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration in Romania and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary, as representatives of the 2 MSs, partners in the programme. In what regards the institutional aspects, it was mentioned that the final decision in this regard would be a matter to be decided at the MSs' level.

**Mr. Sava DIAMANDI** underlined that from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs perspective, the Programme should go on in the same formula, keeping the same structures, taken into consideration all the possible arguments, among which to have a continuity and smooth transition from the current Programme to the next one. Mr. Diamandi stated that the current MA is the most efficient for these tasks and also, Oradea Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation for the Romania-Hungary Border is the most suitable place for hosting the Joint Secretariat.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked Mr. Sava DIAMANDI, Secretary I within Romanian Embassy in Budapest, for all the support and comments.

**Mrs. Eszter CSÓKÁSI** returned to the remark on the bottom-up approach in the cross-border Programme's which normally should allow each individual county to formulate its remarks and opinion and ensure the circulation of the documents among the PC members.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** expressed, once again, the agreement on the bottom-up approach when speaking about the programming process, underlined the consent given by the Hungarian party in what concerned ToR content, but reminded the participants the time constraints and explained that, in order to gain time, the ToR was finalized before the present PC being established, so consultation of ToR with PC members couldn't be performed, as the PC hadn't been established at the time.

**Mrs. Nikoletta HORVATH** stated that in terms of the desire for a smooth transition, there is a current negotiation with the EC and AA, considering the past Programme 2007-2013 when Hungary was the MA. Also, she mentioned that structures within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary were under accreditation process, being designated for other cooperation programmes.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** agreed that all provisions in the EU regulations are only drafts at the moment and not yet finalized, still they are the only official data made available by the COM in this regard -yet the only ones to rely on - and the following months will bring more information, even on that topic too.

**Mrs. Eszter CSÓKÁSI** agreed that this was the first PC meeting, still expressed her desire that the agenda included the possibility that each eligible county attending the meeting could formulate remarks and opinions.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** agreed that it could have been possible but that would have meant a way longer time schedule for the PC meeting.

The programming calendar for 2021-2027 period will be updated according to participants' recommendations and in line with programming process dynamic.

**Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI** expressed the importance and acknowledgements upon the negotiation and establishment of the next MA, and the continuation of discussions process on the content of the future Programme and objectives.

**Mrs. Roxana RACOVIȚĂ** thanked for all the comments, reminded the participants that all recent decisions were taken by consensus, proving, on one hand, the good cooperation between the members and, on the other hand, the efficient Programme's management performed by the Managing Authority 2014-2020, thanked all participants for their important inputs brought during the meeting and announced the closure thereof.

The meeting ended up with the invitation of the Info Point to make a site visit to the flagship project implemented by Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.

## **Synthesis of the 1<sup>st</sup>PC meeting**

**During the 1<sup>st</sup> PC meeting, the following decisions were made:**

**Decision no. 01** concerning the approval of the Programming Committee Rules of Procedure

**Decision no 02** concerning the approval of the Minutes of first PC meeting

**Decision no 03** concerning the Programme's position with regards to the Border Orientation Paper issued by the COM