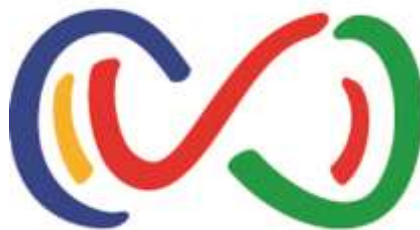


**Minutes of the
3rd Programming Committee Meeting
of the future
INTERREG PROGRAMME between
ROMANIA and HUNGARY for the period
2021-2027**

Date: 15th September, 2021
- online meeting -



Partnership for a better future

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	INSTITUTION
Dan BĂLĂNESCU	Managing Authority (2014-2020) - Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA), Romania
Nikoletta HORVÁTH	National Authority (2014-2020) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary
Valeria CENACCHI	European Commission (COM) - DG Regional and Urban Policy
Liliana CRIȘU	Managing Authority (2014-2020) – Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA), Romania
Ioana MÎNDRU	
Adrian-Zsolt MATUZ	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA), Romania
Radu NECȘULIU	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA), Romania
Elena BUNGĂRDEAN	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA), Romania
Vlad POPESCU	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Embassy of Romania in Budapest), Romania
Roxana MIHAI	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Romania
Daniel BOICU	
Andrei LUCACI	Timiș County Council
Gabriela CHIRICHEU	Arad County Council
Mircea MĂLAN/ Oana NICULA	Bihar County Council
István Tamás JANKÓ-SZÉP	Satu Mare County Council
Iulia GUGIU	Ministry of European Investments and Projects, Romania
Raluca DROB	Regional Development Agency – North-West Region, Romania
Marius Valentin NICULAE	Regional Development Agency – West Region, Romania
Mihai Sorin PASCU	Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Banat and Crisana „Excelsior”

Radu MĂTIUȚ	Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Arad County
Gabriel ȘUSTER	University of Agriculture Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat King Michael I of Romania
Dóra DÉKÁNY	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary
Szilvia HUJBERT	
Tamás MOLNÁR	
András STEFANIK	
Adrienn FUTÓ dr.	Széchenyi Programme Office Consulting and Service Nonprofit Limited Liability Company, Hungary
Illés ÚSZ	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Council
Zsuzsa MIHALIK	Hajdú-Bihar County Council
Anikó NAGY-SZÖLLŐSI	Békés County Council
Eszter Anna CSÓKÁSI	Csongrád-Csanád County Council
Lajos BARCSA	Association of Cities with County Rights
Livia BANU	BRECO
Monica TEREAN	Joint Secretariat (JS)
Cristina VESA	
Carmen CHIRILĂ	
Marius OLARIU	
Nóra SEBESI	Info Point (IP)
Mónika SEMJÉNINÉ HUSZTI	
Viktor FEKETE	
Éva VIDOVENYECZ	
Gloria ZAGAGLIONI	External experts

Dr. Pietro ELISEI	
Claudio CARPINETI	
Marius ȘTEFĂNICĂ	

A G E N D A

– 3rd Meeting of the PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE –

**Decision on Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology under the
future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary, for the period 2021-2027**

September 15, 2021

Online meeting

<i>EET</i>	<i>CET</i>	
10 ⁴⁵ -11 ⁰⁰	09 ⁴⁵ -10 ⁰⁰	Joining the digital platform
11 ⁰⁰ - 11 ¹⁵	10 ⁰⁰ - 10 ¹⁵	Opening and welcome speech
11 ¹⁵ -11 ⁴⁵	10 ¹⁵ -10 ⁴⁵	Presentation of the reviews and the outcomes of the PC preparatory meeting. Recap of the document to be approved: – <i>Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology</i>
11 ⁴⁵ -12 ¹⁵	10 ⁴⁵ -11 ¹⁵	Open discussion over the strategic projects' pipeline for 2021-2027 Project development, procedure, calendar & next steps
12 ¹⁵ -12 ³⁰	11 ¹⁵ -11 ³⁰	Break
12 ³⁰ -12 ⁴⁵	11 ³⁰ -11 ⁴⁵	Decision of the PC members on – <i>Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology</i>
12 ⁴⁵ -13 ⁰⁰	11 ⁴⁵ -12 ⁰⁰	Further activities according to programming calendar
13 ⁰⁰ -13 ¹⁵	12 ⁰⁰ -12 ¹⁵	Conclusions and closure of the meeting

Observation:

No other topics were added to the Agenda.

Quorum at the meeting

Romanian delegation		Hungarian delegation	
No. of institutions attending the meeting	8	No. of institutions attending the meeting	6
No. of institution delegating their votes	0	No. institution delegating their votes	0

List of the delegated votes:

Not the case.

Welcome speech, introduction of the Programming Committee (PC) members and presentation of the Agenda

Mrs. Monica TEREAN welcomed the participants to the 3rd PC meeting and introduced the new Head of the Managing Authority of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, **Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU** who also greeted the participants, expressed his confidence in a good collaboration for a successful Programme and declared the meeting open. He invited the COM's representative, **Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI**, to give a welcome speech.

Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI expressed her gladness to re-join, even if temporarily, the PC members, mentioning she was attending the meeting on behalf of **Mrs. Anna-Monika MODZELEWSKA**, who was on holiday. **Mrs. CENACCHI** acknowledged the progress made by the 2 Members States in relation to the programming process and stressed the importance of drafting a high-quality programming document for a good start of the new programming period.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU thanked **Mrs. CENACCHI** for the intervention and gave the floor to **Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH** who also addressed the participants a few words on behalf of the Member State, Hungary. She welcomed **Mr. BĂLĂNESCU** in the Interreg community's Romanian-Hungarian team, greeted the COM representative, as well as the other participants, and underlined the importance of the topic on the Agenda, expressing her hope that the quorum was met.

Upon **Mr. BĂLĂNESCU**'s request, **Mrs. Monica TEREAN** verified the quorum in line with PC Rules of Procedures (RoP) provisions¹, and, as the SZPO was representing the national level in Hungary, she confirmed the existence thereof. She also mentioned that besides the voting members, observers from both countries were attending the meeting as well.

Further on, **Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU** asked the PC members to approve the Agenda of the 3rd PC meeting and, as no objections were raised in relation thereof, the Agenda was approved.

The Agenda was approved, no supplementary topics were added.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU proposed the participants to discuss the first topic, i.e. the presentation of the reviews and the outcomes of the PC preparatory meeting held on September 9th. He invited the programming expert, **Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI**, to present the main observations received and the related answers provided in relation to the *Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology*.

Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI took the floor and summarized the relevant aspects raised by the PC members in relation to the document such as: soft measures not reflecting the needs of the Programme Area, disagreement on limiting infrastructure investment for projects financed

¹ i.e. "6 of the representatives of the counties (3 RO and 3 HU), 2 national level representatives (1 RO and 1 HU) and the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (2014-2020 MA), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade were represented at the meeting"

under Interreg Specific Objective 1 (ISO1) to 15% of the project's total budget, unbalanced scoring between ISO 1 and Policy Objective (PO) 2, respectively PO 4, for the criteria related to the rate of achieving a given result, short period of time available for assessment, concerns regarding the n+3 target and Programme's performance framework, financial commitment for preparing strategic projects related documentation, equal distribution of funds among NUTS3, subsidiarity principle (with focus on NUTS3), Romanian County Councils' proposal to limit the quality of Lead Beneficiaries to County Councils and county seats municipalities and to have only the strategic character assessed by the Councils for Regional Development in Romania and a similar counterpart in Hungary, the role of the future Monitoring Committee (MC), territorial impact criterion, etc.

Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI intervened and emphasised that projects under ISO 1 should focus on strengthening the cooperation and improving the governance in the cross-border area, and that the infrastructure component (which can be better used under other Policy Objectives) should only contribute to that purpose. In her opinion, which is also that of the COM, although some infrastructure component is not forbidden under ISO1, the objective is mainly conceived for soft measures aiming at a better governance and at solving obstacles, and the need to have investments in infrastructure under ISO1 should be regarded as an exception and be very well justified.

Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH asked for the floor and mentioned that projects under ISO1, even if oriented towards a better governance in the border area, might imply costs for equipment and/or infrastructure exceeding the 15% of the total project's budget limit. She provided an example of a possible cross-border initiative under ISO 1 to be planned in other CBC programme - interventions of ambulance vehicles from one Schengen Member State on the territory of another, in case of emergency situations - where although the main objective would be a better governance (by solving cross-border legislative obstacles), the costs with the needed equipment might be higher.

Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI presented the proposed modifications/simplifications of the *Methodology* and provided relevant answers/arguments for the aspects raised in writing and/or during the preparatory meeting held on September 9th. The proposed modifications concerned: minimal eligibility criteria of beneficiaries (with accent on County Councils' role), expenditures and activities; simplification of the assessment grid - only strategic character and no quality criteria (yet the quality component could be developed as a continuous process after first submission of ideas), revised/simplified/removed/rescored assessment criteria, etc. In addition, the programming expert summed up the open/pending issues that had to be decided upon, such as deleting, if possible, the maximum threshold for infrastructure under ISO1, clarifying the shared local-central policy competences for selected Specific Objectives (SO) with the relevant authorities in both countries, consulting and approving the revised *Methodology*, relaunching the second round for Interreg Programme (IP) approval, approving the updated workplan in relation to programming process, etc. She also mentioned the TA support to be offered to strategic projects ideas listed in the Programme (if the case), in view of further development and preparation of related technical documentations.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU thanked the expert for the presentation and asked **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** to prepare a list with the observations already incorporated in the *Methodology*, as well as with those not included, but answered to by the expert, in order to have them at hand when coming to a decision on the *Methodology*. He expressed the MA's expectation to have strategic projects included in the IP and invited the participants to present their opinions/comments in relation to the proposed *Methodology* and the issues raised.

Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH asked for a clarification regarding the information on shared competences that were to be requested from the Prime Minister Office and **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** specified that such information regarding the multi-level governance and the specific competences on each selected SOs could be helpful when designing the projects' partnership. In this respect, the programming expert will prepare a draft official request, to be submitted to the relevant authorities.

Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH also raised the right of property issue, specifying that in Hungary the land property document and the building permit are requested for the pre-contracting phase, therefore, requesting such documents earlier would represent a restriction, considering also the long period of time between listing the projects in the IP and their contracting. She gave an example of another CBC Programme where the quality assessment preceded the administrative one, and the property issue in that case was settled by asking the applicants to provide a so called "property settlement plan".

Mrs. Monica TEREAN considered that the property right was to be settled by the projects' partners during the period allocated for technical documentation preparation, but the programming expert clarified that, in order to avoid unnecessary delays, she thought such aspect could be tackled from the very beginning. Nevertheless, considering also **Mrs. HORVÁTH's** intervention, the requirement for submitting the property right could be postponed for a later stage.

Mr. Mihai PASCU had an intervention in relation to the indicative list of potential beneficiaries under ISO1, recommending that NGOs and other stakeholders to be also included therein. Another issue raised by **Mr. PASCU** related to the proposal regarding the evaluation made by Councils for Regional Development, which includes only County Councils and several Municipalities in the Programme Area.

Mr. István JANKÓ-SZÉP reiterated the idea of having assessed only the strategic character of the project ideas, as the time constraints would not allow a more complex assessment process (like an open call one).

In response to **Mr. PASCU's** intervention, **Mrs. Gabriela CHIRICHEU** clarified that Councils for Regional Development consists of representatives of all local level administrations which are members with voting right and that NGOs' representatives are observers with no-voting right, the same as in the Monitoring Committee/ Programming Committee.

In this context, **Mr. Mihai PASCU** expressed his concern in relation to the functioning of the PC. In his opinion, the new CPR (art.6 and art.39) regulates that each member in the MC, and by extrapolation in the PC, should have a voting right and asked the COM's representative to provide further information on the topic.

Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI recalled the COM letter on the partnership principle and confirmed that, during the assessment of the official Interreg Programme, information on how that principle had been complied with might be requested. She also drew attention on two aspects in the *Methodology*, namely the eligibility condition for the Lead Beneficiaries and the equal distribution of funds at NUTS3 level. In her opinion, the approach regarding the strategic projects should start from the results to be achieved, the relevant partnerships (having the proper attributions) and the related allocations should be established based on such results. Moreover, the distribution of funds should target the balanced development of the Programme Area (i.e. less developed parts/sectors were to receive higher support), and the focus should be on the quality, results and cross-border impact, aspects which were not conditioned by the

equal distribution of funds among the 8 counties involved in the Programme, **Mrs. CENACCHI** said.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU thanked **Mrs. CHENACCHI** for the clarifications brought and asked the COM's opinion on the RO County Councils' proposal to have only County Councils and/or major Municipalities as Lead Beneficiaries.

Mrs. Valeria CENACCHI specified that, as far as she knew, there were no provisions in the Regulations regarding such limitation in relation to the eligibility of Lead Beneficiaries, and nor the subsidiary principle implied such limitation. She stated that the proposed approach could be an internal, political-one, but underlined the importance to have the projects' partnerships established based on needs and proper level of competences, in order to achieve the envisaged/best results.

As no participant expressed the intention to intervene in relation to the topic above, **Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU** announced a short break, but first he asked the programming expert and the JS to add the NGOs on the indicative list of potential beneficiaries under ISO1, those being accidentally omitted. He also requested **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** to prepare a list indicating the modifications included/not-included in the *Methodology*, to ease the decision-making process.

After the break, **Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU** resumed the meeting and gave the floor to **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** who shortly presented the observations included/accepted, respectively not performed as not applicable and/or not yet decided upon.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU mentioned once again that aspects marked as "to be further discussed" were not included in the document presented by the expert. Further, he asked the voting members to use the chat option for express their votes in relation the *Methodology*, in its revised form.

Following the voting process, **Mrs. Monica TEREAN**, after remembering the audience rule 6 (3)² of RoP in relation to decision-making process, mentioned that, as 14 out of 16 PC members with voting right were present at the meeting, 9 votes were necessary in order to have a decision. She also announced the result of the voting process (annex attached) i.e.: 10 votes for rejecting the *Methodology* in the form presented, 3 votes for its approval and 1 abstain.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU underlined that the votes against were expressed in relation to the current content of the document, and not in relation to the *Methodology* itself. He thanked the members for expressing their votes and asked them to decide on the next steps: to submit a revised *Methodology* for approval within a Written Procedure (WP) or in the context of an online PC meeting.

Upon **Mr. BĂLĂNESCU**'s request, **Mrs. Monica TEREAN** clarified the procedural deadlines in case of each possible approach, that is the documents have to be sent to PC members 10 working days beforehand, with the possibility in case of WP to have a short, 5 working days deadline, while in case of a PC meeting, the procedural timeframe could be shortened only if so decided by the PC members.

²The Chair shall seek consensus of the voting members of the PC. However, if they fail to reach consensus, decision shall be made according to two-thirds majority rule (11/16, 10/15, 9/14, 9/13, 8/12, 7/11, 7/10), including the two Member States.

As the majority of PC members asked for an online PC meeting, it was decided that the *Methodology*, following discussions and agreement on all open issues (so that no more delays in relation to the document could appear), would be revised and sent to all members, at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

The Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology was rejected and a future on-line PC meeting was decided in relation to a revised version of the document.

The next point on the Agenda was the calendar of the programming process, presented by **Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI** who underlined that some steps, such as organizing consultations for strategic projects' ideas identification (planned for October) and their submission and assessment, were conditioned by the *Methodology* being approved by the end of September. Discussions on the performance framework, as well as on future allocations on SOs were to be also started in October, following decision on strategic projects' approach. Also, the second round of the WP 5 for approving the draft of Interreg Programme version 1 was going to be launched, after the document being revised following observations received in the context of the first round and including aspects resulted from the 3rd PC meeting, if the case. Another topic raised by **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** was related to the indicative calendar for TA services contract implementation that had to be updated, in line with the current status of the programming process.

Mrs. Nikoletta HORVÁTH intervened, stating that the services contract calendar should be harmonised with the programming-related activities to be further performed. In addition, she mentioned that the SEA procedure in Hungary was taking 30 days, so by October 9th the result of the assessment should be available and asked **Mrs. ZAGAGLIONI** about the deadlines in Romania.

Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI confirmed the SEA procedure was launched also in Romania, (end of August), and feedback was expected by end of September.

Mr. István JANKÓ-SZÉP took the floor and expressed his opinion that a discussion regarding the selection of indicators was necessary in the near future.

Upon **Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU**'s requested, **Mrs. TEREAN** specified that the nearest date for organizing the next PC meeting in relation to the *Methodology* was the week starting with October 4th, but following **Mrs. HORVÁTH**'s intervention regarding COM's Interreg event to be organized the same week 7-8 October, a postponement should be taken into account.

In **Mrs. Gloria ZAGAGLIONI**'s opinion such postponement was not possible, as any delays in relation to a decision on the *Methodology* would jeopardize the process of having the strategic projects ideas listed in the Interreg Programme. In that context, both **Mr. BĂLĂNESCU** and **Mrs. HORVÁTH** thought that the 4th or 5th of October would be the latest dates for the related PC meeting.

Mr. Andrei LUCACI took the floor underling the importance of the strategic projects and of the results to be achieved through such projects, and expressed his concern in relation to the deadlines imposed by the *Methodology*, although acknowledging the time-constraints relating to the elaboration and implementation of the future IP.

Mr. Dan BĂLĂNESCU closed the meeting by thanking the participants for all interventions, asking them to submit the relevant requests to the Joint Secretariat as soon as possible, underlying the MA's position regarding transparency and equal treatment in relation to all future

project ideas (not only the strategic ones) and expressing his confidence that a decision on the revised *Methodology* would be taken in the next PC meeting.

The next PC meeting for approving the Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology should be organized early in October, the second round of the WP no 5 relating to the draft Programme will be launched immediately after the 3rd PC meeting, the contract services calendar will be harmonized with the programming process status and future discussions on selecting the indicators will be organized.

Synthesis of the 3rd PC meeting

During the 3rd PC meeting, the voting members rejected the content of the *Strategic Projects' Concept and Methodology*, in the form presented by the programming experts. The Decision has been passed by majority of votes (2/3 of the votes expressed), in line with PC RoP