

ANNEX
TEMPLATE FOR INTERREG PROGRAMMES

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Strand	A

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1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

Text field [2 000]

The Programme area (PA) is composed of 4 counties on the Romanian side and 4 counties (NUTS 3 political and administrative units) on the Hungarian side, as follows: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (HU323), Hajdú-Bihar (HU321), Békés (HU332), Csongrád-Csanád (HU333) in Hungary; Satu Mare (RO115), Bihor (RO111), Arad (RO421), Timiș (RO424) in Romania. These counties are included in the following NUTS II statistical regions in Romania: North-West (RO11)- Bihor County, Satu Mare County and West (RO42) - Arad County and Timiș County. In Hungary: NUTS II Northern Great Plain (HU32) - Hajdú-Bihar County, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and Southern Great Plain (HU33) - Békés County, Csongrád-Csanád County.

The PA administrative surface amounts to 50,435.31 km², out of which around 56.3% represents Romanian administrative area (11.9% of total national territory) and 43.7% Hungarian administrative area (14.15% of total national territory). In terms of administrative size of the component counties (NUTS3), these go from 8,691.5 km² (Timiș) to half that (4,252.8 km², Csongrád-Csanád). The total length of the border is 450 km, crossed by 12 road corridors and 5 railways border crossing points. Four counties in the northern and southern border area (notably Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare in the north, and Csongrád-Csanád and Timiș counties in the south) share the border area with neighbouring countries (Ukraine in the north and Serbia in the south).

The PA is composed of a total of 117 urban settlements and 672 rural settlements. Romania's border area has 36 urban settlements and 307 rural settlements, whilst the Hungarian's border area has 81 urban settlements and 365 rural settlements.

The PA has almost 4 million people (3,846,734 inhabitants), out of which around 52.5% on the Romanian side and 47.5% on the Hungarian side of the border.

1.2. Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

Text field [50 000]

1.2.1 Common challenges and investment needs

The territorial analysis shows that there are common challenges related to economic, social and territorial areas, which may be addressed more impactful in the CB area through cooperation and / or joint investments.

Climate change adaptation strategies and the management of natural and anthropic hazards, especially linked to the incidence of floods (notably in the northern and southern areas of the PA), land-slides and fires deriving from draughts and land abandonment have emerged as important investment needs and priorities. The territorial analysis also shows that, although the **renewable energy potential** (i.e. solar, biomass, geothermal) is substantial, this potential is not fully exploited, nor fully mapped at micro-zone level, which also represents a joint investment need and a priority area for future cooperation. The PA is characterized by a **green border** and high potential for the valorisation of natural resources. However, the current management of protected sites is hardly coordinated and does not reflect the real cross-border nature of the natural landscape. Additionally, both the sides of the border are affected by deforestation trends, which may further deteriorate the exposure of the territory to natural hazards and the impact of climate change. Cooperation in the field of protection and valorisation of natural resources, including green infrastructure, has thus been highlighted as common investment need for the PA.

The territorial analysis shows that the **uneven distribution of public services** is a significant barrier impeding balanced development and internal cohesion, with Romanian regions having a lower degree of public functions distribution (**especially in the health cultural and touristic infrastructure**), except major urban centres. In relation to resilient and modern health infrastructure and services, which is a major investment priority of all EU countries, following SARS-CoV-2 pandemics, the basic endowment in the PA looks still inadequate compared to needs, especially in relation to emergency response, exchange of information and community, tailor-made health services for specific target groups. The PA is endowed with rich natural and cultural heritage, providing the basis for cross-border valorisation in touristic routes and cultural initiatives focussing on local traditions, as catalysers of social inclusion. However, the area is still not able to attract and retain high flows of tourists (which is suggested by the decreasing overnight average stay, in terms of number of days), whilst many local and county strategies put great accent on touristic resources and potentials in their territories, in close connection with traditional economic sectors such as local agriculture and food production. The analysis thus suggests that the valorisation of cultural resources and tourism for the socio-economic development of the PA is also a priority, common, investment need for the whole area.

1.2.1.1 Conclusions related to the general demographic context

In 2019, the Programme area was home to 3.85 million people, representing 13.2% of the total inhabitants of Hungary and Romania combined, and distributed territorially in eight counties with varying population volumes (from 338,025 inhabitants in Békés to 701,499 in Timiș) and densities ranging from 54.1/km² (Arad) to 93.9 inhabitants per km² (Csongrád-Csanád). The territory presents localized clusters of high-density population in the southern part (areas around Szeged, Timișoara, Arad) and north (areas around Oradea, Debrecen, and to a large degree the territory of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and northern half of Satu Mare). The area Békés – Arad is characterized by lower density, these being also the counties on each side having the most pronounced negative natural change rate of population in 2018 (-7.4% in Békés and -4% in Arad), pointing to complex underlying reasons for the more reduced attractiveness.

In the last 10 years, the PA has consistently recorded a decrease in population, with Timiș being a significant outlier due to its positive natural and migratory population change (+1.1, +0.5‰). Outmigration represented a problem specifically for the counties of Hajdú-Bihar, Bihor and Satu Mare, which form a contiguous area in the north part of the PA. The intra-regional population dynamic trends highlight the existence of the peri-urbanisation phenomena, especially around Timișoara and Oradea, but also Szeged and Arad, which point to increasing urban-rural divides and a more intensive pattern of urbanisation with implications in service and infrastructure demand, but also environmental impact. The aging of population in the area over the last 10 years and consequently the age dependency ratio has increased constantly, albeit with a more accentuated pace in Békés (158.5% aging index ratio in 2018) and Csongrád-Csanád (147.9%), which are the outliers in the PA. The negative natural change rate in the Hungarian PA territory is two times that of the Romanian territory (-3.8‰, versus -1.9‰), a significant difference recognized in European demographic trend projections (ESPON ESCAPE, 2019), showing Békés and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg as significantly shrinking rural regions.

At county level, as far as population dependency ratios are concerned, clear disparities between Békés (33%) and Csongrád-Csanád (31.2%) and the rest of the counties (from 22.4% in Timiș to 27.7% in Arad) can be observed. However, a more in-depth assessment of LAU2 level demographic dependency ratios highlights a different pattern, where predominantly rural areas in the eastern part of the Romanian counties (especially Arad and Bihor) recording a more vulnerable, elderly population and values of the dependency ratio over 50. This difference between the county average, which shows positive values for Romanian counties, and the situation at LAU2, underlines more accentuated urban-rural disparities in Romanian counties and the formation of inner peripheries in the Békés-Arad-Bihor rural areas.

The demographic trends and the territorial concentration of population suggest that the two sides of the border have common challenges related to the depopulation, demographic aging and suburbanisation trends in main cities, whilst rurality is also an important feature of the PA, generating inner peripheries and rururban disparities.

1.2.1.2 Conclusions on human capital and availability of basic social services

General human capital development indicators

The Programme area is characterised by generally positive trends in human capital development, with raising life expectancy, lowering rates of social exclusion and unemployment. However, the PA is still lagging behind the European level in the performance for some of these indicators, including life expectancy at birth (83.7 for women and 78.2 for men in EU-27 in 2018, as opposed to only 77.27 years for women and 70.08 years for men in Satu Mare, the lowest performer), whilst some indicators highlight internal disparities. In this respect, an internal disparity in the PA can be observed in the infant mortality rate, which is double than the European average in Bihor and Satu Mare (6.8 and 7 as opposed to 3.4 in 2018 for EU-27), and half that in Hajdú-Bihar (1.7), although not all Hungarian counties record under-average values (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg has a rate of 5.1). This is a significant weakness which needs to be addressed with better healthcare service access.

Similarly, there is a significant diversity of social challenges in the PA, although these are assessed using different methodologies at country level (different definition of disadvantaged areas), nevertheless specific patterns can be deduced regardless of differences in methodologies: Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg represent a cross-border area with a prevalence of population with

human capital challenges, whereas notable challenges especially in urban areas are also clustered in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar.

Although social assistance stands in the realm of a typical national policy level of governance, common challenges related to human capital development identified in the PA, corroborated with demographic trends and settlements' concentration patterns, underline territorial vulnerabilities and specific target groups, that can be addressed through joint actions in the field of healthcare and people-to-people actions, whilst the multidimensional character of disadvantage in certain areas can be approached by mainstreaming internal socioeconomic cohesion of the PA into all future joint interventions.

Health-care infrastructure and services

Population access to healthcare services is extremely important for quality of life and is dependent on health infrastructure. The PA is endowed with a well-developed health infrastructure with performance indicators similar to the European ones, especially in counties hosting university centres (Timiș, Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar). However, the distribution of public health functions is significantly denser in the Hungarian counties (i.e. a much higher number of ambulance headquarters) and intra-regional disparities in health infrastructure are present between the more-developed counties of Timiș, Bihor, Csongrád-Csanád and Hajdú-Bihar, recording numbers of hospital beds and medics per inhabitants over the national and European averages, and the other counties in the north (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) and center of the region (Arad, Békés). The number of hospital beds in Hungarian counties is higher on average than the Romanian side, varying between 2429 (Békés) and 3558 (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg). The number of hospital beds/1000 inhabitants is largest in Timiș (8.2‰) and Bihor (8.1‰), and lowest in Satu Mare (5.5‰), with all figures over the EU-27 average.

Timișoara is one of first five most important university centres for medicine in Romania, and Oradea (capital of Bihor County), Debrecen (Hajdú-Bihar), Szeged (from Csongrád-Csanád) and Nyíregyháza (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) have a medicine university or faculty (case of Nyíregyháza). This is a factor for the high number of medics in Timiș County (5722), Bihor (4581), Hajdú-Bihar (3047) and Csongrád-Csanád (2502). The biggest number of medics/1000 inhabitants is registered in Csongrád-Csanád (6.3‰) and Timiș (6.2‰), while the lowest is in Satu Mare (1.9‰), Arad (2.7‰) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (2.7‰), lower than the national averages.

Lastly, complementarities in the higher education offer in sectors relevant for public health policies, in the PA can represent cross-border cooperation opportunities, boosting synergies among local public authorities and the higher education institutions in this specific sector especially in the following fields: Medicine , supported by a favourable labour market with high wages in the sector; Bioeconomy – environmental and food engineering; Applied science, advanced materials, engineering; Information technology.

However, considering the challenges of some human capital indicators, the overall status of population health (which is not fully mapped), as well as recent challenges deriving from unprecedented health crisis and the need to ensure a resilient, modern and coordinated EU health system, the current endowment of health infrastructure and, above all, the functionality and the emergency-response capacity of health services do not seem adequate to emerging needs.

Cross-border cooperation and investments in the field of health, beside and beyond typical infrastructure, focussing on exchange of experience, joint trainings, resilient, modern, well-managed

and performant health institutions, offering personalised health services, towards excellence and standard procedures, shall thus be considered a high priority in the next programming period.

1.2.1.3 Conclusions on the economic development

Overall economic performance

All four NUTS 2 regions included in the PA are still eligible under the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, which represents an opportunity to benefit from ERDF, ESF +, Cohesion Fund, as well as Just Transition Fund (JTF) and other funds and instruments that will be available in the next programming period, in important economic domains but is also an indicator of distance to be travelled compared to the European averages.

There is an economic performance imbalance in the region, which still did not manage to catch up to national levels. The PA now records a lesser share of national GDP in 6 out of the 8 counties compared to 2009, pointing to a stagnating attractiveness level. Furthermore, while the Hungarian counties make up 10.51% of the population and 10.40% of the national Hungarian GDP, in Romania the population represents 18.70% of the total, yet the region only produces 10.33% of the national GDP (2018), although the gap may be partly due to the way turnover is reported in Romania (at headquarter level, often in Bucharest). In terms of GDP per capita, the northern part of the PA (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) records values still a little over a quarter of the EU-27 average, and even half that at national level.

Timișoara is the economic powerhouse of the region, with the Timiș county recording the highest GDP/capita value, at 144% above the PA average (9,728 EUR/capita PPS 2018) yet still half the average one at EU-27 level (27,630 EUR/capita PPS). Timiș Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) per capita is three times the average in the PA (6,213 EUR versus 1,963 EUR), and seven times that in the best-performing Hungarian county (Csongrád-Csanád, 889 EUR), and has increased by 22.3% between 2016-2018. The pull effect of Timișoara, which is also endowed with the largest international airport and four public universities is important and observable on both sides of the border. In practice, a more balanced territorial development should be pursued and this can be achieved with complementarity and cooperation.

Overall business environment and innovation

While national averages for enterprise number per thousand inhabitants continue to decline in both Romania (43 in 2017) and Hungary (49 in 2017), the PA actually records a positive trend. Entrepreneurship continued to grow between 2011 and 2017, except in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, and recorded the highest growth in Bihor and Arad (26.8% and 26.3% increase). However, while entrepreneurship grows, new jobs actually decline: the founders may start businesses without employed human resources, only based on their own knowledge and experience. The records of the analysed period showed that a newly established company created, on average, a single job, a level considered very low, even against the background of the maturity of the entrepreneurial ecosystem mentioned above.

The Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) evaluation shows a positive convergence trend of the Romanian regions and the Hungarian ones, in relation to the EU average, however with clear underperformance especially in basic infrastructures, business sophistication, health, infrastructure, innovation.

Szeged, Debrecen and Timișoara are the regional innovation powerhouses, with Csongrád-Csanád recording an R&D GDP expenditure of 2.34%, above the European level (2018), followed by Hajdú-Bihar (1.86%) and Timiș (0.65%) at a distance, however, over the Romanian national level (0.50%). The PA, however, is only responsible for 9.30% of the total R&D cost spent by the PA countries in 2018, in spite of housing 13.2% of inhabitants.

In conclusion, the analysis showed that the PA has an overall weak business environment, low innovation capacity, limited business sustainability and important imbalances at territorial level, with the concentration of GDP production and R&D expenditures in some main cities, acting as engines of the economic growth in the PA.

1.2.1.4 Conclusions on tourism sector development and cultural assets

Tourism sector development

The growth of the tourism sector in the PA has been documented through an increase of accommodation capacities in the component counties over time (13.45% increase in 10 years). However, there is a national disparity between Romania and Hungary, where the latter has double the number of beds in tourist accommodations per capita (36/1,000 inhabitants, as opposed to only 18/1,000 inhabitants in Romania). Compared to this national level, both sides of the PA are underperforming, at 26 beds /1,000 inhabitants (Hungarian PA) and 15 beds /1,000 inhabitants (Romanian PA) respectively.

Looking at tourist flows' indicators, the occupancy rate is generally low and very low, with an average of 35-38% in the best performers (Hajdú-Bihar, Bihor) and in Satu Mare (which has a very low number of structures to begin with) and going down to 18% in Csongrád-Csanád and 19.08% in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Since 2010, tourist overnight stays have grown throughout the area, except in Satu Mare (-19% between 2010-2018), with a significant 35% increase in Csongrád-Csanád and remarkable increases in Békés (83%), Timiș (77%) and Bihor (72%). However, overnight stays have decreased, on average from 2.78 nights per stay to 2.41 (2010-2018). Disparities in overnight stays have been higher in Romania, with an actual increase in Timiș (+4%), and a 44% decrease in Bihor, which was welcoming tourists for an average of 5 days in 2009, much more than the rest of the counties. Although shorter stays may indicate a low attractiveness of the touristic sites as destination for medium and long-term holidays, shorter stays may also suggest a change in tourists' behaviour, with a higher mobility and willingness to experience itinerary tourism in the area: this can be turned into an asset and regional strongpoint, which, however, can be achieved only through cooperation between actors involved in the management of tourist sites (i.e. through the creation of thematic / niche routes and itineraries).

Cultural capital

In terms of cultural capital, the PA strongpoints and cultural centres are promoted at European level, however these rank in the bottom 25 percentile as far as cultural and creative infrastructure and services are concerned. Low local and international cultural connections could be supported through the CBC programme. Similarly, there are common elements of potential in the form of shared cultural heritage (such as architectural art nouveau heritage, as well as religious and rural heritage) which can represent a collaboration point and an opportunity to promote the area's joint strengths. Intangible cultural heritage elements and contemporary cultural values have the potential to actively contribute to developing a long-term preservation instrument of the common cultural heritage of the whole target area, including under a common touristic destination management approach. Set-up and cooperation

of cross-border clusters, cultural hubs and people-to-people actions promoting cultural exchanges and their respective infrastructure has the potential of being developed through joint cooperation in the field of culture and tourism, as means for the socio-economic development of the cross-border area, taking into account also the need to actively involve rural settlements in order to ensure the balanced development and the cohesion of the region.

The growth potential of tourism in the PA is thus considered high and can produce leverage effects in the PA, under the condition of adopting a unitary approach, by developing “cross-border touristic brands” that will trigger synergies in the less visited counties. A common agenda could be considered for the management of destinations, as well as for the friendly orientation of tourists to the key tourist sites and cross border routes. In this respect, cooperation on natural, cultural (including religious) or spa tourism is especially valuable, taking into account existing common resources and common interest in cooperation.

1.2.1.5 Conclusions on the environmental protection and capital

Overall framework

Environmental and ecosystem protection, climate change adaptation, energy transition and the low carbon economy represent vital issues at the core of the European policy for the 2030 time-horizon. Both Romania and Hungary have committed to ambitious targets through their respective National Energy and Climate Plans 2030 in order to reduce GhG emissions, reach RES shares of 30.7% (Romania) and at least 21% (Hungary) and to contribute to the overall European goal of reaching at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. In this respect, the European, macroregion and national contextualisation is relevant for any subsequent PO2 action in the CBC area, and it strongly supports environmental action.

PA landscape and climate change

The PA is characterized by a plain geomorphology that is favourable to settlement development and agriculture, with a higher landform diversity in the Romanian counties, due to the existence of Oriental and Banat Carpathians, as well as Apuseni Mountains as macroregional units partly covering the PA. Landscape diversity overall is moderate, but coherent across the border, which offers no natural impediment to landscape and protected site integration. A consequence of the vast plain terrain and urbanisation is the high degree of landscape fragmentation, which, albeit lower than in the western parts of Europe, is still a concern in particular in the Hungarian counties, with Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg recording over half of the county surface as medium and highly fragmented. There is a rich hydrographic network in the PA, which is crossing the border between Romania and Hungary almost in its entirety, producing contiguous riparian areas, generating a high potential of joint valorisation. Due to the topography and river density, the area is also one of Europe’s most prone regions to floods: high flood recurrence is recorded in Hajdú-Bihar, Timiș, Arad, Bihor, while very high flood recurrence is a significant risk for the two northernmost counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare. Bihor and Satu Mare have historically been the most affected by flood class 1 events. Landslide susceptibility is relatively low, throughout the whole PA (with the exception of Bihor, in the Apuseni Mountains), with some areas prone to landslides concentrated along rivers. Cross-border disasters and risk management in the area is incipient: although there are some ongoing initiatives in this field, there is still significant room for improvement of coordination, risk prevention and joint response capacity, which substantiates the need for joint investments and future cooperation actions. With respect to the quality of environmental factors, the water bodies in the Romanian PA

are evaluated as being good and transitioning to „medium” towards the border. A significant amount of river sections in the Hungarian side has a quality status considered „poor” or „bad” (eg. Létai-ér, Kösely, Körös) by the EEA under parameters of the Water Framework Directive, especially around Szeged city. Water pollution thus represents a vulnerability in the area, which could be addressed through joint actions under non-climate change risk prevention strategies.

Renewable energy

Common potentials are sustained by the very concrete opportunity to use biodegradable waste for biomass energy, facilitating the energy transition. High and very high potential of geothermal district heating (very high – 171-1932 ktoe – in Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Timiș and Bihor), with geothermal resources being a distinct endowment of the PA. While wind energy, large hydropower and, to a degree, biomass energy, are reduced, there is still a high photovoltaic energy potential, with circa two thirds of the territory being suitable for installation of photovoltaic production (Csongrád-Csanád, Békés, Timiș, partly Arad, Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar - 3.30-3.51 kWh/kWp/day).

Natural resources

Natural endowments of the PA are rich and diverse, ranging from floodplain-specific landscapes to spa heritage, natural reservations, Karst areas rich in caves, RAMSAR wetland areas, and including a UNESCO world Heritage site, Hortobágy National Park (Hungary). Natural areas are very well represented across the whole PA, with Natura 2000 sites covering between 14.63% (Timiș) and 47.29% (Hajdú-Bihar) of the surface of the counties. However, they are not always contiguous across both sides of the border, and this is an indication of a need to improve cooperation in managing the Natura 2000 sites, as well as of joint investments and a coordinated action for the development of green infrastructure along the green border (including buffer zones). Even though the region has a varied, but consistent natural heritage, there is no common branding or understanding of the natural potential of the region and its diverse opportunities, which may contribute to the decreasing touristic performance of the PA, with shortening of the number of nights spent in touristic accommodations. The recent Covid-19 pandemic may accentuate this decline; however, it may also represent an argument for nature-oriented tourism and rural development, as a counter-offer to the city break tourism concentrated in the big urban centers.

1.2.1.6 Conclusions on governance and cooperation

Local governance and centre of the decision-making process

There are commonalities in the way the multi-level administrative structure of the two states is organized, where NUTS 3 and LAU 2 levels are the most relevant in terms of competencies. There are similar patterns in the implementation of vertical governance coordination, with the use of public authority associations and federations, which are involved to a general large degree in promoting local development. However, there is a generally high level of territorial fragmentation at administrative unit level (albeit the border area in Hungary is less fragmented than the national average) and although the countries have a similar administrative structure, the NUTS 3 units in Hungary also have delegated functions in the field of regional development strategies, whilst in Romania these are coordinated by Regional Development Agencies (which, however, are not public administrations, but NGOs of public interest). Additionally, many local administrations in rural areas (such as parts of Arad, Bihor, Hajdú-Bihar counties) may face reduced administrative capacity and/or

resources for implementing cooperation, whilst larger urban centres are typically more experienced and endowed with proper administrative capacity to manage complex investment projects with larger budgets in both countries. The quality of Government Index performance on the lower comparative scale with the rest of Europe, for all NUTS 2 regions involved (places 155-193/202, 2017) indicates that the PA is a lagging region, especially in terms of quality of government services, with existing disparities between the Hungarian regions and the Romanian ones. All these administrative capacity disparities across the PA can potentially affect the capacity of potential beneficiaries to access cooperation funds and to modernise public services to the benefit of cross-border communities. In this context, economies of scale for services' planning and delivery, peer-to-peer exchange, joint analysis of barriers to cooperation, capacity building activities can be pursued through cooperation under the future programme, for better territorial coverage and an increased quality and innovation of cross-border governance.

Formal and informal cooperation

The area is characterised by a long history of informal cooperation, or expressed willingness for cooperation, through twinning initiatives, the constitution of Euroregions and the establishment of EGTCs. Twinning is a typical model applied along the border including the non-standardized and non-institutionalised cooperation of the neighbouring regional authorities (e.g. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare), large urban centres (e.g. Oradea and Debrecen), as well as smaller settlements. According to the official websites of the local municipalities, altogether 144 twinings exist within the programming area. The agenda of these twinings is mainly characterised by cultural and sports activities, exchanges. On the other hand, intercommunity and voluntary associations of public administrations are mainly dependent from bottom-up financing and, for the same reason, the CSO sector is relatively weak. Similarly, although EGTCs represent a growing cooperation reality of the PA, their financial and human resources capacities are differentiated and also depend on top-down financing. In general terms, the analysis showed that the community interaction (exchanges, connections) in the PA is not fully understood, which suggests there is the need to invest more in people-to-people actions which may enable the mobilisation of local communities, increasing their capacities to express shared needs and to propose joint solutions to common community problems, under a truly bottom-up approach.

1.2.2 Lessons learnt from the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme

Main lessons learnt from the current ROHU Interreg Programme (2014-2020), suggested by the Programme implementation Evaluation Report (2020) are recalled below:

- The large number of priorities covered by the programme and the limited matching of the priorities of the eight counties led to a less focused concentration of the funds. For the next programming period, **a more focused concentration of the funds would support and improve the potential to produce visible and perceptible impacts in the programme area.**
- In terms of Programme effectiveness, the Evaluation proposes an **earlier launching of the calls for proposals as well as more simplified systems for project evaluation, contracting and monitoring** that would improve the Programme effectiveness.

- The **sustainability of the cross-border cooperation** depends firstly on the capacity and experience of the beneficiaries but also on a proper monitoring system that should timely depict possible Programme evolutions and external factors and take the right measures in due time.

Based on the Programme implementation Evaluation Report findings, the assessment of the expected territorial impact deriving from the implementation of the current Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, an important lesson learnt in terms of Programme intervention logics is related to the need to reinforce the linkages between needs observed, envisaged interventions and programme indicators, in order to be able to better assess programme and projects' results, territorial and social impacts. The analysis of assessment grids aimed at analysing main **project weaknesses** observed during Concept Notes and Full Applications' selection stages for Flagship Projects, which may have further affected projects' smooth implementation and may also have **a negative effect on the expected results** in the future. The analysis allowed the following conclusions:

- The overall **relevance** of Flagship projects interventions and partnerships has been high, with strong linkages with previous projects and existing networks;
- However, the applicants encountered problems in defining **baseline indicators on existing needs**, defining methodologies for quantifying and selecting target groups and, consequently, they had difficulties in quantifying expected impacts on territories and people, which is probably caused by important **data gaps** and limited capacity to prepare ex ante impact analysis of interventions (which actually suggests a low quality of feasibility studies). This aspect reduced the possibility to assess the expected territorial impact of Flagship projects implemented within ROHU 2014-2020 Programme;

Additionally, from a sector-wise analysis perspective, the main conclusions from the review of the Ips performances and reallocations of funds during the programming period 2014-2020 can be summarised as follows:

- i. Interventions in the field of health and social infrastructure concentrated more than half funds available for restricted calls and nearly one third of those available for contracting under open calls (42% on total share for both types of calls).
- ii. Interventions in the field of sustainable transport have absorbed less than initially planned, especially for projects of strategic importance, where all funds initially allocated to Ip 7c have been reallocated to other measures, whilst the allocations to Ip7b were decreased (as a result the share of Ip7 on total funds available for contracting on total has decreased to 9% from the initial 16%).
- iii. Interventions in the field of employment friendly growth, especially under open calls, where they had been initially granted high share of allocated funds, have absorbed less funds than planned (the share of Ip8b on total funds available for contracting for all types of calls has decreased to 17%, from the initial 29%).
- iv. On the other hand, measures aiming at valorising natural and cultural resources absorbed more funds than initially planned and were thus finally allocated 22% of ERDF available for contracting (overall, both restricted and open calls), whilst allocations to water management have been decreased to 2%.

v. Interventions in the field of risk prevention (funded only under open calls) also absorbed more than initially planned and finally received an increase of funds (from 9 to 13% total funds available for open calls, representing 6% on the total programme available ERDF funds).

vi. Finally, people-to-people interventions funded under Ip 11, only through open calls, absorbed around 4% of ERDF available under open calls, representing 2% of total, as initially planned.

It shall be underlined that, although the above considerations may provide an insight on the potential attractiveness of different types and fields of intervention in terms of stakeholders' response to calls, still, one important lesson learnt from the current programming period, based on stakeholders' consultation under both the Programme evaluation and programming exercises, is that **changing needs and changing context, as well as specific funding rules, timing and conditions for accessing the funds are also important factors** which may affect Programme implementation and absorption rates. In this respect, the experience of the current Programme shall be certainly corroborated with identified needs for the future and with perceived difficulties in accessing funds as experienced by the stakeholders. From one side, a certain flexibility shall be envisaged for reallocation of funds among priorities in the next programming period, as already acknowledged by the EC under proposed CPR. From the other side, it shall be mentioned that the reduction of bureaucracy, a clear communication on funding rules (including details on types of intervention and related indicators), the involvement of the appropriate governance level, networking and partnership development for project generation and support offered for better communication and coordination procedures among partners, as well as for the organisation of procurement procedures (especially for projects of strategic importance) may increase the attractiveness of the different interventions to potential beneficiaries, thus facilitating the attainment of the estimated levels of funds' absorption.

From the perspective of cross-border impact and character of operations, case studies¹ reveal a great cross-border potential in soft measures aiming at promoting peer-to-peer exchange, dissemination of information in national languages for population involvement and awareness, joint training and joint recognition of results, joint strategic planning and the involvement of the appropriate level of governance to tackle common needs that require a joint and coordinating action. Additionally, cross-border impact of joint interventions is usually expected as an indirect effect on cross-border population and final targets (i.e. patients, vulnerable groups, local communities in general) whenever applicable depending of the type of intervention.

The above lessons learnt suggest that, in the programming period 2021-2027:

- The **Programme intervention logics** shall ensure a closer link between the needs identified, the expected changes and the related monitoring and performance framework. In this respect, the concentration of resources on key challenges and common potentials allows, itself, to reinforce "ex ante" the intervention logics, as it ensures that only interventions with the highest possible impact and cross-border character are actually envisaged for funding;
- Where **data gaps** or identifiable barriers do exist, these shall be solved before planning any investment, in order to ensure that the proposed interventions are both relevant to needs and are able to produce expected results on these, better quantified, needs. Linking soft measures to

¹ Analysed under the 2014-2020 Programme evaluation study report (2020).

investment measures (when applicable) is thus a key instrument to reach both projects' and programme success;

- Reinforcing **potential beneficiaries' capacities** to think strategically at cross-border level and to maintain their partnership relations for a common goal is also a key issue to be solved directly through the future Programme, by promoting a larger range of soft measures in support of building capacities, promoting exchanges and strengthening institutional relations, towards higher sustainability of cross-border interventions;
- The concentration in the allocation of resources and priority identification shall pursue the pattern of **funds' attractiveness** to potential beneficiaries, corroborated with **identified needs**. In this respect, the experience of the current programming period has suggested that great stakeholders' interest and high cross-border relevance, providing cascading, direct and indirect effects on territories and communities, are attributed to the following fields: **cooperation in health and social infrastructure; cooperation in risk prevention and management; cooperation in the valorisation of natural and cultural resources, in close connection with tourism; strengthening cross-border strategic planning capacities, reducing barrier to cooperation and people-to-people exchanges as foundations for more structured and strategic cooperation.**

1.2.3 Lessons learnt from the EUSDR

Lessons learnt on EUSDR contribution to increased cooperation (from higher to lower contribution) in the macro-region show that²:

- I. The MRS process brings together actors across countries
- II. Continuing on from previous cooperation and building on existing transnational networks
- III. The MRS process brings together (new) actors across sectors (cross-sectoral cooperation)
- IV. The MRS process brings together actors across levels (national/regional) and type (public/private)
- V. The cooperation brings legitimacy to the work and increases recognition of issues/needs/challenges
- VI. The MRS process facilitates synergies between policies; helps better understand the big picture at the policy level
- VII. The MRS process facilitates access to funding (the cooperation leads to an increase in funding).

Lessons learnt thus suggest that, whilst MRS brings added value to cooperation, by leveraging existing cooperation and promoting new partnerships, there is still room for improving the capacity of the MRS to increase policy legitimacy of working together, create synergies between policies and leveraging funds.

² From survey results included in the EC STUDY ON MACROREGIONAL STRATEGIES AND THEIR LINKS WITH COHESION POLICY, Data and analytical report for the EUSDR (2017); sum of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" responses in order of preferences (from highest score, 94%, to lowest score, 64%).

As concerns EUSDR outcomes, lessons learnt³ show that MRS contributes (from higher to lower contribution) to:

- I. The development of new tools (technical excellence) in the area
- II. Increase in implementation of EU policies in the macro-region
- III. Increase the technical capacity of actors
- IV. The development of new or improved services/products/training
- V. The development of new funding concepts (e.g. private, International Financial Institutions)
- VI. The development of common standards in the area
- VII. Changes and improvements in national policy.

As concerns outcomes, lessons learnt thus suggest that EUSDR projects have been effective⁴ in developing tools, contributing to increase technical capacities, contributing to EU policies and developing new or improved services / products / training. However, there is room for improving the outcomes in terms of developing new funding concepts (i.e. encompassing the complementarity of funds and funding instruments), common standards and to bring effective changes in national policies. The second Report on the implementation of the EUSDR (2019) has further shown that several initiatives and projects developed within the EUSDR have a significant **impact on policies** – or derive from and implement sectoral policies, including crucial EU policies, as in the areas of transport, energy and environment. The report stresses that the link between projects and policies is extremely important since policies need to be fed with concrete project results and, in turn, they set the conditions for successful projects and joint initiatives. In particular, EUSDR-related activities helped shaping national activities by adopting a **transnational approach** (as examples, the report mentions the case of national programmes against natural disasters in several countries). In this respect, the European Parliament has also acknowledged the **political relevance of the ongoing initiatives and the importance of funds allocated to pilot projects and innovative actions**. Finally, it has emerged that the EUSDR contributes to effective multi-level governance. However, the MRS governance still needs to be improved through higher ownership and an active role of national coordinators (line ministries) and a more effective embedding of the MRS into mainstream and cross-border cooperation programmes, starting from the programming phase and across the implementation phase. In this respect, the EC Report (2019) calls for a closer coordination of the different sources of funding and Managing Authorities, suggesting, among the others, that “*specific measures and projects, programmes could develop and apply specific project selection criteria to encourage the creation of projects that support the priorities of an MRS (e.g. budget earmarking, specific calls for macro-regional projects, allocation of extra points to projects contributing to macro-regional targets and actions, etc.)*”.

The future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary will thus reinforce the delivery of the EUSDR by embedding the priority actions planned in the macro-region strategy into the Programme intervention logics (detailed measures to be funded) and projects’ selection criteria, whilst tackling all main weaknesses observed in the delivery of the macro-strategy by: promoting higher policy relevance and complementarity of funds; promoting, from one side, higher involvement of the national governance and decision-making level, including from the perspective of assessing and solving barriers to cooperation; promoting, from the other side, higher mobilisation of cross-border

³ From survey results included in the EC STUDY ON MACROREGIONAL STRATEGIES AND THEIR LINKS WITH COHESION POLICY, Data and analytical report for the EUSDR (2017); sum of “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” responses in order of preferences (from highest score, 69%, to lowest score, 38%).

⁴ Although to a lower extent as compared to the contribution to increased cooperation.

communities, in order to consolidate the legitimization of joint actions bottom-up, as well as based on evidence provided by a reinforced analysis and strategic planning capacity of cross-border actors.

1.2.4 Relevance

The EC recommends to both cross-border Member States, as individual states⁵ and as a cross-border area⁶, to support:

- The concentration of resources on **digital and green transition** (i.e. including promoting ITC, e-government services, as well as developing joint strategies for the sustainable valorisation of natural resources, assessing vulnerabilities and increasing joint emergency response capacity);
- **The resilience of the health sector** (including mapping needs and developing a joint strategy, as well as strengthening the health emergency response capacity, reducing territorial disparities in the accession to health services and promoting patients' mobility and exchange of information);
- The **recovery of economy and labour market** following Covid-19 crisis (including by mapping labour market exchanges, reinforcing labour active measures and ensuring a closer relevance of education and vocational training to skills required in the cross-border labour market, promoting high value-added clusters and cross-border value chains, as well as supporting the recovery of tourism and culture as drivers for the socio-economic development of the PA, hardly affected by the Covid-19 crisis);
- The improvement of **governance and decision-making processes** (including assessing legislative barriers to cooperation, reduce language barriers, improving the exchange of data and information, improving coordination with mainstream programmes and the involvement of stakeholders and the involvement of stakeholders and social partners).

The recommendations related to governance and decision-making processes are also strongly connected and in line with the future **EU Territorial Agenda 2030**, which calls for strengthening the evidence base for informed territorial policies (i.e. better understanding functional flows and experimenting TIA exercises), building institutional capacities, creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, knowledge / best practices sharing, horizontal and vertical coordination of policies.

The following elements also confirm the relevance of selected POs in relation to national policies and strategic framework, which define national development priorities:

- Both countries have a vision on their **territorial and spatial development strategy**, which puts great accent on the need to reduce regional disparities and to ensure the sustainable use of natural and land resources;
- Both countries are negotiating the Partnership Agreement with the EU for the next programming period. The available drafts show that, in line with EU development targets for 2030, great accent is put on **digital and green economy and societies**. In this respect, both countries have advanced

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-csr-comm-recommendation-hungary_en.pdf

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-csr-comm-recommendation-romania_en.pdf

⁶ https://interreg-rohu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BOP_CE_May_2019.pdf

integrated plans for energy and climate change with accent on extending the use of renewable energies and improving the capacity of emergency services to tackle climate changes, unpredictable and extreme conditions;

- Priorities in the **health sector** (from primary health care services and infrastructure, to research and telemedical services) emerge under the draft Operational Programme on Health in Romania, respectively, under the Hungary National Strategy for the Health Sector 2021-2027;
- Equally, both countries have a **long-term vision on tourism development**, with a tourist destination management approach, the extensive use of digital and marketing tools, as well as an increasing capacity to collect and manage data and statistics related to tourism.

In the next **governance level (NUTS3)**, the **county administrative level**, strategies and plans, which provides the framework for the delivery of county sector policies, are generally referred to the current programming period 2014-2020. However, they are still relevant to highlight the importance attributed to cross-border territorial cooperation, the medium and long-term vision on the territorial role of the county, the relevance for future Policy Objectives (POs) and the opportunity to build on past experience in acceding ROHU Interreg Programme 2014-2020, to ensure continuity of both investments and project partnerships. The majority of counties in the PA have identified **cross-border development strategic objectives and priorities**, thus reflecting the **strong vocation** of the territories **towards interregional cooperation on a wide range of sectors, from economic development, to green economy, culture, tourism, welfare and health**. This is further confirmed by the analysis of some city strategies, where great accent is on cross-border cooperation in the cultural field and the increasing role of cities as economic development engines beyond their administrative border. Following the adoption of Agenda 2030 and EU Climate Change and Energy targets for 2030, several counties have drafted **energy and climate change plans** or are planning to draft one. Additionally, the great majority of counties puts great accent on cultural cooperation and touristic potential of local resources, including under a wider perspective of territorial cooperation with neighbouring counties and cities from the other side of the border.

The future Programme shall build on existing cooperation relations, in order to consolidate them and further facilitate their institutionalisation and the continuity of long-term joint projects that many administrations are already promoting.

1.2.5 Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

On 10 November 2020, the European Parliament and EU Member States in the Council, with the support of the European Commission, reached an agreement on the largest package ever financed through the EU budget, of €1.8 trillion. Following the coronavirus crisis and its consequences, the package will help rebuild a **greener, more digital and more resilient** Europe.⁷

The MFF 2021-2027 (amounting to around 1,074 EUR billion) will be combined with a temporary recovery instrument, called Next Generation EU (additional 750 EUR billion resources), mainly allocated to Cohesion, Resilience and Values heading. Key programmes including **Erasmus+**, **EU4Health and Horizon Europe**, will be reinforced, in line with EU priorities, linked to a more resilient Europe, innovation, research, digital and green economy.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eus-next-long-term-budget-nextgenerationeu-key-facts-and-figures_en

Both Romania and Hungary are negotiating the **Partnership Agreement with the EU** for the next programming period. According to the draft available versions, the list of operational programmes that will be proposed by each side of the programme area are detailed in the table below:

Romania	Hungary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Programme for Smart Growth, Digitalisation and Financial Instruments; • Operational Programme for Health; • Operational Programme for Education and Employment; • Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and Dignity; • Operational Programme for Sustainable Development; • Operational Programme for Transport; • 8 Regional Operational Programmes; • Operational Programme for Aquaculture and Fishing; • Operational Programme for a Just Transition; • Technical Assistance Operational Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Programme Plus for Business Development and Innovation (GINOP Plus); • Green Infrastructure and Climate Protection Operational Programme Plus (KEHOP Plus); • Integrated Mobility Operational Programme Plus (IKOP Plus); • Operational Programme Plus for Human Development (EFOP Plus); • Digital Renewal Operational Programme Plus (DIMOP Plus) and • Hungarian Aquaculture Development Operational Programme Plus (MAHOP Plus) • Regional Development Operational Programme Plus (TOP Plus) • Implementation Operational Programme Plus (VOP Plus).

Additionally, the following table shows the list of other Operational Programmes under the Interreg where Romania and Hungary could also benefit of:

Romania	Hungary
Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Interreg NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova Interreg NEXT Romania-Ukraine Interreg IPA-III-CBC Romania-Serbia Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme	Interreg VI-A Austria-Hungary Interreg VI-A Slovenia-Hungary Interreg VI-A Hungary-Croatia Interreg VI-A Slovakia-Hungary Interreg IPA-III-CBC Hungary-Serbia
Common programmes under Interreg	
INTERREG EUROPE Programme Interreg Programme Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine URBACT Programme INTERACT Programme Danube Transnational Programme ESPON Cooperation Programme	

The relevance of draft mainstream Operational Programmes and other Operational Programmes falling under the Territorial Cooperation objective resides in the need that interventions under the future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary shall be **complementary and synergic**, thus boosting a **mutual leverage effect on investments, whilst avoiding overlapping**. In this respect, the proposed priorities for the future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary will reinforce the strategy adopted by each MS to implement national and regional priorities, with a

specific attention paid to needs and opportunities that can be better addressed through cross-border cooperation, adding value to other ERDF and ESF + interventions funded under MS' operational programmes and will contribute to further translate transnational cooperation programmes and, in particular, the EUSDR and ESPON related programmes into specific interventions tailor-made on the specificities of the Romania - Hungary border area.

1.2.6 Programme Strategy

The vision for the future Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary for the period 2021-2027 can be defined as follows: **A greener, resilient and more cohesive cross-border region between Romania and Hungary, with enhanced understanding of cooperation opportunities, increased trust and reduced barriers to cooperation, towards Agenda 2030 common targets with a more sustainable cooperation framework.**

The Programme strategy is articulated in a general objective and three specific objectives corresponding to the two selected POs and ISO underlying specific investment priorities. The guiding principles leading to the proposed strategy and Intervention Logics can be defined as follows:

- maximising the **concentration of resources on interventions where cross-border cooperation brings added value and the Interreg programme represents the main option for funding;**
- promoting the **higher possible cross-border impact on territorial disparities and communities**, focussing on policy objectives with the possible higher and more direct impacts on the population well-being (i.e. health, environmental protection and green infrastructure), safety (i.e. protection from natural disasters and climate change adaptation strategies) and equal opportunities (i.e. equal access to health services, tailor-made solutions for patients, involving youth, rural population and marginalised communities in cultural activities and in the valorisation of resources for the socio-economic development of the area);
- **bridging territories and communities based on common territorial and intangible assets**, which may create common socio-economic opportunities for the economic recovery (i.e. renewable energies and the opportunity of creating “renewable energy / green communities”, as well as culture and tourism, as fields of common interest capable of leveraging funds and partnerships under a common territorial marketing vision);
- **promoting people-to-people interventions as foundation for more structured cooperation**, with a demonstrative value for building sustainable and inclusive communities and an open business environment, which may support in designing tailor-made solutions for future community-led local development initiatives and integrated socio-economic strategies at cross-border level, thus making people-to-people actions “laboratories” for the animation of local communities;
- **building the knowledge basis, capacities, joint systems and joint working procedures** as a precondition for projects sustainability and effective results (i.e. soft measures across all selected POs and specific measures under ISO1 on other themes not related to selected POs). Using ISO 1 as a resource to systematise lessons learnt at the end of the programme implementation, drawing lessons on cooperation in different fields, in what concerns: the development of joint strategies, effective cross-border systems and institutional cooperation frameworks throughout

the selected POs; the resolution of legal and administrative barriers; the creation of more cohesive local and business communities through people-to-people exchanges.

From a wider programme management perspective, as guiding principles for delivery, during the implementation of the Programme the Managing Authority will ensure the contribution to the delivery of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the promotion of horizontal principles (art. 9 of CPR), including fundamental rights, gender mainstreaming, non-discrimination (including youth involvement) and sustainable development (including DNSH principle, as per EC Technical Guidance Note, C(2021) 1054 final). In particular, the MA will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support Policy Objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Additionally, beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria, and, when feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures respective, the Programme. As concerns fundamental rights, gender mainstreaming, non-discrimination and youth policies, these will be mainstreamed under envisaged actions and targeted groups, whenever relevant.

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

The synthesis of main development challenges and programme policy response is presented below:

Table 1

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
PO 2- a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition,	RSO 2.4 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system	Priority 1. Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary	Justification for the selection of PO 2: The green transition, climate change adaptation and better ecological livelihoods are common priorities of the EU Green New Deal towards carbon-neutral EU by 2050, EU Territorial Agenda 2030, EUSDR Action Plan, regional and local development strategies in the PA. Additionally, PO 2 is a priority policy objective for cross-border cooperation, and, in particular, for Interreg A programmes. Justification for the selection of RSO 2.4: The cross-border region is characterised by a rich hydrographic network, which is crossing the

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
<p>green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>based approaches</p>		<p>border almost in its entirety, producing contiguous riparian areas which have a high potential of joint valorisation. Due to the topography and river density, the area is also one of Europe’s most prone regions to floods: High flood recurrence is recorded in Hajdú-Bihar, Timiș, Arad, Bihor, while very high flood recurrence is a significant risk for the two northernmost counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare. Bihor and Satu Mare have historically been the most affected by flood class 1 events. Landslide susceptibility is relatively limited, throughout the whole cross-border areas (with the exception of Bihor, in the Apuseni Mountains region), with some areas prone to landslides concentrated along rivers.</p> <p>Cross-border disasters and risk management in the area is incipient: although there are some ongoing initiatives in this field, there is still significant room for improvement of coordination, risk prevention and joint response capacity, which substantiates the need for joint investments and future cooperation actions , building on the Water management Convention signed at country level and on the previous experience gained by public administrations involved in relevant initiatives, including at macroregional level (EUSDR).</p> <p>An increased cooperation and capacity of joint risk prevention and response to extreme weather events, mostly generating floods, rural and urban landscape destruction, as well as to other climate change-related phenomena, such as draught and fires, is considered a priority by the majority of stakeholders. Non-intervention or inappropriate (i.e. not coordinated) intervention, may generate high social, economic and environmental costs.</p>
	<p>RSO 2.2 Promoting</p>		<p>Justification for the selection of PO 2: As above.</p>

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
	renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein		<p>Justification for the selection of RSO 2.2: Environmental and ecosystem protection, climate change adaptation, energy transition and the low carbon economy represent vital issues at the core of the European policy for the 2030 time-horizon. Both Romania and Hungary have committed to ambitious targets through their respective National Energy and Climate Plans 2030 in order to reduce GhG emissions, reach RES shares of 30.7% (Romania) and at least 21% (Hungary) and to contribute to the overall European goal of reaching at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.</p> <p>High and very high potential of geothermal district heating (very high – 171-1932 ktoe – in Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Timiș and Bihor), is a distinct endowment of the programme area. While wind energy, large hydropower and, to a degree, biomass energy, are reduced, there is still a high photovoltaic energy potential, with circa two thirds of the territory being suitable for installation of photovoltaic production (Csongrád-Csanád, Békés, Timiș, partly Arad, Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar - 3.30-3.51 kWh/kWp/day). However, although the renewable energy potential is substantial, this potential is not fully exploited, nor fully mapped at micro-zone level.</p> <p>Considering the high policy support, both at European, Danube Macro-region, central and local level, for the transition to a low-carbon economy, a better understanding and exploitation of existing resources for renewable, alternative energies, is considered a priority for the cross-border area, which may have an important leverage and indirect effect, and generate strong synergies with other components of development, such as the business sector,</p>

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
			<p>research and innovation (to be funded under other national and European funds). In this respect, investments in regenerable energies under the future Interreg Programme may contribute to create a favourable, enabling, environment for further developments of the renewable energy in the area, the creation of green communities or jobs and certainly the improvement of local environment.</p> <p>Justification for the selection of PO 2: As above.</p> <p>Justification for the selection of RSO 2.7: The Programme area is characterized by a plain geomorphology that is favourable to settlement development and agriculture, with a higher landform diversity in the Romanian counties (Oriental and Banat Carpathians and Apuseni Mountains). Landscape diversity overall is moderate, but coherent across the border, which offers no natural impediment to landscape and protected site integration. The PA is thus characterized by a “green border”, generating a high potential for the valorisation of natural resources. The soil biodiversity potential in the area is moderate, with lower potential recorded in the south (Csongrád-Csanád, Timiș) and Hajdú-Bihar, and higher in the eastern parts of the Romanian counties (Apuseni Mountains), however with significant potential to support further development of biodiversity in the border area south of Nyíregyháza, and with exceptional potential in the regions already protected by Natura 2000 classification (Hortobágy in Hungary, Lipovei Hills, Zarand Mountains in Romania). However, the current management of protected sites is hardly coordinated and does not reflect the real cross-border nature of the natural landscapes and both the sides of the border are affected by deforestation trends, which may</p>
	<p>RSO 2.7 Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>		

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
			<p>further deteriorate the exposure of the territory to natural hazards and the impact of climate change.</p> <p>An increased level of cooperation in the sustainable management of natural resources, in line with EUSDR action plan for biodiversity and landscape protection, is expected to directly contribute to a more effective protection of these areas and to an increased carbon-storage capacity, with the possible direct contribution to the reduction of the GhG emissions accounting. Non-intervention or inappropriate (i.e. not coordinated) intervention, may generate high social, economic and environmental costs, generating the further deterioration of precious natural heritage, whilst potentially compromising local population safety (notably from the adverse effects of climate change) in the cross-border area.</p>
<p>PO 4- A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p>RSO 4.5 Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care</p>	<p>Priority 2. Cooperation for a more social and cohesive PA between Romania and Hungary</p>	<p>Justification for the selection of PO 4: The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is a common cross-cutting objective for EU funds 2021-2027. Affordable and quality healthcare, in particular, is one of the 20 principles proclaimed during the 2017 Goteborg Summit, which jumped at the top of EU, national, regional and local governments’ agenda following the COVID-19 health crisis. Territorial cohesion and a Just transition are the core of EU Territorial Agenda 2030, whilst the sustainable valorisation of natural/cultural resources, as drivers for socio-economic development, is the leitmotif of both EUSDR Action Plan and PA local strategies. PO 4 is a priority policy objective for cross-border cooperation, and, in particular, for Interreg A programmes.</p> <p>Justification for the selection of RSO 4.5:</p>

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
			<p>The PA is characterised by generally positive trends in human capital development. However, the PA is still lagging behind the European level in the performance for several of these indicators, including life expectancy at birth. In particular, this indicator suggests that the quality of life and the health status of population still need to be improved.</p> <p>The uneven distribution of public services is a significant barrier impeding balanced development and internal cohesion. In relation to health infrastructure, the basic endowment in the PA looks still inadequate compared to needs, as suggested by the main relevant indicators, revealing important internal disparities (i.e. the territorial concentration of ambulatories and the number of medics / 1000 inhabitants)).</p> <p>An increased resilience of the health sector is considered a high priority at all governance levels . Resilience does not mean only infrastructure and endowments, but also encompasses the quality of services, their adaptability to target groups and their capacity to respond to specific challenges , as the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically showed. An increased level of cooperation in the health sector is expected to improve health staff’ skills and the overall health-care system quality, including its capacity to reach target groups most in need. This will be achieved starting from the exchange of experience and best practices, the capitalisation of , networks, lessons learnt and previous cooperation, in order to reach a coordinated response.</p>
	<p>RSO 4.6 Enhancing the role of culture and</p>		<p>Justification for the selection of PO 4: As above.</p> <p>Justification for the selection of RSO 4.6:</p>

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
	sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation ⁸		<p>The PA is endowed with rich natural and cultural heritage, as well as a dense network of local actors already cooperating for the organisation of international cultural events and tourism niches’ development (i.e. religious and rural/eco-tourism) providing the basis for cross-border valorisation in touristic routes.</p> <p>The growth of the tourism sector is demonstrated by the increased accommodation capacities in the PA counties over time (13.45% increase in 10 years). However, occupancy rate is low and very low, with an average of 35-38% in the best performers (Hajdú-Bihar, Bihor) and in Satu Mare and going down to 18% in Csongrád and 19.08% in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Since 2010, tourist overnight stays have generally grown, except in Satu Mare (-19%, 2010-2018), with a significant 135% increase in Csongrád-Csanád and remarkable increases in Békés (83%), Timiș (77%) and Bihor (72%). However, overnight stays have decreased, on average from 2.78 nights per stay to 2.41 (2010-2018). Disparities in overnight stays have been higher in Romania, with an actual increase in Timiș (+4%), and a 44% decrease in Bihor.</p> <p>The cross-border area is thus still not able to attract and retain high flows of tourists, but many local and county strategies put great accent on touristic resources and potentials in their territories, in close connection with traditional economic sectors such as local agriculture and food production, which makes tourism a relevant sector for the diversification of local economies, especially rural and marginalised areas. However, cross-border cooperation is needed and would provide high added value, in order to</p>

⁸ Based on current formulation of this specific objective included in PO 4, under revised EDF Regulation (December 2020).

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
			fully exploit the local potential, through a strategic destination management approach, which shall be able to consolidate existing tourist flows, to the benefit of a larger possible area of intervention in the cross-border region.
ISO 1- A better cooperation governance	(b) Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	Priority 3. A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation	<p>The PA presents commonalities in the way the multi-level administrative structure of the two states is organised, where NUTS 3 and LAU 2 levels are the most relevant in terms of competencies. Furthermore, there is a similarity in the implementation of vertical governance coordination. The governance and policy analysis showed that, although there are many examples of cooperation among all kinds of stakeholders, the policy decision-making centres and services delivery competences remain anchored on traditional administrative units on both sides of the border.</p> <p>However, there is still need to improve potential beneficiaries' capacities (especially smaller local public administrations, without being limited to) to design results-oriented projects and to consolidate cross-border partnerships. In general, there is the need to increase stakeholders' capacities to think strategically on common objectives, based on well-defined common opportunities and challenges and an improved understanding of processes and phenomena at cross-border level (i.e. labour market flows, transports and connectivity and others), especially in view to mitigate the border effects and overcoming barriers to cooperation.</p> <p>Based on an increasing trend of territorial disparities between rural and urban areas, between larger urban centres and minor urban centres, which is reflected in a still limited capacity of some areas to provide quality</p>
	(a) Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific		

Selected Policy objective or selected Interreg – specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [2 000 per objective]
	<p>territory, and of stakeholders</p> <p>(c) Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions</p>		<p>infrastructure and servicespeople-to-people actions represent an opportunity. P2P are one solution to build trust, through mutual learning, exchange and mutual support for the realisation of a variety of socio-economic actions with high potential to bridge communities, with low access to main public services especially in scattered settlements, as well as to animate the social interaction or business community.</p> <p>The Programme should thus improve the understanding and knowledge basis of barriers to cooperation, as well as of relevant cross-border patterns, flows, quality of public services, characteristics of specific target groups . Additionally, trainings, joint events, peer-to-peer exchanges are needed to build capacities and institutional relations able to boost the potential impact of interventions on both the territorial cohesion and the cooperation dimension.</p>

2. Priorities [300]

Reference: point (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

2.1. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

Priority 1. Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

PO2 - (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and disaster resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

2.1.1.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:
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<p>As stated in the European Climate Law (COM(2020) 80 final) “Climate change is by its very nature a trans-boundary challenge that cannot be solved by national or local action alone”. The European Climate Law is in line with EU Green New Deal reaffirming the Commission’s ambition to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and with Agenda 2030 targets, in particular with SDG 13 on Climate Action and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Risk management (PA5), in particular, is an action of utmost importance for transnational cooperation at MRS, under EUSDR. The coordination of the Environmental Risks Priority Area (PA5) is managed by Hungary and Romania. The main focus of the work is to address the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan and the ongoing work in the field of climate adaptation. Flood risk management is also a significant target of the priority area: in order to achieve reduction of flood risk events EUSDR PA5 provides and enhance continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan. In case that these prevention measures are not effective enough, then disasters occur, therefore EUSDR PA5 supporting the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities. However, cross-border disasters and risk management in the PA area is incipient: although there are some ongoing initiatives in this field, there is still significant room for improvement of coordination, risk prevention and joint response capacity, which substantiates the need for joint investments and future cooperation actions, in line with EUSDR PA 5.</p>

<p>There is a rich hydrographic network in the PA, which is crossing the border between Romania and Hungary almost in its entirety, producing contiguous riparian areas, generating a high potential of joint valorisation. Due to the topography and river density, the area is also one of Europe’s most prone regions to floods: high flood recurrence is recorded in Hajdú-Bihar, Timiș, Arad, Bihor, while very high flood recurrence is a significant risk for the two northernmost counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare. Bihor and Satu Mare have historically been the most affected by flood class 1 events.</p>

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

ACTION 1

1. Update rivers' flood risk management plans (including contributing to the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP), if applicable)
2. Implement structural and non-structural measures related to flood risk management, support the improvement of forecasting and nowcasting (pilot actions / joint strategies)
3. Increase the preparedness and resilience of communities against floods (trainings, awareness raising events), including youth involvement and gender mainstreaming in civil protection actions
4. Promote sustainable floodplain management including green infrastructure
5. Foster basin wide management planning on specific issues (e.g. ice on rivers)
6. Pilot / demonstrative actions

ACTION 2

1. Training, development capacities and procedures for better preparedness of disaster management, including youth and women's involvement in civil protection actions
2. Identification of innovative solutions to support disaster management (IT tools, VR, mobile apps, etc.) (pilot actions)
3. Strengthening resiliency of national/regional authorities (this type of intervention foresees that a harmonised and standardised approach is developed at cross-border level and then applied at national regional level) (pilot actions / joint strategies)
4. Support operative flood management planning on transboundary watersheds and the harmonization of available assets (pilot actions / joint strategies)

ACTION 3

1. Providing support for risk assessment (eg. with identification of hazards, assessing consequences and probabilities, characterization of risks and uncertainties) on regional, national, or macroregional level and related training and exchange of experience
2. Supporting the monitoring and survey of different environmental risks
3. Harmonising climate change adaptation (CCA) strategies and action plans to improve international collaboration and coordinate activities in the Danube Region
4. Exploring direct effects of climate change and implement mitigation and adaptation measures in environmental risk management plans (joint strategies)
5. Improve cooperation with regard to the use of climate change data and projections from Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and its Climate Data Store (CDS), including training and exchange of experience in these fields
6. Research in the field of climate change adaptation, including promoting partnerships between academic research and youth NGOs activating in the field of environment
7. Support natural (small) water retention measures
8. Pilot / demonstrative actions.

The Programme will envisage two types of interventions, notably:

- Investment interventions (correlated with expenditures in infrastructure and equipment needed to improve cooperation, in general for all types of projects, and, in particular, to deliver pilot actions), and
- Soft interventions.

Soft measures will be mainstreamed, in order to improve the projects' logical framework, their potential impact and sustainability through consolidated institutional cooperation agreements and joint strategies, owned by the adequate governance level. In this respect, for all projects envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an "exit strategy", a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are "taken up" by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play.

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

Increased capacity and efficiency of the emergency services and risk prevention (both climate and non-climate related) thanks to cooperation.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices
- National/Natural Parks administrations
- Environmental protection institutions
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental organisation (including youth and women's associations)
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- Social partners
- EGTC
- Disaster management and emergency response organizations
- Fire services
- Ambulance services
- Police
- Environmental protection agencies (under subordination, coordination or authority of the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, in Romania)
- Governmental offices located in the counties, in Hungary
- Water management authorities

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	SO 2.1	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
1	SO 2.1	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
1	SO 2.1	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		
1	SO 2.1	RCO 24	Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against natural disasters	Euro		
1	SO 2.1	RCO 122	Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities	Euro		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	SO 2.1	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021		Program me monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisation	0	2021		Program me monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 35	Population benefiting from	Number	0	2021		Program me	

			flood protection measures					monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 36	Population benefiting from wildfire protection measures	Number	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 37	Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters (other than floods or wildfire)	Number	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 96	Population benefiting from protection measures against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities	Number	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation and local public administrations, that will benefit from improved risk management and emergency services and infrastructure, after project closure and will thus be better protected from climate and non-climate change related disasters;
- women and children, disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs from the PA, that will benefit from gender sensitive, family-friendly and inclusive emergency services and civil protection;

- young people from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in disaster management, emergency response and civil protection actions, both as volunteers and as future professionals in these fields (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other fields (i.e. biodiversity protection, river management, education in schools, public awareness raising campaigns, employment and professional training, youth policies, gender equality, etc).

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions may address all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, flood plain / riverain areas, etc. Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, through rururban cooperation between local administrations, for an improved joint response to climate and non-climate emergency situations. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.1	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.1	01	

01 grants

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.1	33	

33 No territorial targeting

2.1.2. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

PO2 - (ii) Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein

2.1.2.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

Both Romania and Hungary have committed to ambitious targets through their respective National Energy and Climate Plans 2030 in order to reduce GhG emissions, reach RES shares of 30.7% (Romania) and at least 21% (Hungary) and to contribute to the overall European goal of reaching at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030 (further reinforced by the EU Green New Deal target towards EU Climate neutrality by 2050). The majority of local administrations in the PA has already developed or are in the process of developing their local plans towards Energy and Climate Change targets 2030, in line with Agenda 2030 SDGs 7 and 11. The development of RES is also one of EUSDR priority (PA2), including specific actions to further explore the sustainable use of biomass, solar energy, geothermal, hydropower and wind power to increase the energy independency and to promote and support multipurpose cross border RES utilization projects. Common potentials on both sides of the PA are sustained by the very concrete opportunity to use biodegradable waste for biomass energy, facilitating the energy transition. Additionally, a high and

very high potential of geothermal district heating (very high – 171-1932 ktoe – in Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Timiș and Bihor) is observed in the PA, with geothermal resources as a distinct endowment of the cross-border area. Similarly, high photovoltaic energy potential also characterises the PA, with circa two thirds of the territory being suitable for installation of photovoltaic production (Csongrád-Csanád, Békés, Timiș, partly Arad, Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar - 3.30-3.51 kWh/kWp/day). The promotion of the common RES assets can thus be considered a great opportunity for the PA to contribute to the EU, MRS and MSs strategies and targets towards a carbon neutral EU by 2050, whilst contributing to the transition towards a low-carbon economy, with the contribution of both public actors, academic institutes and business sector representatives (social partners).

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

1. Training (physical and e-learning), best-practice sharing, capacity development for better understanding the advantages of RES utilization tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups (political-legislative, technical, public, youth and women, etc.)
2. Encourage cross-border project generation related to the spread of sustainable RES usage
3. Training (physical and e-learning), best-practice sharing, capacity development for uptake of renewable energy solutions tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups (political-legislative, technical, public, youth and women etc.)
4. Projects of renewable energies on the high geothermal / photovoltaic / wind / biomass potential of the PA (pilot actions)
5. Mapping renewable energies, assess barriers and drafting joint strategies for coordinated actions in the energy market.

The Programme will envisage two types of interventions, notably:

- Investment interventions (correlated with expenditures in infrastructure and equipment needed to improve cooperation, in general for all types of projects, and, in particular, to deliver pilot actions), and
- Soft interventions.

Soft measures will be mainstreamed, in order to improve the projects' logical framework, their potential impact and sustainability through consolidated institutional cooperation agreements and joint strategies, owned by the adequate governance level. In this respect, for all projects envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an "exit strategy", a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are "taken up" by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play.

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

Increased cooperation in the field of renewable energies, contributing to build green and renewable energy communities in the PA, including by experimenting pilot actions and joint initiatives to upscale and further promote RES in the PA (generating of RES projects).

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- National/Natural Parks administrations
- Environmental protection institutions
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental organisation
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- Chambers of commerce and social partners
- EGTC
- National organizations responsible for the energy sector

2.1.2.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	SO 2.2	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
1	SO 2.2	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
1	SO 2.2	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments

1	SO 2.1	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021		Program me monitoring system	
1	SO 2.1	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021		Program me monitoring system	

2.1.2.3. The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation and local public administrations, that will be directly involved in the delivery of the pilot actions and will benefit from their outcomes (i.e. children benefitting from clean energy on pilot schools, civil servants benefitting from clean energy in pilot public buildings, etc);
- young people and women from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in RES pilot actions / awareness raising / project generation activities, as future professionals in this field (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth and women's unemployment);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other correlated fields (i.e. green economy in general, circular economy, energy efficiency, research and development, youth policies, education, employment and professional training, etc).

2.1.2.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions addresses all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, flood plain / riverain areas, etc. Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, through rururban cooperation between local administrations, for building a cross-border renewable energy

community of practice. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.1.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.1.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.2	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.2	01	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.2	33	

2.1.3. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

PO2 - (vii) enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

2.1.3.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

The EU's Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (in line with Agenda 2030 SDG 15) sets out the priorities and a long-term action plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems by 2030, being a core part of the European Green New Deal and having a direct contribution to the green recovery after COVID-19 pandemics. Among EU's Biodiversity Strategy priority actions, the following could be mentioned: launching an EU nature restoration plan (by 2021), which will become binding; introducing measures to enable the necessary transformative change (notably, a new governance setting ensuring better implementation and tracking progress, improving knowledge, financing and investments, better respecting nature in public and business decision-making). Biodiversity is also a Priority of the EUSDR, notably Priority Area 06 "To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils". Among the EUSDR targets for the next period, the following could be mentioned: improve management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas through transnational cooperation and capacity building; strengthen the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region and covered by EU nature legislation; maintain and restore Green and Blue Infrastructure elements through integrated spatial development and conservation planning; to improve and/or maintain the soil quality in the Danube Region. Natural endowments of the PA are rich and diverse, ranging from floodplain-specific landscapes to spa heritage, natural reservations, Karst areas rich in caves, RAMSAR wetland areas, and including a UNESCO world Heritage site, Hortobágy National Park (Hungary). However, there is the need to improve cooperation in managing the Natura 2000 sites, as well as of joint investments and a coordinated action for the development of green infrastructure along the green border (including buffer zones). Additionally, with respect to the quality of environmental factors, the water bodies in the Romanian PA are evaluated as being good and transitioning to „medium” towards the border, whilst a significant amount of river sections in the Hungarian side has a quality status considered „poor” or „bad” (eg. Létai-ér, Kösely, Körös) by the EEA under parameters of the Water Framework Directive, especially around Szeged city. Water pollution thus represents a vulnerability in the area, which could be addressed through joint actions for the protection of natural heritage and risk prevention.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

1. Develop the Masterplan of border Natura2000 areas or sensible areas to focus on the identification of biodiversity hotspots, the common setting of conservation objectives, identifying priority sites for restoration, and measures for mainstreaming the biodiversity
2. Projects to supporting sustainable use of protected areas in order to increase support and feeling of ownership of local people, like events (workshop, conference); report on best practices (case studies); workshops/study tours
3. Develop and/or implement conservation action plans and/or management plans for endangered umbrella species of Natura2000 protected areas
3. Develop and/or implement conservation action plans and/or management plans focussed on certain species conservation aspects
4. Develop and apply the most appropriate methods for prevention and control of IAS and management of their priority pathways in the border areas (pilot actions)
5. Measures for restoration of the invaded ecosystems (pilot actions)
6. Trainings, capacity building and awareness raising on biodiversity conservation

7. Preservation and restoration of biodiversity and establishment and improvement of green infrastructure (pilot actions)
8. Construction of exemplary, permanent green and recreational facilities (pilot actions)
9. Promotion of ecosystem services to assess the progress of biodiversity promotion and conservation activities (pilot actions)
10. Capacity building, training and awareness raising related to blue and green infrastructure
11. Develop use of Strategic Environmental Assessments for decision making with integration of the blue-green infrastructures into planning documents
12. Establish the cooperation between the MRS approaches in establishing ecological connectivity and Green Infrastructure.

The Programme will envisage two types of interventions, notably:

- Investment interventions (correlated with expenditures in infrastructure and equipment needed to improve cooperation, in general for all types of projects, and, in particular, to deliver pilot actions), and
- Soft interventions.

Soft measures will be mainstreamed, in order to improve the projects' logical framework, their potential impact and sustainability through consolidated institutional cooperation agreements and joint strategies, owned by the adequate governance level. In this respect, for all projects envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an "exit strategy", a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are "taken up" by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play.

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

Improved coordination and protection of the natural heritage across the border.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- National/Natural Parks administrations
- Environmental protection institutions
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental organisation including youth organisations activating in relevant fields
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euro regions
- Museums, libraries, theatres
- Churches

- Offices of Cultural Heritage
- Social partners
- EGTC
- Disaster management and emergency response organizations
- Fire services
- Water management authorities

2.1.3.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	SO 2.3	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
1	SO 2.3	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
1	SO 2.3	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		
1	SO 2.3	RCO 36	Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change	Surface (ha)		
1	SO 2.3	RCO 38	Surface area of rehabilitated land supported	Surface (ha)		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	SO 2.1	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021		Program me monitorin g system	

1	SO 2.1	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	
1	SO 2.3	RCR 52	Rehabilitated land used for green areas, social housing, economic or other uses	Surface (ha)	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	

2.1.3.3. The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation and local public administrations, that will be directly involved in the delivery of the pilot actions and will benefit from their outcomes (i.e. PA inhabitants benefitting of rehabilitated land for social purposes, local administrations benefitting of improved land management within their administrative area, etc);
- Young people from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in pilot actions / awareness raising / training activities envisaging the protection and valorisation of natural resources in the PA, including as future professionals in this field (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other correlated fields (i.e. green economy in general, natural risks prevention, circular economy, agriculture and rural development, research and development, education, youth policies, sustainable tourism, etc).

2.1.3.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions may address all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, protected areas / natural reserves, etc.

Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, towards strengthened rururban linkages for the protection and sustainable valorisation of natural resources, under an integrated land management and ecosystem approach. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.1.3.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.1.3.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.3	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.3	01	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	SO 2.3	33	

2.2. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

Priority 2. Cooperation for a more social and cohesive Programme Area between Romania and Hungary

2.2.1. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

PO4 - (v) ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

2.2.1.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

As stated in the 3rd Report on the implementation of MRS (COM(2020) 578 final), “in the current exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent economic crisis, cooperation among countries and regions is needed more than ever. The crisis has economic, fiscal and social consequences that cannot be tackled by any single country alone.” The COVID-19 crisis has especially shown that there is space to improve and reinforce the EU MSs cooperation in the field of health, as acknowledged under the EC Communication on “Building a European Health Union: Reinforcing the EU’s resilience for cross-border health threats” (COM/2020/724 final): “The COVID-19 public health crisis has highlighted that the EU and Member States must do more regarding preparedness and response planning for epidemics and other serious cross-border health threats. While structures and mechanisms set up at EU level as part of the Decision on serious cross-border health threats facilitated the exchange of information on the evolution of the pandemic and supported specific national measures taken, they could do little to trigger a timely common EU level response and ensure coherent risk communication”. In particular, in the field of preparedness, and response planning, the Commission calls MSs, decentralised agencies and the ECDC to promote targeted actions concerning, for instance: reorganising hospital networks with flexible capacity for surge in demand; the cross-border transport and treatment of patients during health emergencies; sufficient availability of primary care structures; good integration of all levels of health and social care; availability of sufficient and up-skilled healthcare staff who can be redeployed to new roles in case of emergency; deployment and financial coverage of eHealth tools (including telemedicine). Policies and actions in the health sector directly contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030 SDGs 3, 5 and 10. In this context, cross-border cooperation and investments in the field of health, beside and beyond typical infrastructure, focussing on exchange of experience, joint trainings, resilient, modern, well-managed and performant health institutions, offering personalised health services, towards excellence and standard procedures, shall thus be considered a high priority in the next programming period.

The PA is endowed with a well-developed health-care infrastructure and services with performance indicators similar to the European ones, especially in counties hosting university centres. However, the distribution of public health functions is significantly denser in the Hungarian counties and intra-regional disparities in health infrastructure are present between the more-developed counties of Timiș, Bihor, Csongrád-Csanád and Hajdú-Bihar, and the other counties in the north (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) and center of the region (Arad, Békés). Timișoara is one of first five most important university centres for medicine in Romania, and Oradea (capital of Bihor County),

Debrecen (Hajdú-Bihar), Szeged (from Csongrád-Csanád) and Nyíregyháza (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) have a medicine university or faculty, which is also reflected in the high number of medics in the more developed counties. Considering the challenges of some human capital indicators, the overall status of population health (which is not fully mapped), as well as recent challenges deriving from unprecedented health crisis and the need to ensure a resilient, modern and coordinated EU health system, the current endowment of health infrastructure and, above all, the functionality and the emergency-response capacity of health services do not seem adequate to emerging needs.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

1. Analysis of trends, needs, standards and barriers to cooperation for health-care services in the PA (including health status of population)
2. Trainings for public employees and civil society in the field of health-care services
3. Networks to exchange good practices, peer learning in the field of health-care services
4. Developing (transnational/cross-border) Action Plans and development strategies in the field of health (including joint response and civil protection mobilisation)
5. Investment in infrastructure, equipment, IT software /hardware, support of eGovernance in the field of health
6. Pilot / demonstrative/ innovative / research projects in the field of health

The Programme will envisage two types of interventions, notably:

- Investment interventions (correlated with expenditures in infrastructure and equipment needed to improve cooperation, in general for all types of projects, and, in particular, to deliver pilot actions), and
- Soft interventions.

Soft measures will be mainstreamed, in order to improve the projects' logical framework, their potential impact and sustainability through consolidated institutional cooperation agreements and joint strategies, owned by the adequate governance level. In this respect, for all projects envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an "exit strategy", a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are "taken up" by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play.

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

Increased resilience, personalisation and quality of the health care sector thanks to cooperation

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- Public health care institutions – hospitals and clinics, social institutions

- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including women’s and youth organisations and civil protection organisations
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- Social partners
- EGTC

2.2.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	SO 4.1	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
2	SO 4.1	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
2	SO 4.1	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		
2	SO 4.1	RCO 69	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	Persons / year		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	SO 4.1	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021		Programme monitoring system	
2	SO 4.1	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	2021		Programme	

			after project completion					monitoring system	
2	SO 4.1	RCR 72	Annual users of new or modernised e-health care services	Persons / year		2021		Programme monitoring system	
2	SO 4.1	RCR 73	Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities	Persons / year		2021		Programme monitoring system	

2.2.1.3. The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation and local public administrations, that will be directly involved in the delivery of the pilot actions and will benefit from their outcomes (i.e. PA inhabitants benefitting of improved access to health-care and community services, local administrations benefitting from a better access to health-care infrastructure and tailor-made services, etc);
- Young people, women and persons with disabilities from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in pilot actions / awareness raising / training activities envisaging the improvement of health-care services, including as future professionals in this field (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment, gender equality and accessibility issues);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other correlated fields (i.e. risks prevention, integrated urban and rural development, research and development, education, employment and professional training, social inclusion especially addressed to special vulnerable groups, family-care policies, gender equality, etc).

2.2.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions address all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, metropolitan areas, etc. Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, through a strengthened inter-municipal and multi-actor (ex. public administration, civil society and EGTCs) cooperation in the field of health, towards a more resilient and performant system, able to reach a wider spectrum of the PA population and to provide more diversified and tailor-made health-care services, based on specific needs identified and jointly tackled. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.2.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.2.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	SO 4.1	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	SO 4.1	01	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	SO 4.1	33	

2.2.2. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

2.2.2.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

Tourism and culture have been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemics, as acknowledged by main EU bodies (i.e. EC, Parliament and Committee of Regions) and international organisations (such as UNESCO and UNWTO), on several occasions between end 2020 and first half of 2021. There is a wide debate at international level regarding the opportunities for the recovery of both tourism and cultural sector, focussing on the need to increase resilience, reaching new audiences, digitalise cultural heritage, create new partnerships, routes and synergies between sectors, etc. Culture and tourism are also an important priority of the EUSDR Action Plan (PA 3), envisaging, among the others: to support the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system, dedicated to tourism, able to provide complete and comparable statistical data in all the 14 states part of the EUSDR; to develop new and support existing Cultural Routes relevant in the Danube Region, as well as green tourist products along the Danube Region; to create a ‘Blue Book’ on Danube cultural identity; to ensure the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage and natural values by developing relevant clusters, and networks of museums, interpretation and visitors centres; to promoting exchange and networking in the field of contemporary arts. Additionally, actions in the fields of tourism and culture are considered priorities under dedicated sector strategies of PA local authorities, and directly contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030 SDG 11.

The growth of the tourism sector in the PA has been documented through an increase of accommodation capacities in the component counties over time, although there is a national disparity between Romania and Hungary, where the latter has double the number of beds in tourist accommodations per capita. Looking at tourists’ flows’ indicators, the occupancy rate is generally low and very low, with an average of 35-38%, going down to 18-19% in some Hungarian counties. Since 2010, tourist overnight stays have generally grown throughout the area, but the average number of overnight stays have decreased over the period 2008-2018, and great internal disparities in the PA have been also observed. Although shorter stays may indicate a low attractiveness of the touristic sites as destination for medium and long-term holidays, shorter stays may also suggest a change in tourists’ behaviour, with a higher mobility and willingness to experience itinerary tourism in the area: this can be turned into an asset and regional strongpoint, which, however, can be achieved only through cooperation between actors involved in the management of tourist sites (i.e. through the creation of thematic / niche routes and itineraries).

In terms of cultural capital, the PA strongpoints and cultural centres are promoted at European level, however these rank in the bottom 25 percentile as far as cultural and creative infrastructure and services are concerned. There are common elements of potential in the form of shared cultural heritage (such as architectural art nouveau heritage, as well as religious and rural heritage) which can represent a collaboration point and an opportunity to promote the area’s joint strengths. Intangible cultural heritage elements and contemporary cultural values have the potential to actively contribute to developing a long-term preservation instrument of the common cultural heritage of the whole target area. Set-up and cooperation of cross-border clusters and cultural hubs has the potential of being

developed through joint cooperation in the field of culture and tourism, as means for the socio-economic development of the cross-border area, taking into account also the need to actively involve rural settlements in order to ensure the balanced development and the cohesion of the region.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

1. Identification of possibilities for making the tourism offer sustainable or creating new sustainable tourism products of public interest (including analysis of trends, mapping resources, assessing barriers to cooperation)
2. Development of such sustainable tourism offers and products incl. investments, embedded into joint tourism strategies for local development
3. Territorial marketing initiatives (Marketing, communication, awareness raising campaigns on local resources and traditions)
4. Trainings, capacity building and exchange of experience among cross-border actors
5. Identification, mapping and further development of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), including its preservation, protection, conservation and rehabilitation, as well as the development of joint promotion and conservation strategies and assessment of barriers to cooperation
6. Mapping of needs and possibilities for digitised cultural heritage and drafting joint strategies
7. Improving the interpretation / adopting innovative methods for territorial marketing through “Story telling models” (“Living history” and “Living heritage”)
8. Pilot actions for innovative solutions (including the acquisition of hardware/software) and the creation of thematic routes, no specific commercial brand) for the protection and valorisation of cultural / rural / natural / religious heritage.
9. Involving local authorities and communities (including schools) to build up intercultural and transcultural ties with different partners (skills development, educational contents and cultural initiatives, joint events etc.).

The Programme will envisage two types of interventions, notably:

- Investment interventions (correlated with expenditures in infrastructure and equipment needed to improve cooperation, in general for all types of projects, and, in particular, to deliver pilot actions), and
- Soft interventions.

Soft measures will be mainstreamed, in order to improve the projects’ logical framework, their potential impact and sustainability through consolidated institutional cooperation agreements and joint strategies, owned by the adequate governance level. In this respect, for all envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an “exit strategy”, a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are “taken up” by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play.

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

Development of a common vision for the joint promotion of common cultural and natural heritage, including cultural initiatives and the development of tourism sites and tourism niches.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including cultural, sport, youth and women’s organisations
- Churches
- National/Natural Parks administrations
- Environmental protection institutions
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euro regions
- Museums, libraries, theatres
- Offices of Cultural Heritage
- Chambers of commerce and social partners
- EGTC

2.2.2.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	SO 4.2	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
2	SO 4.2	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
2	SO 4.2	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		
2	SO 4.2	RCO 77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Number		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	SO 4.2	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021			
2	SO 4.2	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021			
2	SO 4.2	RCR 77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	Number	0	2021			

2.2.2.3. The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation, local public administrations and the wider socio-economic community, that will be directly involved in the delivery of the pilot actions and will benefit from their outcomes (i.e. PA inhabitants benefitting of improved access to cultural and natural heritage, local administrations and the socio-economic community, benefitting from increased opportunities for the diversification of local economies and possible creation of new jobs in the cultural and touristic sectors, etc);
- young people and women from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in pilot actions / awareness raising / training activities envisaging the development of tourism sites and cultural initiatives, including as future professionals in this field (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment and gender equality issues);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other correlated fields (i.e. integrated urban and rural development, agriculture and food value chain, research and development, education, employment and professional training, social inclusion especially addressed to special vulnerable groups, gender equality, etc).

2.2.2.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions may address all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, protected areas / natural reserves, etc. Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, towards strengthened rururban linkages and inter-municipal cooperation for the joint protection and sustainable valorisation of natural and cultural resources, based on the principles linked to integrated tourism destination management, territorial cohesion, sustainable urban and rural development, and cultural dialogue. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.2.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.2.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	SO 4.2	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	SO 4.2	01	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
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2	ERDF	SO 4.2	33	
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2.3. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

Priority 3. A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation

2.3.1. Specific objective

(repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

ISO 1 – A Better Cooperation Governance

2.3.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

Institutional capacities and cooperation are an important priority (PA 10) under the EUSDR Action Plan for the next programming period 2021-2027. In this respect, among the others, EUSDR PA 10 aims at: improving institutional capacities in order to provide high-quality public services; facilitating the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions; reviewing bottlenecks relating to the low absorption rate of EU funds and Invest EU and improving funding coordination; fostering cooperation built on mutual trust between state and non-state actors to enhance well-being for the inhabitants of the Danube Region; strengthening the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region; enhancing the capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development. Building institutional capacities, participatory, community-led and multi-actor governance processes, respecting human rights and anti-discrimination principles, contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030 SDG 16.

There are commonalities in the way the multi-level administrative structure of the two states is organized, where NUTS 3 and LAU 2 levels are the most relevant in terms of competencies, after the central government institutions. There are similar patterns in the implementation of vertical governance coordination, with the use of public authority associations and federations, which are involved to a general large degree in promoting local development. Existing administrative capacity disparities across the PA can potentially affect the capacity of potential beneficiaries to access cooperation funds and to modernise public services to the benefit of cross-border communities. In this context, economies of scale for services' planning and delivery, peer-to-peer exchange, joint analysis of barriers to cooperation, capacity building activities can be pursued through cooperation under the future programme, for better territorial coverage and an increased quality and innovation of cross-border governance. The area is also characterised by a long history of informal cooperation, or expressed willingness for cooperation, through twinning initiatives, the constitution of Euroregions

and the establishment of EGTCs. Twinning is a typical model applied along the border including the non-standardized and non-institutionalised cooperation of the neighbouring regional, large urban centres, as well as smaller settlements. On the other hand, intercommunity and voluntary associations of public administrations are mainly dependent from bottom-up financing and, for the same reason, the CSO sector is relatively weak. Similarly, although EGTCs represent a growing cooperation reality of the PA, their financial and human resources capacities are differentiated and also depend on top-down financing. In general terms, the analysis showed that the community interaction (exchanges, connections) in the PA is not fully understood, which suggests there is the need to invest more in people-to-people actions which may enable the mobilisation of local communities, increasing their capacities to express shared needs and to propose joint solutions to common community problems, under a truly bottom-up approach.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

1. Cross-border studies on barriers to cooperation
2. Lessons learnt from previous experiences
3. Standards and legislation mapping
4. Drafting joint actions plans / strategies / institutional agreements
5. Joint trainings on how to tackle barriers to cooperation
6. Pilot / demonstrative actions to tackle barriers
7. Cross-border studies on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives
8. Lessons learnt from previous experiences
9. Drafting joint actions plans / strategies / institutional agreements on Agenda 2030 and tailor-made solutions for integrated territorial mechanisms in the PA
10. Joint trainings, events and exchange of experience on cross-border strategic planning, project development and joint response
11. Small-scale pilot / demonstrative actions on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives focussed on policy / strategy / multiple funds coordination systems, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at cross-border level
12. Small scale trainings, events, peer exchanges and people-to-people actions.

ISO 1 interventions may have a cross-cutting approach (i.e. trainings and peer exchange on “cross-border strategic thinking”, analysis of cross-border public services quality standards / barriers to cooperation) or a sector approach (which, in this case, shall envisage subjects connected with POs not selected, such as building strategies and capacities related to innovation clusters, mapping cross-border value chains, analysing cross-border traffic flows, piloting community initiatives starting from people-to-people actions, and others). Additionally, in order to boost cooperation sustainability and possible scaling up, also under ISO 1, for all projects envisaging pilot actions, an initial draft strategy will be required, under the form of a common vision justifying the planned investment / pilot action, based on the project partnership agreement. The strategy will then evolve and be further developed during the project, following the results of the pilot action and ending up in the form of an “exit strategy”, a sustainability plan or similar, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperation beyond project duration and that the joint strategies are “taken up” by stakeholders. Common eligibility criteria for all types of projects will thus be the planned soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking. Additionally, projects of strategic importance (if the case) would be required to demonstrate a possible impact on changing cooperation patterns and the current state of play (i.e. solving barriers to cooperation or filling an important cross-border data gap to further substantiate joint strategies).

Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself

Expected change:

- Increased understanding of barriers to cooperation and definition of possible solutions with the involvement of the adequate governance level
- Increased understanding of cross-border exchanges and increased capacity to plan effective joint actions leading to an increased number and quality of joint strategies.
- Increased people-to-people actions and cross-border cooperation in community initiatives pave the way to future, more structured, community-led interventions.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations, authorities and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- EGTC
- Regional and county development agencies
- Chambers of commerce and social partners
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including cultural, sport, youth and women’s organisations
- Churches
- Governmental Offices located in the counties

2.3.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
3	ISO 1	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
3	ISO 1	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action		
3	ISO 1	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ISO 1	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/ action plan	0	2021			
3	ISO 1	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021			

2.3.1.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint trainings, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation, local public administrations and the wider socio-economic community, that will be directly involved in the delivery of the pilot actions and will benefit from their outcomes (i.e. direct effects of reduced barriers to cooperation);
- young people and women from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in pilot actions / awareness raising / training activities, including as future professionals in this field (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment and gender equality issues);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the pilot actions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other correlated fields (i.e. integrated urban and rural development, agriculture and food value chain, green economy, research and development, education, employment and professional training, social inclusion and poverty reduction especially addressed to special vulnerable groups, gender equality, border and migration management, etc).

2.3.1.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The foreseen actions may address all types of territories, i.e. urban / rural areas, marginalised areas as defined by each participating country, mountain areas, protected areas / natural reserves, etc. Although the actions do not foresee specific territorial focus, the Programme will encourage (i.e. through selection criteria), in line with EU territorial Agenda 2030, the PA internal cohesion, towards strengthened rururban linkages and inter-municipal cooperation for the development of cross-border strategies and institutional agreements, based on the principles of multi-level governance, participation and involvement of local communities in the decision-making process, non-discrimination and cultural dialogue. Additionally, the joint studies and analysis envisaged under this priority, will contribute to improve the knowledge of PA territorial development patters, flows and functional areas. In general terms, all actions will need to consider the specific territorial characteristics and needs of the targeted areas (on both sides of the border) and shall be aligned to the relevant territorial strategies at all governance levels (local, regional, national). These aspects shall be reflected in the project proposals submitted by the potential beneficiaries, being detailed in the description of the needs to be addressed and policy relevance.

2.3.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

N/A

2.3.1.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ISO 1	173	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ISO 1	01	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ISO 1	33	

3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)								
IPA III CBC ⁹								
NDICI-CBC ¹								
IPA III ¹⁰								
NDICI ²								
OCTP ¹¹								
Interreg funds ¹²								
Total								

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

⁹ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

¹⁰ Interreg B and C.

¹¹ Interreg B, C and D.

¹² ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C.

Table 8

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)	
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)				
	Priority 1	ERDF											
		IPA III CBC ¹											
		NDICI- CBC ¹											
		IPA III ²											
		NDICI ²											
		OCTP ³											
		Interreg funds ⁴											

¹ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

² Interreg B and C.

³ Interreg B, C and D.

⁴ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C.

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
	Priority 2	(funds as above)										
	Total	All funds										
		ERDF										
		IPA III CBC										
		NDICI-CBC										
		IPA III										
		NDICI										
		OCTP										
		Interreg funds										
	Total	All funds										

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

Programme preparation

The involvement of relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme has been ensured in line with the European code of conduct on partnership established by Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 (conf. art. 8 of the ERDF Reg. (EU) nr. 1060/2021). In particular, following consultations held during the course of 2019 and the agreement reached between the two Member States on the need to methods to ensure a participative programming process, in November 2019 the Rules of Procedures for the Programming Committee have been approved under the 1st Programming Committee meeting. The members of the Programming Committee are detailed below:

Voting members:

Romania:

- Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration (Managing Authority for Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme)
- Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Arad County Council
- Bihor County Council
- Satu Mare County Council
- Timiș County Council

Hungary

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Prime Minister`s Office (EU Development Policy)
- Ministry of Finance
- Széchenyi Programme Office Consulting and Service Nonprofit Limited Liability Company
- Békés County Council
- Csongrád-Csanád County Council
- Hajdú-Bihar County Council
- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Council

Observers:

- European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Policy

Romania

- The Audit Authority (within the Romanian Court of Accounts)
- Ministry of Investments and European Projects
- Ministry of Finances
- National Council for Combating Discrimination
- Association of Romanian Towns
- Agency for Regional Development, West Region

- Agency for Regional Development, North-West Region
 - Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Banat and Crisana „Excelsior”
 - Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Arad County
 - University of Agriculture Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat King Michael I of Romania
- Hungary
- Secretariat for Danube Region Strategy
 - Association of Cities with County Rights
 - Csemete Nature and Environment Protection Association

Consultations during programme preparation

A large involvement of relevant programme partners (including national and local public authorities and institutions, as well as higher education institutions, NGOs and social partners, besides the members of the PC, as detailed above) in the preparation of the Interreg programme has been ensured during the whole programming process through the organisation of several technical and bilateral meetings, consultations (including surveys) and events starting from 2019, as follows:

- 1st technical meeting on programming- Békéscsaba (February, 2019);
- 4 bilateral workshops (183 participants) on both sides of the border (July - August, 2019);
- 1st PC (Programming Committee) meeting in Nyiregyhaza (November, 2019) - approving the Rules of Procedure of the PC;
- online survey on potential beneficiaries’ interests in future Programme and proposed POs within 2021-2027 period (January, 2020);
- 5 workshops (>250 participants) dedicated to each PO and ISO organized on both sides of the border (February, 2020);
- technical meeting MA/NA/JS in Gyula on programming process - POs, SCO, strategic projects (March, 2020);
- relaunch of the online survey on potential beneficiaries’ interests in future Programme and proposed POs within 2021-2027 period (July, 2020);
- online questionnaire dedicated to PC members regarding partnership principle and involvement in the programming process (July, 2020);
- 1 online high-level meeting RO Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration and HU Ministry of External Affairs and Trade (September, 2020) for agreeing the future institutional setup – no agreement reached;
- 6 online workshops (130 participants) on Territorial Analysis, including 2 workshops with central level institutions in Romania and Hungary (October, 2020);
- 1 high-level meeting (February, 2021) for agreeing the future institutional setup;
- 12 online technical meetings between MA/NA/SZPO/JS and programming experts (June 2020 - June 2021/ongoing);
- 4 informal online meetings with COM representative;
- 2 preparatory meetings with PC members on Written Procedure related to Territorial Analysis (January, 2021), respectively on 2nd PC meeting- selection of POs (June, 2021);
- Peer- to-peer event with Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia on strategic projects (February, 2021);
- online TIA workshop MA/NA/SZPO and JS (February, 2021);

- online interviews with central level institutions/relevant stakeholders with regional development related competences and experience in managing ESIF/national programmes especially focused on the concept and procedures related to strategic projects (January-February, 2021);
- 2 rounds of consultations - 4 online workshops (125 participants)- with national/regional/local authorities in both MSs on scenario for selecting POs and related SOs (April, 2021).
- 2nd PC meeting for selecting of the POs and related specific objectives to be financed and approving IP- sections 1.1, 1,2 and 1.3.

Survey on potential beneficiaries

Consultations on strategic projects

Consultations under SEA procedure

Public consultations on the programme and SEA procedure (i.e. publication on current programme website, consultation events, direct emailing, etc)

Role of programme partners in implementation, monitoring and evaluation

In accordance with Article 38 of Regulation (EU) No 1060/2021, the MSs will set up a MC within 3 months of the notification of the approval by the Commission of the CP. MC composition will ensure a balanced representation of the relevant Member State authorities and intermediate bodies (when applicable) and, through a transparent process, of representatives of the partners referred to in Article 29 of Regulation (EU) No 1059/2021) and will carry out the function laid down in Article 30 of Regulation (EU) No 1059/2021. The Member States intend to ensure close cooperation between partners in both Member States and with the private and other sectors. The composition of the monitoring committee shall be ensured by the Member States through nomination for the official setup. Role of members will be specified in the Rules of Procedure.

The rules of procedure of the MC (including the Code of Conduct or special provisions related to the prevention of conflict of interest), the methodology and criteria for selection of the operations as well as the eligibility rules of the Programme will be adopted as soon as possible after the Programme adoption by the EC, but no later than within the deadlines provided for in the relevant regulation(s). The MC will represent the participating MSs on policy, territorial and administrative levels and thus ensure a transparent approach respecting the principles of partnership and multi-level governance and a bottom-up approach.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

Principles:

The Programme's ambition is to make communication an integral part of the working procedures, at all levels, throughout the project and programme cycles.

The entire programme communication is based on the following main principles:

- Transparency and consistency
- Flexibility
- Focus on partners
- Attention to ensuring horizontal principles
- Interaction and synergy with other programmes, between projects and the Programme, and between the projects of the Programme, to improve quality and focus on the capitalisation of results

Audience:

The internal target groups consist of programme bodies, organisations and groups involved in the governance of the Programme. The external target groups are all other stakeholders, mainly organisations that could or do implement projects, as well as the general public and the media:

- Potential partners/applicants: eligible organisations that have an interest or have the capacity to apply for funding
- Partners/funded projects
- End users and the general public: those making use of or potentially being impacted by project outputs and programme results, citizens from the PA, citizens from Romania and Hungary, EU general public
- Influencers/multipliers: European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, national, regional and local authorities and policy makers, EU info centres, other Interreg programmes and their projects, Interact etc.
- Media (radio, television, newspapers, online resources, publications etc.)

Objectives:

The operational objective of the programme communication is to foster cross-border cooperation by attracting and allocating funding to high-quality projects, which are fully in line with the Programme strategy, and which contribute to the accomplishment of the expected change, by delivering their own results in a sustainable way, whilst ensuring capitalisation and dissemination of results. This overall objective is translated into the following communication objectives:

- CO 1: Facilitating the efficient communication flow at programme level
- CO 2: Ensuring effective support for applicants and beneficiaries
- CO3: Increasing the visibility of results

Tools and channels:

- Visual identity (Interreg umbrella brand increases visibility and aids synergies with other programmes)
- Online communication (programme website, as a main tool to communicate, Facebook, as it proved successful and it the most common social media platform in Romania and Hungary, and other relevant social media, which can evolve depending on new IT developments, newsflashes/newsletters, direct emails)
- Public events (kick-off event, any kind of conference, campaign or other larger-scale event which is targeted at a wider audience, participation in multiplier events, cooperation with other Interreg programmes and Interact, others)
- Targeted events (internal meetings and trainings, information events, beneficiary trainings, thematic seminars etc.)

- Publications and promotional materials (any kind of printed or printable digital product i.e. leaflets, brochures, albums, audio-visual productions, others). The programme has an eco-friendly publications policy. Thus, a preference will be given to eco-friendly materials and printing solutions such as recycled paper. Printed materials on paper will be produced with sustainability in mind
 - Media work (press releases, organisation of press conferences around major events, others)
- Annual communication plans will include further details on the implementation of tool, channels, as well as on messages and content.

Monitoring and evaluation

The programme communication will be evaluated against the following indicators set in connection with the communication objectives:

- No of MC meetings
- No of internal meetings and trainings held
- No of participations of the staff to Interact and other inter- programme initiatives, focusing on experience exchange
- No of events for information and promotion of the programme (targeted events for applicants)
- No of participants in information events held for project applicants
- No of targeted events for project beneficiaries held
- No of Programme public events organised
- No of publications
- No of online communication tools used (Programme website, social media platforms)
- Web traffic and social media engagement.

The data will come from JS internal statistics, website analytics and specific tracking tools for social media.

Budget and resources

Communication is a shared horizontal task of the MA, JS, NA, IPs, the MC, and of the projects, as well. Implementation of the communication measures will be supported by all programme bodies, the JS and the IPs in particular. The communication budget, excluding staff costs, will be at least 0.3 percent of the total programme budget.

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

Projects of limited financial volume as per art. 24 (1) (a) of the Interreg Reg. will be managed by the MA through direct calls for proposals. Article 25 (SPF) will not be applied. Small-scale projects will balance the Programme`s average project size and help to increase also the outreach of the programme. Also, projects with limited financial volume may offer easier management with fewer administrative burden for less experienced potential partners .

Partners of the small-scale projects will be detailed under dedicated calls for proposals, launched for each specific objective / PO and selected Interreg Specific Objective, including people-to-people

actions. Among others the aim is to attract newcomers and small sized institutions to implement their cross-border ideas and hence to bring the programme closer to the citizens of the cross-border region. The measures can give opportunity to implement small scale projects under simplified conditions being in line with impact evaluation's recommendations.

In particular, the Programme will welcome small-scale projects with the following purposes among others (the list is not exclusive):

- First cooperation actions for newcomers;
- Establishing new governance networks (including new elements of cooperation);
- Testing and seed financing for larger projects;
- Small and targeted pilot actions;
- Capitalisation on the results of other initiatives (incl. know-how transfer and knowledge exchange);
- Awareness raising actions for the general public;
- People-to-people actions, promoting contacts and interaction between people, trust building.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 10

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority			
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)			
Audit authority			
Group of auditors representatives			
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission			

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

.....

7.3 Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partners countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

Each Member State shall be responsible for preventing, detecting and correcting irregularities committed by the partners located on its territory.

Each Member State shall apply the financial corrections in connection with individual or systemic irregularities detected in operations or operational programme, in accordance with Article 103 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and the Memorandum of Implementation.

In the case of a systematic irregularity, the Member States in the programme shall extend their investigation to cover all operations potentially affected, case by case.

For systemic irregularity or financial correction on programme level that can be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be borne by that Member State.

For systemic irregularity or financial correction on programme level that cannot be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be jointly and equally borne by the Member States.

The Commission has the right of making financial corrections by cancelling all or part of the Union contribution to the programme and effecting recovery from the Member States in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the management and control systems.

In case of any financial corrections imposed by the Commission, the Member States commit to reimburse to the Programme accounts the amount representing the percentage of the financial correction applied to the expenditure paid by their beneficiaries and declared by the Managing Authority to the European Commission at the date of the decision to apply the financial correction.

The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the Member States obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the Managing Authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

Without prejudice to each Member State's responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities, the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of irregularity – or when the Managing Authority is entitled to withdraw from Subsidy Contract and to demand the repayment of the EU contribution in full or in part – is recovered from the lead or sole partner. Beneficiaries shall repay to the lead partner any amounts unduly paid.

Beneficiaries shall repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed

with the lead partner and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the partners. The Programme shall provide the partners a template of the Partnership Agreement.

If the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries or if the Managing Authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner, the Member State on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located or, in the case of an EGTC, is registered shall reimburse the Managing Authority the amount unduly paid to that beneficiary. The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the Member States, as laid down in the cooperation programme.

In accordance with Article 52 (4) of [Regulation \(EU\) 1059/2021](#), once the Member State has reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that partner under its national law. In the event of successful recovery, the Member State shall not have any reporting obligation towards the programme authorities, the Monitoring Committee or the European Commission with regards to such national recoveries.

In case a Member State to the programme has not reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the respective Member State in the programme. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF or any external financing instrument of the Union to the Programme. The amount recovered shall constitute assigned revenue in accordance with Article [21(3)] of Regulation (EU, Euratom) [FR- Omnibus].

With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the Managing Authority by the Member State, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the same Interreg programme. The Managing Authority shall then offset with regard to the Member State in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities set out in the Programme in the event of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission.

In line with Article 52 (2) of Regulation (EU) 1059/2021 Member States agree that neither the lead partner nor the programme's Managing Authority will be obliged to recover an amount unduly paid that does not exceed EUR 250, not including interest, in contribution from ERDF funds to an operation cumulatively in an accounting year.

The liability principles described above shall also apply to financial corrections to Technical Assistance (TA) calculated in compliance with Article 27 of the Regulation (EU) 1059/2021, since such corrections would be the direct consequence of project related irregularities (whether systemic or not). The Managing Authority will keep informed the Member States about all irregularities and their impact on TA.

Member States shall report on irregularities in accordance with the criteria for determining the cases of irregularity to be reported, the data to be provided and the format for reporting set out in the Regulation (EU) 1060/2021. Irregularities shall be reported by the MS in which the expenditure is paid by the lead partner or beneficiary implementing the project. Specific procedure in this respect

will be part of the description of the programme management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 69 (12) of the Regulation (EU) 1060/2021.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/...⁺ (CPR)

Table 11: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95	YES	NO
From the adoption the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 94 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
From the adoption the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

APPENDICES

Map 1: Map of the programme area

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable

⁺ OJ: Please insert in the text the number of the Regulation contained in document ST 6674/21 [2018/0196(COD)].

Appendix 3

List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable - Article 17(3)

Text field [2 000]