



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Impact Evaluation - Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BRECO	The Regional Office for Cross-border Cooperation
CBC	Cross Border Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EUSDR	The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
FLC	First Level Control
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IP	Investment Priorities
IPA	The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
MC	Monitoring Committee
JS	Joint Secretariat
IP	Info Points
LoI	Logic of intervention
MA	Managing Authority
NA	National Authority
NEET	Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training
OC	Open Calls
PA	Priority Axis
RC	Restricted Calls
RTT	Round Trip Time
SO	Specific Objective
TEN-T	TEN-T Trans-European Transport Network
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of references

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation aim and objectives

The **overall objective** of the Impact Evaluation of Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme is to produce specific knowledge on the impact, effectiveness and sustainability of the Programme. The **specific objectives** of the evaluation are: a) to capture the effects of the programme, b) to assess the programme's performance and c) to carry out effectiveness evaluation, particularly assessing the extent to which the objectives of the programme were achieved. The entire evaluation had a twofold approach, assessing (i) the programme as a whole and its general aim at enhancing cross border cooperation and (ii) each specific objective and its particular effects/results and performance.

Considering these objectives, the evaluation is providing details on:

- progress in achieving each specific objective and the contribution of interventions to the achieved progress, factors facilitating the contribution, intended and unintended effects;
- programme outputs and results (outcomes) indicators;
- programme effects on the cross-border regional development and cooperation;
- programme effects at the level of beneficiaries, target groups, final beneficiaries;
- sustainability of outputs and results of the programme;
- the added value of the programme and especially, of the strategic projects in terms of impact.

In terms of the **geographical scope** of the evaluation, operations implemented in Romania and in Hungary are considered and the evaluation pays special attention to the cross-border character of the activities and their impact on cooperation in the covered area. Regarding the **temporal scope**, the cut-off date of the evaluation is December 31st, 2022.

Evaluation methodology

Taking into consideration the objectives of the evaluation and expected results, the main data collection methods used were the following:

- **Document review**, which included: a) Programme documents and previous evaluations, monitoring data on projects and programme; b) European and national strategies and policies and c) Project level documents, such as: application forms, reports, projects' deliverables;
- **Surveys**, addressed to **programme beneficiaries**/partners and to **programme stakeholders** (including programme beneficiaries and other institutions/organizations);
- **Interviews**, conducted with **programme authorities** (the Managing Authority, the National Authority, the Joint Secretariat and Info Points), **stakeholders** (representatives of County Councils, main municipalities in the eligible area etc.) and with **project beneficiaries and their target groups**, under the framework of **15 case studies**.

Additionally, an **Expert Panel** focused on the impact of the programme in the area of natural and cultural heritage and a **Workshop** focused on cross-border cooperation that has been facilitated through all programme interventions/projects.

The following evaluation methods for data analysis were deployed: a) reconstruction of the Theory of Change of the programme, b) realist evaluation, c) contribution analysis, d) content analysis, e) quantitative analysis, f) case studies, g) the funding framework approach and h) media monitoring.

Evaluation findings and conclusions

General effectiveness of the programme¹

¹ It is important to mention from the outset that the findings related to programme achievement in terms of result indicators have been affected by the availability of the necessary administrative data for calculating the level of result indicators' targets. While the necessary statistical and administrative data for calculating the values of result indicators under Specific Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 were updated at level of the year 2022, the data collected from the National Statistical Offices from Romania and Hungary necessary for Specific Objective 3.1 were valid at the level of the year 2021. In regards with the values presented for the results indicators related to Specific Objectives 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, the necessary data has been collected between May and June 2023. Moreover, in this last case, the programme methodology for calculating the current values of the result indicators lacks information for the exact replication of the data collection process conducted in 2014, for establishing the baselines, therefore the data collected for the results indicators has been be complemented with qualitative data in order to draw conclusions.

The effectiveness of the programme, based on its current implementation status (73 projects out of the 108 contracted projects were finalized at the cut-off date of the evaluation) varies across its 8 specific objectives. As a result of applying the programme methodology for calculating the values of result indicators, the evaluation found that:

- **3 result indicators** the programme registered **values reaching or surpassing the targets set for 2023**, namely *Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area* (Specific Objective 1.1), *Increased number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area* (Specific Objective 1.2) and *Slight increase in employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population* (Specific Objective 3.1).
- The registered values of the other **3 result indicators registered achievement rates in regards with the set targets set above 90%**, as it follows: *Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border* (Specific Objective 2.2), *Improved average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area* (Specific Objective 4.1) and *Increased level of the cross-border cooperation intensity of the public institutions and non-profit organizations* (Specific Objective 6.1).
- For one indicator the **target achievement rate is below 90%**: *Improved quality of the joint risk management* (Specific Objective 5.1), but the performance rate is 86%.
- The result indicator *Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T* (Specific Objective 2.1) has a reported value of 0, because no achievement has been reported yet. The expected value of the result indicator is estimated to surpass the target (with 39%).

The analyzed data showed that the Covid19 pandemic had a significant impact on the values of several programme result indicators, such as: number of tourist overnight stays, ratio of people using motorized road vehicles, employment rate. But the available information shows that the most affected sectors **started to recover even from 2021, with an accelerated pace**. Thus, it is expected that by the end of the programme many sectors are revitalized and achieve a similar or higher development status as before the pandemic outburst.

The evaluation found that **the link between the objectives of the programme and the planned outputs is generally strong, and most of the indicators' targets were well set**. However, contextual factors were taken into account to a limited extent when designing the methodology for calculating the baseline and the target values for results indicators set under Specific Objectives 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, and this limited the capacity of the evaluators to assess the programme performance for these specific objectives based on the result indicators. Additional information was used for the evaluation conclusions.

The **main factors supporting the effectiveness of the programme** are: a) favorable legislation in the area of cross-border waters management b) the prioritization of several sectors addressed by the programme policy makers (such as transport and risk management), c) legislative changes in Hungary in the area of vocational training or simplifying regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary, d) synergies created between interventions, due to other external sources of financing. On the other hand, the **main factors hampering the effectiveness of the programme** are related to: a) Covid 19 which affected significantly sectors such as tourism, transport, health and employment, but also, the implementation of the projects, b) energy and economic crises which led to significant increases of prices, c) under financing through the national budgets for protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, healthcare (especially in Romania) or employment, d) legislative changes in Romania in the area of natural area protection, e) national legislations that do not allow joint action of responsible institutions in case of emergencies.

Project level effectiveness

Most targets of output indicators at project level have been achieved already, with multiple instances in which the indicators heavily overperform their targets. Where output indicators have not achieved their targets, this is mainly because no project was finalized contributing to the respective outputs.

The **main factors that facilitated the effectiveness of the projects** as identified through the evaluation are related to: a) multiculturalism of the addressed areas, thus of the communities of beneficiaries, b) well positioned beneficiaries with sufficient expertise and financial capacity, c) well designed partnerships, d) effective support provided by programme authorities to the beneficiaries, especially by the Joint Secretariat – BRECO and Info Points. On the other hand, the **main hampering factors in regards with project level effectiveness** were: a) restriction imposed in the context of

Covid19 pandemic, b) public procurement system, mainly from Romania, c) increases in prices, d) turnover of personnel at the level of project partners, e) not applying the pre-financing mechanism, important mainly in the case of small beneficiaries with less financial capacity, f) late adoption of the programme, late establishment of the legal and administrative framework and late adoption of state aid regulation which led to later than planned calls for proposals.

Impact in regards with each specific objective of the programme

The evaluation found that **the financed projects contribute to a large extent to the progress observed** for each specific objective of the programme, but not in all cases directly to the result indicator set at programme level. Nevertheless, **most of the supported interventions have already generated important positive effects at the level of the target groups**, more specifically:

- Projects contracted under Specific Objective 1.1, Specific Objective 2.1 **contribute directly to the expected results (improved quality of cross-border waters or improved accessibility on cross-border roads)**, but the sum of outputs is rather low due to limited budget available;
- Regarding the projects contracted under Specific Objective 1.2 and Specific Objective 5.1, the current progress registered at project level in terms of already generated outputs is very good and the targets for both outputs are expected to be surpassed. However, **the actual and potential contribution to the related objective is difficult to be assessed** due to the weak links within the Logic of Intervention;
- The projects contracted under **Specific Objective 2.2, Specific Objective 3.1 and Specific Objective 4.1 contribute significantly to the expected results** (increased use of sustainable transport, higher access level to the labor market, increased access to preventive and curative health-care services), due to the design of the Priority Axis and projects and the overall allocated budgets;
- Regarding projects contracted under Specific Objective 6.1, their **benefits for improved cross-border cooperation are visible in all municipalities of the programme beneficiaries**.

The evaluation did not identify a large number of unintended effects. But, some of them are of utmost importance, such as: covering the gap in financing and available human resources in the natural heritage protection sector; generating more interest at local and county level for the transport infrastructure; replications of projects financed under Specific Objective 3.1 and joint efforts made by beneficiaries under Specific Objective 5.1 in changing legislation in regards with joint interventions in case of emergencies. Nevertheless, in the case of Specific Objective 4.1, some projects had negative effects in terms of loss of human resources caused by automatization and their low level of adaptation to the modernized approach. From a general perspective, the programme accelerated the development of several types of activities after the restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic were abolished and thus, the recovery after COVID 19.

General impact of the programme

The programme is **successful in producing change at the level of the eligible area for a large number of persons**. From the perspective of the population addressed or benefiting from the projects results, the programme has a very good coverage. However, the benefits and effects of the programme are not distributed uniformly in the programme eligible area. More projects are implemented by beneficiaries from Romania, from large cities and the funding is concentrated closer to the border, both in Romania and Hungary, and in the north of the programme eligible area.

Interreg V-A Programme Romania - Hungary **contributes in a significant manner to the cooperation and cohesion in the eligible area**, under all Specific Objectives. Cooperation among peer institutions is very present and it contributed to strengthening the relations and trust among programme beneficiaries. Most of them are planning new projects together. This is certainly the **main added value of the programme**, the general perspective being that no other available financing source could support the cooperation between entities on the two sides of the border or some of the sectoral interventions that are funded.

The evaluation found that, overall, the **investments made through the Interreg V-A RO-HU programme are sustainable**. Thus, strategic projects seem to bring the most added value in terms of sustainability, due to significant hard/infrastructure support for the continuation of activities on promotion of cultural heritage, employment in each country and as cross-border activities, the provision of the necessary conditions for better healthcare services, improvement of safety road transportation in

the border area. On the other hand, the sustainability of joint initiatives (for example the joint structures created in projects under Specific Objective 4.1 dedicated to improved healthcare) is not certain.

The programme is **visible in the covered counties as are its already achieved results**, but even more promotion would be beneficial to increase the awareness of the general public on the support for cross-border cooperation. The investments made under Specific Objectives 1.1, 2.1 and 4.1 are the most visible ones, being projects aiming to improve conditions for the entire population of the addressed localities and conducting important infrastructure works. Also, projects under Specific Objective 1.2 are very visible since they combine important infrastructure works with direct involvement of target groups in project activities.

Main recommendations

- **A stronger connection between the operational (project) and strategic levels** should be ensured in the project preparation (*in the case of the Interreg VI-A Programme*) and implementation phases, as the former influence the quality of interventions' designs. Thus, while in several cases the connection with sectoral stakeholders proved to be very strong, this approach has not been applied by all programme beneficiaries. This, stronger connection would better orient and, possibly, sustain, the results of the projects in the programme area. Also, the VI-A Romania -Hungary programme should support joint structure and joint provision of services in order to enhance further the quality/intensity of cooperation between Romania and Hungary.
- In order to facilitate both the project and programme implementation, the programme authorities should take into account the risk of economic crisis and inflation (that already affected the programme in 2021-2022), **applying indexation of projects' budgets with the inflation rate and making adjustment to the programme budget taking into account savings from public procurement and the impact of inflation**, constitutes an important measure that can come to the support of beneficiaries.
- It is important that future programme beneficiaries receive support from programme authorities for quality projects implementation. While in general the support of programme authorities was well appreciated, further **reducing administrative burden and accounting difficulties** would help ease the implementation process for beneficiaries, as this has been a horizontal bottleneck faced by those accessing the funds available through the programme. The delays caused by the public **procurement procedure should be better addressed by programme authorities**, through support and recommendations provided to beneficiaries.
- Encouraging a more **balanced distribution of project activities between Romanian and Hungarian partners**, in line with needs, but with a view to foster CBC, would bring more benefits in the entire eligible area, for target groups and would increase trust and cooperation among partners / peer institutions.
- **Better valorization of the outputs and results of the implemented projects**, through a more intense dissemination of good practice examples can benefit the programme and bring more applicants to calls. More efforts should be invested in disseminating successful projects such as this, to inform citizens of results booked with EU/CBC resources, as promote the idea that Interreg CBC projects generated useful effects for the community.

SUMAR EXECUTIV

Obiectivele evaluării

Obiectivul general al Evaluării de Impact a Programului Interreg V-A România – Ungaria este de a produce informații cu privire la impactul, eficacitatea și sustenabilitatea Programului. **Obiectivele specifice** ale evaluării sunt: a) să surprindă efectele programului, b) să evalueze performanța programului și c) să efectueze o evaluare a eficacității, în special apreciind măsura în care au fost atinse obiectivele programului. Întreaga evaluare a avut o abordare dublă, evaluând (i) programul în ansamblul său, mai ales cu privire la abordarea generală referitoare la cooperarea transfrontalieră și (ii) la fiecare obiectiv specific și efectele/rezultatele obținute.

Având în vedere aceste obiective, evaluarea oferă detalii despre:

- progresul în atingerea fiecărui obiectiv specific și contribuția intervențiilor la progresul realizat, factorii care facilitează această contribuție, efectele preconizate și neintenționate;
- realizările programului și indicatorii de rezultat;
- efectele programului asupra dezvoltării și cooperării regionale transfrontaliere;
- efectele programului la nivel de beneficiari, grupuri țintă / beneficiari finali;
- sustenabilitatea realizărilor și rezultatelor programului;
- valoarea adăugată a programului și mai ales, a proiectelor strategice din punct de vedere al impactului.

În ceea ce privește **sfera geografică** a evaluării, sunt luate în considerare operațiunile implementate în România și în Ungaria, iar evaluarea acordă o atenție deosebită caracterului transfrontalier al activităților și impactului acestora asupra cooperării în zona acoperită. În ceea ce privește **sfera temporală**, data până la care progresul programului a fost analizat este **31 decembrie 2022**.

Metodologia evaluării

Luând în considerare obiectivele evaluării și rezultatele așteptate, principalele metode de colectare a datelor utilizate au fost următoarele:

- **Analiză de documente**, care a inclus: a) documentele programului și evaluările anterioare, datele de monitorizare a proiectelor și programului; b) strategii și politici europene și naționale și c) documente de la nivel de proiect, cum ar fi: cereri de finanțare, rapoarte, livrabile ale proiectelor;
- **Sondaje**, adresate beneficiarilor/partenerilor programului și părților interesate din program (inclusiv beneficiarilor programului și altor instituții/organizații);
- **Interviuri**, realizate cu autoritățile programului (Autoritatea de Management, Autoritatea Națională, Secretariatul Comun și Punctele Locale de Informare), părțile interesate (reprezentanți ai Consiliilor Județene, principalele municipalități din zona eligibilă etc.) și cu beneficiarii proiectului și grupurile țintă ale acestora, în cadrul a 15 studii de caz.

În plus, au fost organizate: a) un **panel de experți** cu scopul validării constatărilor și concluziilor raportului cu privire la impactul programului în domeniul patrimoniului natural și cultural și un **atelier de lucru** axat pe cooperarea transfrontalieră care a fost facilitată prin toate intervențiile/proiectele programului.

Pentru realizarea raportului au fost utilizate următoarele metode de evaluare pentru analiza datelor: a) reconstruirea teoriei schimbării programului pentru fiecare obiectiv specific, b) evaluare realistă, c) analiza contribuției, d) analiza de conținut, e) analiza cantitativă, f) studii de caz, g) abordarea cadru de finanțare și h) monitorizarea mass-media.

Constatările și concluziile evaluării

Eficacitatea generală a programului²

² Este important de menționat, încă de la început, faptul că formularea constatărilor legate de realizările programului în ceea ce privește indicatorii de rezultat a depins de disponibilitatea datelor administrative necesare pentru calcularea nivelului Țintelor indicatorilor de rezultat. În timp ce datele statistice și administrative necesare calculării valorilor indicatorilor de rezultat în cadrul Obiectivelor Specifice 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 și 2.2 au fost actualizate la nivelul anului 2022, datele culese de la Institutul Național de Statistică din România și Ungaria necesare pentru Obiectivele

Eficacitatea programului, analizată pe baza stadiului actual de implementare (73 de proiecte din cele 108 proiecte contractate fuseseră finalizate până la data de referință a evaluării) variază în funcție de cele 8 obiective specifice ale sale. Ca urmare a aplicării metodologiei de calcul a valorilor indicatorilor de rezultat, evaluarea a constatat următoarele:

- **3 indicatori de rezultat ai programului au înregistrat valori care ating sau depășesc țintele stabilite pentru anul 2023** și anume: *Creșterea ușoară a calității apei (starea ecologică) a râurilor transfrontaliere la punctele de măsurare din zona eligibilă* (Obiectiv Specific 1.1), *Creșterea numărului de înnoptări în zona eligibilă a programului* (Obiectiv Specific 1.2) și *Creștere ușoară a ratei de ocupare în zona eligibilă ca procent din populația în vârstă de muncă* (Obiectiv Specific 3.1).
- Valorile înregistrate ale celorlalți **3 indicatori de rezultat au rate de realizare, în raport cu țintele stabilite, de peste 90%**, după cum urmează: *Creșterea raportului între persoane și vehicule rutiere motorizate care trec granița* (Obiectiv Specific 2.2), *Îmbunătățirea nivelului mediu al serviciilor medicale preventive și curative în zona eligibilă* (Obiectiv Specific 4.1) și *Nivelul sporit al intensității cooperării transfrontaliere a instituțiilor publice și organizațiilor non-profit* (Obiectiv Specific 6.1).
- **Pentru un singur indicator rata de realizare a țintei este sub 90%:** *Calitatea îmbunătățită a managementului comun al riscului* (Obiectiv Specific 5.1), dar rata de performanță este de 86%.
- Indicatorul de rezultat *Populația transfrontalieră deservită de infrastructura modernizată care duce la TEN-T* (obiectiv Specific 2.1) are o valoare raportată de 0, deoarece încă nu a fost raportată nicio realizare. Valoarea așteptată a indicatorului de rezultat este estimată a depăși ținta (cu 39%).

Datele analizate au arătat că **pandemia de Covid19 a avut un impact semnificativ asupra valorilor mai multor indicatori de rezultat** ai programului, precum: numărul de înnoptări în zona eligibilă a programului, raportul persoanelor care folosesc vehicule rutiere motorizate, rata de ocupare. Dar informațiile disponibile arată că sectoarele cele mai afectate au început să își revină chiar din 2021, cu un ritm accelerat. Astfel, este de așteptat ca până la sfârșitul programului multe sectoare să fie revitalizate și să atingă un nivel de dezvoltare similar sau mai ridicat ca înainte de izbucnirea pandemiei.

Evaluarea a constatat că **legătura dintre obiectivele programului și rezultatele planificate este în general puternică, iar majoritatea țăintelor indicatorilor au fost bine stabilite**. Cu toate acestea, factorii contextuali au fost luați în considerare într-o măsură limitată în procesul de dezvoltare a metodologiei de calcul pentru valorile de referință și valorile țintă aferente indicatorilor de rezultat pentru Obiectivele Specifice 4.1, 5.1 și 6.1. Acest lucru a limitat capacitatea evaluatorilor de a evalua performanța programului, pentru aceste obiective specifice, pe baza indicatorilor de rezultat. De aceea, s-au folosit informații suplimentare pentru concluziile evaluării.

Principalii **factori care susțin eficacitatea programului** sunt: a) legislația favorabilă în domeniul managementului apelor transfrontaliere b) prioritizarea mai multor sectoare abordate de factorii de decizie ai programului (cum ar fi transportul și managementul riscurilor), c) modificările legislative în Ungaria în domeniul formării profesionale sau simplificarea reglementărilor privind trecerea frontierei dintre România și Ungaria, d) sinergii create între intervenții, datorită altor surse externe de finanțare. Pe de altă parte, principalii **factori care împiedică eficacitatea programului** sunt legați de: a) Covid 19 care a afectat semnificativ sectoare precum turismul, transportul, sănătatea și ocuparea forței de muncă, dar și implementarea proiectelor, b) crizele în energie și economie care au dus la majorări semnificative ale prețurilor, c) subfinanțare prin bugetele naționale pentru protecția patrimoniului natural, cultural și istoric, asistență medicală (în special în România) sau ocuparea forței de muncă, d) modificări legislative în România în domeniul protecției ariilor naturale, e) legislații naționale care nu permit acțiunea comună a instituțiilor responsabile în caz de urgență.

Eficacitatea la nivel de proiect

Majoritatea țăintelor indicatorilor de realizare la nivel de proiect au fost deja atinse, cu mai multe situații în care indicatorii își depășesc cu mult țintele. Acolo unde indicatorii de realizare nu și-au atins obiectivele, acest lucru se datorează în principal faptului că niciun proiect care contribuie la rezultatele respective nu a fost finalizat.

Specifice 3.1 au fost actualizate la nivelul anului 2021. În ceea ce privește valorile prezentate pentru indicatorii de rezultat aferenți Obiectivelor Specifice 4.1, 5.1 și 6.1, datele necesare au fost colectate în perioada mai – iunie 2023. De asemenea, în acest ultim caz, din metodologia programului pentru calcularea valorilor curente ale indicatorilor de rezultat lipsesc informații pentru replicarea exactă a procesului de colectare a datelor desfășurat în anul 2014, pentru stabilirea valorilor de bază, prin urmare datele colectate pentru indicatorii de rezultat au fost completate cu date calitative pentru a putea formula constatări valide.

Principalii **factori care au facilitat eficacitatea proiectelor** identificate prin evaluare sunt legați de: a) multiculturalitatea zonelor abordate, deci a comunităților de beneficiari, b) beneficiari bine poziționați, cu suficientă expertiză și capacitate financiară, c) parteneriate bine proiectate, d) sprijin efectiv oferit de autoritățile programului beneficiarilor, în special de către Secretariatul Comun – BRECO și Punctele de Informare. Pe de altă parte, principalii **factori care împiedică eficacitatea la nivel de proiect** au fost: a) restricțiile impuse în contextul pandemiei de Covid19, b) sistemul de achiziții publice, în principal din România, c) creșterea prețurilor, d) rotația de personal la nivelul partenerilor de proiect, e) neaplicarea mecanismului de prefinanțare, important în special în cazul beneficiarilor mici cu capacitate financiară mai mică, din România, f) adoptarea tardivă a programului, stabilirea tardivă a cadrului juridic și administrativ și adoptarea tardivă a actelor normative referitoare la ajutorul de stat, care au dus la lansarea apelurilor de proiecte mai târziu față de termenele planificate inițial.

Impactul programului la nivel de Obiectiv Specific

Evaluarea a constatat că **proiectele finanțate contribuie în mare măsură la progresul observat pentru fiecare obiectiv specific al programului, dar nu în toate cazurile direct la indicatorul de rezultat stabilit la nivel de program.** Cu toate acestea, majoritatea intervențiilor susținute au generat deja efecte pozitive importante la nivelul grupurilor țintă, mai precis:

- Proiectele contractate în cadrul Obiectivelor Specifice 1.1, Obiectivului Specific 2.1 contribuie direct la rezultatele așteptate (îmbunătățirea calității apelor transfrontaliere sau îmbunătățirea accesibilității la drumurile transfrontaliere), dar suma rezultatelor este destul de scăzută din cauza bugetului disponibil limitat;
- În ceea ce privește proiectele contractate în cadrul Obiectivului Specific 1.2 și Obiectivului Specific 5.1, progresul actual înregistrat la nivel de proiect în ceea ce privește realizările deja generate este foarte bun și se așteaptă ca țintele pentru ambele rezultate să fie depășite. Cu toate acestea, contribuția reală și potențială la obiectivul aferent este dificil de evaluat din cauza legăturilor slabe din cadrul Logicii de Intervenție;
- Proiectele contractate în cadrul Obiectivului Specific 2.2, Obiectivului Specific 3.1 și Obiectivului Specific 4.1 contribuie semnificativ la rezultatele așteptate (utilizarea sporită a transportului durabil, nivel de acces mai ridicat la piața muncii, acces sporit la servicii de asistență medicală preventivă și curativă), datorită designului Axelor Prioritare și a proiectelor și bugetelor globale alocate;
- În ceea ce privește proiectele contractate în cadrul Obiectivului Specific 6.1, beneficiile acestora pentru îmbunătățirea cooperării transfrontaliere sunt vizibile în toate localitățile beneficiarilor programului.

Evaluarea nu a identificat un număr mare de efecte neașteptate. Însă, unele dintre ele sunt de o importanță foarte mare, cum ar fi: acoperirea deficitului de finanțare și resurse umane disponibile în sectorul care se ocupă cu protejarea patrimoniului natural; generarea unui interes mai mare la nivel local și județean pentru infrastructura de transport; replicări ale proiectelor finanțate în cadrul Obiectivului Specific 3.1 și eforturi comune depuse de beneficiarii din cadrul Obiectivului Specific 5.1 pentru schimbarea legislației în ceea ce privește intervențiile comune în caz de urgență. Cu toate acestea, în cazul Obiectivului Specific 4.1, unele proiecte au avut efecte negative asupra resurselor umane, cauzate de automatizare și nivelul scăzut de adaptare al acestora la abordarea modernizată. Dintr-o perspectivă generală, programul a accelerat desfășurarea mai multor tipuri de activități după ce au fost desființate restricțiile impuse în contextul pandemiei și astfel, redresarea după COVID 19.

Impactul general al programului

În general, programul a produs cu succes și pentru un număr mare de persoane schimbările așteptate la nivelul zonei eligibile. Din perspectiva populației adresate sau care beneficiază de rezultatele proiectelor, programul are o acoperire foarte largă. **Cu toate acestea, beneficiile și efectele programului nu sunt distribuite uniform în zona eligibilă a programului.** Cele mai multe proiecte sunt implementate de beneficiarii din România, din orașele mari, iar finanțarea este concentrată mai aproape de graniță, atât în România, cât și în Ungaria, în nordul zonei eligibile pentru program.

Programul Interreg V-A România - Ungaria contribuie în mod semnificativ la cooperarea și coeziunea în zona eligibilă, în cadrul tuturor Obiectivelor Specifice. **Cooperarea dintre instituțiile omoloage din România și Ungaria este foarte prezentă și a contribuit la întărirea relațiilor și a încrederii dintre beneficiarii programului.** Cei mai mulți dintre ei plănuiesc noi proiecte împreună. Aceasta este cu siguranță principala valoare adăugată a programului, perspectiva generală fiind că nicio altă sursă de

finanțare disponibilă nu ar putea sprijini cooperarea dintre entitățile de pe ambele părți ale graniței sau unele dintre intervențiile sectoriale care sunt finanțate.

Evaluarea a constatat că, **per ansamblu, investițiile realizate prin programul Interreg V-A RO-HU sunt sustenabile**. Proiectele strategice par să aducă cea mai mare valoare adăugată din punct de vedere al durabilității, datorită sprijinului semnificativ pe care îl acordă dezvoltării de infrastructură, în special pentru continuarea activităților de promovare a patrimoniului cultural, ocuparea forței de muncă în fiecare țară și ca activități transfrontaliere, asigurarea condițiilor minime necesare pentru furnizarea unor servicii de sănătate de calitate sau îmbunătățirea siguranței transportului rutier în zona de frontieră. Pe de altă parte, sustenabilitatea inițiativelor comune (de exemplu, structurile comune create în proiecte în cadrul Obiectivului Specific 4.1 dedicate îmbunătățirii asistenței medicale) nu este sigură.

Programul și rezultatele sale sunt vizibile în toate județele în care au fost implementate proiecte, dar o promovare mai intensă ar fi benefică pentru creșterea gradului de conștientizare a publicului larg cu privire la sprijinul existent pentru cooperarea transfrontalieră. Investițiile realizate la nivelul Obiectivelor Specifice 1.1, 2.1 și 4.1 sunt cele mai vizibile, fiind proiecte care urmăresc îmbunătățirea condițiilor pentru întreaga populație din localitățile vizate și realizarea unor lucrări importante de infrastructură. De asemenea, proiectele din cadrul Obiectivului Specific 1.2 sunt foarte vizibile, deoarece combină lucrări importante de infrastructură cu implicarea directă a grupurilor țintă în activitățile proiectului.

Recomandări principale

- Ar trebui asigurată o conexiune mai puternică între nivelurile operaționale (proiect) și strategice în fazele de pregătire a proiectelor (în cazul Programului Interreg VI-A) și de implementare, deoarece acestea influențează calitatea și rezultatele intervențiilor. Astfel, deși în mai multe cazuri legătura cu părțile interesate sectoriale s-a dovedit a fi foarte puternică, această abordare nu a fost aplicată de toți beneficiarii programului. Această conexiune mai puternică ar orienta mai bine și, eventual, ar susține mai bine rezultatele proiectelor din zona programului. De asemenea, programul VI-A România - Ungaria ar trebui să sprijine structura comună și furnizarea comună de servicii pentru a spori și mai mult calitatea/intensitatea cooperării dintre România și Ungaria.
- Pentru a facilita atât implementarea proiectelor, cât și implementarea programului, autoritățile programului ar trebui să țină cont de riscurile generate de criza economică și inflație (care au afectat deja programul în perioada 2021-2022), aplicând indexarea bugetelor proiectelor cu rata inflației și făcând ajustarea bugetului programului ținând cont de economiile din achizițiile publice și de impactul inflației. În acest fel, Autoritatea de Management poate veni în sprijinul beneficiarilor și contribui la încheierea cu succes a proiectelor aflate încă în implementare.
- Este important ca viitorii beneficiari ai programului să primească sprijin din partea autorităților programului pentru implementarea mai eficace a proiectelor. Deși, în general, sprijinul autorităților programului a fost foarte apreciat, reducerea în continuare a sarcinii administrative și a dificultăților contabile ar ajuta la ușurarea procesului de implementare pentru beneficiari, deoarece acesta a fost un blocaj orizontal cu care s-au confruntat cei care au accesat fondurile disponibile prin program. Întârzierile cauzate de procedura de achiziție publică ar trebui abordate mai bine de către autoritățile programului, prin sprijin și recomandări oferite beneficiarilor.
- Încurajarea unei distribuții mai echilibrate a activităților planificate în cadrul proiectelor între partenerii români și maghiari, în concordanță cu nevoile, dar și în vederea promovării cooperării transfrontaliere, ar aduce mai multe beneficii, în întreaga zonă eligibilă, pentru grupurile țintă și ar întări cooperarea și încrederea dintre parteneri/ instituții omoloage.
- O mai bună valorificare a realizărilor și rezultatelor proiectelor implementate, printr-o diseminare mai intensă a exemplelor de bune practici poate aduce beneficii programului și de asemenea, poate crește numărul aplicanților. Ar trebui investite mai multe eforturi în diseminarea unor proiecte de succes, pentru a informa cetățenii cu privire la rezultatele obținute cu resurse UE / Interreg, promovând ideea că proiectele Interreg au generat efecte utile pentru comunitate.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

Az értékelés célja és célkitűzései

Az Interreg V-A Románia-Magyarország program hatásvizsgálatának **általános célja**, hogy konkrét ismereteket szerezzen a program hatásáról, hatékonyságáról és fenntarthatóságáról. Az értékelés **konkrét céljai** a következők: a) a program hatásainak felmérése, b) a program teljesítményének értékelése és c) a hatékonyság értékelése, különösen annak felmérése, hogy a program céljai milyen mértékben valósultak meg. Az értékelés egésze kettős megközelítést alkalmazott, értékelve (i) a program egészét és a határokon átnyúló együttműködés fokozására irányuló általános célját, valamint (ii) az egyes konkrét célkitűzéseket és azok konkrét hatásait/eredményeit és teljesítményét.

E célokat figyelembe véve az értékelés részletesen ismerteti a következőket:

- az egyes konkrét célkitűzések megvalósításában elért előrehaladás, valamint a beavatkozások hozzájárulása az elért előrehaladáshoz, a hozzájárulást elősegítő tényezők, a szándékolt és nem szándékolt hatások;
- a program kimenetei és eredményei (kimenetek) mutatói;
- a program hatásai a határokon átnyúló regionális fejlődésre és együttműködésre;
- a program hatásai a kedvezményezettek, a célcsoportok és a végső kedvezményezettek szintjén;
- a program eredményeinek és eredményeinek fenntarthatósága;
- a program és különösen a stratégiai projektek hozzáadott értéke a hatás szempontjából.

Az értékelés **földrajzi hatókörét** tekintve a Romániában és Magyarországon végrehajtott műveleteket vesszük figyelembe, és az értékelés különös figyelmet fordít a tevékenységek határokon átnyúló jellegére, valamint az érintett területen folytatott együttműködésre gyakorolt hatásukra. Az **időbeli hatókör** tekintetében a vizsgált időszak 2022. december 31-ig tart.

Értékelési módszertan

Az értékelés célkitűzéseit és a várt eredményeket figyelembe véve a fő adatgyűjtési módszerek a következők voltak:

- **A dokumentumok áttekintése**, amely a következőket foglalta magában: a) programdokumentumok és korábbi értékelések, a projektek és a program monitoring adatai; b) európai és nemzeti stratégiák és politikák; és c) projektszintű dokumentumok, mint például: pályázati űrlapok, jelentések, a projektek eredményei;
- **A program kedvezményezettjeinek/partnereinek és a program érdekelt feleinek** (beleértve a program kedvezményezettjeit és más intézményeket/szervezeteket) **bevonásával készített felmérések**;
- **Interjúk**, amelyeket a **program hatóságaival** (az Irányító Hatóság, a Nemzeti Hatóság, a Közös Titkárság és a Helyi Információs Pontok), az **érdekelt felekkel** (a megyei tanácsok képviselői, a támogatható terület főbb települései stb.), valamint a **projekt kedvezményezettjeivel és célcsoportjaikkal** készítették **15 esettanulmány** keretében.

Emellett egy **szakértői panel** a program természeti és kulturális örökségre gyakorolt hatásával foglalkozott, egy **műhely** pedig a határokon átnyúló együttműködésre összpontosított, amelyet a program valamennyi beavatkozása/projektje elősegített.

Az adatelemzéshez a következő értékelési módszereket alkalmaztuk: a) a program változáselméletének rekonstrukciója, b) reális értékelés, c) járulékelemzés, d) tartalomelemzés, e) mennyiségi elemzés, f) esettanulmányok, g) a finanszírozási keretmegközelítés és h) médiafigyelés.

Értékelési megállapítások és következtetések

A program általános hatékonysága³

³ Fontos már az elején megemlíteni, hogy a program eredménymutatók tekintetében elért eredményeire vonatkozó megállapításokat befolyásolta az eredménymutatók célértékeinek kiszámításához szükséges adminisztratív adatok rendelkezésre állása. Míg az 1.1., 1.2., 2.1. és 2.2. egyedi célkitűzés szerinti eredménymutatók értékeinek kiszámításához szükséges statisztikai és adminisztratív adatok a 2022-es év szintjén kerültek aktualizálásra, addig a 3.1. egyedi célkitűzéshez szükséges, a romániai és magyarországi nemzeti statisztikai hivataloktól gyűjtött adatok a 2021-es év szintjén voltak érvényesek. A 4.1., 5.1. és 6.1. egyedi célkitűzéshez kapcsolódó eredménymutatókhoz bemutatott értékek tekintetében a szükséges adatokat 2023 májusa és júniusa között gyűjtötték be. Ez utóbbi esetben továbbá az eredménymutatók aktuális értékeinek

A program hatékonysága a végrehajtás jelenlegi állása alapján (a 108 szerződéses projektből 73 projektet fejeztek be az értékelés határidejének lejártakor) a 8 egyedi célkitűzés között változik. Az eredménymutatók értékeinek kiszámítására szolgáló programmodszertan alkalmazása eredményeként az értékelés megállapította, hogy:

- A program **3 eredménymutatója a 2023-ra kitűzött célokat elérő vagy meghaladó értékeket** regisztrált, nevezetesen a határ menti folyók vízminőségének (ökológiai állapotának) enyhe növekedését a támogatható területen lévő mérési pontokon (1.1 egyedi célkitűzés), a turisták vendégéjszakáinak számának növekedését a támogatható programterületen (1.2 egyedi célkitűzés) és a foglalkoztatási arány enyhe növekedését a támogatható területen a munkaképes korú népesség százalékában (3.1 egyedi célkitűzés);
- A másik **3 eredménymutató** regisztrált értékei a **kitűzött célok 90% feletti teljesítési arányát** mutatják, az alábbiak szerint: (2.2 egyedi célkitűzés), a támogatható területen lévő egészségügyi intézmények átlagos szolgáltatási szintjének javulása (4.1 egyedi célkitűzés) és a közintézmények és nonprofit szervezetek határokon átnyúló együttműködési intenzitásának növekedése (6.1 egyedi célkitűzés);
- Az egyik mutató esetében a **célérték elérési aránya 90% alatt van**: A közös kockázatkezelés minőségének javítása (5.1. egyedi célkitűzés), de a teljesítési arány 86%.
- A TEN-T-hez vezető korszerűsített infrastruktúrával ellátott, határokon átnyúló lakosság (2.1 egyedi célkitűzés) eredménymutató értéke 0, mivel még nem jelentettek eredményt. Az eredménymutató várható értéke a becslések szerint meghaladja a célértéket (39%-kal).

Az elemzett adatok azt mutatták, hogy a Covid19-világjárvány jelentős hatással volt a program több eredménymutatójának értékeire, mint például: a motorizált közúti járműveket használók aránya, foglalkoztatási ráta. A rendelkezésre álló információk azonban azt mutatják, hogy a leginkább érintett ágazatok **már 2021-től elkezdtek talpra állni, méghozzá gyorsított ütemben**. Így várhatóan a program végére számos ágazat újjáéled, és a világjárvány kitörése előtti állapothoz hasonló vagy annál magasabb fejlettségi szintet ér el.

Az értékelés megállapította, hogy **a program célkitűzései és a tervezett eredmények között általában szoros a kapcsolat, és a legtöbb mutató célját jól határozták meg**. A 4.1., 5.1. és 6.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében meghatározott eredménymutatók alap- és célértékeinek kiszámítására szolgáló módszertan megtervezésekor azonban a kontextuális tényezőket csak korlátozott mértékben vették figyelembe, és ez korlátozta az értékelők azon képességét, hogy az eredménymutatók alapján értékeljék a program teljesítményét ezen egyedi célkitűzések tekintetében. Az értékelési következtetésekhez további információkat használtak fel.

A **program eredményességét támogató fő tényezők** a következők: a) kedvező jogszabályok a határon átnyúló vízgazdálkodás területén, b) a program döntéshozói által érintett több ágazat prioritásként való kezelése (például a közlekedés és a kockázatkezelés), c) magyarországi jogszabályi változások a szakképzés területén vagy a Románia és Magyarország közötti határátlépésre vonatkozó szabályozás egyszerűsítése, d) a beavatkozások között más külső finanszírozási forrásoknak köszönhetően létrejött szinergiák. Másrészt a **program hatékonyságát akadályozó fő tényezők** a következőkhöz kapcsolódnak: a) a Covid19, amely jelentősen érintette az olyan ágazatokat, mint a turizmus, a közlekedés, az egészségügy és a foglalkoztatás, de a projektek végrehajtását is, b) az energia- és gazdasági válság, amely jelentős áremelkedéshez vezetett, c) a természeti, kulturális és történelmi örökség, az egészségügy (különösen Romániában) vagy a foglalkoztatás nemzeti költségvetésből történő alulfinanszírozása, d) a természeti területek védelmét érintő romániai jogszabályi változások, e) a felelős intézmények közös fellépését vészhelyzet esetén nem lehetővé tevő nemzeti jogszabályok.

A program projektszintű hatékonysága

A projektszintű kimeneti mutatók legtöbb célkitűzése már megvalósult, és több esetben a mutatók jelentősen túlteljesítették a kitűzött célokat. Ahol a kimeneti mutatók nem érték el céljaikat, annak oka elsősorban az, hogy nem került sor az adott kimenetekhez hozzájáruló projekt véglegesítésére.

kiszámítására szolgáló programmodszertanból hiányzik a 2014-ben végzett adatgyűjtési folyamat pontos megismétlésére vonatkozó információ az alapértékek megállapításához, ezért az eredménymutatókra vonatkozóan gyűjtött adatokat minőségi adatokkal egészítették ki a következtetések levonása érdekében.

A **projektek hatékonyságát elősegítő, az értékelés során azonosított fő tényezők** a következőkhöz kapcsolódnak: a) a célterületek, így a kedvezményezettek közösségeinek multikulturális jellege, b) a megfelelő szakértelemmel és pénzügyi kapacitással rendelkező, jól pozícionált kedvezményezettek, c) jól megtervezett partnerségek, d) a programhatóságok által a kedvezményezetteknek nyújtott hatékony támogatás, különösen a Közös Titkárság - BRECO és az információs pontok - által. Másrészről a **projekt szintű hatékonyságot akadályozó tényezők** a következők voltak: a) a Covid19 világjárvány miatt bevezetett korlátozások, b) a közbeszerzési rendszer, főként Romániából, c) az áremelkedések, d) a projektpartnereknél a személyzet fluktuációja, e) az előfinanszírozási mechanizmus alkalmazásának hiánya, ami főként a kisebb pénzügyi kapacitással rendelkező kis kedvezményezettek esetében volt fontos, f) a program késői elfogadása, a jogi és adminisztratív keret késői létrehozása és az állami támogatásokról szóló rendelet késői elfogadása, ami a tervezettnél későbbi pályázati felhívásokhoz vezetett.

A program egyes konkrét célkitűzéseire gyakorolt hatás

Az értékelés megállapította, hogy a **finanszírozott projektek nagymértékben hozzájárulnak a program egyes konkrét célkitűzései tekintetében megfigyelt előrehaladáshoz**, de nem minden esetben közvetlenül a program szintjén meghatározott eredménymutatóhoz. Mindazonáltal a **támogatott beavatkozások többsége már jelentős pozitív hatásokat eredményezett a célcsoportok szintjén**, pontosabban:

- Az 1.1. és 2.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében szerződött projektek **közvetlenül hozzájárulnak a várt eredményekhez (a határ menti vizek minőségének javítása vagy a határ menti utak jobb megközelíthetősége)**, de a rendelkezésre álló korlátozott költségvetés miatt az eredmények összege meglehetősen alacsony;
- Az 1.2. és 5.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében szerződéssel rendelkező projekteket illetően a már elért eredmények tekintetében a projekt szintjén regisztrált jelenlegi előrehaladás nagyon jónak mondható, és mindkét eredményre vonatkozó célkitűzés várhatóan túlteljesül. A **kapcsolódó célkitűzéshez való tényleges és potenciális hozzájárulás** azonban **nehezen értékelhető, mivel az együttműködési megállapodáson belüli gyenge kapcsolatok miatt**;
- A 2.2., 3.1. és 4.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében szerződött projektek **jelentősen hozzájárulnak a várt eredményekhez** (a fenntartható közlekedés fokozott használata, a munkaerőpiachoz való hozzáférés magasabb szintje, a megelőző és gyógyító egészségügyi szolgáltatásokhoz való fokozott hozzáférés), **ami a programcsomagok és projektek kialakításának és a teljes elkülönített költségvetésnek köszönhető**;
- Ami a 6.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében szerződött projekteket illeti, a **határon átnyúló együttműködés javulását szolgáló előnyök a program kedvezményezettjeinek valamennyi településén láthatóak**.

Az értékelés **nem állapított meg nagyszámú nem szándékolt hatást**. Néhány közülük azonban néhány rendkívül fontos, mint például: a természeti örökségvédelmi ágazatban a finanszírozásban és a rendelkezésre álló humán erőforrásokban mutatkozó hiányosságok pótlása; a közlekedési infrastruktúra iránti nagyobb helyi és megyei szintű érdeklődés felkeltése; a 3.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében finanszírozott projektek megismétlése és a kedvezményezettek által az 5.1. egyedi célkitűzés keretében tett közös erőfeszítések a jogszabályok megváltoztatására a vészhelyzetekben történő közös beavatkozások tekintetében. Mindazonáltal a 4.1. egyedi célkitűzés esetében néhány projektnek negatív hatásai voltak az automatizálás okozta humán erőforrás-veszteség és a modernizált megközelítéshez való alacsony szintű alkalmazkodás tekintetében. Általános szempontból a program felgyorsította számos tevékenységtípus fejlődését a világjárvány kapcsán bevezetett korlátozások eltörlése után, és így a Covid19 utáni helyreállítást.

A program általános hatása

A program a **támogatható terület szintjén nagyszámú személy számára eredményes változást eredményez**. A megszólított vagy a projekt eredményei által kedvezményezett lakosság szempontjából a program nagyon jó lefedettséggel rendelkezik. A program előnyei és hatásai azonban nem egyenletesen oszlanak meg a program támogatható területén. Több projektet romániai, nagyvárosokból származó kedvezményezettek hajtanak végre, és a finanszírozás a határhoz közelebb koncentrálódik, mind Romániában, mind Magyarországon, valamint a program támogatható területének északi részén.

Az Interreg V-A Románia-Magyarország program **jelentős mértékben hozzájárul az együttműködéshez és a kohézióhoz a támogatható területen**, valamennyi társfinanszírozási célkitűzés keretében. Az együttműködés a társintézmények között nagyon jelen van, és hozzájárult a

program kedvezményezettjei közötti kapcsolatok és bizalom erősítéséhez. Legtöbbjük új projekteket tervez közösen. Ez kétségtelenül a **program fő hozzáadott értéke**, mivel az általános kilátás az, hogy semmilyen más rendelkezésre álló finanszírozási forrás nem tudná támogatni a határ két oldalán lévő szervezetek közötti együttműködést vagy a finanszírozott ágazati beavatkozások némelyikét.

Az értékelés megállapította, hogy az **Interreg V-A Románia-Magyarország program keretében végrehajtott beruházások** összességében **fenntarthatóak**. Így a fenntarthatóság szempontjából a stratégiai projektek jelentik a legnagyobb hozzáadott értéket, mivel jelentős hard/infrastruktúra támogatást nyújtanak a kulturális örökség népszerűsítésére irányuló tevékenységek folytatásához, a foglalkoztatáshoz az egyes országokban és a határokon átnyúló tevékenységekhez, a jobb egészségügyi szolgáltatásokhoz szükséges feltételek biztosításához, a közúti közlekedés biztonságának javításához a határ menti térségben. Másrészt a közös kezdeményezések (például a 4.1. egyedi célkitűzés szerinti, az egészségügyi ellátás javítására irányuló projektek keretében létrehozott közös struktúrák) fenntarthatósága nem biztos.

A program és a már elért eredmények láthatóak az érintett megyékben, de még több népszerűsítésre lenne szükség ahhoz, hogy a közvélemény jobban megismerje a határokon átnyúló együttműködés támogatását. Az 1.1., 2.1. és 4.1. egyedi célkitűzésben megvalósított beruházások a leglátványosabbak, mivel ezek a projektek a kedvezményezett települések teljes lakosságának körülményeit javítják, és fontos infrastrukturális munkákat végeznek. Az 1.2. egyedi célkitűzés alá tartozó projektek szintén nagyon láthatóak, mivel fontos infrastrukturális munkákat kombinálnak a célcsoportok közvetlen bevonásával a projekttevékenységekbe.

Főbb ajánlások

- **Az operatív (projekt) és a stratégiai szintek közötti szorosabb kapcsolatot** kell biztosítani a projektek előkészítési *(az Interreg VI-A program esetében)* és végrehajtási szakaszában, mivel az előbbieket befolyásolják a beavatkozások terveinek minőségét. Így, bár több esetben az ágazati érdekeltekkel való kapcsolat nagyon erősnek bizonyult, ezt a megközelítést nem minden program kedvezményezettje alkalmazta. Ez a szorosabb kapcsolat jobban orientálná és esetleg fenntarthatóbbá tenné a projektek eredményeit a programterületen. A VI-A Románia-Magyarország programnak támogatnia kellene a közös struktúrát és a közös szolgáltatásnyújtást is, hogy tovább javuljon a Románia és Magyarország közötti együttműködés minősége/intenzitása.
- A projekt és a program végrehajtásának megkönnyítése érdekében a programhatóságoknak figyelembe kell venniük a gazdasági válság és az infláció kockázatát (amely már a 2021-2022-es programra is hatással volt), a **projektek költségvetésének az inflációs rátával való indexálása és a program költségvetésének kiigazítása a közbeszerzésből származó megtakarítások és az infláció hatása figyelembevételével** fontos intézkedés, amely a kedvezményezettek támogatására szolgálhat.
- Fontos, hogy a program jövőbeli kedvezményezettjei támogatást kapjanak a programhatóságoktól a projektek minőségi végrehajtásához. A programhatóságok támogatását általában véve nagyra értékelték, ami tovább **csökkentette az adminisztratív terheket és az elszámolási nehézségeket**. A közbeszerzési eljárás okozta késedelmeket a **programhatóságoknak jobban kellene kezelniük** a kedvezményezetteknek nyújtott támogatás és ajánlások révén.
- **A projekttevékenységek román és magyar partnerek közötti kiegyensúlyozottabb elosztásának** ösztönzése a szükségleteknek megfelelően, de a határon átnyúló együttműködés előmozdítása érdekében több előnnyel járna a teljes támogatható területen, a célcsoportok számára, és növelné a partnerek/együttműködő intézmények közötti bizalmat és együttműködést.
- **A végrehajtott projektek eredményeinek és eredményeinek jobb felértékelése** a bevált gyakorlatok példáinak intenzívebb terjesztése révén előnyös lehet a program számára, és több pályázót hozhat a felhívásokra. Több erőfeszítést kellene fordítani az ehhez hasonló sikeres projektek terjesztésére, hogy tájékoztatni lehessen a polgárokat az EU/CBC-forrásokkal elért eredményekről, és hogy népszerűsíteni lehessen azt az elképzelést, hogy az Interreg CBC-projektek hasznos hatást gyakoroltak a közösségre.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objective and scope of the evaluation

The Evaluation Plan of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme (i.e., henceforth the Programme) sets the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period. The objectives of the Evaluation Plan are to improve, through proper planning, the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period, to facilitate informed programme management and policy decisions aiming at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme and to ensure that evaluations provide relevant inputs for annual implementation reports.

In line with its ToRs, the overall objective of the Impact Evaluation of Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme is to produce specific knowledge on the impact, effectiveness and sustainability of the Programme. The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- to capture the effects of the programme as a whole and its performance as regards each specific objective.
- to assess the programme's performance as regards each specific objective and its impact as a whole, considering how support from ERDF has contributed to the objectives of each priority, in line with the result-focus of cohesion policy.
- to carry out effectiveness evaluation, particularly the extent to which the objectives of the programme were achieved.

Considering the objectives, the result of the evaluation is an in-depth analysis on the programme's performance as regards each specific objective and its impact, providing details on:

- progress in achieving each specific objective and the contribution of interventions to the achieved progress, factors facilitating the contribution, intended and unintended effects;
- measurement of programme result (outcome) indicators and, building on the qualitative assessment of the result indicators performed during the evaluation process and its subsequent suggestions, identification and measurement of an additional set of indicators to capture the actual results and impact of the programme and proposals for the future programme;
- sustainability of outputs and results of the programme;
- added value of strategic projects in terms of impact;
- effects on the cross-border regional development and cooperation;
- current and estimated effect of the programme in the eligible area and produced changes;
- effects at the level of beneficiaries, target groups, final beneficiaries and real changes produced in the beneficiary organizations;
- effects of capitalization within projects.

In terms of the **geographical scope** of the evaluation, both, operations implemented in Romania and in Hungary are considered and the evaluation, through the methodology planned in this Report, pays special attention to the cross-border character of the activities and their impact on cooperation in the covered area. Regarding the **temporal scope**, the cut-off date of the evaluation is December 31st, 2022. The duration of the evaluation exercise was 8 months, with a total budget of 586.609,66 Lei (including VAT), as per the contract no. 239 dated 27.12.2022, signed between the Contracting Authority, Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration and the service provider, QURES Quality Research and Support.

1.2. Context of the evaluation. The evaluability of the programme

The total budget of the Programme, for the entire implementation period is 243.861.763 Euro, out of which ERDF provides 189.138.672 Euro. The funds have been available to eight counties (NUTS III regions), four in Romania, i.e., Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad, Timiş and four in Hungary, i.e., Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád-Csanád. The eligible area has an important contribution to the entire population of Hungary and Romania, representing 13.1% of the total number of inhabitants of the two countries.⁴

At the cut-off date of the evaluation, under the seven Priority Axes of the Programme 108⁵ operations/projects were financed, out of which 73 were completed and 35 were under implementation. The following table contains the available information regarding the project portfolio

⁴ Program Document Interreg Program Romania – Hungary, version 4.0.

⁵ 10 projects represent the Concept Note phase of the strategic projects.

at the moment of drafting the inception report. The completion of a certain number of projects serves as evidence of the information availability for the evaluation of the programme's impact using a theory-based methodology.

Figure 1 - Contracted and finalised operations and their value until 12/31/2022

Priority Axis	Specific Objective	No. of contracted operations	Contracted value ⁶ (EUR)	No. of finalised operations	Contracted value of finalised operations (EUR)
PA 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources (Cooperating on common values and resources)	S01.1	2	€ 5.950.344	0	-
	S01.2	17	€ 47.800.566	10	€ 7.812.285
PA 2: Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove bottlenecks (Cooperating on accessibility)	S02.1	2	€ 13.897.641	1	€ 61.450
	S02.2	4	€ 6.417.913	3	€ 5.638.198
PA 3: Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)	S03.1	20	€ 40.590.400	8	€ 7.166.121
PA 4: Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)	S04.1	21	€ 88.205.354	12	€ 18.057.474
PA 5: Improve risk-prevention and disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)	S05.1	10	€ 13.937.380	8	€ 9.710.392
PA 6: Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)	S06.1	33	€ 4.457.280	27	€ 4.725.377
Technical Assistance		16	€ 22.290.432	9	€ 12.999.107
TOTAL		125	€ 243.547.343	78	€ 66.170.404

Source: eMS

⁶ Eligible expenditure.

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data collection and analysis methods

The data collection methods used for drafting the first version of the Evaluation Report were the following:

1. Document review⁷, which included: a) Programme documents, studies and previous evaluations, official quantitative data on projects progress / status and achievements (i.e., monitoring data extracted from eMS data), monitoring data on programme information and communication activities and achievements; b) European and national strategies and public policy documents and c) Project level documents, such as: application forms, progress reports, final reports (where the case), sustainability reports (where the case), projects' deliverables.
2. Surveys⁸:
 - 1 survey addressed to **programme beneficiaries / partners**, covering 125 responses, out of which: 68 responses from programme beneficiaries from Romania and 57 responses from programme beneficiaries from Hungary;
 - 1 survey addressed to **programme stakeholders**, covering 167 responses, out of which: 81 responses from programme stakeholders from Romania and 86 responses from programme stakeholders from Hungary.

The 2 surveys were designed and conducted separately as to meet ToR requirements and especially due to the fact that the evaluation needed to calculate the current values of programme result indicators and for 3 of them, as per the official methodology, stakeholders' perspectives were to be collected. In order to be more specific regarding the categories of entities involved in the 2 aforementioned surveys, we further present the categories of entities involved:

Table 1. Categories of entities involved in the process of quantitative data collection

SURVEY	CATEGORIES OF ENTITIES INVOLVED	FURTHER DETAILS
Beneficiaries survey	This survey was addressed to all programme beneficiaries, regardless of their nature, e.g., county councils, city halls, universities, NGOs, water basin administrations, environment protection agencies, museums, local transport companies, hospitals and other. The responses collected include both, perspectives of lead beneficiaries and of projects partners.	The survey was sent exhaustively to all institutions partners in the projects financed under the Interreg RO-HU V-A Programme.
Stakeholders survey	Stakeholders include a mix between beneficiaries and relevant county and local level institutions in the context of the expected results of the programme. The two categories overlap to some extent, but they are not identical. The types of entities covered by this second survey include: county councils, city halls, universities, NGOs, emergency situation responsible institutions, environment protection responsible institutions, territorial labor inspectorate, hospitals, schools, being both beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries of the programme but with strong interest in the expected results, in the areas that were addressed by the SOs.	We considered important to make the distinction between the two groups addressed by the two surveys, by developing two separate questionnaires, because the Programme methodology for calculating the baseline and target values of result indicators under SOS 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, which needed to be replicated within this evaluation exercise, implied data collection from stakeholders. The methodology indicates all categories that needed to be involved in this process and the second survey was developed based on these specifications.

Source: Evaluation team

3. Interviews⁹:
 - **National interviews** conducted with the Managing Authority of the programme, The National Authority of the Programme, The Joint Secretariat of the Programme and the one of the 4 Info Points – 4 interviews;
 - **Stakeholders' interviews** conducted with representatives of County Councils in the eligible area, Municipalities in the eligible area, Environment protection and risk management institutions and universities – 15 interviews, out of which: *9 interviews with stakeholders from Romania and 6 interviews with stakeholders from Hungary*;

⁷ The complete list of reviewed documents is presented in [Annex 6](#) of this report.

⁸ For the complete results of the 2 conducted surveys please see [Annex 9](#) of this report.

⁹ For the complete list of institutions that participated in the data collection process please see [Annex 7](#) of this report.

- **Case study level interviews** conducted with the lead beneficiaries, partners and representatives of the target groups, where appropriate, for each of the 15 projects included in the sample – *43 interviews*.

The last activities within the evaluation, that involved the stakeholders into this process, were the **Expert Panel and the Workshop for the Qualitative /Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment**. In order to capitalize as much as possible, on one hand, on the findings already formulated and on the other hand, on the types of expected outcomes of the panel / workshop, the evaluation team planned and organized the following two events:

- **A validation experts panel** which was focused mainly on the SO 1.2 of the programme, due to its several inconsistencies identified in the Logic of Intervention and due to the need of corroborating the preliminary findings with expert perspectives in two areas: a) protection of natural and cultural heritage and b) tourism¹⁰;
- **A validation net-impact assessment workshop**, focused mainly on Programme effects in the area of cross-border cooperation, from both perspectives, horizontally, thus across all Programme areas and targeted, directly linked with the implementation of PA 6¹¹.

[Annex 10](#) of the Report presents detailed information related to the selection of each target group for the aforementioned data collection methods that were used within the evaluation, the engagement strategy, adjustments of the initial approach based on the problems encountered or risks that were identified.

In terms of data analysis, the following methods were applied:

- Reconstruction of the Theory of Change of the programme, by specific objective¹²
- Realist evaluation
- Contribution analysis
- Content analysis
- Quantitative analysis
- Case studies¹³
- Funding framework approach¹⁴
- Media monitoring content analysis.

2.2. Limitations of the evaluation

Conclusions related to the overall impact of the programme have been drawn to the possible extent given the level of implementation of the financed projects. Nevertheless, the evaluation assessed also the prospective achievements based on the contracted funds and overall set targets at project level, per Specific Objective. This approach has been applied as a complementary analysis bringing added value to the evaluation results in the current context of programme progress.

Data collection through surveys and possibility to apply the methodology (as per the programme Document Annex IX_Methodology_result_indicators_revised_CP3) for the calculation of the result indicators values for SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1 was challenging, because of the lack of data base with stakeholders participating the survey conducted in 2014 for the establishment of the baseline of result indicators and the lack of responsiveness of contacted stakeholders in regards with the surveys conducted under this evaluation process. Although the support provided by the programme authorities (including the Managing Authority, Joint Secretary and Info Points) was consistent and contributed significantly to the data collection process, the response rate remained under the minimum limit set by the methodology for calculating the value of the result indicator relevant for SO 6.1. In regards with the number of responses required for calculating the values of result indicators under SOs 4.1 and 5.1 no minimum limit has been set through the methodology, neither the number of responses received for the baseline survey conducted in 2014 is known, as to be able to use it as a landmark. This is a key issue influencing directly the validity of the data presented in this report in regards with the current values

¹⁰ The list of participants is included in [Annex 7](#).

¹¹ Idem

¹² Please see [Annex 3](#) of the report

¹³ Please see [Annex 8](#) of the report, covering all 15 Case Study Reports conducted under the framework of the evaluation

¹⁴ Please see [Annex 11](#) of the report which consists of the data base elaborated by the evaluation experts, based on which the funding framework analysis has been conducted

of result indicators set under SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1. In order to be able to apply this type of methodology, one needs to ensure that for calculating the baseline and the current values:

- a) the same instrument of data collection has been applied,
- b) the same categories of stakeholders and, to the possible extent – due inherent changes that occur during a period of time of 8 year, the same institutions have been involved,
- c) a similar number of responses are taken into account when calculating the baseline and current values and
- d) the same formulas are used when calculating the baseline and current values.

2 out of the 4 conditions (conditions b and c) could not be met due to external causes, not related to the evaluation process in itself.

Another limitation, that was mentioned even from the inception phase of the evaluation, was the possible low or reduced familiarity of the stakeholders with the programme (having stakeholders that are not beneficiaries can pose problems in collecting data). At the same time, some of the data which will be collected might not be as accurate as expected, as they will rather reflect the perception of the stakeholders. In several cases this has been observed, but as explained also in the Inception Report, no evaluation question answer is based only on the perspective of stakeholders. Moreover, even when condition b is met, staff turnover within the key stakeholders institutions may affect comparability of the baseline and achieved values for the indicators, because different persons are answering questions that require their subjective assessment of a particular situation in the programme area. Additionally, even when the same persons answer the questions on the result indicators set under SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1 their perception can be influenced by personal or very localized circumstances in the last nine years (2014-2023) and comparisons between the baseline and the achieved values based on perceptions over such a long period of time have a very limited capacity to capture sectoral changes of interest for evaluation.

On the other hand, interviewing a wide range of categories of stakeholders, based on stakeholders' analysis conducted in the inception phase, provided the evaluation team the possibility to:

- make distinctions between the areas where the visibility of the programme or projects and of the results of the programme is higher and where the, among other due to the specificity of the interventions, the investments supported by the programme are less known;
- formulate findings regarding the level of information and interest of key stakeholders of the programme on the sources of financing made available through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme.

In regards with the Case studies developed under the framework of the evaluation, some reports present more in-depth analysis, with consistent findings and conclusions regarding the effects of the projects and their contribution to the specific objective of the programme, while others are less informative in this regard. These differences are in line with the implementation status of the projects included in the sample for the case studies. Nevertheless, in case of several projects that are still in the implementation phase already produced effects have been observed and covered with the conducted analyses and, also, findings and conclusions related to the expected and also plausible impact have been formulated. This situation is reflected also at the level of Priority Axis / Specific Objectives, such as: SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2 where conclusions related to the contribution and impact of the programme to the addressed sectors are limited due to the fact that no project has been finalized yet.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1. General effectiveness of the programme

3.1.1. EQ1. What is the progress in achieving each specific objective of the programme?

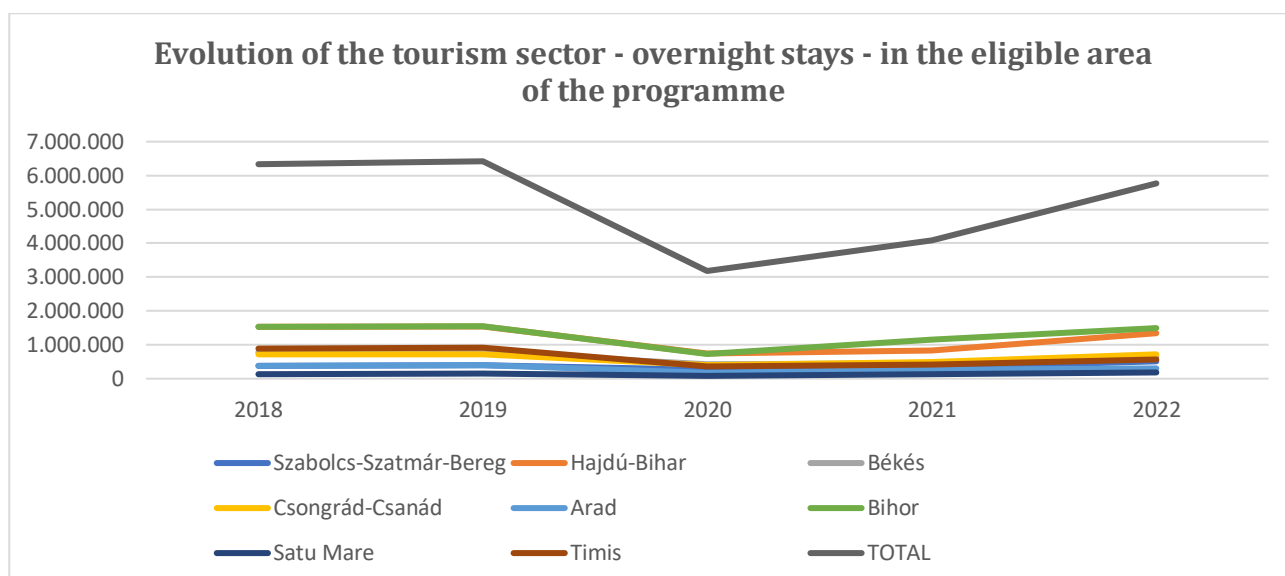
The consistency of the information presented in this section, that covers the values of programme result indicators, has been affected by the availability of the necessary administrative data for calculating the current achievement level of result indicators' targets. Thus, while the information received from the VM National Environmental Institution of Hungary and the Romanian Waters National Administration in regards with the water quality of rivers and the administrative data received from the Border Police Offices from Romania and Hungary are updated to the end of year 2022 (necessary for SOs 1.1 and 2.2), the data collected from the National Statistical Offices from Romania and Hungary proved information for the end of 2021 (necessary for SO 3.1) or the end of 2022 (necessary for SOs 1.2, 2.1). In regards with the values presented for the results indicators for which data was collected from stakeholders (necessary for SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1), while the information is updated at the level of May – June 2023, the programme methodology for calculating the current values of the result indicators is missing information on the numbers of responses that need to be collected for the results set under SOs 4.1 and 5.1 and the list of respondents that have participated in the previous survey was not available or provided to the evaluation team by the moment when the Evaluation Report was elaborated.

Progress registered at the level of all indicators of the programme, according to the Programme Document, against their target

Based on the data provided by the National Environmental Institution in Hungary and the Romanian Waters National Administration, the current value of the indicator established under the SO 1.1 **“Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area (PA1, IP 6/b)”** is **2,88**, higher than the programme target set for 2023, of 2,39. Thus, the target has been reached with a proportion of 120,5%. The values calculated separately for Romania and Hungary show similar results, the level of water quality being 2,87 in Hungary, at the measurement points included in the analysis and the level of water quality in Romania being 2,89. But it is important to mention that, in the case of Romania, the data collected from the National Administration of Romanian Waters does not cover all selected measure points used in the calculation of the baseline value. While the total number is the same (80 measure points), not all of them are distributed in same manner in the region (*The exact methodology and data used for the calculation of the result indicator can be consulted in [Annex 10](#)*).

In regards to the result indicator **“Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area (PA1, IP 6/c)”**, corresponding with the SO 1.2 of the programme, the analysis of the collected data indicates the value of **5.766.974 overnight stays were measured in 2022 in the eligible area of the programme**, against the target value (for 2023) of 5.485.294 overnight stays. Thus, **the target has been already surpassed**. The value calculated for 2019 is lower than the baseline of the indicators, which was calculated for 2013. Nevertheless, the touristic sector was significantly affected by the traveling restrictions imposed during the Covid19 pandemic. Since the effects of pandemic started to decrease and the restrictions were eliminated, the tourist sector has slightly recovered and it is expected to be fully recovered in 2023, the number of overnight stays reaching a much higher level than the one from the end of 2022. To have a clearer image on the general evolution of the sector in the eligible area of the programme and on the extent to which it has been affected by the pandemic, the report presents in the figure below the evolution of the number of overnight stays in the 8 counties covered by the programme, between 2018 and 2022.

Figure 2. Evolution of the tourism sector in the eligible area of the programme between 2018 and 2021

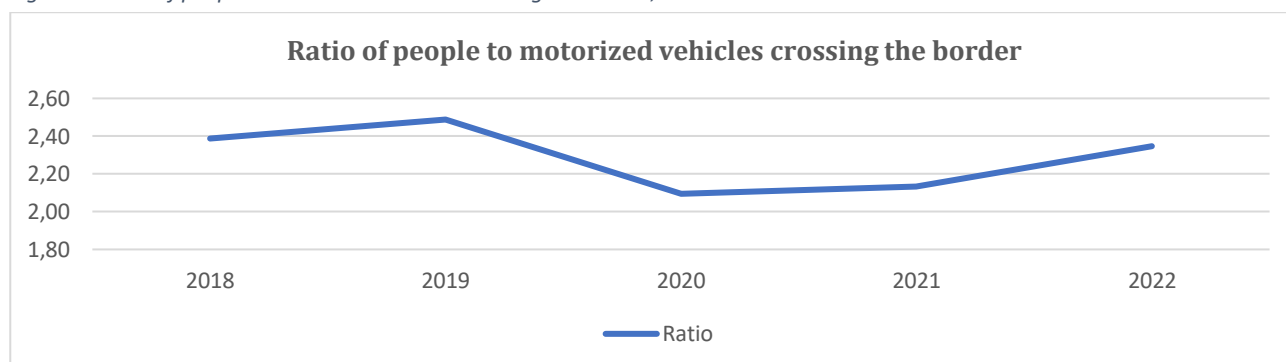


Source: Administrative data provided by the National Statistical Offices of Romania and Hungary

In regards with the result indicator **“Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T (no. of inhabitants) (PA 2, IP 7/b)”**, from the data collected from the National Statistics Offices from Romania and Hungary, the estimation of the indicator’s value is **approximately 607.768 inhabitants, representing 139,56% of the programme target**. The value is a prediction that starts from the premises that the project RO-HU 444 will be successfully finalized by the end of the programme and that the number of inhabitants in the relevant localities will remain approximately similar by 2023. Nonetheless, according to the current progress status of the project contributing to the result indicators, based on eMS data where no output has been reported yet, the **current value of the indicator is 0**.

In regards with the SO 2.2 of the programme, an increase in the ratio of people to motorized vehicles crossing the border between Romania and Hungary contributes directly to lower carbon and noise emissions from cross-border transport. In regards with the programme result indicator under SO 2.2, **“Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border (PA 2, IP 7/c)”**, the value calculated for the eligible area, based on the data received from the Border Policy Offices from Romania and Hungary is **2,35 in 2022¹⁵**, less than the target set for 2023, which is 2,59 and also less than the baseline calculated for 2014. Similar with other several indicators, also in this case, the pandemic affected the registered trends, because of the fact that people avoided public transportation means during the period when restrictions were enforced. Below is presented the trend observed between 2018 and 2022.

Figure 3. Ratio of people to motorized vehicles crossing the border, between 2018 - 2022



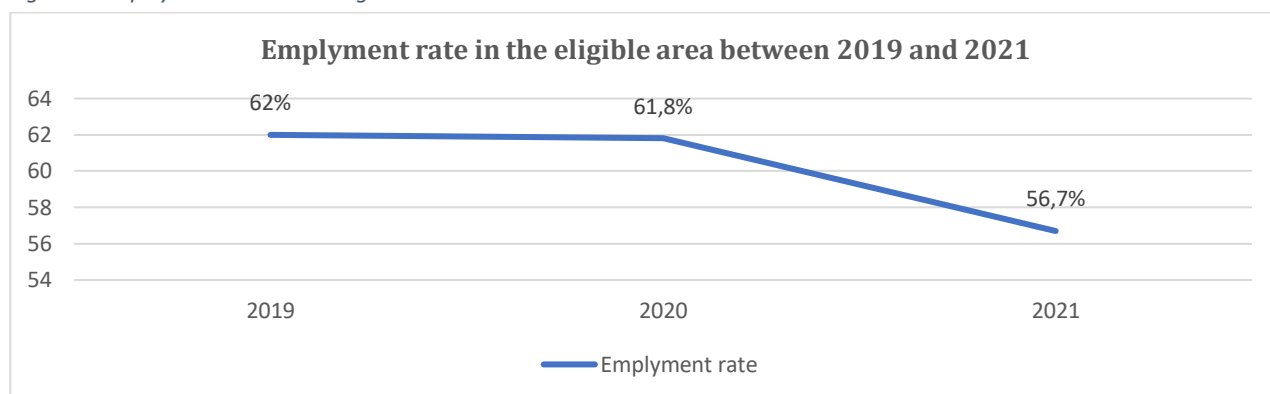
Source: Administrative data collected from the Border Police Offices of Romania and Hungary and processed by the evaluation team

From the data collected from the National Statistics Offices of Romania and Hungary, the value for the result indicator **“Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age**

¹⁵ This value represents an average between the data provided from the Hungarian Border Police Office and the Romanian Border Police Office. The values registered by the two offices are very similar, but during the conducted analysis several slight discrepancies have been observed. Thus, the calculated value represents an average.

population (PA 3, IP 8/b)” is 56,70% for year 2021, higher than the target of 56,38%. The progress of this indicator between 2019 and 2021 is presented in the below table.

Figure 4. Employment rate in the eligible area between 2019 and 2021



Source: data collected from the National Statistical Offices and processed by the evaluation team

Nevertheless, as the available data shows, in 2019 and 2020, the registered values for employment rate in the programme area were significantly higher than the values expected for 2023, as per programme targets. While the sector was significantly affected by Covid19, it is expected at the end of 2023 to show an important progress, as employment area started to slowly recover.

In regards with the result indicator for SO 4.1 of the programme **“Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area (PA 4, IP 9/a)”**, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is **3,33**, less than the target for 2023. For the calculation of the result indicators, data was collected from 9 relevant stakeholders.

In regards with the result indicator for SO 5.1 of the programme **“Quality of the joint risk management (PA 5, IP 5/b)”**, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is **2,78**, lower than the target for 2023 of 3,23 and also of the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,02. This value was calculated based on 25 received responses, thus based on the perspective of 25 institutions responsible with risk management from both sides of the border. The following figure shows the registered values by assessment criteria.

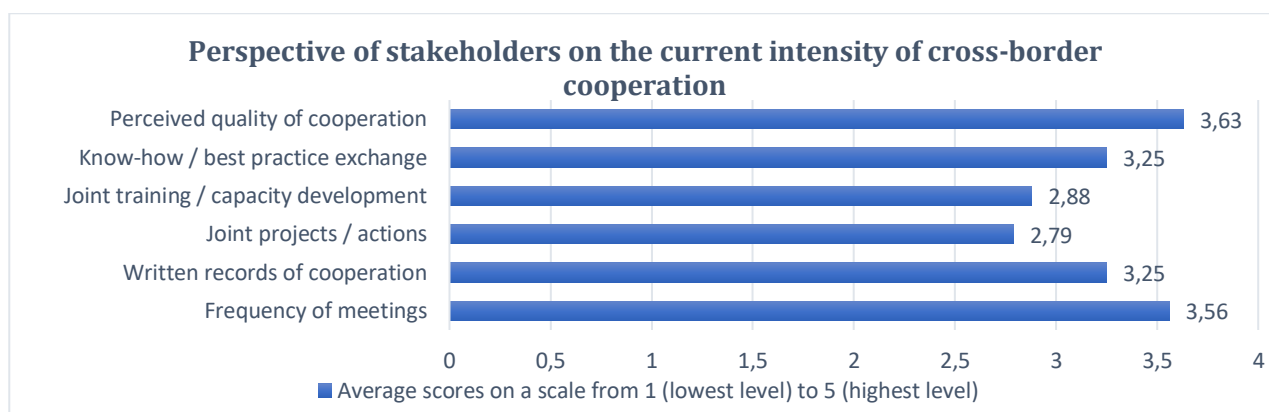
Figure 5. Perspective of programme stakeholders on the risk management capacity of responsible institutions in the eligible area



Source: Survey addressed to programme stakeholders (detailed can be seen in [Annex 9](#))

In regards with the result indicator for SO 6.1 of the programme **“Intensity level of cross-border cooperation (PA 6, IP 11/b)”**, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is **3,23**, lower than the target for 2023 of 3,57 and also of the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,46. This value was calculated based on scores given by 57 relevant institutions (based on the programme methodology). The following figure shows the registered values by assessment criteria.

Figure 6. Perspective of stakeholders on the current intensity of cross-border cooperation



Source: Survey addressed to programme stakeholders (detailed can be seen in [Annex 9](#))

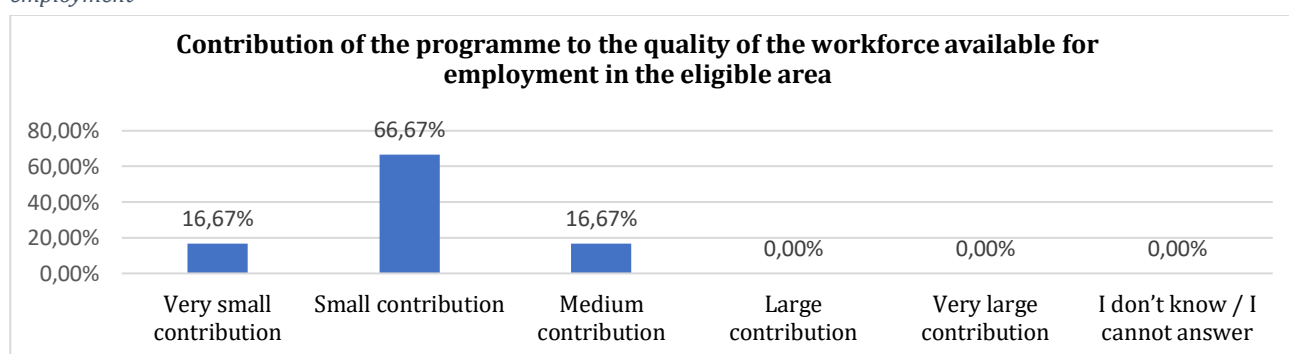
Nevertheless, it is important to mention here, that when stakeholders are asked directly about the intensity of cooperation, they express a very positive opinion considering that the level of cooperation has increased to a very large or large extent. But when the definition of the programme is applied, the values decrease, and this can be explained by the fact that stakeholders do not perceive the meaning of the concept “intensity of cross-border cooperation” as defined by the programme.

Value of additional result evaluation indicators reflecting the perspectives of final beneficiaries / beneficiaries of the programme

In regards with the status or evolution of **the tourist attractiveness (PA1, IP 6/c)** in the eligible area of the programme, based on the qualitative data collected through the interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries and also with stakeholders, perspectives and findings vary. On one hand, the investments supported through the project have a significant potential of attracting more tourists¹⁶ in the areas where the projects are implemented and increasing the visibility of various pieces of Natural and cultural heritage from both sides of the country. On the other hand, the official administrative data shows a significant decrease of the tourist overnight stays in 2020 in comparison with the figures from 2019 and slight increase in 2021. As mentioned previously the pandemic affected more the tourist sector than the contribution that the programme could have brought. Only in the following years the contribution of the programme and the development of the sector will become visible.

In regards with the **quality of the workforce available for employment (PA 3, IP 8/b)**, the perspectives collected from stakeholders do not indicate an improvement and at the same time the quantitative data shows a low to very low contribution of the programme in this area.

Figure 7. Perspective of stakeholders on the contribution of the programme to the quality of the workforce available for employment



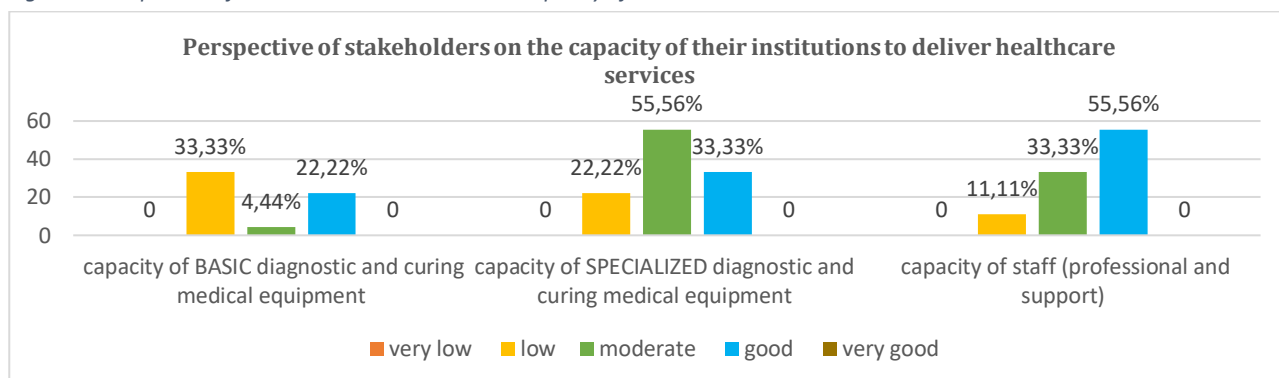
Source: Survey addressed to programme stakeholders (detailed can be seen in [Annex 9](#))

Moreover, the European Semester Reports from 2023 for Romania and Hungary, indicate similar problems in terms of workforce quality and availability. In Hungary, shortages of labour and an unutilised workforce have been observed. In Romania, the outward migration of skilled labour also generates significant workforce shortages. These aspects are still present in the areas addressed by the programme.

¹⁶ i.e., the renovated Tăriei Crişurilor Muzeum through the project RO-HU 446, the rehabilitation works conducted in Salonta and Bekes through project RO-HU 14, the cross border ecotouristic thematic route developed along the Crisul Repede Valley through the project RO-HU 68.

In regards with the additional indicator **“Capacity to deliver healthcare services (PA 4, IP 9/a)”**, based on the data collected from the stakeholders, the capacity of the medical surveyed institutions is rather moderate to good. 55% of respondents believe that they have good capacity based on the available human resources. In terms of the capacity of the basic medical equipment only 22% consider that they have good capacity. And, in terms of the capacity provided by the owned specialized diagnostic and curing equipment, 33,33% of respondents consider that medical institutions have good and very good capacity.

Figure 8. Perspective of relevant stakeholders on the capacity of their institutions to deliver health care services

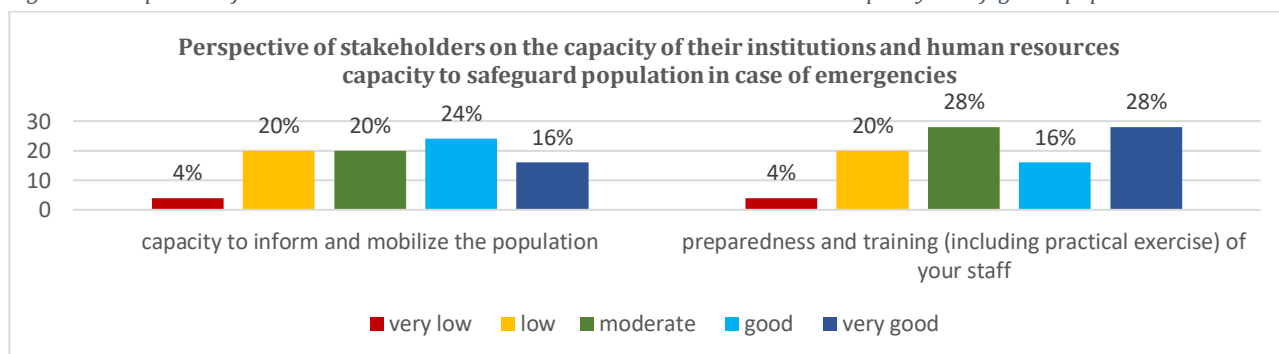


Source: Survey addressed to stakeholders

The case studies developed also show that the medical infrastructure and the capacity of the medical institutions has not evolved significantly since the projects started. Moreover, the European Semester Report from 2023¹⁷ emphasizes that the health sector is facing an important workforce shortage. The report also mentions that, even if Romania has a high number of new medical graduates, the availability of healthcare professionals is below the EU average and this is caused by high rate of workforce emigration. Also in Hungary, the health system is confronting with significant scarcity of medical professionals. Thus, the general context affects also the area addressed by the programme.

In regards with the additional indicator **“Capacity to safeguard population (PA 5, IP 5/b)”**, the data collected from stakeholders indicates that significant progress has been made in the last years due to important investments in the infrastructure in both sides of the border, but there are still significant needs in this area that should be covered through integrated investments. The survey conducted with relevant institutions from the targeted area shows that perspectives on the institutional and human resources capacity to inform and mobilize in case of emergency situations varies a lot from one stakeholder to another.

Figure 9. Perspective of relevant entities on their institutional and human resources capacity to safeguard population



Source: Data collected through the stakeholders' survey

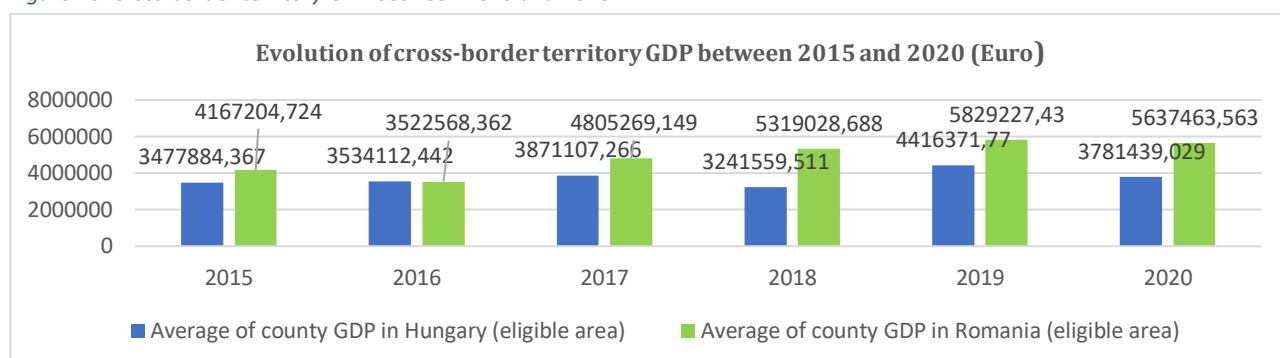
Still, the data collected through interviews showed that important financial resources have been directed to the sector of risk prevention and disaster management and the capacity of the responsible institutions has increased.

Progress registered for the relevant common CBC indicators

¹⁷ https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/RO_SWD_2023_623_en.pdf

The **cross-border territory GDP** shows several variations between 2015 and 2019 in both sides of the border. The common observed trend relates to the decrease of the GDP in 2020 in comparison with the figures registered in 2019.

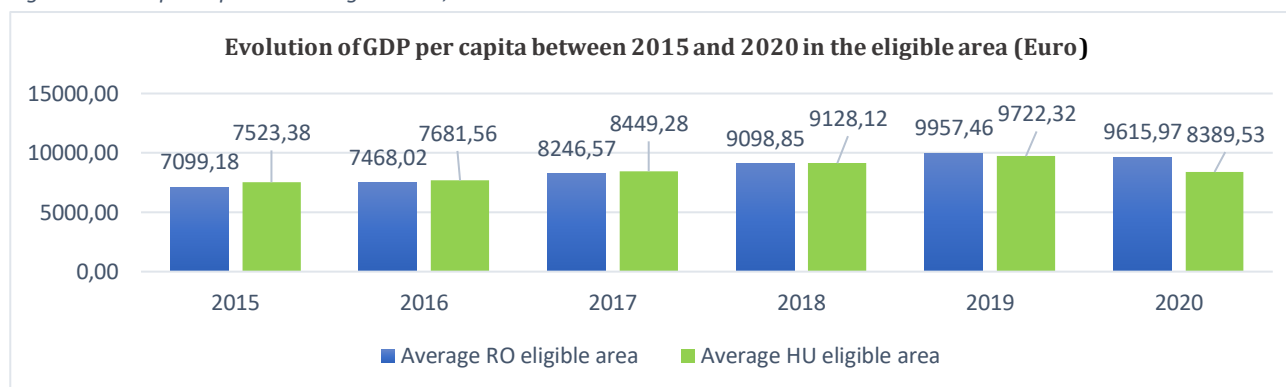
Figure 10. Cross-border territory GDP between 2015 and 2020



Source: National Statistics Offices from Romania and Hungary

Regarding the **GDP per capita at county level**, the available administrative data shows an increase in the entire area covered by the programme between 2015 and 2019 and a slight decrease in 2020 (For the detailed data please see [Annex 12](#)). In 2020 the average GDP per capita in the eligible area in Hungary was 9615,97 Euro and in Romania 8389,53 Euro.

Figure 11. GDP per capita in the eligible area, between 2015 and 2020

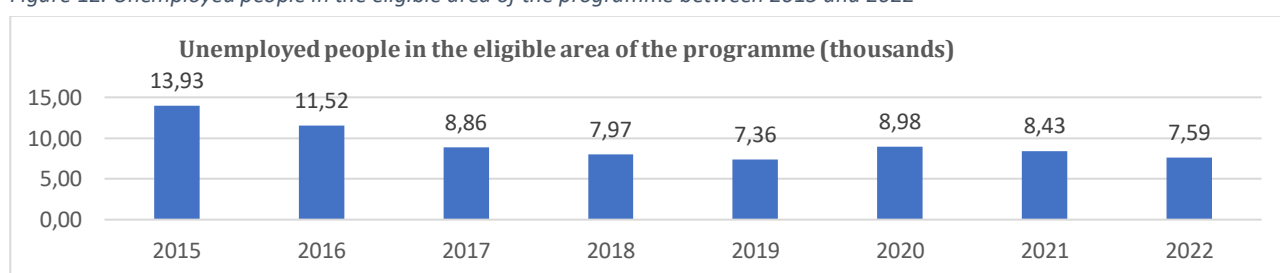


Source: National Statistics Offices from Romania and Hungary

Number of unemployed people

The longitudinal available data show a decrease in the number of unemployed people in the last 8 years in the programme area, from 13.930 unemployed in 2015 to 7590 unemployed people in 2022.

Figure 12. Unemployed people in the eligible area of the programme between 2015 and 2022



Source: National Statistics Offices from Romania and Hungary

3.1.2. EQ2. Were the indicator targets easily reachable?

Achievement level of result indicators

The analysed data showed that the Covid19 pandemic, had a significant impact on the values of several programme result indicators, such as: number of tourist overnight stays, ratio of people to motorized road vehicles, employment rate. The general context has been worsening during the pandemic and its effects are obvious in the presented figures. The trends registered in the areas addressed by the programme show that the most affected sectors **started to recover even from 2021, with an accelerated pace**. Thus, it is expected that by the end of the programme many sectors (e.g., tourism,

which based on the 2022 available date has already reached the level from before the sanitary crisis, mobility, employment) are to be revitalized to a certain extent and to achieve a similar or higher development status as before the pandemic outburst. Also, many projects financed through the Interreg Programme are still in the implementation phase, thus, they have generated, so far, little effects. But, it is expected that interventions financed under the programme will generate a much more contribution than can be observed at this point in time, due to the availability of updated data, the finalization of important (regular or strategic projects) and the decrease of the negative impact of Covid19.

Figure 13. Achievement level of programme result indicators

SO	Result indicator	Baseline value	Target (2023)	Current value*	Achievement rate
SO 1.1	Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area	2,46 (2013)	2,39	2,88 (2023)	120,5% of the target
SO 1.2	Increased number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area	4.885.294 (2013)	5.485.294	5.766.974 (2022)	105,14% of the target, but below the baseline (2013 value)
SO 2.1	Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T	356.076 (2014)	435.794	607.768 (estimation based on no. of inhabitants from 2022)/ 0 (due to no output reported)	139,46% of the target (estimation for the end of the project RO-HU 444)
SO 2.2	Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border	2,50 (2014)	2,59	2,35 (2022)	90% of the target, but below the baseline (2013 value)
SO 3.1	Slight increase in employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population	56,31% (2012)	56,38%	56,70% (2021)	100,57% of the target
SO 4.1	Improved average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area	3,19 (2015)	3,50	3,22 (2023)	92% of the target
SO 5.1	Improved quality of the joint risk management	3,02 (2015)	3,23	2,78 (2023)	86% of the target, but below the baseline (2015 value)
SO 6.1	Increased level of the cross-border cooperation intensity of the public institutions and non-profit organizations	3,46 (2015)	3,57	3,23 (2023)	90,47% of the target, but below the baseline (2015 value)

Source: data processed by evaluation experts

* For each indicator the current value was calculated based on the methodology presented in Annex IX of the Programme Documents and on most recent available data (which is not consistent for all result indicators, depending on their source of data). Thus, after each value the cut-off date of the presented information is mentioned.

Extent to which indicators' targets were well set

The evaluation found that where the link between the objectives of the programme, thus the expected results and the planned outputs is strong, the targets were well set (*the detailed analysis regarding the strengths of the programme Logic of Intervention by SO is presented under the EQ 11 and further related examples are presented in the Case Study Reports*), such as in the case of OSs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1.

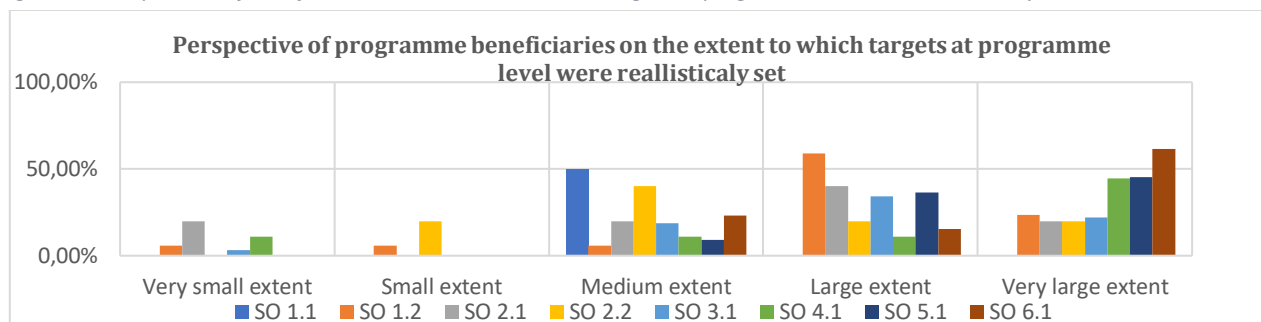
Thus, 2 main findings in regards with the level of appropriateness of target set for programme result indicators were formulated:

- Strength of causal link between programme output indicators and programme result indicators varies from one SO to another. The review of the programme logic, of the needs analysis (including problems and drivers identified in the programming phase and related planned activities and expected outputs) and the data collected from stakeholders and programme beneficiaries allowed the evaluation team to develop the matrix in [Annex 4](#) showing the level of strength of the link between expected outputs and results, by SO
- It is important to mention that not all projects estimated their contribution to the results indicators of the programme. Even if they have explained the causal link between the planned outputs and expected effects in line with the specific objective under which they were financed, not all beneficiaries set a target to be reached at the end of the project or after its closure. Thus, no quantitative estimation of the expected impact of the contracted projects to the programme results could be elaborated. Nevertheless, the data collected and analysed under the framework

of the 15 Case studies conducted¹⁸ shows that most of the projects will reach their targets by the end of the implementation and will generate the expected effects / results. Many of the on-going projects have already produced significant effects in their sector and for their target groups (the complete analysis is presented in [Annex 8](#)).

Programme stakeholders consider that targets were realistically set for SOs 1.6 and 1.2, while for SOs 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1 the targets are considered to be appropriate to a moderate extent.

Figure 14. Perspectives of beneficiaries on the extent to which targets at programme level were realistically set



Source: Data collected through the beneficiaries' survey

While the methodology for calculating the targets of result indicators have been revised in 2020, based on the conclusions and recommendation of the study *Assessment of methodologies for defining the output and result indicators, the milestone output targets and the financial milestones for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme* and based on the modifications of the programme, especially in relation with budget allocations, conducted in 2018, there are still inconsistencies or lack of information that make the assessments of programme's results rather difficult. The revision of the methodology included also target adjustments, as it follows:

Table 2. Modifications of programme result indicators targets

SO 1.1	increase with 0,02 percentage points the target for the result indicator under SO 1.1
SO 1.2	-
SO 2.1	-
SO 2.2	decrease with 0,06 percentage points the target for result indicator under SO 2.2
SO 3.1	decrease with 0,13 percentage points the target of the result indicator under SO 3.1
SO 4.1	increase with 0,10 percentage points the target for the expected result under SO 4.1
SO 5.1	increase with 0,04 percentage points for result under SO 5.1
SO 6.1	-

Source: Programme document (different versions)

The evaluation found that contextual factors were taken into account to a limited extent when designing the methodology for calculating the baseline and the target values for results indicators set under SO 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, as it is explained below:

- The inherent change in the structure, number and personnel of relevant institutions that were included in the data collection process for measuring the baseline values of the indicators, in almost 10 years period of time after the calculation of the result indicators baseline, may affect significantly the validity of the data collected for calculating the achievements against the targets.
- Economic changes that may affect significantly the values of the indicators are not included in the methodology, which is rather simple and has little capacity of integrating the effects of the programme into the broader picture of the addressed sector.

3.1.3. EQ3. Which were the main obstacles or success factors?

The answer to the EQ 3 is focused on a) the contextual factors (positive and negative) that have influences or had a significant potential of influencing the extent to which the programme partially achieved (due to its progress status) and will be able to achieve its objectives by its closure and b) the strength of the logic of intervention of the programme, thus the level of the plausibility of the expected and achieved outputs to contribute to the expected results of the programme. This approach is grounded on the fact that programme results cannot be generated solely by the funded interventions under the

¹⁸ Please see the complete Case Study Reports in [annex 8](#).

Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme, on the contrary, the expected results are well aligned with the objectives of strategic national and regional documents and EU policies, thus, many instruments should have been used for the implementation of national EU policies, among which of course the financing provided through the programme (*in this regard please see the conclusions of the funding framework analysis presented under EQ and [Annex 11](#) of the report*) and several unexpected factors could have affected the development of each sector, such Covid 19 pandemic, the significant increase of prices due to the armed conflict from Ukraine and other.

Positive factors influencing the values of the programme result indicators / additional result indicators

Table 3. Positive factors influencing the values of programme result indicators

External positive factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loosening of the regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary facilitated the implementation of projects and generation of effects (horizontal factor) - Official agreements signed between Romanian and Hungary government in regards with the management of water resources, started from 2003 (relevant for SOs 1.1 and 5.1) - On the transport sector significant developments have been observed in last years based on the prioritization of the sector and visible increase of awareness regarding the importance of a high-quality public transportation systems for developing cities and also for the development of the cross-border area (related to SO 2.1) - For the project beneficiaries from Hungary, the modification of exchange rates between euro and forint was an economic factor that facilitated the projects' implementation. The forint was devaluated in comparison with the euro, which led to more resources available (especially related to SO 3.1) - The reorganization of the vocational training system in Hungary, by being placed under the coordination of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology, was a beneficial change in support of the contracted projects. Due to the reorganization, vocational training has become much more responsive to all kinds of demands from municipalities and employers. (relevant for SO 3.1) - EU policy on the risk management of floods and more specifically the integration of the EU Flood Directive into the national legislations, leads to a more effective management of natural hazards (relevant for SO 5.1)
Internal positive factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strength of the logic of intervention of SOs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1, where the programme has properly identified and addressed the existing needs. - The level of awareness of programme authorities in regards with the importance of supporting the beneficiaries and finding together, where necessary, proper mitigation actions. - The capacity of the programme to reach well positioned stakeholders, having at disposal the necessary human and financial resources in order to successfully implement the projects.

Source: Qualitative analysis based on document review and qualitative data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders

Negative factors influencing the values of the programme result indicators / additional result indicators

Table 4. Negative factors influencing the values of programme result indicators

External negative factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Covid 19 pandemic – which affected employment, tourism, cultural events, transport, economic activities, possibility of development of partnerships and common interventions (horizontal factor) - Public underfinancing (horizontal factor) - The legislative change, in Romania, on the protected area custode institutions, which led to significant decrease in the national capacity of monitoring and taking action for the protection of natural area (relevant for SO 1.2) - Lack of highly qualified human resources in the area of cultural heritage protection in both sides of the border (relevant for SO 1.2) - Still lack of integrated approach in regards with redirecting the individual transport to environmentally friendly transport (relevant for SO 2.2) - The postponement of Romania's accession to Schengen area, affecting the transport and workforce mobility sector (relevant for SOs 2.1 and 3.1) - Shortage of qualified workforce in the area of health in both sides of the border - National legislation that not permit common intervention on emergency situations near to the border (relevant for SO 5.1)
Internal negative factors ¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rather weak logic of intervention under SO 1.2 and SO 5.1 - Moderate logic of intervention under SO 2.1 and SO 3.1 - Even if the inconsistencies from the methodology for calculating the target and current values of programme result indicators were addressed to a large extent in its revised version, some sections still need further clarifications²⁰ - Unclear definition of result indicator <i>Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T</i> or too lax definition of output indicator <i>CO23 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status</i>

¹⁹ For detailed findings related to the strength of the logic of intervention at OS level, please see Section 3.3.1 and Annex 3 of the report

²⁰ e.g., the number of respondents expected in the case of the survey conducted for calculating the values of result indicator under SO 5.1 or the number and categories of institutions included in the baseline survey conducted in 2014

Source: Qualitative analysis based on document review and qualitative data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders

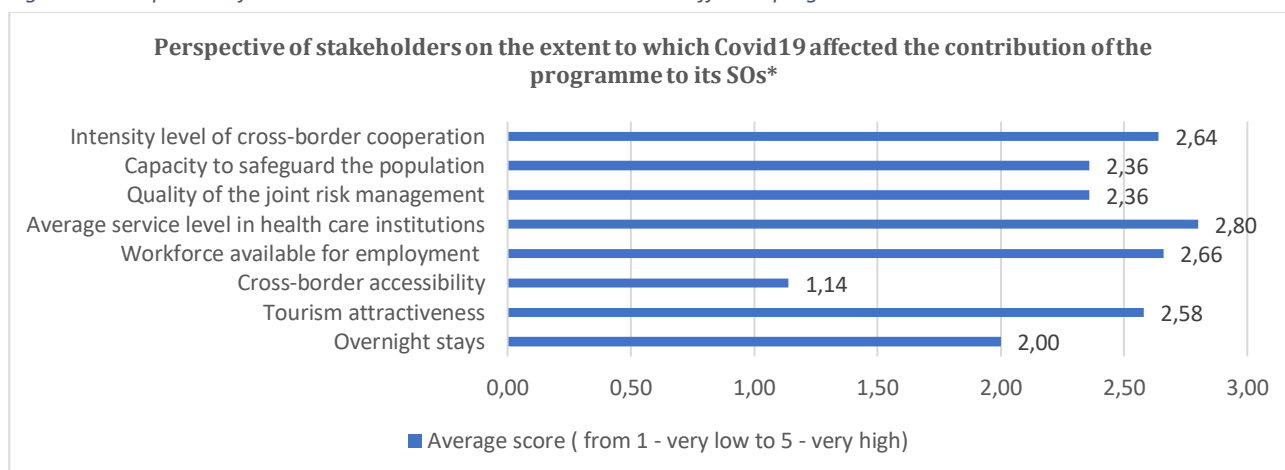
3.1.4. EQ4. Did the Pandemic (Covid-19) have a significant aggregate effect on the Programme?

The impact of Covid19 on result indicators

The analyzed data showed that the Covid19 pandemic, had a significant impact on the values of several programme result indicators, such as: number of tourist overnight stays, ratio of people to motorized road vehicles, employment rate. The longitudinal analyses conducted under EQ 1, for the indicators where data was available, presents the magnitude of the effects of Covid19. Also, the pandemic affected the contribution of the programme to these sectors, due postponement of activities extensions of implementation periods and eventually, the extent to which the evaluation is able to analyse the progress due to the fact that 32,41% of projects (35 projects) are still ongoing. The supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic also affected the implementation of the projects. When the report was drafted²¹, under SOs 1.1 and 2.1 no project was finalized yet. Nonetheless, the drafted case studies showed that the design of the projects did not suffer major changes due to Covid19. Many beneficiaries decided to keep the face-to-face activities in the design of the projects (and not to adjust them to the online format for ensuring in order not to affect their effectiveness) and they have resumed them after the restrictions were abolished. Also, most of beneficiaries mentioned that the most visible impact was related to soft activities, many hard investments being continued.

Programme stakeholders consider that Covid 19 affected to the most extent the contribution of the programme to the health sector. Also, their perspective confirms the evidence presented in regards with the significant effects of the pandemic to the tourism attractiveness, availability of workforce and cross-border cooperation.

Figure 15. Perspective of stakeholders on the extent to which Covid19 affected programme results



Source: Stakeholders' survey

* For indicators quality cross-border rivers water (SO1.1) and ratio of people to motorized vehicles crossing the border (SO2.2) an insufficient number of responses were collected by the moment when the Draft Evaluation Report was drafted.

The impact of Covid19 on programme administration and procedures

The MA issued several instructions in order to support the beneficiaries in the implementation phase. The activities related to verifications, such as site visits were postponed and instead video calls were conducted. Project partners were able to bring revision to the soft activities planned and adjust them to the remote system of work which has extended in that period. Also, more implementation period extensions were approved and beneficiaries had the possibility to postpone certain type of activities and to resume when the context allowed them. This important bottleneck that affected significantly the programme has been successfully mitigated (see all measured taken by the MA under Section 3.2.3).

3.1.5. EQ5. Was there any effect generated by the conflicting geopolitical context?

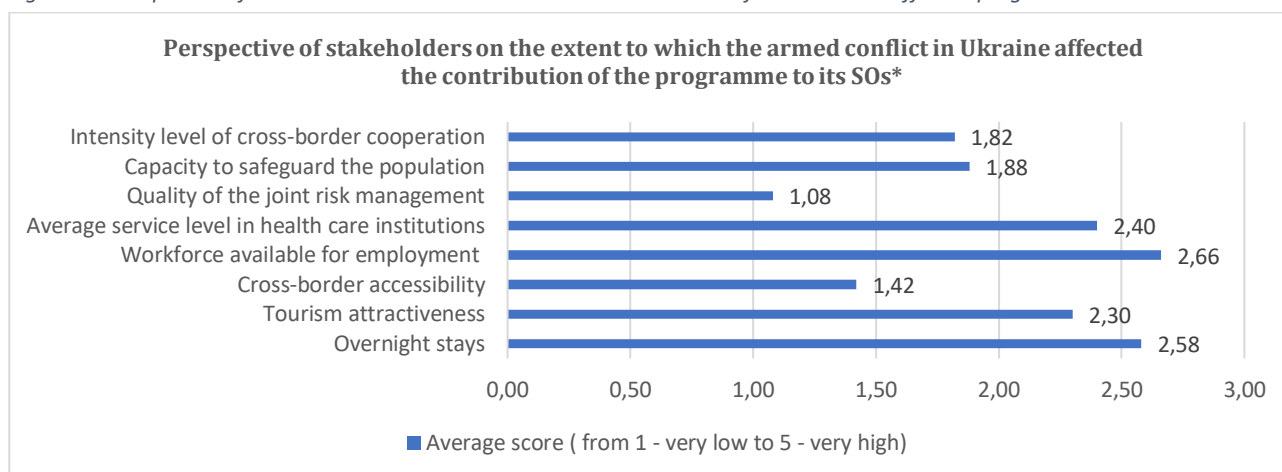
The impact of the overall geopolitical context on result indicators

Programme stakeholders consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine affected the most the extent to which the programme contributed in the employment area. Based on their perspective, other

²¹ May – June 2023

significantly affected sectors were tourism and health sector. But, in general the evaluation found that the effects of the geopolitical context were observed or perceived to very limited extent.

Figure 16. Perspective of stakeholders on the extent to which the armed conflict in Ukraine affected programme results



Source: Stakeholders' survey

* For indicators quality cross-border rivers water (SO1.1) and ratio of people to motorized vehicles crossing the border (SO2.2) an insufficient number of responses were collected by the moment when the Draft Evaluation Report was drafted.

The Ukrainian-Russian war negatively affected the implementation of the projects which included construction works. The inflation rate of the construction materials in Romania, which was exacerbated by the Russian invasion in Ukraine and by the on-going energy crisis, resulted in higher prices for the construction materials than the prices budgeted initially. This difficulty led to delays in the construction works, ensued by the lack of sufficient funding. The partners needed time to identify own sources of financing in order to proceed with this activity.

The impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context on the administration and procedures of the programme

No measures were needed due to the low effect of the geopolitical context to the programme beneficiaries. Where budget adjustments were needed due to the increase of prices, programme authorities supported the beneficiaries in finding and applying mitigation solutions.

3.1.6. EQ6. How effective and timely were the launching of the different Call for proposals?

Influence of the calls management on all programme indicators, based on the time of launching the calls

According to the survey results, there is a high level of agreement among beneficiaries regarding Priority axes 1, 2, 5 and 6 (specifically IP6/b, IP6/c, IP7/c, IP8/b, IP5/b, IP11). Beneficiaries perceive these calls as facilitating the appropriate selection and successful implementation of projects. However, there is a contradiction between stakeholders' perception from the survey and the feedback obtained through interviews. The feedback from beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries reveals challenges regarding the timing of the calls. One common issue is that the timing of the calls may not align with their operational or project timelines, making it difficult for them to fully engage or prepare their proposals. Even if the deadlines were postponed several times, at the request of applicants, some stakeholders still consider that they have needed more time between the announcement of the calls and the submission deadlines to ensure adequate planning and preparation. According to the eMS data, a number of 260 projects were submitted, out of which 108 were contracted. This reveals that 41,9% of the applications were approved and funded, the number of submitted projects being 2.3 times more than the contracted ones.

According to Evaluation Report „Services for evaluating the implementation of The Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme”²² the evaluation, selection, and contracting process for the projects began in December 2016, one year after the Programme was approved. This process involved three Open Calls (OCs) and three Restricted Calls (RCs), with RC1 being relaunched because no projects passed the administrative and eligibility compliance phase. The initial Open Calls were launched under time pressure due to delays caused by: slow approval of the Programme document, the late

²² Services for evaluating the implementation of The Interreg V-A Romania –Hungary Programme Service contract No. 280/03.10.2019 Final Evaluation Report Beneficiary: Ministry of Public Works Development and Administration Bucharest, Romania August 2020 <https://interreg-rohu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ROHU-Final-Evaluation-Report.pdf> (accessed June 19, 2023)

establishment of the legal and administrative framework and the complexity of applying state aid regulations to the cross-border nature of the Programme. In this regard, several processes had to be integrated, including awareness and training, support for beneficiaries, state aid assessment, ongoing assistance for management authorities, monitoring of state aid schemes, and ex-post assessment. Due to difficulties in finalizing the state aid schemes, the Monitoring Committee decided to prioritize launching calls for IPs not falling under state aid regulations first, and then proceed with the others once the state aid issue was resolved. The period between launching the Open Calls and finalizing the selection process lasted two years. Nevertheless, it is important to mention here that the submission deadlines were postponed few times based on the requests received from the applicants. The Restricted Calls had longer durations than the Open Calls mainly due to the Concept Note phase and associated issues with public procurement. The Programme showed flexibility by accommodating extension requests from beneficiaries to support them throughout the implementation process.

The influence of selection criteria

According to the surveys, based on the perspective of the majority, while some beneficiaries and stakeholders indicated that the criteria allowed for a moderately, under PA 2 - accessibility or large extent, under PA 1 – common values and resources, PA 3 - employment, PA 4 - health successful implementation, other respondents, under PA 5, PA 6, did not express a specific level of understanding and agreement. This diversity of responses may reflect different levels of involvement, knowledge, and perspectives among participants regarding the selection criteria and their impact on project success.

The influence of the overall management of applications and the evaluation process

Overall, the applications and evaluation process had varying levels of effectiveness and impact across the different priority axes, as perceived by the stakeholders and beneficiaries involved. An assessment of the level of agreement among stakeholders and beneficiaries detailed by Priority Axes (PA) and Investment Priorities (IP), is presented in the next table.

Table 5. Perspectives of stakeholders and beneficiaries on the overall management of the application and evaluation process

Priority Axes	Perspective of stakeholders / beneficiaries
PA 1 - Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources	The stakeholders involved in common values and resources appreciated the detailed project proposals that outlined specific objectives, expected outcomes, and resource requirements. The rigorous evaluation criteria applied during the process, which considered factors like environmental impact, sustainability, and long-term benefits, were also recognized by the stakeholders.
PA 2 - Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove bottlenecks	Stakeholders involved in cross-border mobility had mixed views on the effectiveness of the applications and assessment process. Survey and interview data revealed that while some stakeholders believed the process played a moderately significant role in enabling successful project implementation, others felt that a more comprehensive analysis and assessment could have been conducted. The assessment criteria included feasibility, potential impact, and alignment with cross-border mobility objectives.
PA 3 - Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility	Stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in employment and labour mobility generally agreed that the applications and assessment process contributed to the successful implementation of projects.
PA 4 - Improving health-care services	Stakeholders involved in health-care and prevention highly valued the applications and evaluation process. The comprehensive needs assessment conducted, which analysed healthcare infrastructure, service gaps, and population demographics, was recognized as valuable. Project proposals were evaluated based on their potential to address these challenges and enhance health services.
PA 5 - Improve risk prevention and disaster management	Stakeholders involved in risk prevention and disaster management generally agreed that the applications and assessment process significantly contributed to the successful implementation of projects. The rigorous evaluation and selection criteria ensured that the implemented projects aligned with the overall objective of improving risk prevention and disaster preparedness.
PA 6 - Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens	Stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in cooperation of institutions and communities strongly believed that the applications and evaluation process greatly facilitated the successful implementation of projects. The process was viewed as exceptionally effective in promoting collaboration and cooperation between institutions and citizens, although specific details were not provided in the given information.

Source: data collected and analyzed by the evaluators

3.1.7. EQ7. How effective was the institutional setup / staffing of the implementing bodies?

Overall, the data collected from the stakeholders and beneficiaries and the insights from the survey indicate that the institutional setup, effective communication, and support from the programme structures were significant factors contributing to projects' success.

The influence of the institutional setup

Based on the data collected through the questionnaire among stakeholders, it is clear that the overall institutional setup of the programme exerted an important influence on result indicators. However, it is

worth noting that a considerable proportion of respondents (50.75%) responded with "I don't know / I cannot answer" regarding this aspect. Under coordination of the Managing Authority, the Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position were perceived to have a moderate extent of influence, with 11.94% of respondents acknowledging this. Similarly, the national authority structure and position were deemed to have a moderate extent of influence, with 13.43% of respondents expressing this view. Among the beneficiaries, 50% expressed uncertainty or lack of knowledge, stating "I don't know." This indicates a significant portion of participants who may not have a clear understanding of the impact of these program components. However, among the respondents who provided an opinion, a medium extent influence was observed across all program structures. It is important to mention here that the interviews conducted within the project level case studies indicate that **beneficiaries do not make a clear distinction between programme authorities** and they have an **overall very positive perspective** regarding the communication and support received from the institutions that they were more often in contact, the Joint Secretariat or the Info Points. In most cases, they consider the relation with programme authorities as being a determinant factor for the success of their projects.

Only 13.43% of the questioned stakeholders indicated that the **Managing Authority structure** and its position have a significant impact on the results of programme. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1 – common values and resources, 2 - accessibility and 3 - employment, the majority opinion is that the impact of the Managing Authority (MA) on all results and indicators is of medium extent, and within Priority Axes 4 - health, 5 – risk management and 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent. From the stakeholders' perspective the **National Authority structure** and position were deemed to have a moderate extent of influence, with 13.43% of respondents expressing this view. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the majority opinion is that the impact of the NA structure on all indicators is of medium extent, and within PA 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent.

The evaluation found that Programme **beneficiaries consider that the excellent support and collaboration provided by the Joint Secretariat and Info Points**, on the basis of the Framework agreement regarding the delegation of responsibilities for the implementation of the Interreg V-A Romania –Hungary Programme, **contributed to a large extent to the successful implementation of their projects**. The JS and IPs have been the main contact points for beneficiaries and due to their location, in the eligible area of the programme, their effectively came in the support of those implementing Interreg funds. Based on the perspectives expressed during the interviews, beneficiaries emphasized the crucial support provided by the Joint Secretariat (JS) and Info Points (IPs) during the projects' implementation periods. The strong relationship with the JS and IPs positively influenced the project's outcome, as they consistently communicated well with the beneficiaries. According to the Framework agreement regarding the delegation of responsibilities for the implementation of the Interreg V-A Romania –Hungary Programme, the JS actively engaged with the beneficiaries, ensuring they were informed about program requirements, guidelines, and deadlines. The clear and timely communication facilitated smooth project implementation and minimized misunderstandings. Beneficiaries also appreciated the JS's and IPs' supportive attitude throughout the project and the JS's and IPs' willingness to address queries, provide clarifications, and offer guidance whenever needed. Under coordination of the Managing Authority and with the contribution of the National Authority, the JS's and IPs' proactive approach fostered a positive working relationship, contributing to the project's success.

From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3, the majority opinion is that the impact of the JS-BRECO an IPs structures and positions on all indicators is of medium extent, and within PA 5 – joint risk management and 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent, and very large extend for PA 4 - health.

The influence of the competences of the MA/ BRECO/ NA staff and number of employees

Furthermore, the competences of the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat-BRECO, National Authority and Info Points staff were recognized as having a substantial influence on project success, with 14.93%, 16.42%, and 34.33% of respondents indicating this, respectively. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1 and, 4 the majority opinion is that the competences of the MA/ BRECO/ NA / IPs staff on all indicators is of medium extent, and within PA 3 - employment is of large extent, Priority Axes 2, 5, 6 is of very large extent. While the interviewees with stakeholders and programme beneficiaries (conducted in the framework of the case studies) acknowledged the positive support from programme

authorities, particularly the Joint Secretariat (JS) and Info Point (IPs), during the pandemic, they also mentioned occasional difficulties in communication with the JS throughout the project.

The interviewees appreciated the support given from the Managing Authority during the pandemic, especially the measure of approving delays in the schedule of implementation of the project activities. This **flexibility and understanding** demonstrated by the Managing Authority during challenging circumstances underscore the importance of effective institutional support in adapting to unforeseen situations. Moreover, the **support was delivered in a timely manner**, this playing a crucial role in ensuring the smooth progress of the project. Also, beneficiaries recognized **JS's and IPs expertise in programme regulations and procedures**, which greatly facilitated project implementation. The JS's and IPs knowledge enabled them to provide valuable insights and practical suggestions, helping beneficiaries overcome challenges and optimize project activities. This expertise was instrumental in navigating bureaucratic processes and effectively utilizing available resources.

Nevertheless, many beneficiaries, that have also accessed financing under the Interreg programme 2007 – 2013, consider that when the MA was located in Hungary the administrative burden was lower than due to simpler procedures.

3.2. Project level effectiveness

3.2.1. EQ8. To what extent have the objectives of the projects financed under this programme been achieved or are about to be achieved?

Progress registered at the level of projects in achieving their targets

The following table presents the achieved values and outputs to be delivered by operations of the programme's output programme indicators.

Table 6. Progress registered at the level of projects in achieving their targets

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)	7,00	9,00	-	0,00%	No finalized project
C009 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	61.000,00	159.723,00	77.267,00	127,00%	310,93%
C023 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status	6.000,00	144.133,58	97.217,03	1620,00%	89,54%
C013 Roads: Total length of newly built roads	12,00	12,14	-	0,00%	No finalized project
C014 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	18,00	20,06	-	0,00%	No finalized project
7/c 1 Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved	5,00	17,00	16,00	320,00%	100,00%
7/c 2 Total length of newly built bicycle road	17,00	20,44	20,44	120,00%	100,00%
C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	10.000,00	31.598,00	26.412,00	264,00%	64,95%
9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services	3.911.505,00	13.428.318,00	4.749.042,00	121,00%	74,59%
9/a 2 Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment	58,00	163,00	64,00	110,00%	83,08%
5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	970.000,00	3.170.776,00	2.248.259,00	232,00%	111,87%
11/b1 Number of institutions directly involved in cross border cooperation initiatives	36,00	589,00	33,00	92,00%	90,00%

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
11/b2 Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives	2.000,00	18.445,00	30.045,00	1502,00%	187,50%

Source: eMS data

As shown in the table from above, most indicators have achieved their targets, with multiple instances in which the indicators heavily overperform their targets. Only three indicators did not achieve yet their targets, namely *6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions*, *CO13 Roads: Total length of newly built roads*, *CO14 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads*. All three indicators reported 0 outputs so far, as there is no finalized project that contributes to the values of any of the indicators. It is important to mention that the projects have to be finalized and the outputs to be put in use in order to be accounted in the value of the indicator. Two projects in implementation are expected to contribute to the value of the 6b/1 indicator, one project in implementation is expected to contribute to the value of the CO13 indicator and one project in implementation is expected to contribute to the value of the CO14 indicator. Further, based on the analysis of the overall *outputs to be delivered by operations*, the projects in implementation are expected to produce sufficient outputs to slightly exceed the targets of the respective indicators.

As for the rest of the indicators, their value is expected to increase, despite achieving their targets solely on outputs produced already, as there are still many projects in implementation. The column *Outputs to be delivered by operations* indicates the potential achievement of the projects (absolute values) based on the estimations of the projects. In the last column of the table, *rate of achievement of target at project level*, the evaluators calculated the average achievement of indicators at project level. The projects that feed into the value of indicator *CO09 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions* have an achievement rate of 310,93 of the targets at project level. This is the highest achievement rate at project level among all indicators. Indicator CO44 has the lowest achievement rate of targets at project level, at just 64,95%.

3.2.2. EQ9. What are the internal and external factors that affected/ supported the achievement of the objectives at project level?

To internal factors at the micro and meso-level that contributed to/ hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level

- **The most important internal factor that contributes to the achievement of the objectives at project level is the quality of the partnership's design.** Multiple partners acknowledged in the interviews that the partners that are involved in the project, the management system, the communication channels, the division of activities, and the coordination from the lead partner contributes the most to the facilitation of achieving the objectives. Partners consider that the quality of the expertise of the human resources weighs heavily on the achievement of objectives. As well, the beneficiaries' experience in implementing EU-funded projects is an important factor that influenced the implementation of the projects.
- **The main internal factor that hindered the achievement of objectives at project level represents the turnover of personnel within the partners.** Changes in the human resources of the partners, especially at the level of the leadership, can influence the implementation process in a negative manner. For example, in the case of a project, the director of a partner has been changed 3 times during the lifespan of the project, which ended up in affecting the decision-making process and caused important delays. Based on the data collected, the infrastructure works have not been a priority of the institution during the period when the instability of the management was high.
- **Another internal factor that affected the achievement of objectives at project level represents the overloading with tasks of the people in the project team.** There were situations in which the available human resources were not sufficient to cover all the activities that were required to be implemented, at the level of the project but also at the level of the institution.

To external factors at the micro level that contributed to/ hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level

- **The most important external factor that affected the projects in a positive manner in achieving their targets represents the support provided to the beneficiaries by the Interreg**

V-A Romania-Hungary Programme authorities. This external positive factor was the most highlighted in the interviews conducted at the level of the projects. According to the case studies, the Management Authority of the programme has conducted many information events meant to increase the visibility of the programme and of the available funds and has supported the beneficitation in the process of finding and implementing mitigations actions when needed. According to programme beneficiaries, the communication with the programme authorities was very good, the support needed was timely delivered and all their revision request have been approved, the process being considered very smooth. As the interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries showed, they were content with the overall process of contract revision and indicated that all involved entities with whom they have directly communicated or collaborated were very supportive. Beneficiaries emphasized that the flexibility of programme management regarding the implementation period and the postponements of the planned activities during the pandemic were key for the success of the project. They also consider that the staff of the programme authorities have a strong grasp on the common issues encountered at the level of the projects and on how to support the beneficiaries in addressing them.

- **Multiple beneficiaries highlighted the importance of effective communication during the preparation of the project with the stakeholders in the area.** According to them, the actors that will be relied upon for the implementation of the project must be consulted, and during the implementation consultation is still needed on an ongoing basis. In the case of a project on employment, the partners consulted employers on average every three months to align the content of their training and mentoring programme with labor market needs.
- **The multilingualism of several municipalities from the border area** is a factor that contributed to the success of the project. There was not a language barrier between the respective partners, as both sides could communicate in Hungarian fluently.
- As a horizontal defining factor, it is important to highlight the **cross-border character of the projects, and thus, their potential to generate common effects** and strengthen the collaboration between peer institutions / organizations as to address more effectively common problems in each sector covered by the programme. The evaluation showed that, in general, in the case of PAs 1, 2 and 6 this condition has been met. In the case of PAs 3, 4 and 5 the cross-border effects were observed to a less extent than in the case of the other PAs. In the case of PA 3, even if projects were effective in increasing the employment rates at local level, their effects in terms of cross-border workforce mobility are not visible yet and also less plausible on a medium-term, without additional public interventions. While PA 4 aimed to enhance cooperation on health-care and prevention, based on the case studies analyses, cooperation existed and was enhanced during project implementation, but it continued to a rather limited extend after project closure. In the case of PA 5, common effects were significantly influenced not only by the design of the financed interventions, but also by the national legislation that still does not allow common emergency intervention based on the existing needs.
- **The biggest external factor that hampered the achievement of the objectives at project level represents the public procurement process.** Most beneficiaries identified the difficulties in public procurement as an external factor that hindered the smooth implementation of the project. According to the beneficiaries, the public tender process is very lengthy and complex in both Romania and Hungary. Beneficiaries encountered delays during public procurement procedures, caused by processes such as requested clarifications on award documentation, appeals, etc. Besides the issues encountered in the process of public procurement, there were situations in which the beneficiaries encountered non-compliance by contractors with deadlines and execution schedules. In one instance, one Romanian partner took into consideration the length of the procedure, and it still proved to be insufficient. The process lasted significantly longer than expected.
- **Administrative bottlenecks proved to act as a factor that hindered the achievement of the objectives for multiple projects.** In the case of protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, situations where beneficiaries could not receive the necessary authorizations for constructions after the change in legislation related to the custodians of natural protected areas. In the case of infrastructure works, the implementation was significantly hampered and delayed by the bureaucratic red tape, hindering the progress in building the roads. Concerning the employment interventions, one partner encountered difficulties in carrying out the vocational training courses, caused by issues in authorizing the courses and issuing the diplomas for the trainees by County

Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (AJPIIS). Due to understaffing of AJPIIS, the authorization of courses and issuing of diplomas was a lengthy process, and the Lead Partner could not reach out to AJPIIS for urgent matters.

- **The lack of a pre-payment system for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary, for beneficiaries from Romania, was identified as a factor that hampered the implementation of the projects.**

The absence of the payment request instrument in the Interreg programme was identified as a negative factor in one case study. The partners, located in Romania, always need to have funds available for the coverage of expenses in the project, with reimbursement occurring several months from the payments. The amounts spent in the projects are large, as there were hard investments included in the intervention.

3.2.3. EQ10. How the Covid-19 pandemic affected the project's implementation?

The influence of the COVID-10 pandemic on the achievement of the objectives at project level

The COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in the case of most of the projects and hindered the achievement of the projects' objectives. According to the results of the survey, the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the projects in the following manners:

- to a large extent the contribution of projects to overnight stays and to the tourist attractiveness in the programme eligible areas;
- to a large extent the contribution of projects to the ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border;
- to a small extent the contribution of projects to the cross-border accessibility;
- to a moderate extent the contribution of projects to the employment rate and quality of the workforce in the eligible area;
- to a small extent the contribution of projects to the average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area;
- to a moderate extent the contribution of projects to the quality of the joint risk management
- to a small extent the contribution of projects to the capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population;
- to a large extent the contribution of projects to the intensity level of cross-border cooperation.

The main channel through which the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of the projects are the soft activities. Due to the restrictions adopted in both Romania and Hungary, many beneficiaries were forced to delay the activities until the restrictions were lifted. As well, some beneficiaries identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a source that influenced the overall increase in prices, which resulted in challenges in applying the budget. For some beneficiaries, there were issues regarding the supply chain for the acquisition the equipment.

The response provided by the MA in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

In order to mitigate *the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic*, the MA undertook the following measures:

- Establishing a buffer at the level of the programme to ensure funds for making payments to beneficiaries (through a loan from the state budget);
- Organizing online meetings and information events and contests with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries as well as with the structures within the programme. Encouraging the use of electronic correspondence;
- Implementation of the use of the electronic signature and the possibility for the beneficiaries to pay from the programme for issuing the electronic signature
- The programme structures recommended to the beneficiaries' precautionary measures such as restricting the movement of people during the state of emergency or replacing events/seminars when possible, with online meetings, giving the possibility to the beneficiaries to change the funding contract by notification;
- The possibility of postponing as much as possible the activities involving events, workshops, seminars, etc. with the participation of a large number of people, respectively the modification of financing contracts, in accordance with the contractual provisions, in the situation where the evolution of COVID-19 prevented the carrying out of project activities according to approved applications;

- The use of potential savings, in the case of projects financed under Priority Axes 3 and 5 under implementation and whose purpose of the project is risk reduction or health interventions, for the purchase of goods and equipment necessary in the fight against COVID-19.

Overall, the beneficiaries declared themselves highly satisfied with the measures implemented by the MA to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The beneficiaries perceived that the possibility of prolonging the graphic of activities and/or to modify the events and meeting activities from face-to-face to online are considered the decisions of the MA which had the most positive impact on the achievements of the project. As well, the adoption of electronic document management and the promotion of e-signatures, facilitated efficient communication and streamlined processes.

3.3. Impact (for each specific objective of the programme)

3.3.1. EQ11. What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to the progress in achieving this specific objective?

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO1.1 - Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies (IP 6/b)

At the level of SO 1.1 no project has been finalized yet and no progress regarding the output level indicators has been reported. Thus, while the cumulative targets of the 2 contracted projects surpass the programme target, no conclusion on the extent to which the projects will be able to produce the planned outputs can be elaborated at this moment.

Table 7. Achievement level in regards with the output indicators under the SO 1.1

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)	7,00	9,00	-	0%	No finalized project

Source: eMS data

The budget contracted for the 2 projects under SO 1.1 has a bigger share in the Romanian side of the border, consisting of 70,75%. This approach is appropriate due to the fact that interventions conducted in this side of the border have a greater potential of creating common positive effects, the upstream of the addressed rivers being located in Romania, while the down-stream of the rivers being in Hungary. Thus, problems such as river water pollution and sludge accumulation identified in Romania affect also the Hungarian territory. On the other hand, from the improvements in Romania of water management, quality of water or water yield in Romania benefits also the Hungarian localities near to the border also benefit. Nevertheless, the target set at the level of output indicator, *CO6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions*, is rather limited. In the context of the target set for the result indicator, *Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area*, and the methodology developed for its measurement. While the target for the output indicator is **9 measurement points** positively affected by the projects, the current value of the rivers water quality in the eligible area is measured by taking into account the scores registered at the level of **95 measurement points** from the eligible area (15 from Hungary and 80 from Romania). Even if, the current value of the programme result indicator has surpassed its target, this increase cannot be attributed only to interventions financed under SO 1.1, nor to the Interreg V-A programme. Moreover, the analysis of the qualitative data collected through the conducted surveys led to similar findings. Beneficiaries and stakeholders of the projects financed under SO 1.1 consider that their projects can contribute to the result indicator of the programme only to a moderate extent. The same perspective has been collected also from the stakeholders. Nevertheless, the in-depth analysis conducted for project RO-HU 224, showed that the effects of the intervention, even if the project is not finalized yet, have been significant in the addressed area. The project managed to realize perform unplugging works on the channel sectors Muresel, Ier Legator and Ier, which had not been done for over 20 years, and their impact on the quality of water, but also of the air (due to significant levels of pollution of the water, sludge and waste along the channels) is of utmost importance for the communities where the channels are located.

The causal link between the achievements of the projects and the overall expected effects on the quality of water of cross-border rivers is **strong**. The expected result of the programme - Water quality

(ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area is directly related with the output indicator - Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project). Thus, the contribution of the projects to the expected result under the SO 1.1 can be easily assessed. Nevertheless, the conducted case studies showed several overlaps between the activities conducted by the projects financed under SO 1.1 and the one financed under SO 5.1, which can contribute also to the water quality of cross-border rivers. The cases studies conducted under SO 5.1 have highlighted that several projects implemented under PA 5 also contribute to the result indicator of SO 1.1, through the infrastructure works conducted on river beds in the eligible area of the programme (*the cases of synergies identified between these projects, such as the complementarity of projects RO-HU 224 and RO-HU 11, are described in Annex 8*).

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO1.2 - Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area (IP 6/c)

In the case of SO 1.2, the cumulative progress made so far by all contracted projects in terms of output indicators achievement is significantly above the programme level set targets. While the target of indicator C009 has been surpassed with 27%, for the indicator C023 the registered achievement is with 1520% higher than the target.

Table 8. Achievement level in regards with the output indicators under the SO 1.2

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
C009 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	61.000,00	159.723,00	77.267,00	127%	310,93%
C023 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status	6.000,00	144.133,58	97.217,03	1620%	89,54%

Source: eMS data

Out of 17 projects contracted under the SO 1.2, only 9 have been finalized by the end of December 2022, the rest being on-going. In regards with the funds' beneficiaries, 27 are from Hungary and 30 are from Romania. 17.683.097 Euro represents the ERDF budget contracted for Romanian institutions and 26.797.740 Euro the ERDF budget contracted by Hungarian beneficiaries. The projects contracted under the SO 1.2 represent 31,00% of the total contracted amount at programme level.

While the current progress registered at project level in terms of already generated outputs is very good, the actual and potential contribution of projects/programme to **sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage** within eligible area is difficult to be assessed due to the inconsistency in the logic of intervention. Indicator C009 - *Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions* contributes directly to the expected programme result, but indicator C023 - *Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status*, does not have a direct link with the expected increase of overnight stays in the eligible area. Moreover, the findings drafted under the framework of the case studies show that the potential of the projects financed under SO 1.2 of contributing to the expected result vary. While **projects that focus on environment protection**, thus addressing the natural heritage and contributing only to the output indicator C023, have the tourism component less developed and their capacity to generate results in the area of tourism is limited, the **projects that focus on cultural heritage** are closer to the aim of increasing the number of visitors to the rehabilitated cultural objectives or developing cross-border cultural centres aiming at covering a wide range of public. In this regard, the data available from eMS shows that **only 7 projects out of the 17 projects contracted under SO 1.2 contribute to the indicator C009, which is directly linked to the expected result**. It is clear that both types of projects bring added value in their areas and some have already generated positive effects for their target groups (such as: creating better conditions for survival for protected species, increasing awareness on the importance of environment projects among their target groups, increasing the collaboration among peer institution from Romania and Hungary in the area of natural and cultural heritage and increasing access to culture and cultural acts), but only projects that have explicitly planned to increase in expected number of visits to the supported sites / areas, may directly and in a significant manner contribute to the expected result of SO 1.2. Moreover, the example of the project RO-HU 29 shows that intensive touristic activities facilitated by the existence of thermal water in the area leads

directly to the deterioration of the natural heritage. Thus, the expected outputs and result of the programme under SO 1.2 can be considered to be conflicting²³.

In terms of the development of the sector, thus in relation to the potential increase of sustainable use of heritage and of the impact of the programme in this direction, more than half of the beneficiaries that have responded to the conducted survey (approximately 58%) consider that the level of awareness on environmental issues of the persons informed within the funded projects has been improved to a moderate or low extent. Also, 47% of beneficiaries of projects financed under SO 1.2 consider that their projects contributed to a large and very large extent to the conservation and safeguarding of natural and national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas in the eligible area. 46,66% of the stakeholders from which perspectives on the impact of the programme were collected consider that it contributed to a large and very large extent to this expected result.

The causal link between output indicators and result indicator related to SO1.2 is rather **weak**. The expected result is insufficiently linked with the overall objective, this being an exception in the case of Interreg RO-HU programme. Also, output indicator CO23 is not contributing directly to the expected result of the programme. It is important to mention here that also the definition of the indicator CO23 is rather weak, due to the fact that the number of hectares taken into account cover also the surfaces for which studies have been made, but where no direct intervention was planned or realized. The definition does not reflect in an appropriate way the title of the indicator, because no prospects of future interventions on these areas for better conservation of the biodiversity is required from the beneficiary's side. The area that represents the territories where studies and research have been made should not be included in the analysis of the extent to which supported projects directly contribute to the SO.

Moreover, the expert panel also validated the findings of the evaluation team. The general perspective indicated that the interventions financed under SO 1.2 of the programme, while very visible, they have little potential in influencing in a significant manner the tourism in the border area. This statement is based on the following arguments highlighted by the participants:

- A major part of the types of financed activities do not address directly the tourism area, more specifically, taken as standalone activities they have no influence on the number of tourist overnight stays in the area of the programme. Many project activities require one-day travels across the 2 countries.
- The programme result indicator is not sensitive in regards with cross-border mobility, thus it does not indicate any information regarding exchange of tourists between Romania and Hungary;
- Also, the indicators do not cover the length of the tourist stays in each country.

Thus, 2 main issues were reflected within the panel, the fact that the supported interventions generate outputs that can contribute to the increase of tourist in the programme area to a limited extent and that the indicators used to measure outputs and results of the programme in the area of tourism could have been more diverse as to capture better the specific of the interventions.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO2.1 - Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure (IP 7/b)

1 of the 2 projects contracted under SO 2.1 is still in the implementation phase and no progress has been reported yet in terms of outputs. But, it is important to mention that the first project constituted the support received by the beneficiary for the development of the full application and it did not have a direct contribution in terms of expected outputs. Thus, the current achievement level is 0%.

Table 9. Achievement level in regards with the output indicators under the SO 2.1

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
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²³ The case study report showed that while the programme is expected to generate an increase in the number of the tourist overnight stays in the addressed areas, the experience of the project ROHU 29 during Covid19 pandemic, when tourism has been affected significantly, showed that the normal flux of tourists contributes directly and rather aggressively (through the water consumption level registered at the level of accommodation units) to the drainage of thermal water in the area, thus it is affecting in a negative manner the specific objective and thus, IP 6/c.

C013 Roads: Total length of newly built roads	12,00	12,14	-	0%	No finalized project
C014 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	18,00	20,06	-	0%	No finalized project

Source: eMS data

Under the specific objective SO2.1. two consecutive projects were funded for a total of €13.9 million. Only 5.4% of the total INTERREG RO-HU development envelope was spent along this SO2.1, which is very low considering the significant implementation costs. As a result, the developments under implementation have contributed to the improvement of cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded/modernized roads, but **their impact can be considered small**. One reason for this is that relatively few improvements have already been funded in relation to the priorities and on the other hand the implemented infrastructures have mainly concerned interurban roads. In general, partners in the project and also other relevant institutions that were involved in the stakeholders' survey²⁴ consider that the project can contribute only to a medium extent to cross-border accessibility in the area addressed by the programme.

Infrastructure improvements (and background documents) in Arad County, Békés County and Curtici Town will help to improve accessibility to border areas, improve access to border crossings and relieve congested crossings. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the impacts achieved are mainly local, primarily serving the municipalities concerned, with a marginal network effect. It should be noted, however, that the improvements and preparatory materials supported by the project have provided significant support to local and regional authorities and these projects have implemented and prepared infrastructural improvements that will help people living in the border region and improve their accessibility, helping them to access the TEN-T network.

The **causal link between output indicators and result indicator** (Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T) **is moderate**, but it is important to note that the physical road network can only partially measure accessibility in the context of mobility. The main reason for this is that it does not matter where the road section is built, what network role it plays, how well it actually serves the population. The project has mainly implemented access roads and inter-municipal roads, which significantly and substantially improve the accessibility of the individual municipalities and help the transport potential of the cross-border area, but their macro-network impact is marginal. . Based on our expert opinion, challenge (CH15 – *the density and the quality of roads with cross-border impact cause mobility inconveniences directly and economic disadvantages indirectly*) and potentials (P12 - *new border crossing points and other reconstructed or improved roads can multiply the mutually beneficial interactions between people and businesses* and P13 - *Existing and potential new logistic centres contribute to enhancement of crossborder transport and business connections*) have been addressed by the projects implemented, but their impact can be considered more local.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO2.2 - Increased proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport (IP 7/c)

The table below shows the progress made at project level in terms of output target achievement for SO 2.2. Both targets have been surpassed, with 220% for indicator 7/c 1 *Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved* and with 20% for indicator 7/c 2 *Total length of newly built bicycle road*.

Table 10. Achievement level in regards with the output indicator under the SO 2.2

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
7/c 1 Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved	5,00	17,00	16,00	320%	100,00%

²⁴ Due to the fact that under SO2.1 only one project was financed and that the expected impact was not very high taking into consideration the limited budget allocated, the range of possible respondents to the 2 conducted surveys (for beneficiaries and stakeholders) was also limited. When reading the presented findings related to key actors perspectives regarding the impact of the investments made under SO 2.1, the fact that only 5 partners / representatives of project partners and 7 stakeholders (other than the beneficiaries) shared their opinion through the surveys.

7/c 2 Total length of newly built bicycle road	17,00	20,44	20,44	120%	100,00%
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Source: eMS data

Under SO2.2, Interreg V-A RO-HU financed the implementation of 4 projects for a total amount of EUR 6.4 million, representing almost 3% of the total programme budget. All the projects implemented contribute to sustainable cross-border transport, partly through the development of public transport and partly through the development of a cycling network. The **improvements implemented contribute to the increased use of sustainable transport, facilitating cross-border public transport**, but if their share within the programme were greater, a more significant impact could be achieved. Based on the conducted surveys, 66% of beneficiaries of the projects financed under SO 2.2 consider that their investments contributed to a large extent to the usage of sustainable cross-border transport means in the eligible area. On the other hand, stakeholders show a less positive perspective, 66,66% of them considering that the programme contributed to a medium extent to this expected result.

In the case study under examination, both Debrecen and Oradea have developed sustainable local public transport that improves service quality. Importantly, a cross-border public transport route planner has been developed, which contributes to increasing the sustainability of cross-border transport. The developments can be divided into 3 groups. A significant proportion of the improvements are those that support local public transport and cycling facilities (bus purchase, bus stop renovation, cycle path development, background studies), these are important project elements, but their impact can be considered indirect. Direct improvements to cross-border transport have been implemented, such as combined bicycle track/ public transport system between Socodor and Ketegyhaza, extension of existing cross-border bicycle road, and cross-border public transport route planner. These improvements will directly contribute to the achievement of the objectives. Thirdly, complementary soft activities (conferences, awareness-raising campaigns, cycling competition, etc.) support infrastructure investments, also contribute to the promotion of sustainable mobility and thus to the achievement of the objectives.

The **causal link between output indicators and the result indicator** (Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border) **is strong**, the increase of cross-border public transport services can help the achievement of the result indicator. All the improvements made have contributed to the development of public transport and cycling. Some of the projects specifically target the development of cross-border transport, thus helping to achieve the result indicator. The programme has made significant progress towards addressing the challenges (CH14 - *Deficiencies of the cross-border public transportation system hinder the economic and labour market integration*, CH16 - *Shortcomings of the bicycle road infrastructure weaken the mobility of people living in the border area*) and potentials (P13 - *Existing and potential new logistic centres contribute to enhancement of crossborder transport and business connections* and P14 - *Development of bicycle road network can contribute to increase the mobility of people and to better exploit the touristic potential*) identified by the programme, notably in the areas of public transport and cycling improvements.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO3.1 - Increased employment within the eligible area (IP 8/b)

In order to address the indicator, the evaluators analysed the eMS data of the programme. The table from below presents the values associated with the output indicator C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training.

Table 11. Achievement level in regards with the output indicator under the SO 3.1

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	10.000,00	31.598,00	26.412,00	264%	64,95%

Source: eMS data

As it is shown in the table from above, the contracted projects have already met the target of the output indicator C044, with an achievement rate of 264%. The target of the C044 output programme indicator is 10,000 participants, with a total achievement until the date of 1st of April 2023 of 26.412. All

contracted projects under SO3.1 estimated an achievement value of 31.598 participants until the end of the programme. The average achievement of outputs at project level stands at just 64,95%. But, in the case studies conducted for SO3.1, no situation of under-achievement of outputs were identified for the studied projects.

The programme **contributes to higher access level to the labour market** of the persons in the target groups of the projects, **however the effect on employment is expected to occur on a longer-term**. The projects aimed mainly to increase the availability of vocational training in the eligible area of the programme, by investing in the establishment of facilities and procurement of equipment necessary for conducting the vocational training courses. The facilities were used to accommodate the organization of vocational training courses for the respective target groups, and will be used in the future by the partners from the projects to organize further courses. The projects tailored the courses that were offered in accordance with the needs of the labour market in the eligible areas. The majority of projects developed a strategy regarding employment policy on vocational training in their respective eligible areas, which helped project beneficiaries to identify the main economic sectors in the respective eligible areas which are in high need for workforce. This facilitated a long-term vision on the use of the newly established facilities. No primary data is available on the percentage of participants at training courses that found employed. All projects achieved their targets with regards to the output indicator. The questionnaire conducted with the beneficiaries indicates that 70% of the beneficiaries believe that their projects contribute to a large/very large extent to the addressed programme result. On the other hand, stakeholders have a more pessimistic perspective, 66,67% of them considering that the programme contributes to a small extent to the current employment rate and the quality of the workforce. available for employment in the eligible area.

The **causal link between output indicator and the result indicator** for SO3.1 (*R 8/b Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population*), more explicitly the modifications in the values of the result indicator that can be attributed to the projects implemented, is **moderate**. The employment institutions that participated to the survey do not consider that the programme contribute to increasing the employment rate and the quality of work to a high extent. The case studies found that the most important results of the projects were the construction of the training facilities and/or procurement of equipment, which do contribute to the employment rate and quality of work. However, the participation to the vocational training courses do not ensure a path to employment/change of the workplace for the target group. While there are instances of participants finding a new employment as a consequence of participating to the vocational training courses, the relevant employment agencies from the region did not notice a high contribution.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO4.1 - Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible (IP 9/a)

The below table shows the cumulative progress made by the contracted projects under SO 4.1. The total planned outputs are significantly higher than programme targets. Also, for both indicators, the so far registered achievements of the projects surpassed the targets, with 21% in the case of the indicator 9/a 1 and with 10% in the case of the indicator 9/a 2.

Table 12. Achievement level in regards with the output indicators under the SO 4.1

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services	3.911.505,00	13.428.318,00	4.749.042,00	121%	74,59%
9/a 2 Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment	58,00	163,00	64,00	110%	83,08%

Source: eMS data

The programme had an **important contribution to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services in the programme area**, particularly on the Romanian-side of the border and in counties benefiting of more support (Satu Mare, Timis, Csongrád-Csanád and Bihor). Investments in most cases concentrated on key medical institutions in the respective counties (e.g., Gróf Tisza István Hospital, Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara, Békés County Central Hospital, County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea), on services responding to key health problems (e.g., cardio-

vascular diseases, emergency care) or essential for several other medical activities (e.g., laboratories). The projects have an important contribution from a preventive perspective and reach out to vulnerable categories through the information and screening campaigns organised, but such activities need to be organised by hospitals/medical institutions on a continuous basis (in synergy with other initiatives and national programmes) for a visible impact on the populations' health to be registered. In most cases analysed in depth the effects of the project go beyond the county itself, as patients come from neighbouring counties to benefit of specialised services, too. The questionnaire conducted with the beneficiaries indicates that 77,77% of them believe that their projects contribute to a large/very large extent to improved access to preventive and curative health-care services. Stakeholders also have a positive perspective, 88,89% of them considering that the programme contributes to a very large / large extent to access to preventive and curative health-care services.

Notable examples that underpin the finding above are the Angiography room and the newly set department of interventional cardiology at the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara, restructured and equipped due to the Programme, which is unique in the county area (in public hospitals), serving a considerable number of patients that did not have this possibility in Timisoara before²⁵. The project was actually recognized at the Healthcare Awards 2020 and awarded the title of "Medical Team of the Year". A significant number of health-care departments were endowed with modern equipment (e.g., 38 in the case of "RO-HU 357"²⁶) with notable results and impact at county level, e.g., for the Clinical Analysis Laboratory in Bihor County Hospital the time for samples to reach the laboratory decreased by 86% and the response time decreased by 80%, with emergency samples being delivered within 35-40 minutes of collection. Additionally, the average hospitalization time and costs per test were reduced. At the same time, on the Hungarian side, the average age of equipment in the hospital was reduced to less than ten years. Synergies are created at county level among different projects, e.g., in Bihor, where the strategic project RO_HU 449²⁷ contributes significantly to the quality of the emergency health care services in Bihor and its surrounding is improved.

The **causal link between output indicators and the result indicator** for SO4.1 ("Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area"), in other words, on the extent to which the modifications in the values of the result indicator can be attributed to the projects implemented is **strong**. While not all medical entities in the 8 counties were financed, as presented above the investments were considerable, focused on key institutions and services in at least 5 out of the 8 counties (serving also patients outside of the programme area) and the effectiveness of the projects as such, as well as the synergy between some of them at county level or in the border area (to a more limited extent) do produce a wider change from the perspective of service quality and access²⁸. Consequently, challenge 19 - *inequalities in health and social care infrastructure, worse health status on the Romanian side and also patient migration* and challenge 20 - *failure to create proper administrative conditions for cross-border health care financing and semi-legal or illegal practices*, as well as potential 17 - *based on the existing cross-border cooperation health care infrastructure and services can be better harmonized, planned to be solved or taken into consideration by the programme*, were partially addressed by the projects.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO5.1 - Improved cross-border disasters and risk management (IP 5/b)

As it is shown in the table below, the contracted projects have already met the target of the output indicator, with an achievement rate of 232%. The target of the 5/b 1 output programme indicator is 970.000 persons, with a total achievement until the date of 1st of April 2023 of 2.248.259 persons. All contracted projects under SO5.1 estimated an achievement value of 3.170.776 people, up to their finalization. The average achievement of outputs at project level is 111,87%.

Table 13. Achievement level in regards with the output indicator under the SO 5.1

²⁵ Based on National Statistics Office in Romania, in Timis County the % of deaths caused by heard diseases decreased from 48% in 2019 (3.748) to 45% in 2021 (4.568 the latest data available). With a monthly average of 40 patients, as indicated in the interviews, the project can contribute to a positive trend in this regard.

²⁶ RO-HU-357 - Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion

²⁷ Integrated project for sustainable development in the mountain area of Bihor County, improvement of access and development in health care services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations (IPHEALTH)

²⁸ While the programme, the EU and the projects emphasize the importance of access to medical services to the vulnerable categories, the indicator does not necessarily reflect this aspect.

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	970.000,00	3.170.776,00	2.248.259,00	232%	111,87%

Source: eMS data

For the specific objective SO5.1 *Improved cross-border disaster and risk management*, 8 projects were finished by the end of 2022 and other two projects are still ongoing. Their **contribution to the specific objective of the programme is rather limited**, on one hand due to the weak link between the output and result indicators and on the other, due to their limited budgets. The total budget of these 10 projects is 13,937,380.32 Euros. All 10 projects were based on sharing information on cross-border risk management between the main stakeholders and relevant authorities. The case studies focused on water management of rivers of the cross-border area mainly because floods and drought are the main sources of risks in the recent years. All stakeholders stated in the interviews that only small-scale investments could be made by the Interreg RO-HU programme, while large-scale, high added value investments could not be made because of their budget. This is also true for water management and other areas of risk management. The questionnaire conducted with the beneficiaries indicates that 81,82% of them believe that their projects contribute to a large/very large extent to improved cross-border disasters and risk management. But, in the case of programme stakeholders, only 56% of them consider that the programme contributes to a very large / large extent to the quality of the joint risk management. In addition to this the exchange of information and practices between the relevant public authorities on both sides of the border means that the cooperation regarding risk management had been developed through the years. Knowledge sharing and collaboration between water organisations over several programming periods has increased the effectiveness of risk management.

The link between the output (*Population safeguarded by the interventions*) **and result indicator** (*Improved quality of joint risk management*) **is weak**. The value of the result indicator is assessed through a questionnaire survey of relevant organisations on a Likert-scale. While, the output indicator focused on the target group of the projects, on the contrary, the result indicator focuses on those carrying out the investments. It would have been more appropriate to define a result indicator that also has a direct impact on the target group. One such indicator could be the reduction in central budget resources spent on natural disasters.

Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO6.1 - Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities (IP 11/b)

The value of the output indicator **number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives** is the most important output indicator of for PA6/IP11 of the programme. The value in already approved reports is 33 institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation, close to the programme target at 36 institutions. On the other hand, the target set by the 33 funded projects is 589. Data collected during the evaluation shows there is high potential that the project targets will be achieved. The **number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives** is the second output indicator for PA6/IP11 of the programme and represents the expression of the target groups of all projects aiming mainly at enhancing the intensity of cross-border cooperation. While the programme target was 2,000 persons, the 33 funded projects assumed 18,445 persons participating in initiatives. Moreover, the number of people actually participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives for the projects with approved reports is over 160% the value promised by funded projects.

Table 14. Achievement level in regards with the output indicator under the SO 6.1

Indicator	Programme targets	Outputs to be delivered by operations	Outputs achieved so far	% of achievement	Rate of achievement of target at project level
11/b1 Number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives	36,00	589,00*	33,00	92%	90,00%
11/b2 Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives	2.000,00	18.445,00	30.045,00	1502%	187,50%

Source: eMS data

**Even though the data reported through eMS shows that the overall planned outputs at project level surpass the programme target with 1511%, the average planned outputs at project level is approximately 6 institutions, with the exception of project RO-HU 280, where the set target is 550 institutions. Thus, the figures presented through eMS may not be valid due to an error made in the application form of the project.*

33 out of 108 projects funded by the programme are funded under PA6/IP11. This makes it the axis with the largest number of funded projects. 27% of all the programme beneficiaries (projects leaders and partners) have been involved in the implementation of PA6. However, the budget allocated to PA6 represents only 2% of the total contracted budget of approved projects. All eight counties benefited from support under PA6, but there is a difference of intensity of the support provided. 30% of project beneficiaries are from Bihor and they received 35% of the funding, although Bihor County represents only 15% of the population of the programme area²⁹.

Irrespective of the intensity of support, **the benefits of projects for improved cross-border cooperation are visible in all municipalities of the programme beneficiaries** (projects leaders and partners). Out of 81 unique programme beneficiaries (given that 8 programme beneficiaries are leaders or partners in two projects each), 42 are municipalities or county government institutions, 24 are nongovernmental organisations (associations, foundations, sport clubs) and 10 are educational or cultural institutions (schools, universities, museums and libraries). There are also three police institutions, including the border police, benefiting from PA6 and two municipality owned enterprises, in charge of providing water management. Taking into account this mix of beneficiaries and the findings of case studies, the programme provided support for intense exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge, creating professional linkages among the partner institutions. The questionnaire conducted with the beneficiaries indicates that 82,61% of them believe that their projects contribute to a large/very large extent to improved, sustainable cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, in the case of programme stakeholders, only 45,62% of stakeholders have the same opinion.

Moreover, in all cases the projects specific outputs encourage future cooperation ensuring the sustainability of the cross-border cooperation. For example, the cooperation between the Town of Aleșd, Șinteu Commune, Municipality of Marghita, the Town of Szarvas and the Town of Berettyoujfalu generated a “Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary”, that is useful for all Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the region, therefore it has both a sustainable and spill-over effect. The involved municipalities already started to plan and implement new projects based on the strategy, this representing in fact a sustainable direct effect of the project. Another example is the case of Jóna András Museum and County Museum of Satu Mare, that implemented a project in partnership with the Municipality of Csenger, Geszteréd Aranyzablya Society, the Town of Tasnad and Vedeș Commune. The two museums developed a joint archaeological digital database that supports continuous cooperation in the field of archaeology, allowing all professionals working in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu-Mare to continue cooperation on their activity beyond the project.

The **causal link between output indicators and the result indicator** for PA6 (“Increased intensity of cross-border cooperation”) in other words, the extent to which the modifications in the values of the result indicator can be attributed to the projects implemented is **very strong**. The high number and frequency of workshops and meetings organised within the projects generated a solid platform of communication on technical level among the participants on different issues, including public administration, civic engagement, education and culture promotion, sports, border security, administrative capacity for water management. In many cases the exchange of experience allowed the presentation of good practices and generated plans for new projects among partners and among other organisations in the involved municipalities. However, PA6 only covers a fraction of the municipalities in the programme area, as there are about 780 municipalities in the programme area. 84% of these municipalities are small, rural municipalities, with limited administrative capacity, including limited capacity for cross-border cooperation, and this appears to be the main reason for their absence from the V-A Romania-Hungary Programme³⁰. In this context, in order to increase the number of

²⁹ Other counties with high intensity of the programme support are Békés (17% of partners and allocated funds), Arad (12% of partners and allocated funds) and Hajdú-Bihar (11% of partners and allocated funds).

³⁰ According to data collected for the evaluation and to the “Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary” developed, as mentioned, within the one of the funded projects.

municipalities and organisations involved in cross-border cooperation, support to small municipalities and incentives for the inclusion of new partners should be provided.

3.3.2. EQ12. What are the internal and external factors facilitating that contribution?

The following table summarises the relevant findings presented under:

- *Section 3.1 General effectiveness of the programme* in relation with the facilitating factors identified at the **macro-level** (public policy level and general status of the addressed sectors) and **meso-level** (programme design related factors),
- *Section 3.2 Project level effectiveness*, presenting **meso-level** (management and implementation of the programme related factors) and **micro-level** facilitating factors (project level),
- *Evaluation Question 11, referring to current and expected contribution of projects to programme SOs.*

Table 15. Factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to each SO

SO of the programme	Factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to each SO
SO 1.1	- Official agreements signed between Romanian and Hungary government in regards with the management of water resources
SO 1.2	- Interest of relevant stakeholders in filling in the existing gap related to human and financial resources deployed through the public system (especially in Romania) for environment protection
SO 2.1	- The prioritization of transport sector by policy-makers and visible increase of awareness regarding the importance of a high-quality public transportation systems
SO 2.2	- Increased awareness at the level of stakeholders (national, county and local level administrations) in regards with the importance of promoting environmentally friendly means of transportation
SO 3.1	- Reorganization of the vocational training system in Hungary, by being placed under the coordination of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology, leading to more responsiveness from public responsible institutions in the area of employment
SO 4.1	- Significant budget allocated to PA 4 and thus, very high potential of impact
SO 5.1	- Official agreements signed between Romanian and Hungary government in regards with the management of water resources - EU policy on the risk management of floods and more specifically the integration of the EU Flood Directive into the national legislations
SO 6.1	- Interest of eligible entities in developing cross border cooperation projects, based on already trust releasing established between institutions / organization from both sides of the border
Horizontal factors	- Complementarities and synergies created between the projects financed under the programme and also with other public intervention (<i>with notable examples under SOs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 4.1 and 5.1</i>) - Coherent logic of intervention under SOs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1 - Design of the projects in terms of cross-border character which is strong under PAs 1, 2 and 6 - Experience of beneficiaries in the sectors addressed by the projects and in implementing projects with external financing, and in most cases, with sufficient expertise and financial capacity - Involvement of stakeholders in the design phase of the projects - Multiculturality of communities located in the border area, which facilitated communication - Strong partnerships, in many cases developed previously to accessing Interreg V-A RO-HU funds - Effective support provided to the beneficiaries by programme authorities - Loosening of the regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary - Modification of exchange rates between euro and forint was an economic factor that facilitated the projects' implementation (mainly identified at the level of OS 3.1, but also with a horizontal impact)

Source: Qualitative analysis conducted by the evaluation experts

3.3.3. EQ13. Did the interventions financed under the programme produce the intended effects? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Not many unintended effects were observed within the in-depth analysis conducted for projects included in the sample for Case Studies. Nevertheless, some of them are of utmost importance for the development of the sectors addressed by the projects. In terms of **protecting natural heritage**, the interventions financed under the programme managed to cover a significant gap of human and financial resources generated by the legislative change related to the responsible institutions in regards with the management of natural protected areas in Romania. In regards with **TEN-T infrastructure**, the examples analysed within the case studies, showed that the investments made in terms of new or modernized roads contributed to the overall prioritization of area of intervention at county and local level in both sides of the border. As an example, project RO-HU 390 certainly contributed to this change of paradigm/perspective, facilitating the prioritization of the public transport system at the local and regional level through its very visible results. Moreover, the development of the road infrastructure has an indirect impact to encourage workforce exchange between Romania and Hungary. In the area of **employment**, the activities and results of the analysed projects generated spill-over effects. The

supported centres that were built with the scope to accommodate vocational trainings courses and other types of employment initiatives, also started to host social and cultural events. Moreover, the results of the financed projects determine other institutions to replicate the models and develop similar facilities. In the area of **health**, the cases studies conducted highlighted some cases, the automation of laboratories required ongoing professionalization of medical staff, but this process has not been fully successful. This generated significant downsizing of personnel. Based on the collected data, in the case of project RO-HU 357, 20% - 30% of the human resources did not manage to adapt to the new requirements of the purchased equipment. On the other hand, the interventions made with the support of the programme increased the prestige of the institutions and medical staff at regional level. An important unexpected effect in the area of **risk management** was identified. During the implementation of the projects related to common management of emergency financed through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary programme, many beneficiaries faced a common bottleneck related to the limitative legislation of both countries, that does not allow common emergency interventions. Thus, responsible institutions from both sides of the border join efforts in making the necessary steps for changing the relevant legislation. This process is currently ongoing. In the area of **cooperation**, one case in particular highlighted a novel type of indirect effects. In the case of project RO-HU 179, it was especially fortunate that the intervention supported the digitalization of the public administrations in the five partner municipalities just before the COVID-19 pandemic.

From a **general perspective**, the programme accelerated the development of several types of activities after restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic were abolished and thus, the recovery after COVID 19. This was due to the already signed projects, ongoing works and the need to finalize at an accelerated pace the soft activities that were resumed.

In terms of **indirect effects**, these are the continuation of common projects and strengthening of collaboration between partners. The data collected and analyzed showed that in most cases where in depth analyses have been conducted, partners are planning future common projects and looking for external sources of financing, including current Interreg Romania – Hungary Programme.

3.4. General impact of the programme

3.4.1. EQ14. Is the expected change produced at the level of the eligible area?

Level of influence in the eligible area and for the entire population of the eligible area

The programme is successful in producing change at the level of the eligible area for a large number of persons. The programme covers the entire eligible area and there are no parts of the area that are not covered at all by any project. From the perspective of the population covered by the projects results, and therefore benefiting from the programme, the programme has a very good coverage:

- The number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings is over 26,400, representing about 1% of the adult (25-64 years old) population in the programme area. The average proportion of population participating in learning activities at national level is 7.9% in Hungary and 5.4% in Romania (in December 2022), according to Eurostat³¹, but this includes also students' participation in formal education. Therefore, we may assess that the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme is serving well the population of the eligible area, contributing to a medium extent to the population learning and employment, covering a satisfactory share of the adult population.
- The population having access to improved health services is surpassing the population of the programme area, with a total of 4,749,042 persons being served by investments in the healthcare infrastructure, endowment and the development of competences of healthcare professionals. This number shows the programme is covering very well, with benefits in the field of healthcare services, the population of the programme area and there are some spill-over effects. However, as already mentioned in the analysis of the impact of the SO4.1, the programme had an important contribution to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services in the programme area, particularly on the Romanian-side of the border and in counties benefiting of more support (Satu Mare, Timis, Csongrád and Bihor).

³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20proportion%20of,in%202020%2C%20see%20Table%201.

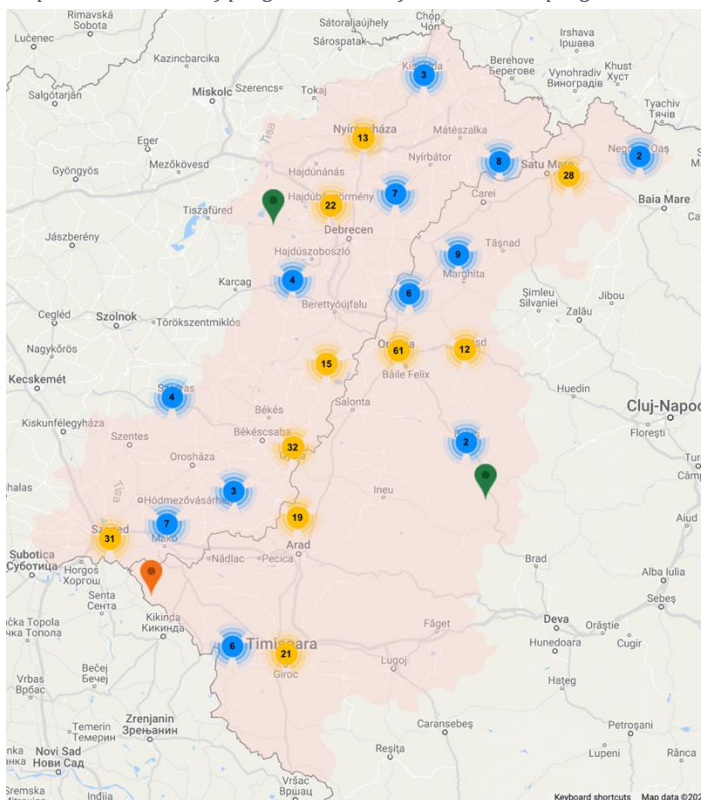
- The population safeguarded by improved emergency services is 2,248,259 persons, representing almost 60% of the population of the programme area. This number shows the programme is covering very well, with benefits in the field of risk prevention and disaster management, the population of the programme area. Considering that previous CBC programmes in the area also generated results in this field, the influence of the cross-border cooperation in the programme area is very high.

From a geographical perspective, we assume that a concentration of projects and programme beneficiaries (projects leaders and partners) represents an indicator for the results generated by the programme. There are over 780 municipalities in the programme eligible area and over 3.8 million inhabitants. The programme beneficiaries (projects leaders and partners) have their headquarters in only 82 municipalities. Only 39 of beneficiaries are rural municipalities (villages) out of the 662 villages. The larger number of projects and programme beneficiaries are in Bihor. The largest number of beneficiaries representing rural municipalities: 15 villages are also in Bihor, compared to seven in Satu Mare, five in Békés, four in Hajdú-Bihar, three in Csongrád-Csanád and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, two in Arad and in Timiș.

Some projects cover entire counties, therefore their results are expected to be distributed in a larger area, although they appear to be located in county capitals. However, the analysis of the portfolio of projects and the case studies shows that the location of results is usually closer to the border even in projects implemented and with results at county level. The outer margins of the counties within the programme area are less covered by projects results. For example, the projects funded under SO1.1 are implemented for the management of rivers and channels very close to the border (Muresel, Ier, Ier Legator channels, Cigányka-ér main channel and Battonyai Nagy canal).

The map of projects partners distribution shows that projects are concentrated in the cities that are capitals of counties. Moreover, there are areas where no project is implemented. For example, no city, town or village in the east of Timiș county is benefiting directly from the Romania-Hungary CBC programme (not even the largest city of Lugoj). The same issue appears in the west of Csongrád-Csanád and Békés counties in Hungary and the east of the county of Arad in Romania. The programme covers better the northern part of the programme area, including the east of the Romanian counties and the west of the Hungarian ones: Bihor, Hajdú-Bihar, Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.

Map 1. Distribution of programme beneficiaries in the programme area territory



Source: keep.eu

The distribution of the projects and therefore of the programme results appears to be linked with two factors:

- There is a more intensive and probable cross-border cooperation between institutions and organisations closer to the border and the geographical proximity is an important enabling factor;
- There is an effect of the Joint Secretariat headquarters in Oradea, determining a more intensive accession of the opportunities provided by the programme in the proximity of the JS: more in Romania than in Hungary, concentrated in Bihor and to a lesser extent in Satu Mare and with a better geographical coverage in the north compared to the south of the programme area;
- There is a more intensive and probable cross-border cooperation in large cities compared to smaller municipalities;

The same characteristics of the concentration of projects: closer to the border, closer to the Joint Secretariat (JS) and in large cities are visible in other cross-border programmes. For comparison we examined the V-A Austria – Hungary Programme, with a concentration of projects close to the border (if eligible counties are divided in two halves, one closer and one further from the border, there are more projects in the half closer to the border) and in large cities; V-A Hungary – Croatia Programme, with a concentration of projects close to the border, in V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme, with a concentration of projects close to the border, in the city of the JS (although not a very large city) and in the largest cities of the programme area. We can see similar distributions in the programmes: IPA CBC Romania – Serbia where a large number of projects (almost 20%) are implemented in the largest city of the area, where the Joint Secretariat is located (Timișoara in Romania) and in IPA CBC Hungary – Serbia where a large number of projects are implemented in the largest two cities of the programme area: Szeged and Novis Sad. There are similar cases in other EU regions as well, for example, the same pattern of projects concentration, with a significant number of projects in the city where the JS is located can be observed in the V-A Italy – Slovenia Programme and in the V-A Greece – Italy Programme etc. However, for the Hungary - Slovakia - Romania - Ukraine ENI CBC Programme this effect is not observable. Moreover, other programmes, as V-A Belgium – France, V-A Belgium - The Netherlands, V-A Bulgaria – Greece, V-A Czech Republic – Poland, V-A Germany – Denmark etc.

Therefore, although the pattern of the projects distribution/concentration specific to the V-A Romania-Hungary programme is not unique and is frequently present in multiple regions of the EU, a more inclusive distribution of projects in the programme area can be achieved and is achieved by other similar programmes.

Data collection shows there is a link between the geographical presence of the programme beneficiaries and the effects of the programme, because there are very few spill-over effects that are already generated, and few such effects expected. This is, as already mentioned, depending on size of the programme.

Therefore, the programme generates change (at the intensity analysed under EQ 1) at the level of the eligible area, but with a larger intensity in areas closer to the border and in the north and to a lesser intensity in areas further from the border. This concentration of results contributes to the enhancement of cross-border cooperation, where programme beneficiaries take profit of the geographical proximity as a supporting factor and develop projects in partnership with direct or indirect effects related to their collaboration. However, the fact that projects and results are not present in a large number in the west of the Hungarian counties and the east of the Romanian counties limits the capacity of the programme to generate results beyond the margins of the programme area. This geographical distribution of projects also limits the programme's capacity to enhance cross-border cooperation in municipalities and areas where it is not already present.

Spill-over effect of the programme for other areas in Romania and Hungary

Case studies and the interviews with the programme stakeholders show there is very limited spill-over effect of the programme in other areas in Romania and Hungary in all fields covered by the programme with one exception: the support for healthcare services development.

As already presented, projects funded under OS 4.1 reported that over 4.7 million persons have access to improved health services. There is an overlap in reporting the number of end beneficiaries, as a citizen of Oradea, for example, has access to the improvements supported by all projects funded under OS 4.1 for health-care providers in the city, and there may be a fair amount of multiple counting of the persons

with access to improved health services considering the large number of services supported. However, there is a high probability that persons from neighbouring counties with less developed health services, especially in Romania, where the more investments have been made, use the services located in the eligible area. Therefore, there is a high potential for a spill-over effect of OS 4.1 in the counties of Sălaj, Maramureş and Caraş-Severin in Romania.

The limited spill-over effect of the programme is also linked with the concentration of projects closer to the border and further from the neighbouring counties in both countries: Romania and Hungary.

Moreover, case studies show that beneficiaries and partners in the V-A Romania-Hungary cross-border projects do not implement activities in partnership with other institutions or organisations in order to set off the spill-over effect of cross-border cooperation in other areas. This is happening because most projects are small in scale and the large (strategic) projects are supporting local infrastructure to be used by future cross-border activities (with the exception of strategic projects funded under SO 4.1). Moreover, the way projects are managed is compartmentalised and it happens very rarely that results from one programme are capitalized (disseminated, used, reused and enhanced) in another programme in another area/region.

3.4.2. EQ15. Were the strategic projects able to increase the impact of the programme as compared to regular projects?

A total of nine³² projects received strategic support. They have been selected as part of restricted calls based only on concept notes and, afterwards, they received support for the development of full applications.

The strategic projects include:

- Three projects have been funded under PA1, SO1.2 supporting cooperation for the historical and cultural heritage of the region, respectively:
 - o The projects: “Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cultural incubator for performing arts” and “Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage” that supported the development of better infrastructure for sharing, creating, protecting and promoting the common cultural values and the flexibility for cultural performance in the cross-border area, especially in Debrecen and Oradea.
 - o The project: “Easing Access to Systemic Discovery of Our Origins and Resources” supporting the development of tourism in the historical land of Sătmar, based both on investments for the renovation of cultural sites, building of infrastructure dedicated to tourist information and exhibitions and the implementation of tourism promotion activities.
- One project has been funded under PA2 for the improvement of cross-border accessibility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to the RTT infrastructure (TEN-T) in Arad and Bekes counties, project “Connecting communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in the Romanian - Hungarian border area” supporting a direct, shorter connection between the border checkpoints from Nădlac/Nagylak, Turnu/Battonya, Variaşu Mic/Dombegyhaz, Grăniceri/Elek and Vărşand/Gyula, as an alternative to national roads DN7 and DN 79, thus improving the traffic flow on the congested national roads and relieving the overcrowded border checkpoint from Nădlac/Nagylak.
- One project has been funded under PA3 to support development of capacity for professional trainings and employment and the delivery of professional trainings and employment services in Timiş and Csongrád-Csanád counties: project: “Joint Employment-Driven Initiative”.
- Four projects have been funded under PA4 in order to improve prevention and health-care in the cross-border region. The funded strategic projects under PA4 covered all eight counties in the programme area. They are:
 - o “Development and Testing of Efficient Screening and Prevention Programs”;
 - o “Integrated project for sustainable development in the mountain area of Bihor County, improvement of access and development in health care services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations”;

³² By the cut-off date of the Report, 10 major projects were financed through the Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary Programme. Nevertheless, between the cutoff-date and the time when this report was drafted (July – August 2023) one contract for a major project under PA 6, namely RO-HU 453, was terminated.

- “Babies Across Borders - Connecting Health Services in The Field of Obstetrics - Gynecology and Neonatal Care Between Emergency Clinical County Hospital Pius Brinzeu Timisoara And The Pediatric Clinic Of Szeged”;
- “ROcHUs - Care for health in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties”.

About 50% of the total budget of contracted projects was allocated to the strategic projects, representing a total of almost €109 million. Almost 13% out of this amount (over €14 million) was allocated to preparing the projects. Representing half of the financial support provided by the programme, there is a high expectation among stakeholders that, on the long-term, these projects will generate a more visible and significant impact compared to other projects.

The large budget allocation and the need for preparatory support for these projects occurred because they represent the largest infrastructure investments within the programme. Therefore, these projects needed both important funding and time for technical projects elaboration and significant budgets for constructions, works and endowments.

The main results of the strategic projects are the infrastructures (buildings, roads) dedicated to promotion of cultural heritage and employment, to better transportation and healthcare services for citizens in the cross-border region. Additionally, the cross-border cooperation has been supported within the strategic project both as a direct result (to a lesser extent), through some activities, and as an indirect result (to a larger extent), as the project management teams needed to cooperate for a long period of time and to cover a diverse range of administrative and technical issues.

However, some of the interviewed stakeholders have been critical concerning the strategic projects, because they are using a large part of the programme budget and have comparatively fewer beneficiaries/Euro invested among the citizens in the cross-border area compared to regular projects. There are opinions underlying that more citizens can benefit from the programme with less administrative burdens and a larger number of smaller projects and no strategic projects.

However, the strength of the strategic projects seems to be their sustainability. They are expected to be sustainable, as they offer significant hard/infrastructure support for the continuation of activities on promotion of cultural heritage and employment in each country and as cross-border activities. They also provide conditions to better healthcare services on both sides of the border and these conditions are of high quality and expected to be long lasting. The long-term results of the strategic project under PA2 - accessibility are expected in improved conditions, speed and safety of road transportation in the border area, facilitating thus more cross-border exchanges for a long period of time.

On the other hand, the existing infrastructure for border crossing between the two countries is limited (as long lines at border-crossing points prove) and this can affect the sustainability of the projects. The delayed accession of Romania to Schengen is also delaying the capacity of the projects to generate a more visible and extended impact. Moreover, the infrastructure for border crossing between the two countries is not frequent enough to support cross-border cooperation in an intensified way. In this context the sustainability of all projects, including strategic ones, in terms of cross-border cooperation can be also limited.

3.4.3. EQ16. To what extent did the programme add benefits to the cross-border regional development and complement and enhance the effect of other related policies or strategies?

Contributing, together with the results of other EU funded programmes and national policies, to development and achievements in the programme area

In both countries, the complementarity with national investments (from national budgets) and with other EU programmes, including the regional development programmes, has been ensured in two ways:

- During the programming phase, both the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme and other EU funded programmes in Romania and Hungary paid special attention to ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlapping.
- The Monitoring Committee (MC), including representatives of the main funding institutions and authorities in the two countries, is performing projects' selection, ensuring that complementarities are indeed present and that the overlapping and double funding are avoided.

Representatives of respective ministries (matching areas of intervention) have decision making role as members of MC. They monitor overall implementation of the Programme and have the opportunity to participate in all processes important to Programme implementation, from approving the Programme

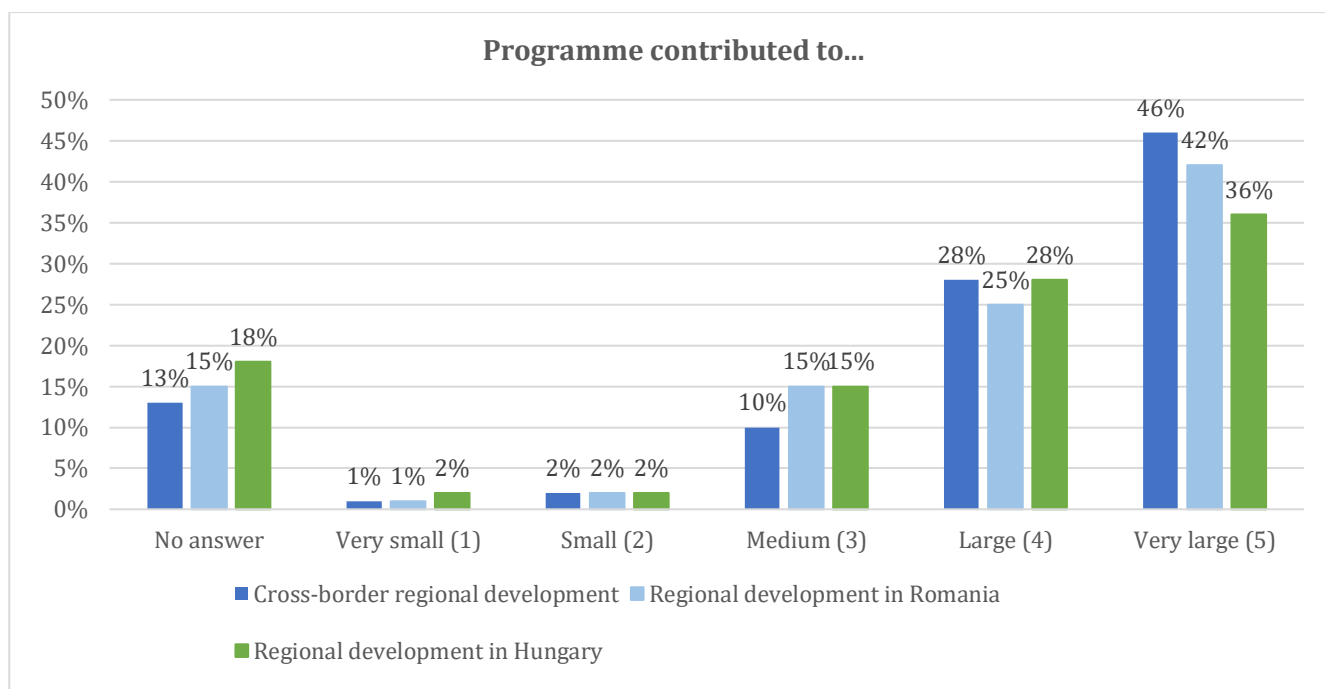
to approving projects to be financed within the call for proposals. Their role is also to check if respective proposed action is overlapping with other funds and investments.

Complementarities with other investments and projects (especially EU funded) in the programme area are ensured in the following files:

- The field of environment protection funded under PA 1 of the Programme is complementary with funding under the Large Infrastructure Operational Programme in Romania (SO3.2), the Environmental and Energy Efficiency Operational Programme in Hungary (SO1.3, 2.1, 4.1 and 4.2), the LIFE programme of the European Commission, the funding from the Environment Fund Agency in Romania;
- The field of protection and promotion of cultural and historical heritage under SO1.2 is complementary with funding under the Regional Operational Programme in Romania (SO5.1 and 7.1), funding under the Human Resource Development Operational Programme in Hungary (SO1.3);
- The field of transport infrastructure connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to the RTT infrastructure (TEN-T) funded under SO2.1 is complementary with funding under the Regional Operational Programme in Romania (SO6.1), funding under the Integrated Transport Development Operational Programme (SO1.1) and the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (SO1.3) in Hungary;
- The field of sustainable mobility funded under SO2.1 is complementary with funding under the Regional Operational Programme in Romania (SO3.2), the Economic Development and Innovation in Hungary (SO 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.2);
- The field of employment support funded under PA3 is complementary with funding under the Human Capital Development Operational Programme in Romania (PA3), the funding under the Human Resource Development Operational Programme in Hungary (SO1.4 and 1.6). There is also complementarity with the national programmes and activities of the public employment services in the two countries and with Erasmus+ in promotion learning and skills development;
- The field of healthcare infrastructure and services development funded under PA4 is complementary with funding under the Regional Operational Programme in Romania (PA8), funding under the Human Resource Development Operational Programme (SO1.8), the Integrated Transport Development Operational Programme (SO4.1) in Hungary, the funding under the Programme HELATH of the European Commission;
- The field of emergency and disaster management funded under PA5 is complementary with funding under the Large Infrastructure Operational Programme in Romania (OS5.1) and funding under the Environmental and Energy Efficiency Operational Programme in Hungary (SO1.4 and 1.6);
- The field of administrative capacity, funded under PA6 is complementary with several investments in administrative capacity in the Romanian and Hungarian Operational Programme, as well as the Europe for Citizen programme of the European Commission, although the Interreg V-A programme has a specific element covered: the cross-border cooperation that is not specific to any other national or UE-wide programme. On the other hand, several counties are not only part of the eligible area for Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, but also part of the eligible area for IPA/ERDF cooperation programmes between Hungary and Romania and Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. These programmes allow for complementary development of projects aiming at regional development.

The surveys conducted with the programme beneficiaries and the stakeholders confirms that the programme added benefits to the regional development in Romania and Hungary at least to a medium extent. 67% of the programme beneficiaries and the stakeholders declared that the programme has a large or very large contribution to regional development in Romania and 64% of them declared that the programme has a large or very large contribution to regional development in Hungary.

Figure 17. Programme contribution to the regional development – perspective of beneficiaries and programme stakeholders



Source: Survey with programme beneficiaries and survey with stakeholders. Combined analysis of the answer to the same question. Number of valid answers analysed =130

Concerning the cross-border regional development, 75% of the programme beneficiaries and the stakeholders declared that the programme has a large or very large contribution to it and only 3% consider the contribution to be small or very small.

Contribution, together with other EU funded programmes and national policies, to the cross-border regional development in the programme area

Overall, the programme area registered good progress regarding regional (GDP and human capital) development until 2019, with raising life expectancy, lowering rates of social exclusion and unemployment. As expected, the pandemic and the international geostrategic context brought challenges since 2020 to both the economic and human capital development. Especially from the economic perspective, the macroeconomic indicators show a stagnation.

The health infrastructure started in a good position at the beginning of the programming period, in 2014, compared to the EU average and it is now even better positioned. The performance indicators regarding the healthcare services are similar to the European ones, especially in counties hosting university centres (Timiș, Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar). However, as showed, the programme stakeholders are not identifying a progress in the capacity to deliver healthcare services of the healthcare providers in the programme area. Moreover, the distribution of public health units 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 natural and cultural heritage of the region is partly valorised and the existing roads and tourism infrastructure is partly supporting sustainable development in the programme area. As the strategic analysis for the Interreg VI-A Romania – Hungary Programme shows, the progress in the region regarding the protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage and infrastructure development is present, but slow and under the needed level for significant regional development.

In order to answer the question on the programme contribution to the cross-border regional development, the evaluation team applied the funding framework methodology. There are several EU funded programmes, under the cohesion policy, that we found similar with the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, in the sense that they have the potential to contribute to the same results. There are also other CBC programmes that are implemented in some of the counties in the evaluated

programme area that have been considered. Projects funded in the programme area in direct or delegated management by the EU Commission (for example the LIFE programme, Erasmus+ programme), have not been included. The complete methodology used for the funding framework, including the method used to calculate the value allocated to counties in the programme area is presented in [Annex 11](#).

The funding framework methodology was applied only to calculate the relative contribution of the V-A Romania-Hungary Programme compared to other EU funded programmes. Although national programmes and investments are also made in the programme area and in the sectors covered by the programme, the type of available information related to both Romanian and Hungarian national programmes is not consistent from programme to programme and this heterogeneity of information represents an important limitation in applying the funding framework methodology.³³

Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme represents 8.65% of the EU funds allocated in the programme area under the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes (INTERREG V-A Slovakia – Hungary, Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme, Interreg-IPA CBC Hungary-Serbia Programme, 2014 - 2020 Romania - Ukraine ENI CBC, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020).

As expected, the programme contribution to the cross-border regional development is high in areas where the programme allocation is high. The funding framework shows that the programme has a significant contribution – surpassing 34% of the funds allocated in the programme area within the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes, to:

- The use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area, corresponding to results of SO1.2;
- The improved preventive and curative medical services in the eligible area, corresponding to results of SO4.1.

The programme also has an important contribution to increasing employment, or employability in the programme area, with over 17% of the EU allocations.

³³ Although there are many Hungarian and Romanian national-level programs that target individually each of the relevant Specific Objectives defined in the RO-HU CBC Interreg Programme under evaluation, it is beyond the capacity of the current assessment to summarise the national funding allocated in the specific areas (counties), due to several reasons. First, many national funding programs are - while adding national funds as well - co-funded from various EU programs, therefore duplicating our analysis. Second, the national funding system is rather fragmented, and data is not presented in a systematic way. Third, even in case of availability of yearly funding dedicated for specific objectives, the exact allocation according to counties is not available as public information therefore it is not possible to determine how much of those financial means have reached our specific target areas.

Table 16. The funding framework table: comparison of input of different programmes

CBC RO-HO - Specific objectives	Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary		Total other EU funds		Other CBC		Operational Programmes in Romania (ERDF+ESF)		Operational programmes in Hungary (ERDF+ESF)	
		% from EU support		% from total		% from total		% from total		% from total
SO 1.1 Improved quality management of transboundary rivers and groundwater	5.950.345	1,29%	455.714.773	98,71%	16.929.511	3,67%	182.485.393	39,53%	256.299.869	55,52%
SO 1.2 Sustainable use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area	47.800.566	36,40%	83.534.083	63,60%	10.544.373	8,03%	41.654.280	31,72%	31.335.431	23,86%
SO 2.1 Improved cross-border accessibility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to the RTT infrastructure (TEN-T)	13.837.671	7,75%	164.601.739	92,25%	8.130.518	4,56%	79.925.822	44,79%	76.545.398	42,90%
SO 2.2: Increase the percentage of passengers using sustainable forms of transport – with low carbon emissions and low noise level – for cross-border travel	6.417.914	0,65%	980.785.569	99,35%	0	0,00%	17.864.976	1,81%	962.920.592	97,54%
SO 3.1 Increase employment within the eligible area	40.590.400	17,53%	191.012.207	82,47%	5.627.954	2,43%	97.000.000	41,88%	88.384.253	38,16%
SO 4.1 Improved preventive and curative medical services in the eligible area	85.497.325	34,04%	165.670.882	65,96%	21.695.406	8,64%	38.326.982	15,26%	105.648.495	42,06%
SO 5.1 Improved disaster and cross-border risk management	13.937.380	6,04%	216.811.254	93,96%	6.820.184	2,96%	8.672.722	3,76%	201.318.348	87,25%
SO 6.1 Intensification of sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities	4.457.280	8,09%	50.631.879	91,91%	0	0,00%	18.134.943	32,92%	32.496.936	58,99%
Total	218.488.881	8,65%	2.308.762.387	91,35%	69.747.946	2,76%	484.065.119	19,15%	1.754.949.321	69,44%

Source: Processed by the authors of the evaluation report, based on public data on contracted projects

From a national perspective, the programme complements very well the investments planned in each country under the cohesion policy for healthcare services and infrastructure: the investments in Hungary, supported by Operational Programmes, are high, while investments supported by the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme are smaller compared to the ones done in Romania. On the other hand, in Romania the programme allocated to healthcare services and infrastructure 159% of the funds allocated by the Regional Operational Programme in the four counties: Arad, Bihor, Satu Mare and Timiș.

There are no programmes supporting exactly similar activities to the ones supported under the SO 6.1 supporting directly cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities from Romania and Hungary. However, there are programmes supporting institutional development and capacity, that is a prerequisite for the cross-border cooperation both according to the V-A Romania-Hungary Programme theory of change and to experts' opinion. Nevertheless, among EU funded programmes, only the V-A Romania-Hungary Programme supports cross-border cooperation.

It is also important to note that there are several Hungarian funding programs that also support cross-border activities, especially cultural, sport, educational and economic activities, providing funding or co-funding for projects and activities mostly in the Transylvanian area (but not only in the crossborder areas). Such examples are the National Cultural Fund³⁴, Csoóri Sándor Fund³⁵, various Funds managed by the Bethlen Gábor Fund³⁶, and many others. Similar programmes are not funded in Romania.

3.4.4. EQ17. Are there any regions or fields where the effects are disproportionately low or high, negatively or positively?

Different levels of the programme results, in different fields

Concerning the fields where the effects are the most visible and the most important, it is difficult to compare effects in very different fields, from water management, to mobility, healthcare and administrative capacity and cooperation. The analysis is based on two elements:

- The financial allocations at SO level and even under this level (projects under SO1.2 Sustainable use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area can be separated in projects supporting the promotion and protection of the natural heritage and projects for the promotion and protection of the historical and cultural heritage).
- The expert assessment of the importance of the programme effects in each field, based on the case studies, interviews and the survey with stakeholders.

Table 17. Level of investments and results by Specific Objective

Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary – Specific Objectives	Contracted budget	Share of the SO in the programme contracted budget	Level of effects (high / low visible/important effects)
SO 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies (IP 6/b)	5.950.345	2,72%	Low level effects: with local visibility and importance and low cross-border impact
SO 1.2 Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure (IP 7/b)- projects on the natura heritage	17.183.476	7,86%	Low level effects: with local visibility and importance
SO 1.2 Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area (IP 6/c)- projects on the historic and cultural heritage	30.617.090	14,01%	High level effects: with high visibility and importance at local level and in the cross-border area of the cities where investments have been supported
SO 2.1 Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure (IP 7/b)	13.837.671	6,33%	Low level effects: with local visibility and importance and medium cross-border impact
SO 2.2: Increased proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport (IP 7/c)	6.417.914	2,94%	Medium level effects: with local visibility and importance, but high cross-border impact in the areas: Oradea-Debrecen and Jimbolia-Morahalom
SO 3.1 Increased employment within the eligible area (IP 8/b)	40.590.400	18,58%	Medium level effects because the programme is not directly targeting the labour market, but only preparedness for employment (employability)
SO 4.1 Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area (IP 9/a)	85.497.325	39,13%	Very high-level effects, with high visibility and importance at regional level, but with medium cross-border impact

³⁴ <https://nka.hu/>

³⁵ <https://emet.gov.hu/csoori-sandor-alap-program>

³⁶ <https://bgazrt.hu/tamogatasok/>

Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary – Specific Objectives	Contracted budget	Share of the SO in the programme contracted budget	Level of effects (high / low visible/important effects)
SO 5.1 Improved cross-border disasters and risk management (IP 5/b)	13.937.380	6,38%	Medium level effects
SO 6.1 Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities (IP 11/b)	4.457.280	2,04%	Medium level effects, but with high cross-border impact

Source: Authors assessment, based on EMS data, case studies, interviews and the survey with stakeholders

The budget allocated for SO 4.1 „ Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area” represents about 40% of the total contracted budget of the programme (for PA1-6) and although funds and results are not evenly distributed in region and there is no visible increase of the healthcare delivery capacity, there are significant benefits in the healthcare field in the entire programme area, especially in the capacity to provide screening and testing, therefore preventive services. Compared to the other fields, the benefits in the healthcare field are significantly higher.

Another field with significant allocations and that appears to register important and innovative benefits in the area is the protection and promotion of the historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area, funded under SO1.2.

In both fields with significant positive results that are more important compared to the other fields, there have been several strategic projects implemented (three projects under SO1.2 promoting the historical and cultural heritage and four projects under SO4.1 supporting healthcare infrastructure development and services). This supports the finding presented above on the impact of the strategic projects. The scale of the investments is increasing the potential of strategic projects for results with impact at regional level and beyond. Therefore, the evaluation finds that the strategic projects are able to increase the impact of the programme, especially in the sectors where small and local investments have a very limited impact at regional level and remain of importance only at community level: healthcare and protection and promotion of the historical and cultural cross-border heritage.

The evaluation finds that effects at a medium level have been achieved under PA3. The outputs of the funded projects are useful in ensuring and raising skills and competence development in the programme area. But there are both external factors (like the COVID-19 pandemic, the armed conflict in Ukraine and the digitalisation and development of AI) and internal factors (the fact that businesses are not eligible) that limit the effects of PA3 - employment. Without targeting the labour market, namely the employer, PA3 has effects on the employability (preparedness for employment), but it does not ensure long lasting effects on employment.

Less results are visible in the field of protection and promotion of the natural endowment and heritage of the programme area, including the management of cross-border rivers and groundwater funded under SO1.1 and SO1.2 (the projects aiming at preserving the natural heritage) and in the fields of transportation and mobility. This is linked with the limited allocation of funds, but also with external factors influencing the respective fields.

The investments in the environment (including water management) and natural heritage protection and promotion are made in a context of ever-increasing environmental challenges, climate changes affecting the water supplies and habitats, therefore their impact is limited considering also the small amount of funding allocated.

The investments in transportation and mobility (the fields covered by PA2) are, first of all, small compared to the investments in other fields. Moreover, the delayed accession to Schengen of Romania is limiting the impact of investments supporting the cross-border mobility through improvements of roads and bike lines and the development of public transport services. On the other hand, we must underline that the development of public transport between the two countries, in the context of the border checking requirements, was low. Developing public transport options between Oradea and Debrecen and between Jimbolia and Morahalom represents an important step forward, although in the field of mobility the overall effects of the programme are smaller than in other areas.

Different levels of the programme support, as condition for effects in different counties

As already showed in the analysis under the evaluation question 14, the distribution of the projects and allocated funds is not even in the programme area. Consequently, more results are expected:

- closer to the border,
- in large cities, especially the county capitals and
- in the north of the programme area.

Although the main aim of the programme is to support the cross-border cooperation and, therefore, the distribution of funds by counties is less important compared to the programme capacity to contribute to cooperation between the two countries, the question on disproportionate programme effects in different regions entails an analysis of the distribution of funds and projects results in the covered counties. Although allocation of funds does not guarantee effects, the general assumption under the analysis in this report (also present in the funding framework analysis presented above) is that the intensity of funding is a proxy for the intensity of effects.

Areas that are less served by the programme and where the programme results are less visible are, therefore: the outer parts of the programme area (the west of Hungarian counties and the east of Romanian counties in the programme area) and the rural areas.

The county that benefits the most is Bihor. 11% of the programme area population lives in Bihor, but the county benefits from almost a quarter of the programme contracted budget (24%). There are 58 beneficiaries from Bihor, with headquarters in 21 municipalities (out of 78 in the country).

The second well covered county is Satu Mare. 9% of the programme area population lives in Satu Mare county, but 16% of the programme contracted budget is committed to beneficiaries in this county.

Table 18. Distribution of allocated funds by county, compared to the distribution of the population

County	Total project value/partners in county (€)	% budget committed	% population of the county
Bihor	52.657.403	24%	11%
Satu Mare	34.228.579	16%	9%
Arad	26.577.175	12%	15%
Csongrád-Csanád	24.850.309	11%	14%
Hajdú-Bihar	24.493.460	11%	18%
Timiş	23.332.398	11%	10%
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	20.345.852	9%	15%
Békés	11.386.222	5%	9%
Total	218.548.881		

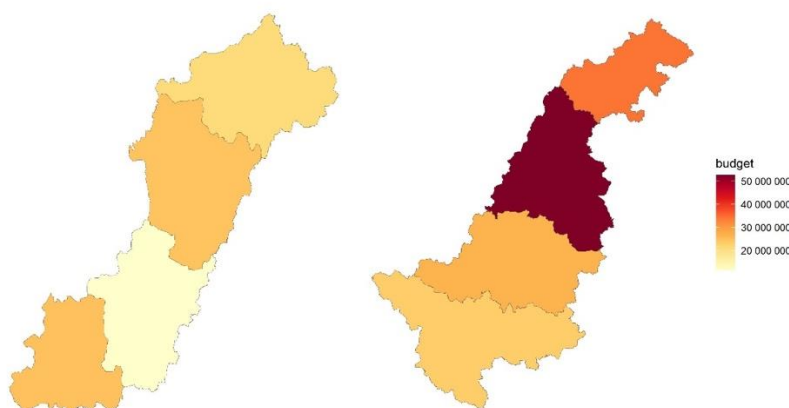
Source: eMS and statistical offices data processed by authors

As visible in the table, the budget committed to programme beneficiaries in the Hungarian counties in the programme area are comparatively lower compared to their share of population.

On the other hand, data or information analysed for this evaluation report showing significant differences in effects in different counties is scarce. Project beneficiaries report indicators at project level, not broken down by county. However, case studies confirm the assumption that differences in funds allocations are influencing the effects. Under SO 2.2 dedicated to accessibility, where road infrastructure was supported, the bulk of the budget was spent in Romania and the most important effects are produced in Romania, in Arad county.

Figure 18. Intensity of the programme financing by committed budget

Budget Distribution



Source: eMS and statistical offices data processed by authors

As mentioned above, the fact that the programme is not providing funding in a balanced way to different counties and to the two countries may also affect the effects of the programme concerning the intensity of the cross-border cooperation because considerable more funding provided to one side of the border and less to the other can limit the cooperation as there is a need of actions and initiatives on both sides of the border in order to have sustainable cooperation and funding allocated today represents also an investment in the capacity for cross-border cooperation tomorrow. This leads to an important recommendation with a view to attract and fund new beneficiaries.

3.4.5. EQ18. Are the programme results likely to be sustainable on long term? What are the major factors that influenced sustainability?

Perspective of programme stakeholders on the sustainability of programme results

There is a large agreement among programme beneficiaries and stakeholders of the programme that programme results are sustainable. In total, 85% of the programme beneficiaries and stakeholders answering the surveys conducted for the evaluation agree that project results can be maintained to a large or very large extent.

Commitment of programme stakeholders to allocate resources, including financial and human resources, needed to ensure the sustainability of the programme results

Only 40% of stakeholders agree that funding sources from the EU or external donors supporting the sustainability or follow-up of the projects are available to a large or very large extent for the programme beneficiaries or other interested stakeholders that can commit to ensure follow-up. In this context, the institutional commitment of the programme beneficiaries is instrumental.

- The programme beneficiaries are taking measures to ensure sustainability, and this is reflected in all the case studies conducted. Moreover, the answers to the survey show that: 70% of the beneficiaries already allocated human resources for the sustainability of the projects results (they agree their institution allocated these resources to a large or very large extent);
- 76% of the beneficiaries already allocated financial resources for the sustainability of the projects results (they agree their institution allocated these resources to a large or very large extent).

On the other hand, the programme stakeholders see these commitments as less apparent, although present. The results of the survey with stakeholders show that:

- 58% of the programme stakeholders' area are committed to support the sustainability of results to a large or very large extent, by allocating human resources;
- 51% of the programme stakeholders' area are committed to support the sustainability of results to a large or very large extent, by allocating financial resources.

Almost all beneficiaries consider to a large or very large extent that their projects generated positive non-financial results that can be re-used. In this context, 75% of the beneficiaries planned follow-up initiatives using results of the project / projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme (they declare they agree with the statement “I have planned follow-up initiatives using results of the project / projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme” to a large or very large extent).

However, for finalized projects analyzed by the case studies conducted for this evaluation, there are no significant steps already taken to ensure the sustainability of cross-border cooperation tools, mechanisms and structures established. While the infrastructure is maintained and the competences developed in trainings and workshops are considered useful for the day-to-day trainings, there are few steps taken to ensure that cross-border cooperation local strategies will be implemented, that cross-border, joint, councils or committees will meet regularly etc. The main action to ensure the continuation of cross-border cooperation using the tools, mechanisms and structures established under the CBC RO-HU Programme is planning for new projects under the new programme during the 2021-2027 programming period. This is a proven effective action to continue or intensify cross-border cooperation, but it shows the cooperation's dependence on EU funding continues.

Perspective of programme stakeholders on projects/actions that can be replicated

About 60% of the programme stakeholders consider to a large or very large extent that projects generated positive non-financial results that can be re-used and 57% agree to a large or very large extent that projects can be replicated or scaled-up.

On the other hand, case studies show that some projects, especially the ones funded to protect or restore natural habitats should be replicated and, in some cases, even resumed in the same area to ensure sustainable protection of the environment.

Influence positive and negative factors

The quality of the project is appreciated by programme beneficiaries and stakeholders as the main factor that supports, or even guarantees the sustainability.

Environmental factors are very important for the sustainability of the projects funded under PA1 and in most cases they are not favourable. For example, the impact (medium and long-term effects) of the project ROHU-29 - *Conservation and protection of ecosystems threatened by the lack of thermal water and fresh water in the cross-border area* may be considered to be at risk in the absence of future coordinated public interventions for environment protection. No thermal water is currently present in the area where the artificial habitat should have been constructed. The areas where thermal water was present in the beginning of the project has drained out by the end of the project, due to drilling and other interventions affecting underground waters, in the context of climate change and more dry periods present in the area. Thus, the beneficiary should have ensured the necessary water on a long-term, expenses that were not foreseen initially. Thus, in the absence of centralized, coherent measures for the protection of the natural habitat and heritage the results of distinct, reduced in scope and budget intervention cannot be sustainable. If contextual factors affecting constantly the status of the environment are maintained, the effects of the continuous deterioration of the natural habitats on the protected species cannot be annulled by small scale interventions, such as the projects funded by the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

The sustainability of projects funded under PA4 in the field of healthcare depends in continuing information campaign to raise awareness on health issues among people, to convince them to consult doctors for screening and tests as preventive measures for health protection etc.

The sustainability of projects supporting employment and crafts depends in great measure of future economic development and evolutions of the labour market.

On the other hand, interviews with programme beneficiaries and stakeholders show that the sustainability of project results may be negatively affected by a change of management in the beneficiaries' institutions, after which the new management may not consider the results achieved as outstanding as their predecessors. From a larger perspective: the political and institutional stability has been mentioned as a factor influencing sustainability by many of the interviewed stakeholders.

3.4.6. EQ19. Did the programme have a positive contribution to the application of the horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (especially as regards the equality between men and women) and sustainable development?

Integration of horizontal principles in programme preparation phase

By respecting these horizontal principles, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary 2014-2020 programme ensures the effective and responsible use of EU funds and contributes to the overall objectives of the European Union, such as territorial cohesion, sustainable development, and the promotion of cooperation and integration between member states. The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary 2014-2020 program adheres to the EU's horizontal principles, which are overarching principles that guide the implementation of EU-funded programs. These principles include:

- Sustainable development: The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary programme incorporates the principle of sustainable development by promoting projects that contribute to environmental protection, economic growth, through investments for improved employment, and social cohesion, through investments in healthcare, learning and cultural exchanges, administrative capacity. It encourages initiatives that integrate environmental considerations, promote resource efficiency, and support long-term economic viability. PA1 is directly dedicated to protection of natural resources: waters, natural sites, and biodiversity. PA5, on the other hand, supports risk management contributing, among others, to the mitigation of risks related to the climate changes, as floods and fires. Moreover, SO2.2 supports investments in mobility that are green and environmentally friendly.
- Gender equality: The programme promotes equal opportunities for women and men and aims to address social and economic disparities within the cross-border region.
- Non-Discrimination: The programme upholds the principles of equality and non-discrimination by emphasising that all participants, regardless of their background or characteristics, have equal access to funding and opportunities.
- Accessibility: the programme emphasises the importance of ensuring accessibility of persons with disabilities to all the projects results and benefits.

To ensure that the programme is aligned with EU requirements in the field of environment protection, related to the sustainable development principle the programme benefited from a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA). Moreover, the territorial analysis and Programme document include details about the programme commitment to the above-mentioned principles.

Integration of horizontal principles in calls and contracting procedures

The horizontal principles are presented in the calls for projects proposals and required actions to be taken are mentioned. The applicants, therefore, included the presentation of their approach to the horizontal principles in their application, as the online application form has a dedicated section for the description of these principles. The commitment of the applicants to respect the horizontal principles was assessed as part of the application quality assessment.

The support offered by programme authorities to beneficiaries on horizontal principles

Programme authorities have been open to provide support to beneficiaries on the horizontal principles and the information included in the text of the calls for proposals is of high quality. From this perspective, the programme set a clear tone on the promotion of horizontal principles and generated awareness among the beneficiaries.

Promotion of horizontal principles through the programme communication activities

On the other hand, the evaluation did not identify communication activities, or elements of the communication messages underlying the horizontal principles. The promotion of sustainable development is done inherently when promoting PA1 and SO2.1 and when good practices among the funded projects are presented to a larger audience (through press releases, news published on the website, Facebook posts, the ROHU Magazine). But the promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is not visible in the programme level communication activities.

Monitoring of horizontal principles

Because they are included in the project documents – the application forms – respecting horizontal principles should be monitored in the implemented projects. In practice, monitoring of respecting horizontal principles is weak, because there are no clear indicators regarding the horizontal principles and monitoring activities focus, naturally, on the project main objectives, activities and results. Attention is always paid to monitoring the respect for the legal framework relevant for the horizontal principles. But other aspects are less monitored, if the main objectives, activities and results of projects do not coincide with the horizontal principle. This coincidence is present in the case of projects under PA1 and SO 2.2 regarding the development of sustainable mobility.

Level of integration of horizontal principles in the phases of planning and implementing the projects

The first level of respecting the horizontal principles is following the legal provisions in all the areas covered by these principles:

- Environmental legislations in interventions related to nature, biodiversity, water management;
- Building legislation covering respect for environmental protection, for the development of infrastructure of any type;
- Environmental legislations and the legislation related to accessibility in interventions related to mobility;
- Building legislation covering accessibility ensuring for the construction and rehabilitation of buildings;
- Regulations on equal opportunities and non-discrimination followed in all operations, including project management.

Moreover, the horizontal principles are taken into account in planning project management, including: recruitment of team members ensuring equal opportunities and non-discrimination, ensuring accessibility to information to all people, including persons with disability, using new equipment and implementing green procurement.

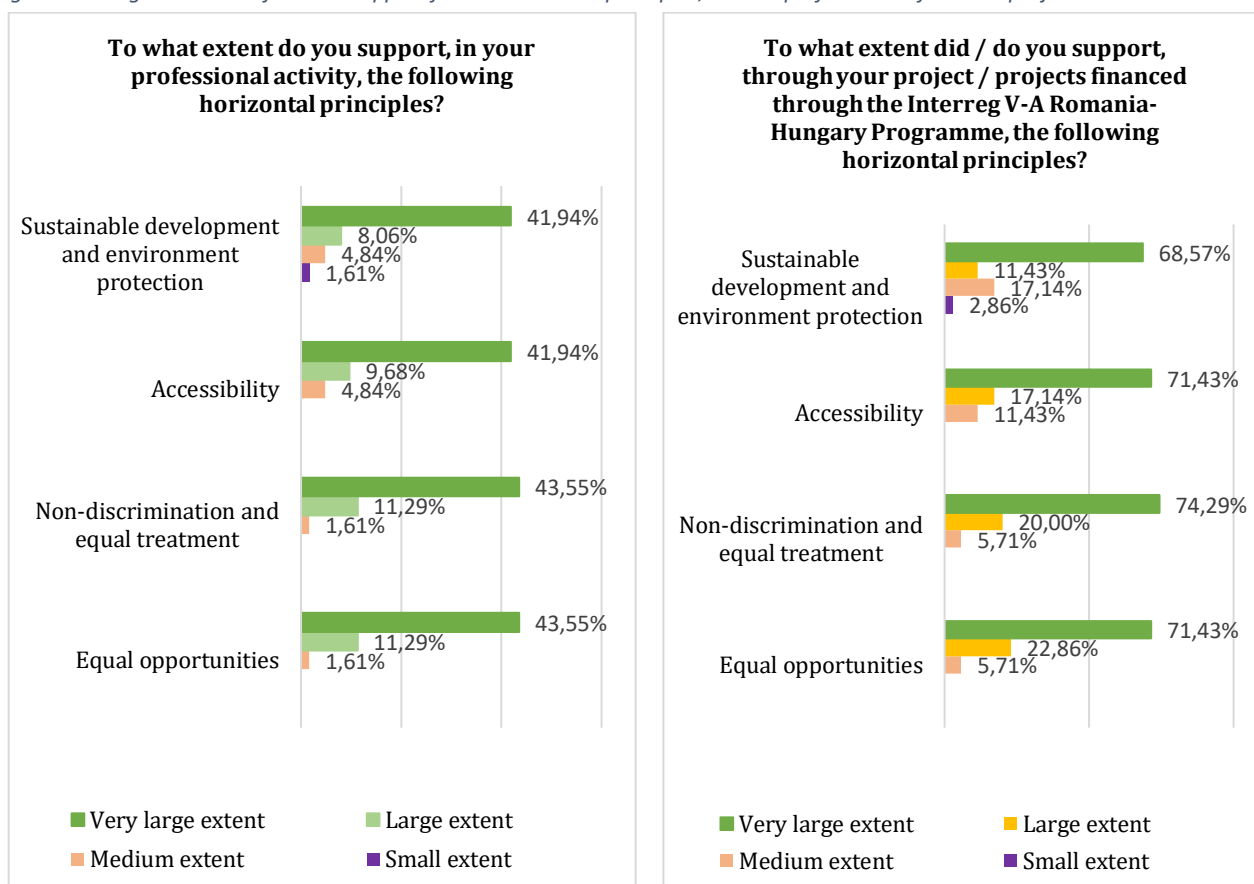
Under PA1 and SO 2.1, on the other hand, all activities and planned results are promoting the horizontal principles of sustainable development. In the projects supporting the concerning of the historical and cultural heritage, activities and planned results are promoting non-discrimination, especially when taking into account the development of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue and relations.

Under PA4 the accessibility and non-discrimination have been also promoted, in order to ensure access to healthcare of the most disadvantaged people. Within the project *RO-HU-357 - Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion*, the County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea implemented actions to improve the access of disadvantaged groups to the health infrastructure. As part of these efforts, they provided 50 free medical tests specifically for social cases.

Awareness and support of stakeholders for the promotion of horizontal principles

The survey with beneficiaries shows that they support the horizontal principle in their professional activity in general. However, an indicator of the good guidance received from the programme authorities, more beneficiaries (a large majority) integrated the support for the horizontal principles through their projects funded by the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

Figure 19. Programme beneficiaries' support for the horizontal principles, in their professional life and in projects



Source: Survey with beneficiaries. N (Number of valid answers) =62

3.4.7. EQ20. How did the Programme contribute to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?

The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has played a significant role in contributing to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Union to address common challenges and promote cooperation among countries along the Danube River. The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme contribution is visible in:

1. **Environmental Protection:** The programme has funded initiatives that promote environmental protection (SO1.2) and sustainable resource management in the Danube region (SO1.1 and SO1.2). Projects focus on preserving and restoring natural habitats, promoting biodiversity conservation, and implementing measures to improve water quality. These efforts align with the EUSDR objective of protecting and restoring the Danube River's ecological status especially by protecting the environment of the tributaries of the Danube, namely under Priority Area 4 "To restore and maintain the quality of waters", Priority Area 5 of the EUSDR "To manage environmental risks" and Priority Area 6 "To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils".
2. **Cultural Heritage and Tourism:** The programme has funded initiatives that preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Danube region, including historical sites, traditions, and cultural events. These projects aim to enhance tourism development, create sustainable tourism products, and improve the region's attractiveness as a tourist destination. By supporting cultural heritage and tourism, the programme contributes to the EUSDR objective of preserving and promoting the Danube region's cultural identity, namely under Priority Area 3 "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts".
3. **Innovation:** The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has facilitated cross-border cooperation between research institutions in the field of environmental protection and in the field of health. The programme also has supported projects that stimulate innovation in the

Danube region concerning learning and employment valorising the cultural common heritage. By promoting innovation, the programme contributes to the EUSDR objective of enhancing the region's economic competitiveness, namely under Priority Area Priority Area 7 "To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)".

4. Connectivity and Infrastructure: The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has supported projects that enhance connectivity and develop transport infrastructure along the larger Danube region. These projects aim to improve navigation, upgrade ports, and strengthen multimodal transport links. By enhancing connectivity, the programme contributes to the EUSDR objective of improving the transportation network in the Danube region, namely under Priority Area 1B "To improve mobility and intermodality – rail, road and air."
5. Social Inclusion and Education: The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has supported projects that promote social inclusion, education, and skills development in the Danube region. It has funded initiatives to improve access to education, promote social cohesion, and enhance the integration of vulnerable groups. By addressing social challenges, the programme contributes to the EUSDR objective of promoting social inclusion and cooperation in the Danube region, namely under Priority Area 9 of the EUSDR "To invest in people and skills".

Table 19. Correspondence between the Priority Areas of EUSDR and the Specific Objectives of Interreg-V-A Romania-Hungary Programme

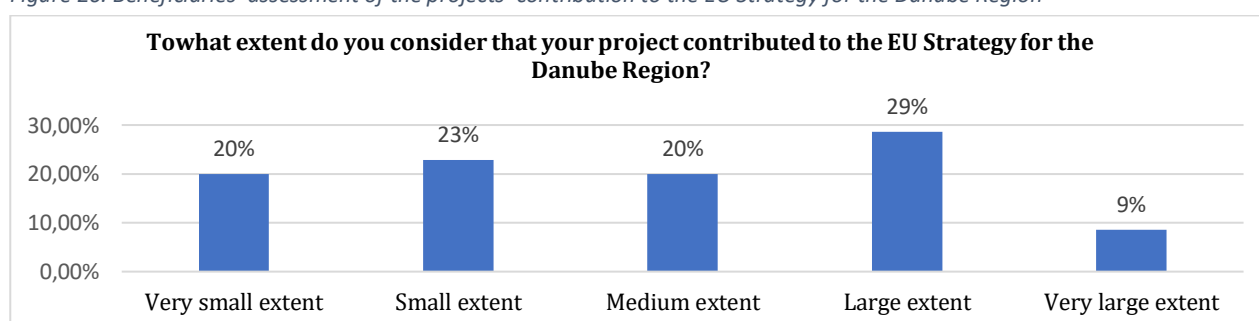
Priority Areas of EUSDR	Specific Objectives of Interreg-V-A Romania-Hungary Programme
Priority Area 1A "To improve mobility and intermodality of inland waterways"	n/a
Priority Area 1B "To improve mobility and intermodality – rail, road and air"	PA2: S02.1 and S02.2
Priority Area 2 "To encourage more sustainable energy"	n/a
Priority Area 3 "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts"	partly S01.2 and partly PA6-S06.1
Priority Area 4 "To restore and maintain the quality of waters"	S01.1
Priority Area 5 of the EUSDR "To manage environmental risks"	S01.1, partly S01.2, PA5-S05.1
Priority Area 6 "To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils"	partly S01.2
Priority Area 7 "To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)"	PA4-S04.1, partly S01.2
Priority Area 8 "To support the competitiveness of enterprises"	n/a
Priority Area 9 of the EUSDR "To invest in people and skills"	PA3-OS 3.1
Priority Area 10 "To step up institutional capacity and cooperation"	PA 6-S06.1
Priority Area 11 of the EUSDR "To work together to tackle security and organised crime"	n/a

Source: evaluation team based on the Interreg-V-A Romania-Hungary and the EUSDR documents

Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has been instrumental in supporting various initiatives that align with the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Through its funding and collaborative approach, the program has contributed to the sustainable development and cooperation in the Danube region, helping to address common challenges and leverage the potential of the region's resources and opportunities.

However, not all projects funded contributed equally to the objectives of the EUSDR. According to the survey with beneficiaries, about a third of projects contributed to a large or very large extent to the objectives of the EUSDR, but over 40% contributed to a small or very small extent.

Figure 20. Beneficiaries' assessment of the projects' contribution to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region



Source: Survey with beneficiaries. Number of valid answers analysed=62

3.4.8. EQ21. To what extent did the Programme contribute to the targets of Europe 2020 Strategy?

Europe 2020 Strategy puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities: (1) smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; (2) sustainable growth: promoting a more resource

efficient, greener and more competitive economy and (3) inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. In order to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, five ambitious targets have been set by the Europe 2020 Strategy, covering employment, research and development, climate change and energy sustainability, education, and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The following table includes the Europe 2020 Strategy targets and the correspondent Specific Objectives of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme contributing to the target.

Table 20. Correspondence between the Priority Areas of EUSDR and the Specific Objectives of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme

Europe 2020 Strategy targets	Specific Objectives of Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme contributing to the target
75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed	Especially PA5-SO 5.1 SO 1.2 could contribute as the promotion of cultural and historical heritage creates jobs for craftsmen and the promotion of natural, cultural and historical heritage creates can create jobs in tourism
3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D	Especially PA4-SO4.1 supported R&D in the medical field. SO1.2 supported research in the field of natural resources protection
The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right)	Partly PA1, although the programme did not include investments in the energy field. SO2.2 promoted sustainable, green and low carbon mobility

Source: evaluation team based on the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme projects portfolio and the Europe 2020 Strategy

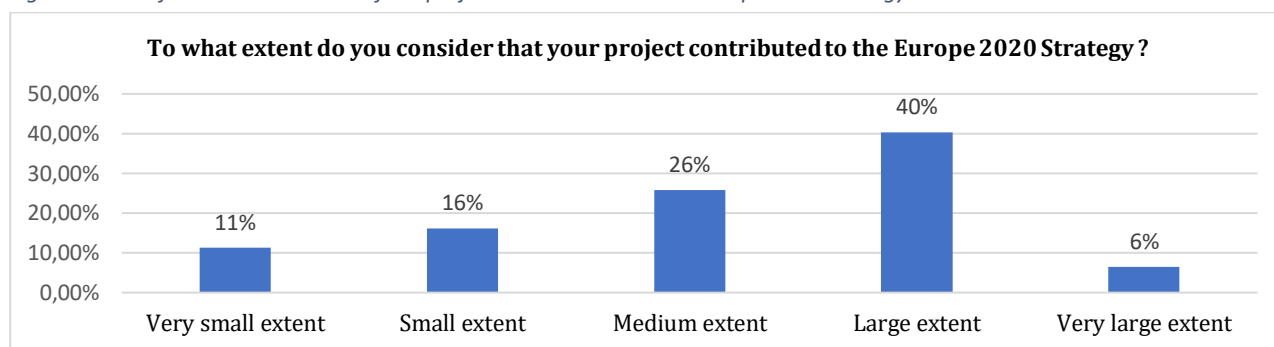
The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has made significant contributions to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is the European Union's growth and development strategy. The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme contribution is visible in:

1. **Smart Growth:** The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has fostered projects that promote innovation, research, and technological development, especially in the medical field and concerning the environment. It has supported collaboration between universities, research institutions, hospitals and nongovernmental organisations to encourage knowledge transfer and the development of innovative solutions. These efforts contribute to the Europe 2020 objective of achieving smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.
2. **Sustainable Growth:** The programme has played a role in promoting sustainable development in the cross-border region between Romania and Hungary. It has supported projects focused on environmental protection, and sustainable resource management, especially protection of water resources. By addressing these areas, the programme contributes to the Europe 2020 objective of promoting a more resource-efficient, greener, and low-carbon economy.
3. **Inclusive Growth and Employment:** The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme funded projects that promote social inclusion, equal opportunities, and human capital development. It has supported initiatives that enhance access to learning and skills development and these opportunities are accessible for vulnerable groups. By addressing social and economic disparities, the programme contributes to the Europe 2020 objective of promoting inclusive growth and reducing poverty and social exclusion and to the objective of promoting high employment rates and supporting the growth of a dynamic and competitive economy.
4. **Regional Development:** As showed in the analysis for evaluation question 16, the programme has contributed to regional development by fostering cross-border cooperation and strengthening territorial cohesion between Romania and Hungary. It has supported projects that enhance infrastructure and improve connectivity supporting development of cross-border public transport. Moreover, the programme ensured the development of the health infrastructure and services, contributing to increased quality of life in the counties participating and beyond. These efforts align with the Europe 2020 objective of promoting balanced and sustainable regional development.

Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has aligned its objectives and results with the Europe 2020 Strategy and has made contributions to its objectives. These findings are supported by the advised opinion of the beneficiaries, but – similar to the contribution of projects to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region – there is a lot of variation of the level of contribution of projects to the EU 2020 Strategy. 46% of the beneficiaries assess that their projects contributed to a large or very

large extent to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, but 27% declared the projects only contributed to a small or very small extent to achieving the objectives of the same strategy.

Figure 21. Beneficiaries' assessment of the projects contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy



Source: Survey with beneficiaries. Number of valid answers analysed =62

3.4.9. EQ22. To what extent did the programme contribute to the increase of the level of the cross-border cooperation and the cohesion in the eligible area?

Strategic cooperation in the region and leverage insured by the programme in order to determine intense cooperation

To answer this question, the criteria for cross-border cooperation and selected qualitative and quantitative indicators was inspired by the Ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III³⁷. In a nutshell:

- The potential for strategic cross-border development is ensured through the compentence of the MC. This potential has been valorized by the strategic and regular projects implemented by partners such as the County Councils and County self-governments in the eight counties covered by the programme.
- The actual "Interreg-V-A-demand of approved projects" is matching the initially planned "Interreg-V-A-funding supply", as the entire budget of the programme was committed to projects
- All approved projects included a mutual exchange of experience on the project's themes. This is the element that determined 79% of programme beneficiaries and 76% of the programme stakeholders answering to the surveys for the evaluation to state that the programme contributed to increased intensity of cross-border cooperation to a large or very large extent, as confirmed by interviews. Moreover, some projects capitalized on previous results and limited number of projects are developing policy instruments, strategies, or other policy support tools.
- The level of involved administrative units proves that the intensity of cooperation is very high and most of the municipalities taking part in projects implementation have several partners on the other side of the border. All county, regional and district administrations and most of the large municipalities are taking part in contracted Interreg-V-A projects. However, most of the small local communities are still not covered and the cross-border cooperation at the level of rural public administration is limited.
- The population directly and indirectly covered by the programme implementation is significant, although a small percent has been directly involved in activities. As a result, there is the potential to generate intense cross-border cooperation beyond the administrative cooperation.

The assessment is presented in the table below:

Table 21. Intensity of cooperation assessed according to specific indicators.

Indicator	Data	Findings
The range of actors represented on the Programme Monitoring Committee and extent of their formal powers in the strategic-level decision making process (qualitative).	More than half of the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) are national level decision making stakeholders and all of them represent national or county authorities with strategic influence over the programme area territory.	The potential for strategic cross-border development is ensured through the compentence of the JMC. This potential has been valorised by the strategic and regular projects implemented by partners such as the County Councils and County self-

³⁷ Criteria and indicators for cooperation are based on the Inception Report, available at https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2006/expo_interreg_report170209.pdf

		governments in the eight counties covered by the programme.
The extent to which the actual "Interreg-demand of approved projects" matched the initial "Interreg-funding supply"	<p>The contracted value of projects represents 94% of the total programme budget. The projects selected for financing covered 100% of the programme budget, but one project was terminated.</p> <p>On the other hand, the programme budget for the entire period is smaller than the budget of the four Romanian counties covered for one year.</p>	The actual "Interreg-V-A-demand of approved projects" is matching the initially planned "Interreg-V-A-funding supply".
<p>The extent to which the approved projects have performed all of the following project activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mutual exchange of experience on the project's themes. - A joint development of policy strategies, policy instruments and other policy support tools. - Joint pilot projects (always carried out by more than one project partner), which tested or applied joint outcomes and generated tangible cross-border, transnational, or interregional results. 	<p>All approved projects included a mutual exchange of experience on the project's themes. This is the element that determined 79% of programme beneficiaries and 76% of the programme stakeholders answering to the surveys for the evaluation to state that the programme contributed to increased intensity of cross-border cooperation to a large or very large extent, as confirmed by interviews.</p> <p>Some projects capitalized on previous results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the case of projects preserving the natural environment (under SO1.1 and 1.2) previous projects have been implemented in the area, many times with funding from the Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013, - in the field of cultural cooperation, administrative cross-border cooperation, where partnerships established under PHARE and Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013 funding have been continued. <p>A limited number of projects are developing policy instruments, strategies, or other policy support tools.</p> <p>In most cases studies conducted as part of projects activities have very useful results for strategies development at local level (i.e. the studies on the tourism development potential in several municipalities, studies on disaster and environmental risks). They have a limited potential to encourage further cross-border cooperation, because they are rather focusing on encouraging local development.</p>	
The extent to which public administrative units existing in the programme area were directly involved in all approved projects	<p>65 out of the 108 contracted projects have local public administration authorities involved (municipalities or counties). Therefore, public administrative units are involved in 60% of the approved projects.</p> <p>On the other hand, only 48 administrative units in the programme area are directly involved in contracted projects, representing 6% of the administrative units existing in the programme area.</p>	<p>The level of involved administrative units proves that the intensity of cooperation is very high and most of the municipalities taking part in projects implementation have several partners on the other side of the border.</p> <p>However, 6% of the administrative units are actively participating in the programme. All county, regional and district administrations and most of the large municipalities are taking part in contracted Interreg-V-A projects, but most of the small local communities are still not covered and the cross-border cooperation at the level of rural public administration is limited.</p>
The number of persons directly involved in and reached by all approved projects compared to the total population living in the eligible area	<p>The eligible programme area has about 3.8 million inhabitants.</p> <p>The entire population of the programme area can benefit from improved healthcare services and 60% of the programme area population benefits from improved management of emergency, risk and disaster situations.</p> <p>Projects are targeting directly over 56,400 persons in events under SO1.2 and SO6.1.</p>	The population directly and indirectly covered by the programme implementation is significant, although a small percent has been directly involved in activities. As a result, there is the potential to generate intense cross-border cooperation beyond the administrative cooperation.

Sources: eMS, JS.

Interviewed stakeholders and projects' partners underlined that one of the most important benefits of the programme is the increased intensity of cross-border cooperation in the programme area. They stated that cross-border cooperation has been good during the previous programming periods as well, but its intensity is increasing with time and due to continuous and repeated opportunities for national, regional, and local authorities and institutions to work together. The concept of 'intensity' in relation to the cross-border cooperation is not operationalized when it comes to the result indicator for SO6.1.

Interviews show that, when referring to intensity of cross-border cooperation, programme beneficiaries and stakeholders refer to the frequency of cross-border meetings or joint activities and the number of partners/partnerships they have across the border.

The results of interviews are confirmed by the survey results. 79% of programme beneficiaries and 76% of programme stakeholders answering to the surveys for the evaluation state that the programme contributed to increased intensity of cross-border cooperation to a large or very large extent. Through the cooperation on the projects, partners create bonds of trust and often choose the same partners for new projects, based on the positive experience. In this way they become more efficient during the implementation of the project.

However, as already showed, the stakeholders' assessment of the result indicator for SO 6.1 of the programme "Intensity level of cross-border cooperation (PA 6, IP 11/b)", is at the level 3,23 (out of 5), lower than the target for 2023 of 3,57 and also than the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,46. This value was calculated based on scores given by 57 relevant institutions answering the survey with stakeholders, carried out for the evaluation. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that when stakeholders are asked directly about the intensity of cooperation, they express a very positive opinion considering that the level of cooperation has increased to a very large or large extent due to the programme. This apparent contradiction is linked with limitations of measuring programme result indications based on a stakeholder survey, because stakeholders express subjective opinions (their perception) on the issues under evaluation, in this case the intensity of cooperation at different moments in time. Their perception at each moment in time (in 2014 and 2023), reflected in a simple score from 1 to 5, can be influenced by several factors, some of them personal or local or specific to their institution or organisation, not only factors at the level of the programme area. Moreover, as presented in the methodology, one limitation of the evaluation is that evaluations could not control who is answering the stakeholders survey, to ensure the same persons that answered the survey when the baseline was established have been consulted also for the evaluation. Considering these methodological limitations, we consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic and international context to be important factors that made stakeholders assess that cross-border cooperation is enhanced by the programme, although when asked about their score, they gave a smaller score in 2023 compared to 2014. The difficult context seems to make stakeholders assessment harsher and the need for cross-border cooperation higher.

According to their own assessment, the cooperation between programme bodies (MA, NA, JS, IPs and FLCs) back in 2014 was good and now it is even better. According to all conducted interviews, the communication is intense and prompt and the pandemic sped up the digitization which streamlined communication and implicitly cooperation between the authorities of the programme.

The evolution of the quality of cross-border cooperation among different stakeholders during the programme implementation

In general, programme beneficiaries consider that the programme contributed to a medium or large extent to the cooperation between different types of stakeholders. 80% of programme beneficiaries declare that their projects contribute to a large or very large extent to their cooperation with their peers across the border. On the other hand, considering all type of stakeholders, 46% of the programme beneficiaries assess that their projects contributed to a large or very large extent to the cooperation between local public authorities, other public authorities in the programme area and the civil society organisations.

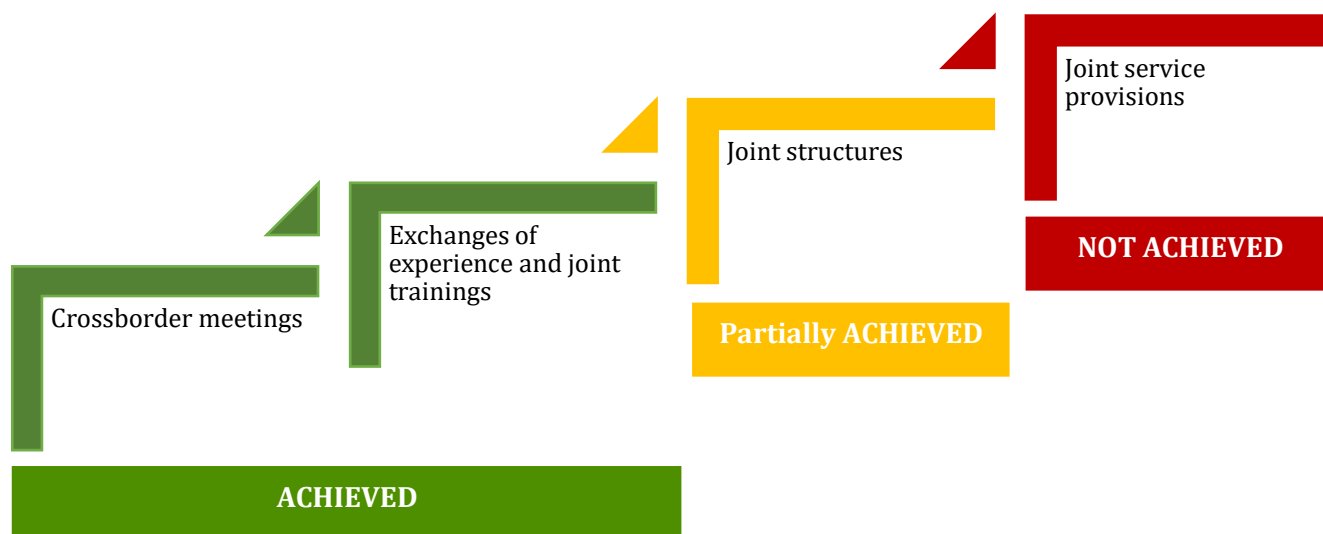
About 50% of the programme stakeholders believe that the programme contributed to a large or very large extent to the cooperation between local public authorities. A smaller share of programme stakeholders believe that the programme contributed to a large or very large extent to the cooperation between other public authorities in the programme area and the civil society organisations.

About 41% of programme beneficiaries and 30% of stakeholders assess that the programme contributed to a large or very large extent to the cooperation between businesses and this is easily explained by the fact that businesses cannot be direct beneficiaries of the Interreg programme.

If the quality of the cooperation is considered, we could place the cooperation in a continuum ranging from having meetings, to exchanging of experiences and joint trainings, to establishing joint structures and ending with joint (public) services provision. In this case, the CBC RO-HU programme is clearly supporting the cooperation in the form of the two first steps. It is also supporting joint structures, but

their sustainability is not certain and, in some projects, the programme supports identifying legal and administrative barriers for the joint structures and joint (public) services provision. However, joint (public) services provision is not yet a result of the cross-border cooperation between Romania and Hungary.

Figure 22. Progression of cross border cooperation between partners



3.4.10. EQ23. What is the added value of the interventions under this programme, compared to what could have been expected from the two member states acting separately?

As mentioned, the framework funding analysis shows that the contribution of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, compared to other EU funding sources managed by the two countries (funding from the CBC Programmes and European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020), is relatively low at about 8%. There is otherwise a challenge to compare the contribution of the Interreg programme with national programmes, as the national programmes have less transparency, both in funds allocations and in access to information about the contracted and spent budgets. On the other hand, most of the investments from the national programmes are not covering the same areas of support as the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme. The evaluation identified the support for water management from national local development programmes, but the investments are complementary, not similar to the ones done under the Interreg programme.

National funding is available, in both countries, for cultural projects, contributing to the same objectives as part of the projects under SO1.2 on the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage, but the transparency and access to information on the funding provided by these programmes is low.

Overall, the funding framework shows significant contribution of the programme in the field of preserving and promoting the sustainable use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area, promoting lifelong learning and employability and the development of healthcare infrastructure and services. A less visible contribution was provided by the programme in the field of transportation and mobility, taking into account the large investments planned with ERDF and CF support in the Operational Programmes.

The visible contribution of the programme in the areas of improved disaster and cross-border risk management is under 10%, due to large investments planned with ERDF support especially in Hungary. The added value of the programme is in the area of cross-border cooperation, as showed by the analysis answering the previous question. On the other hand, other EU funded programmes, both in Hungary and Romania supported institutional development in complementarity with the PA6 of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

In this context, although limited, the added value of the programme is appreciated by the programme beneficiaries and stakeholders. 63% of the programme beneficiaries and 54% of the programme stakeholders agree to a large or very large extent that the programme answered better the needs in the programme area compared to other programmes and policies.

3.4.11. EQ24. What is the progress on raising awareness among the beneficiaries /potential beneficiaries of the Programme/the general public?

Level of information of beneficiaries about the programme calls and results

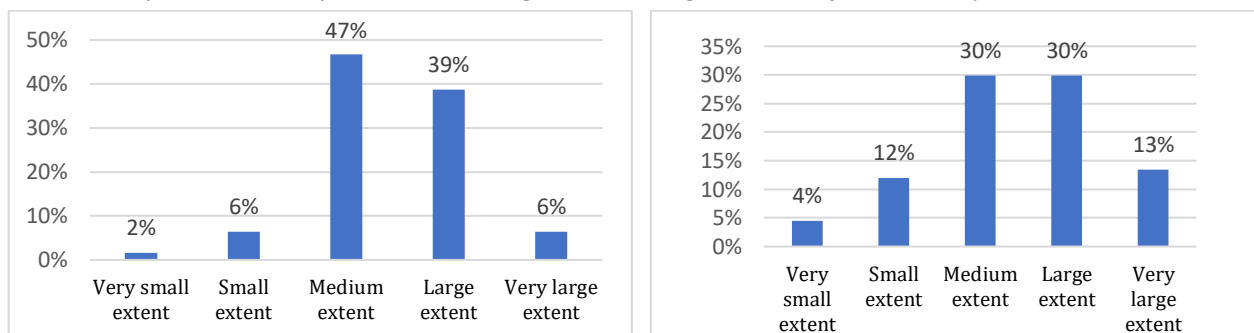
According to data provided by the MA, in the period 2016-2022:

- a total of 4,579 persons participated to all promotion activities and 1,628 persons participated in information events dedicated to project applicants;
- a total of 285 events have been organised and 7 annual conferences;
- 70 communication actions (press conferences, press releases, interviews, advertisements via different media channels) have been implemented;
- 12,865 materials have been printed;
- 6,400 persons connected or interacted in 2022 to/with online events and activities, including Facebook campaigns;
- 6.683 persons receive the electronic newsletter.

In 2022 the programme website: interreg-rohu.eu, registered almost 500,000 visitors and 3,000,000 visits, proving a very good online visibility of the programme. Social media presence is assured on Twitter, Instagram, Linkedin and physical presence in the programme area is constant, including events, individual meetings with possible applicants. A film was produced and broadcasted, promoting the programme on the national Romanian television. The Ro-Hu Magazine is in a trilingual format (Romanian, Hungarian and English language). It issued 8 numbers and ensures in-depth information about the programme results.

The events and especially the communication activities lead to a medium to high awareness about the programme results among beneficiaries and stakeholders. The general belief of stakeholders is that the programme is visible in the covered counties, but even more promotion would be beneficial to increase the awareness of the general public on the support for cross-border cooperation.

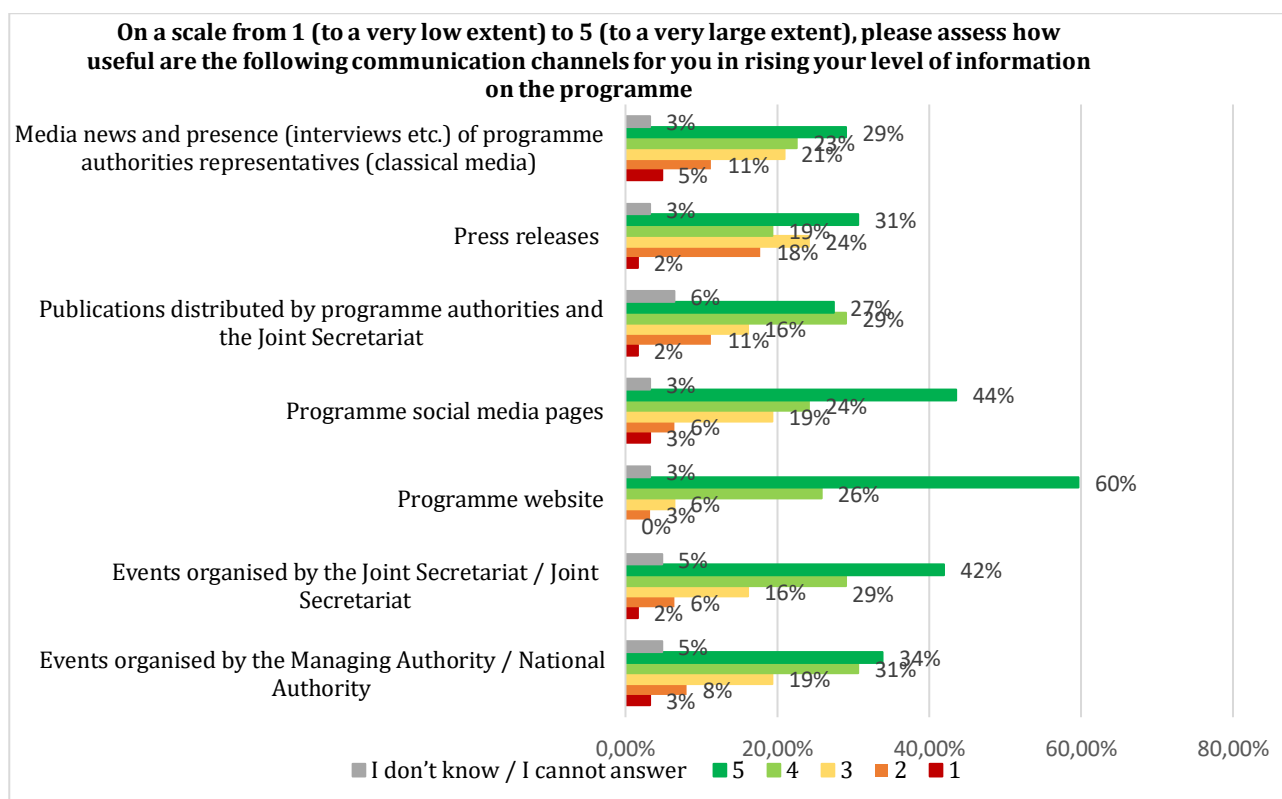
Figure 23. Level of awareness of programme beneficiaries and stakeholders on programme results. Answer to the question: "To what extent do you consider that you know the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme, its objectives and expected results?"



Sources: Survey with beneficiaries. Number of valid answers analysed =62; Survey with stakeholders. Number of valid answers analysed =67.

In general, all the communication channels are useful for project beneficiaries. The programme website is considered the most useful communication channel, followed by the information events and social media. 86% of beneficiaries consider that the website is useful and very useful. 71% have the same perspective related to the events organized by the JS and 68% of beneficiaries consider that the information disseminated through social media channels have been very useful / useful for them.

Figure 24. Usefulness of communication, assessed by programme beneficiaries



Sources: Survey with beneficiaries. Number of valid answers analysed N=62

The experience of the programme authorities shows that the programme is visible as the activities targeting potential applicants generated three times more application compared to the available funds.

3.4.12. EQ25. How can potential applicants (without previous experience in the Programme) be motivated to submit projects under calls?

As showed, despite the extensive communication activities, the number and variety of beneficiaries and their geographical coverage can be improved. There are many usual beneficiaries and some municipalities, institutions or organizations do not have the 'courage' to apply: they do not feel well prepared enough to try to apply and quit before trying. The recommended actions to motivate the potential applicants include:

- Planning and implementing targeted information activities, in areas that are not well covered by the programme;
- Limiting the number of large strategic projects, allowing a larger budget to be available for competitive calls. A larger budget available means that new organizations are encourage to apply as their chances to benefit can be higher;
- Financial and human capacities of the partners should be considered, and in case of equal scores by the projects, the projects selection should favour the project involving partners new to the programme;;
- Encouraging beneficiaries to include new institutions and organisations in their projects/partnerships. This is an important way to allow small municipalities and organisations to build their capacity to manage cross-border cooperation projects. This can be done by:
 - o providing small municipalities and organisations with dedicated help-desk materials;
 - o organising workshops (with funding from technical assistance) ensuring the participation of both (a) experience beneficiaries and (b) small municipalities and organisations with no experience in CBC programmes. This can support partnership building and facilitate knowledge transfers;
 - o providing beneficiaries with tools for managing unexperienced partners;
 - o allocating additional points in the appraisal of funding applications to partnerships including small municipalities and organisations with no experience in CBC programmes, when the need for their inclusion in the project is well argued.
- Promotion of the Program through the County Councils and local authorities, to give more credibility and attractiveness for small, rural municipalities and small organisations.

3.4.13. EQ26. What is the capitalization potential of the projects?

Extent to which projects results can be used to support the initiation and implementation of new initiatives

Renewed roads and sites of cultural and historic importance, environment protection, hospitals renovations, add to the quality of life of the citizens as well as to the touristic potential of both countries. Moreover, there is a very high potential of the results of the strategic projects funded under SO1.2 and SO3.1 and of all projects funded under SO4.1 to be used in other projects and activities.

Interviews with projects' partners and stakeholders allowed evaluators to identify multiple cases of prioritization of the results of the previous Hungary-Romania programme, including projects under SO1.2 that developed education and cultural centers by expanding previous buildings supported by the previous cross-border cooperation programme and projects under PA4 that supported works and endowment of hospitals that also benefited from support previously. In these cases, the beneficiaries are able to make a step forward in developing the quality of their services due to the combined effect of the projects implemented under the current and the previous funding framework.

76% of beneficiaries answering the survey conducted for the evaluation assess that their projects generated results that have a high or very high potential to generate economic positive results after their prioritization (have capitalization potential). Stakeholders are more cautious and only 52% answered that the capitalization potential of the projects is high or very high.

Capitalization could be improved by forming thematic clusters (e.g. medicine, culture, environment) in order to generate projects with higher impact and added value.

3.4.14. EQ27. What is the level of satisfaction of beneficiaries of the Programme?

The general feedback of beneficiaries for the programme authorities, especially the JS and IPs, is very good. According to the survey 61% of the beneficiaries are satisfied or very satisfied with the programme procedures. More in detail:

- 48% of the beneficiaries agree to a large or very large extent that the moment when the calls were launched allowed for a successful implementation of the projects;
- 52% of the beneficiaries agree to a large or very large extent that the projects selection criteria allowed for a successful implementation of the projects;
- 43% of the beneficiaries agree to a large or very large extent that the applications and appraisal process allowed for a successful implementation of their project.

The most important issue mentioned during interviews on the projects preparation and selection was the long period of time between the moment the applications had been planned and the moment the contracts were signed and projects started.

On the other hand, the following elements influenced in a positive manner, to a high or very high extent, the projects results:

- the clarity of available programme information for 65% of the beneficiaries;
- information timely made available for 58% of the beneficiaries;
- correlation of the needs addressed by the programme with the needs identified for 61% of the beneficiaries;
- correlation between the eligible activities and the beneficiaries' needs for 60% of the beneficiaries;
- minimum and maximum eligible budget allowed by the programme/SO for 63% of the beneficiaries;
- the support received from programme authorities in the implementation process for 57% of the beneficiaries;
- communication with programme authorities for 69% of the beneficiaries.

14% of the beneficiaries answering the survey stated they did not receive enough support from programme authorities and 46% of the beneficiaries agree to a large or very large extent the contracting procedures allowed for a successful implementation of their project. In general, according to interviews, where a low level of satisfaction appeared this was related with the timely releasing of funds on reimbursements.

3.5. Additional evaluation questions

3.5.1. AEQ 1. Which data needs are there for future programming periods?

Compared to the period 2014-2020 the indicators proposed for the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary monitoring and evaluation are in a smaller number and with a clearer data source. In the period 2014-2020 a few result indicators created issues related to data collection, as presented in the table below.

Table 22. Assessment of challenges related to programme indicators

Indicator	Source	Issues related to access and quality of data, based on the evaluation experience
6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)	Project monitoring	No issue
C009 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Project monitoring	Need for a monitoring system at the level of all beneficiaries recording data for the indicator
C023 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status	Project monitoring	No issue
C013 Roads: Total length of newly built roads	Project monitoring	No issue
C014 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	Project monitoring	No issue
7/c 1 Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved	Project monitoring	No issue
7/c 2 Total length of newly built bicycle road	Project monitoring	No issue
C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	Project monitoring	No issue, but need for records of participants to activates to be kept
9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services	Project monitoring	It is not fully clear how to define the area expected to benefit from the health services supported by the projects and overestimation and overreporting of the indicator is possible.
9/a 2 Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment	Project monitoring	No issue
5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	Project monitoring	It is not fully clear how to define the area expected to benefit from the projects, and overestimation and overreporting of the indicator is possible
11/b1 Number of institutions directly involved in crossborder cooperation initiatives	Project monitoring	No issue
11/b2 Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives	Project monitoring	No issue, but need for records of participants to activates to be kept
6/b Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area	available database	No issues (data provided by programme beneficiaries or water authorities)
6/c Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area	available database	Minor issues – statistical data available, but not updated (the most recent data refer to December 2021) Significant issue related to the relevance of the indicator to the supported interventions, as underlined in the report
7/b Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T (no. of inhabitants)	available database	Minor issues – statistical data available, but not updated (the most recent data refer to December 2020)

Indicator	Source	Issues related to access and quality of data, based on the evaluation experience
7/c Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border	available database	No issues – data available in the database of the Border Police)
8/b Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population	available database	Minor issues – statistical data available, but not updated (the most recent data refer to December 2021)
9/a Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area	survey	Significant difficulty of reaching relevant stakeholders in the programme area, in a large enough number, with expertise in each field and with a good representation of the entire programme area (or stakeholders in a large enough number covering well the entire programme are) Significant difficulty of establishing progress from baseline towards the end of the programme, even if the same stakeholders answer to the survey, as their opinion on the issues covered by questions is subjective and can be influenced by a large range of factors, including the programme. There is no methodological robust way to ensure that the stakeholders' opinion on an issue is not changing even if the situation is not changing, due to personal or very particular reasons out of the control of the evaluation.
5/b Quality of the joint risk management	survey	
11/b Intensity level of cross-border cooperation	survey	
6/b – Number of data sources on water quality developed due to the programme	survey	
6/c – Tourist attractiveness	survey	
8/b – Quality of the workforce available for employment	survey	
9/a – Capacity to deliver healthcare services	survey	
5/b – Capacity to safeguard population	survey	

Source: Authors analysis

The indicators that generated the most significant challenges are not used in the current period (2021-2027), as the new approach of the European Commission lead to the use of a smaller and clearer set of indicators, selected from a set of common indicators for all funds, including the ERDF. Moreover, dedicated indicators for Interreg are defined in the ERDF and CF Regulation³⁸. Based on the methodology for the programme development the programme performance framework includes the analysis and description of all common indicators proposed and there are no specific indicators of the programme.

The challenges related to data collection for the programme (output and results) indicators are not, therefore, foreseen in the period 2021-2027.

On the other hand, although well designed to reflect the level of cooperation in the programme area and some of the most important results in the field of healthcare and tourism, the new indicators – the common indicators for the period 2021-2027 – are not covering all data needs of a future evaluation. Some of the administrative and statistical indicators used for this evaluation and others relevant for the specific objective of the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme can be used for the future evaluations to assess the general impact, spill-over effects of the programme etc.

Although there are challenges related to reaching stakeholders with a survey to establish the programme performance against the results indicators, we highly recommend planning for the future evaluations the collection of data from stakeholders, for additional result and impact indicators. The programme authorities (MA, NA, JS) maintain and populate, during the programme implementation, a data base with the programme stakeholders (not only programme beneficiaries) and keep these programme stakeholders updated about the programme implementation progress. These stakeholders can be consulted for evaluations as well. Although there are significant issues with grounding

³⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.

conclusions on progress in certain areas mainly on the stakeholders opinion (as detailed in the table above), it is important to add this dimension to the future evaluations. The way stakeholders perceive the programme results is instrumental for how stakeholders will use and sustain these results on the long term.

3.5.2. AEQ 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention logic and theory of change that affected the evaluation?

The programme evaluation conducted in 2020 made an assessment of the evaluability of the impact of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme and made some recommendations on the results chain to be followed for the impact evaluation. According to the previous evaluation, the main challenge concerning the intervention logic was that “the programme output and result indicators do not capture accurately and completely the range of outputs or specific effects”.

Following the recommendations formulated in 2018 in the indicators assessment and in the 2020 evaluation, the programme authorities added results indicators to the programme intervention logic, therefore the challenge that was found by the previous evaluation was resolved. Nevertheless, as the report showed, there are still areas where the strength of the logic of the intervention is limited. Also, the methodology for calculating the values of result indicators based on stakeholders' perspectives is not detailed enough as to allow the replication of the process conducted in 2014 for defining the baseline for result indicators.

Another issue that was encountered during the evaluation and needs to be taken into account is that the project successful implementation, construction of infrastructures, including roads and healthcare facilities, endowment of services etc. are not directly determining a better service for the population, more cross-border mobility and cooperation. In the impact evaluation the assumptions and external factors intervening in the programme theory of change are extremely important in transforming the outputs and results in a perceivable and important impact for the people. Therefore, the logic of intervention (the link between activities, outputs and results) and the theory of change (the theory of how the activities are addressing needs and how outputs and results are contributing to solving problems in the programme areas) are well planned. However, two weakness have been identified:

- the link between the intervention under SO 1.2 and the result indicator: „Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area” is not strong. The result indicator is not linked directly with both output indicators. There is no direct support for tourism and surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status;
- the output indicators: „the population safeguarded by the interventions” and the result indicator: „the improved quality of joint risk management” under PA5 should be switched. The output indicator focused on the target group of the projects and reflects results at community level, on the contrary the result indicator focuses on those carrying out the investments and reflects institutional level effects.

On the other hand, the programme evaluation plan did not integrate, from the beginning, data collection at community level from the target groups and end, indirect beneficiaries in the programme area. For an in-depth evaluation of the impact there is a need to collect data at citizens level, among the end users of the infrastructures built and the people directly benefiting from activities. This was difficult to do in the current evaluation, due to limited access to data and resources and the fact that the counterfactual evaluation was not possible. However, more efforts are needed for the future evaluations, and adequate time and budgets need to be planned by the programme authorities, when designing the evaluation plan, to ensure that data collection will be done at community level in the programme area, in order to capture the impact reflected in the theory of change.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions and related recommendations

The following chapter includes the conclusions on the **effectiveness** of the programme, and of the financed projects, as well as on the actual and potential overall **impact** of the programme. At the same time, the chapter addresses the **sustainability** of the already generated and expected results and effects of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

The recommendations are formulated based on findings and conclusions and they draw attention on key issues related to what the programme authorities should consider taking measures, with a view to improving the current and future programme.

General effectiveness of the programme

It is important to mention from the outset that the findings related to programme achievement in terms of result indicators have been affected by the availability of the necessary administrative data for calculating the level of result indicators' targets. While the necessary statistical and administrative data for calculating the values of result indicators under SOs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 were updated at level of the year 2022, the data collected from the National Statistical Offices from Romania and Hungary necessary for SOs 3.1 were valid at the level of the year 2021. In regards with the values presented for the results indicators related to SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, the necessary data has been collected between May and June 2023. Moreover, in this last case, the programme methodology for calculating the current values of the result indicators lacks information for the exact replication of the data collection process conducted in 2014, for establishing the baselines, therefore the data collected for the results indicators has been complemented with qualitative data in order to draw conclusions.

Conclusion 1. The effectiveness of the programme, based on its current implementation status (73 projects out of the 108 contracted projects were finalized at the cut-off date of the evaluation) varies across its 8 specific objectives. As a result of applying the programme methodology for calculating the values of result indicators, the evaluation found that:

- Only for **3 result indicators** the programme registered **values reaching or surpassing the targets set for 2023**, namely *Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area* (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 1.1, which surpassed its target by 20,5%; *Increased number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area* (calculated at the level of year 2022), under SO 1.2, which surpassed its target by 5,13%; and *Slight increase in employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population* (calculated at the level of year 2021), under SO 3.1, surpassing the target with 0,56%.
- Nevertheless, the values of other **3 result indicators show registered achievement rates in regards with the set targets set above 90%**, as it follows: *Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border* (calculated at the level of year 2022), under SO 2.2, reached the target with a 90% rate, *Improved average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area*, under SO 4.1 (calculated at the level of year 2023), which registered an achievement rate of 92% and *Increased level of the cross-border cooperation intensity of the public institutions and non-profit organizations* (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 6.1, which achieved 90,47% of the target for 2023. Moreover, under SOs 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1 the qualitative assessment based on interviews and case studies shows that the programme had an important positive contribution in the funded sectors and the changes achieved are significant for the programme beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
- For one indicator the **target achievement rate is below 90%**: *Improved quality of the joint risk management* (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 5.1, with a performance rate of 86%.
- The result indicator set under SO 2.1, *Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T* (calculated at the level of year 2023), constitutes an exception since its value is linked with the progress made at project level; as project has been finalized and no achievement has been reported yet the **current achievement rate is 0%**. Nevertheless, the evaluation assessed the expected value of the result indicator based on the planned achievement at projects level, and it is expected to be surpassed with 39,46%.

Conclusion 2: The analyzed data showed that the Covid19 pandemic had a significant impact on the values of several programme result indicators, such as: number of tourists overnight stays until 2021,

ratio of people using motorized road vehicles, employment rate. The general context worsened during the pandemic and its effects are reflected by the figures presented above. The trends registered in the areas addressed by the programme, especially the changes observable between 2021 and 2022, show that the most affected sectors **started to recover even from 2021, with an accelerated pace**. Thus, it is expected that by the end of the programme many sectors are revitalized and achieve a similar or higher development status as before the pandemic outburst. This was visible event in 2022 compared to 2021 in the sector of tourism. Also, many projects are still in the implementation phase, thus, they have generated, so far, little effects. In this context, it is safe to say that, after the end of the programme (when figures for year 2023 are available), the data regarding its overall effectiveness, reflected in the values of the result indicators will be significantly more informative. It is expected that interventions financed under the programme will generate a much more contribution than can be observed at this point in time, due to the availability of updated data, the finalization of important (regular or strategic projects) and the decrease of the negative impact of Covid19.

Conclusion 3. The evaluation found that **where the link between the objectives of the programme, thus the expected results and the planned outputs is strong, and the targets were well set**, especially in the case of SOs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1. However, contextual factors were taken into account to a limited extent when designing the methodology for calculating the baseline and the target values for results indicators set under SO 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, where inherent changes occurred in the structure, number of personnel and capacity of relevant institutions that were included in the data collection process for setting the baseline values of the indicators in the nine years since the programme was initiated.

There are no recommendations proposed in relation to the formulation of the result indicators for the 2021-2027 VI-A RO-HU Programme, because the methodology provided by the EU regulation for these indicators, that is integrated in the programme under implementation since 2022, represents an improvement compared with the programming period 2014-2020. Risks similar with the ones already encountered regarding most indicators and targets are not foreseen in the future.

Conclusion 4. The evaluation found that the **main factors supporting the effectiveness of the programme** are: a) favorable legislation in the area of cross-border waters management (EU, national legislation in both sides of the border and bilateral governmental agreements between Romania and Hungary), b) the prioritization of several sectors addressed by the programme policy makers (such as transport and risk management), c) increased awareness at the level of stakeholders in regards with the importance of promoting environmentally friendly means of transportation, d) legislative changes in Hungary in the area of vocational training or simplifying regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary, e) synergies created between interventions, due to other external sources of financing (mainly mainstream operational programmes), f) modification of exchange rates between euro and forint. On the other hand, the **main factors hampering the effectiveness of the programme** are related to: a) Covid19 which affected significantly sectors such as tourism, transport, health and employment, but also, from an horizontal perspective, affected the implementation of the projects, b) energy and economic crises which led to significant increases of prices, c) under-financing through the national budgets of the sectors addressed by the programme, such as protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, healthcare (especially in Romania) or employment, d) legislative changes in Romania in the area of natural area protection, e) national legislations that do not allow joint action of Romania and Hungary responsible institutions in case of emergencies (which some exceptions), f) lack of integrated approach in regards with redirecting the individual transport to environmentally friendly transport (a factor addressed already but still present), g) the delays of Romania's accession to Schengen area and h) insufficient highly qualified human resources in the area of health and natural heritage protection.

Recommendation 1. A stronger connection between the operational (project) and strategic levels should be ensured in the project preparation (*in the case of the Interreg VI-A Programme*) and implementation phases, as the former influences the quality of interventions' designs. Thus, while in several cases the connection with sectoral stakeholders proved to be very strong, this approach has not been applied by all programme beneficiaries. This stronger connection would better orient and, possibly, sustain the results of the projects in the programme area and potentially beyond the eligible area of the programme, in the East of Hungary and the West of Romania (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (c), (d), (e) and (f)).

Recommendation 2. In order to facilitate both the project and programme implementation, taking into account the risk of economic crisis and inflation (that already affected the programme in 2021-2022), **applying indexation of projects' budgets with the inflation rate and making adjustment to the programme budget taking into account savings from public procurement and the impact of inflation**, constitutes an important measure that can come to the support of beneficiaries, especially in the context of significant disruptive context factors, such as the energy and economic crisis (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (b) and (c)). For example, if in the future the price of construction materials and works will be affected from inflation again, the projects, but also the programme priorities and specific objectives with significant budgets allocated to construction could be increased, using savings from projects that include services less affected by inflation. This can be achieved by creating a financial reserve for each call, to be complemented by funds that are not used by projects that can save money due to public procurement where they obtain better prices than anticipated. The funds from the financial reserve can be afterwards distributed to projects facing serious challenges/bottlenecks due to inflation, based on an updated decision on funding (of the MC) and an addendum to the funding contract.

Conclusion 5. In general, the funds available and eligible activities were considered to be very important by both beneficiaries and other stakeholders, addressing in a proper way the existing problems in each sector and the needs of the eligible applicants. A case which made an exception is the SO 1.1 where, while many institutions were able to conduct most of the eligible activities, they still could not achieve the output level indicator due to their little or no responsibility in regards with the rivers water quality measurement points. Several situations in which eligible institutions applied for financing under SO 5.1, instead of SO 1.1 were identified. While this situation created synergies between the contracted projects, it is important also to emphasize that it has been generated by an inconsistency in the programme's design.

Conclusion 6. The evaluation found that the beneficiaries attribute to a large extent the success of the implementation process to the excellent support and collaboration provided by the Joint Secretariat and the Info Points. The JS has been the main contact point for beneficiaries and due to its location and the conducted analyses showed that it effectively supported those implementing Interreg funds. The Info Points replicated part of the support provided by the JS, mainly for beneficiaries from the Hungary, which facilitated access to information and technical support for them, overcoming possible language barriers.

Project level effectiveness

Conclusion 7. **Most targets of output indicators at project level have been achieved already, with multiple instances in which the indicators heavily overperform their targets.** Only three indicators have not achieved their targets, yet, namely *6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions; CO13 Roads: Total length of newly built roads; CO14 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads*. All relevant projects reported 0 outputs so far, as there is no finalized project to contribute to the values of any of the aforementioned indicators. As for the rest of the indicators, their values is expected to increase, despite achieving their targets solely on outputs produced already, as there are still many projects in implementation. The projects that feed into the value of indicator *CO09 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions* have an achievement rate of 310,93% of the targets at project level. This is the highest achievement rate at project level among all indicators. Indicator *CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training* has the lowest achievement rate of targets at project level, at just 64,95%.

Conclusion 8. The **main factors that facilitated the effectiveness of the projects** as identified through the evaluation are related to: a) multiculturality of the addressed areas, thus of the communities of beneficiaries, b) in most cases, well positioned beneficiaries with sufficient expertise and financial capacity, c) well designed partnerships, d) effective support provided by programme authorities to the beneficiaries, especially by the JS – BRECO and Info Points. On the other hand, the **main hampering factors in regards with project level effectiveness** were: a) restriction imposed in the context of Covid19 pandemic, which led to significant delays in the implementation of planned activities, b) public procurement system, mainly from Romania (but still bottlenecks have been also identified in Hungary, even if to a lesser extent), which also led to delays, c) increases in prices which led to unsuccessful public

tenders and the need for additional financing sources, d) turnover of personnel at the level of project partners, e) not applying the pre-financing mechanism, important mainly in the case of small beneficiaries with less financial capacity, f) late adoption of the programme, late establishment of the legal and administrative framework and late adoption of state aid regulation which led to later than planned calls for proposals.

Recommendation 3. It is important that future programme beneficiaries receive support from programme authorities for quality projects implementation. While in general the support of programme authorities was well appreciated, further **reducing administrative burden and accounting difficulties** would help ease the implementation process for beneficiaries, as this has been a horizontal bottleneck faced by those accessing the funds available through the programme.

Recommendation 4. Moreover, **financial incentives (100% grant, ERDF 50% pre-financing)** can help the beneficiaries of the projects, but also, they may increase the popularity of the programme. As in Hungary these instruments are already in place³⁹, in Romania, Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary does provide pre-financing to beneficiaries only in a limited number of cases. Efforts for a more consistent use of pre-financing for Romanian beneficiaries should be continued in order to increase the effectiveness and popularity of the programme.

Recommendation 5. The delays caused by the public **procurement procedures should have been addressed earlier in the implementation of projects.** The suspensive clause should have been used in order to prepare the tender in advance and be able to proceed with project activities earlier in the implementation period. Projects where this clause has been used face less delays. It is also recommended for the beneficiaries to conduct a thorough analysis of the procurement regulations, seek legal expertise to navigate its complexities, establish a clear and transparent procurement process, maintain proper documentation, and regularly monitor and review the process for effectiveness. This process should be better supported by programme authorities through **recommendations, special budget sections to allow beneficiaries to include not only the costs resulted from procurement but also project management costs for a thorough preparation of procurements and trainings for beneficiaries.**

Impact in regards with each specific objective of the programme

Conclusion 9. The evaluation found that **the financed projects contribute to a large extent to the progress observed** for each specific objective of the programme, but not in all cases directly to the result indicator set at programme level (in line with the EC LoI 2014-2020). Even if not all projects are finalized, the case studies allowed an in-dept analysis at project level, which revealed the fact that **most of interventions have already generated important positive effects at the level of the target groups.** In regards with the actual and expected contribution to result indicators, based on the analysis of the projects' design and of the strength of the causal links between the output and result indicators at OS level, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Projects contracted under SO 1.1 **contribute directly to the to the result indicator** *Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area*, but the sum of outputs is rather low, i.e.: 9 measurement points treated. In comparison, the expected rivers water quality increases based on the values registered at 95 measurement points in the eligible area. On the other hand, the current value of the programme result indicator has surpassed its target, but this increase cannot be attributed only to interventions financed under SO 1.1, nor to the Interreg V-A programme.
- Regarding the projects contracted under SO 1.2, the current progress registered at project level in terms of already generated outputs is very good and the targets for both outputs are expected to be surpassed. However, **the actual and potential contribution of projects/programme to sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area is difficult to be assessed**, because of the inconsistency in the logic of intervention. Namely, the outputs of SO 1.2 are reflected in (a) the number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions and (b) the surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status, while the result (outcome) of SO 1.2 was set to be the increased number of tourists

³⁹ New legislation in Hungary (Government Decree No. 241/2023. (VI.20.) allows for the possibility of 100% grant, 50% pre-financing of total partner cost (not the ERDF).

overnight stays in the programme area. But only the first output indicators (the one referring to visitors) is directly linked with the expected result (referring to tourism growth). On the other hand, 59% of the financed projects do not aim to attract visitors, but only to enhance habitat protection/conservation, thus they do not generate effects directly linked with the number of overnight stays in the eligible area.

- The project contracted under SO 2.1 **contributes to the improvement of cross-border accessibility** through the constructed, upgraded/modernized roads, but their impact can be considered rather small, given its limited budget in comparison with the total budget of the programme and the need for road infrastructure investments. Moreover, the causal link between output indicators and result is moderate, since the physical road network can only partially measure accessibility in the context of mobility.
- The projects contracted under SO 2.2 **contribute to the increased use of sustainable transport**, facilitating cross-border public transport, but if their share within the programme had been greater, a more significant impact could have been achieved. The causal link between output indicators and the result indicator is strong, the increase of cross-border public transport services having a direct impact on the ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border.
- The projects contracted under SO 3.1 **contribute to a higher access level to the labor market** of the persons in the target groups of the projects, however the effect on employment **is expected to occur rather on the long-term**, given the moderated strength of the causal link between the outputs and the result and the need of several other supporting factors.
- Projects contracted under SO 4.1 have an **important contribution** to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services particularly on the Romanian-side of the border and in counties benefiting of more support, due to the large budget allocated and contracted under PA 4 and the coherence of its design.
- Under SO 5.1, the **contribution of the 10 contracted projects is rather limited** because of two factors. On one hand, there is a weak link between the output and result indicators: while the output indicator focuses on the target group of the projects, on the contrary, the result indicator focuses on those carrying out the investments. A better intervention logic design could link the programme output with funds beneficiaries and their partners and the results (outcomes) with the target group/population of the covered area. On the other hand, the contribution of projects to results is rather limited because of their limited budgets.
- Regarding projects contracted under SO 6.1, their **benefits for improved cross-border cooperation are visible in all municipalities of the programme beneficiaries**. Taking into account this mix of beneficiaries and the findings of case studies, the programme provided support for intense exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge, creating professional linkages among the partner institutions.

Conclusion 10. Not all projects have set targets for result indicators, and this hampered the evaluators' capacity to analyze the contribution of the projects to the programmes' objectives. An additional hampering factor for the evaluation, already mentioned, is the moderate or weak link between the result and output indicator(s) for some specific objectives. In this context, a cumulative expected effect of project portfolio by SO cannot be calculated, but rather approximated based on projects design, progress and additional qualitative data collected from beneficiaries.

Recommendation 6. Regarding the potential of the programme to contribute to the development of the addressed sectors and the extent to which this contribution can be assessed, the logic of intervention under each SO needs to **better highlight the causal links between outputs and result indicators** (for period 2021 – 2027), based on lessons learned from Interreg V-A. Moreover, the values of result indicators should be **assessed with a frequency of 3 years**, in order for the Managing Authority to be able to analyze the trends, external factors and adjust the targets in accordance in a timely manner. And, this activity should be separately budgeted, due to its complexity, where calculating the value of result indicators implies collecting data from stakeholders. At project level, all applications should cover all output indicators at OS level and should set target for programme result indicator, thus, estimate their contribution to the expected result in covered sector.

Conclusion 11. The evaluation did not identify a large number of unintended effects. Nevertheless, some of them are of utmost importance for the development of the sectors addressed by the projects, such as: covering the gap in financing and available human resources in the natural heritage protection sector; generating more interest at local and county level for the transport infrastructure; replications of projects financed under SO 3.1 and joint efforts made by beneficiaries under SO 5.1 in changing legislation in regards with joint interventions in case of emergencies. On the other hand, in the case of SO 4.1, some projects had negative effects in terms of loss of human resources caused by automatization and their low level of adaptation to the modernized approaches that were adopted. From a general perspective, the programme accelerated the development of several types of activities after the restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic were abolished and thus, the recovery after COVID19. In terms of **indirect effects**, continuation of joint projects and strengthening of collaboration between partners is the most visible one.

General impact of the programme

Conclusion 12. The programme is **successful in producing change at the level of the eligible area for a large number of persons**. The programme covers the entire eligible area and there are no parts of the area that are not covered at all by any project. From the perspective of the population addressed or benefiting from the projects results, the programme has a very good coverage (notable is that population having access to improved health services is surpassing the population of the programme area and population safeguarded by improved emergency system represents almost 60% of the population of the programme area). However, the benefits and effects of the programme are not distributed uniformly in the programme eligible area. More projects, beneficiaries and larger target groups are concentrated closer to the border and in the North of the programme area, with less projects implemented in the South of the programme area and in municipalities that are further from the border (in the East of the eligible Romanian counties and the West of the eligible Hungarian counties). Moreover, more projects are implemented by beneficiaries from the large cities. This type of project distribution, with larger projects density close to the border and the location of the joint secretariats is visible in other CBC programmes. However, in this context, actions are needed to attract new beneficiaries.

Recommendation 7. Encouraging a more **balanced distribution of project activities between Romanian and Hungarian partners**, in line with needs, but with a view to foster CBC, would bring more benefits in the eligible area, for target groups and would increase trust, level of cooperation among partners / peer institutions. One way to **attract new applicants** sending personalized invitations for information and dissemination events. Organising events (even small-scale events in a large number of cities and even in the rural areas, within a caravan type campaign) in partnership with local authorities and NGOs (local or regional with grass-roots activities) may also contribute to attracting new applicants.

Recommendation 8. A larger number of beneficiaries can be also achieved with a smaller number of strategic, large projects being funded. Limiting the number of large strategic projects would allow a larger budget to be available for competitive calls. A larger budget available means that new organizations are encouraged to apply as their chances to benefit can be higher.

Conclusion 13. The programme **contributes in a significant manner to the cooperation and cohesion in the eligible area**, under all SOs. While in some cases effects at sector level are less visible when assessing the common impact generated by the programme, cooperation especially among peer institutions is very present and it contributed to strengthening the relations and trust among programme beneficiaries. Most of them are planning new projects together. This is certainly the **main added value of the programme**, the general perspective being that no other available financing source could support the cooperation between entities on the two sides of the border or some of the sectoral interventions funded by the V-A RO-HU Programme.

Recommendation 9. It is important to increase the number of municipalities involved in cross-border cooperation. In this context, it would be beneficial to encourage applicants with experience to include new institutions and organizations in their projects/partnerships. This is an important way to allow small municipalities and organizations to build their capacity to manage cross-border cooperation projects. This can be done by:

- providing small municipalities and organizations with dedicated help-desk materials;

- organizing workshops (with funding from technical assistance) ensuring the participation of both (a) experience beneficiaries and (b) small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes. This can support partnership building and facilitate knowledge transfers;
- allocating additional points in the appraisal of funding applications to partnerships including small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes, when the need for their inclusion in the project is well argued.

Conclusion 14. In both countries, the **complementarity with national investments** (from national budgets) and with **other EU programmes**, including the regional development programmes, **has been ensured**. Regarding the **alignment and contribution of Interreg programme to EU 2020 strategy and Danube Region Strategy**, this has been direct and important as types of effects already generated or to be generated. In relation to the magnitude of the contribution to the development of the addressed sectors, the findings vary from one SO to another (*see Conclusion 9*).

Conclusion 15. Putting the potential contribution of the programme to the addressed sectors in the context of the overall EU existing financing in the eligible area, the funding framework shows that the programme has a significant contribution – surpassing 34% of the funds allocated in the programme area within the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes – in the sectors covered by SO1.2 and 4.1.

Conclusion 16. Overall, the **investments made through the Interreg V-A RO-HU programme are sustainable**. The results achieved, especially the ones related to important infrastructure built and equipment purchased, are investments that generate positive effects on long-term. They are, in most of the cases, under the responsibilities of public institutions which are obliged to allocate distinct budgets for their maintenance and repairs. Thus, strategic projects seem to bring the most added value in terms of sustainability, due to significant hard/infrastructure support for the continuation of activities on promotion of cultural heritage, employment in each country and as cross-border activities, the provision of the necessary conditions for better healthcare services, improvement of safety road transportation in the border area. They facilitate more cross-border exchanges for a long period of time. On the other hand, the sustainability of joint initiatives (for example the joint structures created in projects under SO 4.1 dedicated to improved healthcare) is not certain. In most cases these structures need additional funding to be institutionalized, to have a clear and well assumed ownership.

Recommendation 10. The VI-A RO-HU programme and future cross-border cooperation projects should support joint structure and joint provision of services in order to enhance further the quality/intensity of cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian municipalities and organizations.

Conclusion 17. In terms of capitalization potential of financed projects, the renewed roads and sites of cultural and historic importance, environment protection, hospitals renovations, add to the quality of life of the citizens as well as to the touristic potential of both countries. Moreover, there is a **very high potential of the results of the strategic projects funded under SO1.2 and SO3.1 and of all projects funded under SO4.1 to be used in other projects and activities**.

Conclusion 18. All actors involved in the management and implementation of the programme **follow the legal provisions in all the areas covered by the horizontal principles**: equal opportunities, non-discrimination and sustainable development. Under PA1 and OS 2.1, all activities and planned results are promoting the horizontal principles of sustainable development. Especially in the projects concerning historical and cultural heritage the development of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue and relations is emphasized. Under PA4, the accessibility and non-discrimination have been also promoted, in order to ensure access to healthcare of the most disadvantaged people.

Conclusion 19. The programme is **visible in the covered counties as are its already achieved results**, but even more promotion would be beneficial to increase the awareness of the general public on the support for cross-border cooperation. The investments made under 1.1, 2.1 and 4.1 are the most visible ones, being projects aiming to improve conditions for the entire population of the addressed localities and conducting important infrastructure works. Also, projects under SO 1.2 are very visible since they combine important infrastructure works with direct involvement of target groups in project activities.

Recommendation 11. Better valorization of the outputs and results of the implemented projects, through a more intense dissemination of good practice examples can benefit the programme and bring more applicants to calls. More efforts should be invested in disseminating successful projects, to inform citizens of results booked with EU/CBC resources, as well as to promote the idea that Interreg CBC projects generated useful effects for the community, including projects financed under SOs where the results are less visible for the general public (such as: 1.1, 3.1 or 5.1). This is not only beneficial for the 2014 – 2020, but of utmost importance for the new programming period, as a means through which more new potential beneficiaries of the programme may be reached.

Conclusion 20. The beneficiaries are mostly satisfied with the programme and the support they received from the programme authorities, especially the Joint Secretariat and Info Points. However, the long time between the moment of submitting applications for funding and the start of the projects generated discontent and some challenges in projects implementation.

Recommendation 12. Programme authorities, especially the Managing Authority, should examine the project appraisal and contracting procedures and where possible introduce simplified rules or terms in order to ensure the shorter possible time between the moment projects are planned and submitted and the moment they can start.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMENDATIONS
<p>The following paragraphs of the Final Evaluation Report:</p> <p>Based on the data provided by the National Environmental Institution in Hungary and the Romanian Waters National Administration, the current value of the indicator established under the SO 1.1 “Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area (PA1, IP 6/b)” is 2,88, higher than the programme target set for 2023, of 2,39. Thus, the target has been reached with a proportion of 120,5%.</p> <p>In regards to the result indicator “Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area (PA1, IP 6/c)”, corresponding with the SO 1.2 of the programme, the analysis of the collected data indicates the value of 5.766.974 overnight stays were measured in 2022 in the eligible area of the programme, against the target value (for 2023) of 5.485.294 overnight stays. Thus, the target has been already surpassed.</p> <p>In regards with the result indicator “Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T (no. of inhabitants) (PA 2, IP 7/b)”, from the data collected from the National Statistics Offices from Romania and Hungary, the estimation of the indicator’s value is approximately 607.768 inhabitants, representing 139,56% of the programme target. Nonetheless, according to the current progress status of the project contributing to the result indicators, based on eMS data where no output has been reported yet, the current value of the indicator is 0.</p> <p>In regards with the SO 2.2 of the programme, an increase in the ratio of people to motorized vehicles crossing the border between Romania and Hungary contributes directly to lower carbon and noise emissions from cross-border transport. In regards with the programme result indicator under SO 2.2, “Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border (PA 2, IP 7/c)”, the value calculated for the eligible area, based on the data</p>	<p>Conclusion 1. The effectiveness of the programme, based on its current implementation status (73 projects out of the 108 contracted projects were finalized at the cut-off date of the evaluation) varies across its 8 specific objectives. As a result of applying the programme methodology for calculating the values of result indicators, the evaluation found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only for 3 result indicators the programme registered values reaching or surpassing the targets set for 2023, namely <i>Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area</i> (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 1.1, which surpassed its target by 20,5%; <i>Increased number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area</i> (calculated at the level of year 2022), under SO 1.2, which surpassed its target by 5,13%; and <i>Slight increase in employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population</i> (calculated at the level of year 2021), under SO 3.1, surpassing the target with 0,56%. - Nevertheless, the values of other 3 result indicators show registered achievement rates in regards with the set targets set above 90%, as it follows: <i>Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border</i> (calculated at the level of year 2022), under SO 2.2, reached the target with a 90% rate, <i>Improved average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area</i>, under SO 4.1 (calculated at the level of year 2023), which registered an achievement rate of 92% and <i>Increased level of the cross-border cooperation intensity of the public institutions and non-profit organizations</i> (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 6.1, which achieved 90,47% of the target for 2023. Moreover, under SOs 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1 the qualitative assessment based on interviews and case studies shows that the programme had an important positive contribution in the funded sectors and the changes achieved are significant for the programme beneficiaries and other stakeholders. - For one indicator the target achievement rate is below 90%: <i>Improved quality of the joint risk management</i> (calculated at the level of year 2023), under SO 5.1, with a performance rate of 86%. 	<p>No related recommendation was formulated</p>

<p>received from the Border Policy Offices from Romania and Hungary is 2,35 in 2022⁴⁰, less than the target set for 2023, which is 2,59 and also less than the baseline calculated for 2014.</p> <p>From the data collected from the National Statistics Offices of Romania and Hungary, the value for the result indicator “Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population (PA 3, IP 8/b)” is 56,70% for year 2021, higher than the target of 56,38%.</p> <p>In regards with the result indicator for SO 4.1 of the programme “Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area (PA 4, IP 9/a)”, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is 3,33, less than the target for 2023. For the calculation of the result indicators, data was collected from 9 relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>In regards with the result indicator for SO 5.1 of the programme “Quality of the joint risk management (PA 5, IP 5/b)”, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is 2,78, lower than the target for 2023 of 3,23 and also of the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,02.</p> <p>In regards with the result indicator for SO 6.1 of the programme “Intensity level of cross-border cooperation (PA 6, IP 11/b)”, based on the methodology established under the programme for calculating the value of the indicator, the result is 3,23, lower than the target for 2023 of 3,57 and also of the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,46.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The result indicator set under SO 2.1, <i>Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T</i> (calculated at the level of year 2023), constitutes an exception since its value is linked with the progress made at project level; as project has been finalized and no achievement has been reported yet the current achievement rate is 0%. Nevertheless, the evaluation assessed the expected value of the result indicator based on the planned achievement at projects level, and it is expected to be surpassed with 39,46%. 	
<p>The following paragraphs of the Final Evaluation Report:</p> <p>The value calculated for 2019 is lower than the baseline of the indicator (<i>referring to Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area (PA1, IP 6/c)</i>), which was calculated for 2013. Nevertheless, the touristic sector was significantly affected by the traveling restrictions imposed during the Covid19 pandemic. Since the effects of pandemic started to decrease and the restrictions were eliminated, the tourist sector has slightly recovered and it is expected to be fully recovered in 2023, the</p>	<p>Conclusion 2: The analyzed data showed that the Covid19 pandemic had a significant impact on the values of several programme result indicators, such as: number of tourists overnight stays until 2021, ratio of people using motorized road vehicles, employment rate. The general context worsened during the pandemic and its effects are reflected by the figures presented above. The trends registered in the areas addressed by the programme, especially the changes observable between 2021 and 2022, show that the most affected sectors started to recover even from 2021, with an accelerated pace. Thus, it is expected that by the end of the programme many sectors are revitalized and achieve a similar or higher development status as before the</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated</p>

⁴⁰ This value represents an average between the data provided from the Hungarian Border Police Office and the Romanian Border Police Office. The values registered by the two offices are very similar, but during the conducted analysis slight discrepancies have been observed. Thus, the calculated value represents an average.

<p>number of overnight stays reaching a much higher level than the one from the end of 2022. To have a clearer image on the general evolution of the sector in the eligible area of the programme and on the extent to which it has been affected by the pandemic, the report presents in the figure below the evolution of the number of overnight stays in the 8 counties covered by the programme, between 2018 and 2022.</p> <p>Nevertheless, As the available data shows, in 2019 and 2020, the registered values for employment rate in the programme area were significantly higher than the values expected for 2023, as per programme targets. While the sector was significantly affected by Covid19, it is expected that the situation at the end of 2023 to show an important progress, as employment area started to slowly recover.</p> <p>Similar with other several indicators, also in this case (<i>referring to the indicator Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border</i>), the pandemic affected the registered trends, because of the fact that people avoided public transportation means during the period when restrictions were enforced. Below is presented the trend observed between 2018 and 2022.</p>	<p>pandemic outburst. This was a visible event in 2022 compared to 2021 in the sector of tourism. Also, many projects are still in the implementation phase, thus, they have generated, so far, little effects. In this context, it is safe to say that, after the end of the programme (when figures for year 2023 are available), the data regarding its overall effectiveness, reflected in the values of the result indicators will be significantly more informative. It is expected that interventions financed under the programme will generate a much more contribution than can be observed at this point in time, due to the availability of updated data, the finalization of important (regular or strategic projects) and the decrease of the negative impact of Covid19.</p>	
<p>The conclusion was formulated based on Annex 5. (Strength of the causal links between the output indicators and result indicators at OS level), the findings related to Conclusion 1 and the findings presented in the following paragraphs of the Final Evaluation Report:</p> <p>Thus, 2 main findings in regards with the level of appropriateness of target set for programme result indicators were formulated:</p> <p>Strength of causal link between programme output indicators and programme result indicators varies from one SO to another. The review of the programme logic, of the needs analysis (including problems and drivers identified in the programming phase and related planned activities and expected outputs) and the data collected from stakeholders and programme beneficiaries allowed the evaluation team to develop the matrix in Annex 5 showing the level of strength of the link between expected outputs and results, by SO</p> <p>It is important to mention that not all projects estimated their contribution to the results indicators of the programme. Even if they have explained the causal link between the planned outputs and expected effects in line with the specific objective under which</p>	<p>Conclusion 3. The evaluation found that where the link between the objectives of the programme, thus the expected results and the planned outputs is strong, and the targets were well set, especially in the case of SOs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1. However, contextual factors were taken into account to a limited extent when designing the methodology for calculating the baseline and the target values for results indicators set under SO 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, where inherent changes occurred in the structure, number of personnel and capacity of relevant institutions that were included in the data collection process for setting the baseline values of the indicators in the nine years since the programme was initiated.</p>	<p>There are no recommendations proposed in relation to the formulation of the result indicators for the 2021-2027 VI-A RO-HU Programme, because the methodology provided by the EU regulation for these indicators, that is integrated in the programme under implementation since 2022, represents an improvement compared with the programming period 2014-2020. Risks similar with the ones already encountered regarding most indicators and targets are not foreseen in the future.</p>

<p>they were financed, not all beneficiaries set a target to be reached at the end of the project or after its closure. Thus, no quantitative estimation of the expected impact of the contracted projects to the programme results could be elaborated. Nevertheless, the data collected and analysed under the framework of the 15 Case studies conducted⁴¹ shows that most of the projects will reach their targets by the end of the implementation and will generate the expected effects / results. Many of the on-going projects have already produced significant effects in their sector and for their target groups.</p> <p>While the methodology for calculating the targets of result indicators have been revised in 2020, based on the conclusions and recommendation of the study <i>Assessment of methodologies for defining the output and result indicators, the milestone output targets and the financial milestones for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme</i> and based on the modifications of the programme, especially in relation with budget allocations, conducted in 2018, there are still inconsistencies or lack of information that make the assessments of programme's results rather difficult. The revision of the methodology included also target adjustments, as it follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase with 0,02 percentual points the target for the result indicator under SO 1.1 - decrease with 0,06 percentual points the target for result indicator under SO 2.2 - decrease with 0,13 percentual points the target of the result indicator under SO 3.1 - increase with 0,10 percentual points the target for the expected result under SO 4.1 - increase with 0,04 percentual points for result under SO 5.1 <p>The inherent change in the structure, number and personnel of relevant institutions that were included in the data collection process for measuring the baseline values of the indicators, in almost 10 years period of time after the calculation of the result indicators baseline, may affect significantly the validity of the data collected for calculating the achievements against the targets.</p>		
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⁴¹ Please see the complete Case Study Reports in annex 6.

<p>Economic changes that may affect significantly the values of the indicators are not included in the methodology, which is rather simple and has little capacity of integrating the effects of the programme into the broader picture of the addressed sector.</p>		
<p>The findings presented in tables 3 and 4 of the Final Evaluation Report:</p> <p>External positive factors (Table 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loosening of the regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary facilitated the implementation of projects and generation of effects (horizontal factor) - Official agreements signed between Romanian and Hungary government in regards with the management of water resources, started from 2003 (relevant for SOs 1.1 and 5.1) - On the transport sector significant developments have been observed in last years based on the prioritization of the sector and visible increase of awareness regarding the importance of a high-quality public transportation systems for developing cities and also for the development of the cross-border area (related to SO 2.1) - For the project beneficiaries from Hungary, the modification of exchange rates between euro and forint was an economic factor that facilitated the projects' implementation. The forint was devaluated in comparison with the euro, which led to more resources available (especially related to SO 3.1) - The reorganization of the vocational training system in Hungary, by being placed under the coordination of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology, was a beneficial change in support of the contracted projects. Due to the reorganization, vocational training has become much more responsive to all kinds of demands from municipalities and employers. (relevant for SO 3.1) - EU policy on the risk management of floods and more specifically the integration of the EU Flood Directive into the national legislations, leads to a more effective management of natural hazards (relevant for SO 5.1) <p>Internal positive factors (Table 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strength of the logic of intervention of SOs 1.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1, where the programme has properly identified and addressed the existing needs. 	<p>Conclusion 4. The evaluation found that the main factors supporting the effectiveness of the programme are: a) favorable legislation in the area of cross-border waters management (EU, national legislation in both sides of the border and bilateral governmental agreements between Romania and Hungary), b) the prioritization of several sectors addressed by the programme policy makers (such as transport and risk management), c) increased awareness at the level of stakeholders in regards with the importance of promoting environmentally friendly means of transportation, d) legislative changes in Hungary in the area of vocational training or simplifying regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary, e) synergies created between interventions, due to other external sources of financing (mainly mainstream operational programmes), f) modification of exchange rates between euro and forint. On the other hand, the main factors hampering the effectiveness of the programme are related to: a) Covid19 which affected significantly sectors such as tourism, transport, health and employment, but also, from an horizontal perspective, affected the implementation of the projects, b) energy and economic crises which led to significant increases of prices, c) under-financing through the national budgets of the sectors addressed by the programme, such as protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, healthcare (especially in Romania) or employment, d) legislative changes in Romania in the area of natural area protection, e) national legislations that do not allow joint action of Romania and Hungary responsible institutions in case of emergencies (which some exceptions), f) lack of integrated approach in regards with redirecting the individual transport to environmentally friendly transport (a factor addressed already but still present), g) the delays of Romania's accession to Schengen area and h) insufficient highly qualified human resources in the area of health and natural heritage protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 1. A stronger connection between the operational (project) and strategic levels should be ensured in the project preparation (<i>in the case of the Interreg VI-A Programme</i>) and implementation phases, as the former influence the quality of interventions' designs. Thus, while in several cases the connection with sectoral stakeholders proved to be very strong, this approach has not been applied by all programme beneficiaries. This stronger connection would better orient and, possibly, sustain the results of the projects in the programme area and potentially beyond the eligible area of the programme, in the East of Hungary and the West of Romania (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (c), (d), (e) and (f)). - Recommendation 2. In order to facilitate both the project and programme implementation, taking into account the risk of economic crisis and inflation (that already

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The level of awareness of programme authorities in regards with the importance of supporting the beneficiaries and finding together, where necessary, proper mitigation actions. - The capacity of the programme to reach well positioned stakeholders, having at disposal the necessary human and financial resources in order to successfully implement the projects. <p>External negative factors (Table 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Covid 19 pandemic – which affected employment, tourism, cultural events, transport, economic activities, possibility of development of partnerships and common interventions (horizontal factor) - Public underfinancing (horizontal factor) - The legislative change, in Romania, on the protected area custode institutions, which led to significant decrease in the national capacity of monitoring and taking action for the protection of natural area (relevant for SO 1.2) - Lack of highly qualified human resources in the area of cultural heritage protection in both sides of the border (relevant for SO 1.2) - Still lack of integrated approach in regards with redirecting the individual transport to environmentally friendly transport (relevant for SO 2.2) - The postponement of Romania’s accession to Schengen area, affecting the transport and workforce mobility sector (relevant for SOs 2.1 and 3.1) - Shortage of qualified workforce in the area of health in both sides of the border - National legislation that not permit common intervention on emergency situations near to the border (relevant for SO 5.1) <p>Internal negative factors (Table 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rather weak logic of intervention under SO 1.2, SO 2.2 and SO 5.1 - Moderate logic of intervention under SO 2.1 and SO 3.1 - Even if the inconsistencies from the methodology for calculating the target and current values of programme result 		<p>affected the programme in 2021-2022), applying indexation of projects’ budgets with the inflation rate and making adjustment to the programme budget taking into account savings from public procurement and the impact of inflation, constitutes an important measure that can come to the support of beneficiaries, especially in the context of significant disruptive context factors, such as the energy and economic crisis (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (b) and (c)). For example, if in the future the price of construction materials and works will be affected from inflation again, the projects, but also the programme priorities and specific objectives with significant budgets allocated to construction could be increased, using savings from projects that include services less affected by inflation. This can be achieved by creating a financial reserve for each call, to be complemented by</p>
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<p>indicators were addressed to a large extent in its revised version, some sections still need further clarifications⁴²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear definition of result indicator <i>Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T</i> or too lax definition of output indicator CO23 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status 		<p>funds that are not used by projects that can save money due to public procurement where they obtain better prices than anticipated. The funds from the financial reserve can be afterwards distributed to projects facing serious challenges/bottlenecks due to inflation, based on an updated decision on funding (of the MC) and an addendum to the funding contract.</p>
<p>The findings presented in the Case Study Reports (Annex 8 of the report) and in table 5, as it follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PA 1 - The stakeholders involved in common values and resources appreciated the detailed project proposals that outlined specific objectives, expected outcomes, and resource requirements. The rigorous evaluation criteria applied during the process, which considered factors like environmental impact, sustainability, and long-term benefits, were also recognized by the stakeholders. - PA 2 - Stakeholders involved in cross-border mobility had mixed views on the effectiveness of the applications and assessment process. Survey and interview data revealed that while some stakeholders believed the process played a moderately significant role in enabling successful project implementation, others felt that a more comprehensive analysis and assessment could have been conducted. The assessment criteria included feasibility, potential impact, and alignment with cross-border mobility objectives. - PA 3 - Stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in employment and labour mobility generally agreed that the applications and assessment process contributed to the successful implementation of projects. 	<p>Conclusion 5. In general, the funds available and eligible activities were considered to be very important by both beneficiaries and other stakeholders, addressing in a proper way the existing problems in each sector and the needs of the eligible applicants. A case which made an exception is the SO 1.1 where, while many institutions were able to conduct most of the eligible activities, they still could not achieve the output level indicator due to their little or no responsibility in regards with the rivers water quality measurement points. Several situations in which eligible institutions applied for financing under SO 5.1, instead of SO 1.1 were identified. While this situation created synergies between the contracted projects, it is important also to emphasize that it has been generated by an inconsistency in the programme's design.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

⁴² e.g., the number of respondednts expected in the case of the survey conducted for calculating the values of result indicator under SO 5.1 or the number and categories of institutions included in the baseline survey conducted in 2014

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PA 4 - Stakeholders involved in health-care and prevention highly valued the applications and evaluation process. The comprehensive needs assessment conducted, which analysed healthcare infrastructure, service gaps, and population demographics, was recognized as valuable. Project proposals were evaluated based on their potential to address these challenges and enhance health services. - PA 5 - Stakeholders involved in risk prevention and disaster management generally agreed that the applications and assessment process significantly contributed to the successful implementation of projects. The rigorous evaluation and selection criteria ensured that the implemented projects aligned with the overall objective of improving risk prevention and disaster preparedness. - PA 6 - Stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in cooperation of institutions and communities strongly believed that the applications and evaluation process greatly facilitated the successful implementation of projects. The process was viewed as exceptionally effective in promoting collaboration and cooperation between institutions and citizens, although specific details were not provided in the given information. 		
<p>The following paragraphs of the Final Evaluation Report:</p> <p>Based on the data collected through the questionnaire among stakeholders, it is clear that the overall institutional setup of the programme exerted an important influence on result indicators. However, it is worth noting that a considerable proportion of respondents (50.75%) responded with "I don't know / I cannot answer" regarding this aspect. Under coordination of the Managing Authority and the National Authority, the Joint Secretariat-BRECO and the Info Points (IPs) structures and positions were perceived to have a moderate extent of influence, with 11.94% of respondents acknowledging this. Similarly, the national authority structure and position were deemed to have a moderate extent of influence, with 13.43% of respondents expressing this view. Among the beneficiaries, 50% expressed uncertainty or lack of knowledge, stating "I don't know." This indicates a significant portion of participants who may not have a clear understanding of the impact of these program components. However, among the respondents who provided an opinion, a medium extent influence was observed across all program structures. It is important to mention here that the interviews</p>	<p>Conclusion 6. The evaluation found that the beneficiaries attribute to a large extent the success of the implementation process to the excellent support and collaboration provided by the Joint Secretariat and the Info Points. The JS has been the main contact point for beneficiaries and due to its location and the conducted analyses showed that it effectively supported those implementing Interreg funds. The Info Points replicated part of the support provided by the JS, mainly for beneficiaries from the Hungary, which facilitated access to information and technical support for them, overcoming eventual language barriers.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

<p>conducted within the project level case studies indicate that beneficiaries do not make a clear distinction between programme authorities and they have an overall very positive perspective regarding the communication and support received from the institutions that they were more often in contact, the Joint Secretariat or the Info Points. In most cases, they consider the relation with programme authorities as being a determinant factor for the success of their projects.</p> <p>Only 13.43% of the questioned stakeholders indicated that the Managing Authority structure and its position have a significant impact on the results of programme. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1 – common values and resources, 2 – accessibility and 3 – employment, the majority opinion is that the impact of the Managing Authority (MA) on all results and indicators is of medium extent, and within Priority Axes 4 – health, 5 – risk management and 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent. From the stakeholders' perspective the National Authority structure and position were deemed to have a moderate extent of influence, with 13.43% of respondents expressing this view. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the majority opinion is that the impact of the NA structure on all indicators is of medium extent, and within PA 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent.</p> <p>The evaluation found that Programme beneficiaries consider that the excellent support and collaboration provided by the Joint Secretariat and Info points, on the basis of the Framework agreement regarding the delegation of responsibilities for the implementation of the Interreg V-A Romania –Hungary Programme, contributed to a large extent to the successful implementation of their projects. The JS has been the main contact point for beneficiaries and due to its location, in the eligible area of the programme, it effectively came in the support of those implementing Interreg funds. Based on the perspectives expressed during the interviews, beneficiaries emphasized the crucial support provided by the Joint Secretariat (JS) and IPs during the interviews. The strong relationship with the JS and IPs positively influenced the project's outcome, as they consistently communicated well with the beneficiaries. According to the Framework agreement regarding the delegation of responsibilities for the implementation of the Interreg V-A Romania –Hungary Programme, the JS and IPs actively engaged with the beneficiaries, ensuring they were informed about</p>		
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<p>program requirements, guidelines, and deadlines. The clear and timely communication facilitated smooth project implementation and minimized misunderstandings. Beneficiaries also appreciated the JS's and IPs' supportive attitude throughout the project and the JS's willingness to address queries, provide clarifications, and offer guidance whenever needed. Under coordination of the Managing Authority and National Authority, the JS's and IPs proactive approach fostered a positive working relationship, contributing to the project's success.</p> <p>From the stakeholders' perspective the Joint Secretariat-BRECO and IPs structures and positions were perceived to have a moderate extent of influence, with 11.94% of respondents acknowledging this. From the beneficiaries' perspective within Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3, the majority opinion is that the impact of the JS-BRECO and IPs structures and positions on all indicators is of medium extent, and within PA 5 – joint risk management and 6 – cross-border cooperation is of large extent, and very large extend for PA 4 - health.</p>		
<p>The conclusion was formulated based on the findings presented in table 6 of Evaluation Report.</p>	<p>Conclusion 7. Most targets of output indicators at project level have been achieved already, with multiple instances in which the indicators heavily overperform their targets. Only three indicators have not achieved their targets, yet, namely 6/b 1 <i>Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions</i>; CO13 Roads: <i>Total length of newly built roads</i>; CO14 Roads: <i>Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads</i>. All relevant projects reported 0 outputs so far, as there is no finalized project to contribute to the values of any of the aforementioned indicators. As for the rest of the indicators, their values are expected to increase, despite achieving their targets solely on outputs produced already, as there are still many projects in implementation. The projects that feed into the value of indicator CO09 Sustainable Tourism: <i>Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions</i> have an achievement rate of 310,93% of the targets at project level. This is the highest achievement rate at project level among all indicators. Indicator CO44 Labour Market and Training: <i>Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training</i> has the lowest achievement rate of targets at project level, at just 64,95%.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>
<p>The conclusion was formulated based on the following paragraphs of the Evaluation Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important internal factor that contributes to the achievement of the objectives at project level is the quality of the partnership's design. Multiple partners acknowledged in the interviews that the partners that are 	<p>Conclusion 8. The main factors that facilitated the effectiveness of the projects as identified through the evaluation are related to: a) multiculturalism of the addressed areas, thus of the communities of beneficiaries, b) in most cases, well positioned beneficiaries with sufficient expertise and financial capacity, c) well designed partnerships, d) effective support provided by programme authorities to the beneficiaries, especially by the JS – BRECO and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 3. It is important that future programme beneficiaries receive support from programme authorities for quality projects

<p>involved in the project, the management system, the communication channels, the division of activities, and the coordination from the lead partner contributes the most to the facilitation of achieving the objectives. Partners consider that the quality of the expertise of the human resources weighs heavily on the achievement of objectives. As well, the beneficiaries' experience in implementing EU-funded projects is an important factor that influenced the implementation of the projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main internal factor that hindered the achievement of objectives at project level represents the turnover of personnel within the partners. Changes in the human resources of the partners, especially at the level of the leadership, can influence the implementation process in a negative manner. For example, in the case of a project, the director of a partner has been changed 3 times during the lifespan of the project, which ended up in affecting the decision-making process and caused important delays. Based on the data collected, the infrastructure works have not been a priority of the institution during the period when the instability of the management was high. - Another internal factor that affected the achievement of objectives at project level represents the overloading with tasks of the people in the project team. There were situations in which the available human resources were not sufficient to cover all the activities that were required to be implemented, at the level of the project but also at the level of the institution. - The most important external factor that affected the projects in a positive manner in achieving their targets represents the support provided to the beneficiaries by the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme authorities. This external positive factor was the most highlighted in the interviews conducted at the level of the projects. According to the case studies, the Management Authority of the programme has conducted many information events meant to increase the visibility of the programme and of the available funds and has supported the beneficiaries in the process of finding and implementing mitigations actions when needed. According to programme beneficiaries, the communication with the programme authorities was very good, the support needed was timely 	<p>Info Points. On the other hand, the main hampering factors in regards with project level effectiveness were: a) restriction imposed in the context of Covid19 pandemic, which led to significant delays in the implementation of planned activities, b) public procurement system, mainly from Romania (but still bottlenecks have been also identified in Hungary, even if to a lesser extent), which also led to delays, c) increases in prices which led to unsuccessful public tenders and the need or additional financing sources, d) turnover of personnel at the level of project partners, e) not applying the pre-financing mechanism, important mainly in the case of small beneficiaries with less financial capacity, f) late adoption of the programme, late establishment of the legal and administrative framework and late adoption of state aid regulation which led to later than planned calls for proposals.</p>	<p>implementation. While in general the support of programme authorities was well appreciated, further reducing administrative burden and accounting difficulties would help ease the implementation process for beneficiaries, as this has been a horizontal bottleneck faced by those accessing the funds available through the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 4. Moreover, financial incentives (100% grant, ERDF 50% pre-financing) can help, the beneficiaries of the projects, but also, they may increase the popularity of the programme. As in Hungary these instruments are already in place, in Romania, Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary does provide pre-financing to beneficiaries only in a limited number of cases. Efforts for a more consistent use of pre-financing for Romanian beneficiaries should be continued in order to increase the effectiveness and popularity of the programme. - Recommendation 5. The delays caused by the public procurement procedures should have been addressed earlier in the implementation of projects. The suspensive
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<p>delivered and all their revision request have been approved, the process being considered very smooth. As the interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries showed, they were content with the overall process of contract revision and indicated that all involved entities with whom they have directly communicated or collaborated were very supportive. Beneficiaries emphasized that the flexibility of programme management regarding the implementation period and the postponements of the planned activities during the pandemic were key for the success of the project. They also consider that the staff of the programme authorities have a strong grasp on the common issues encountered at the level of the projects and on how to support the beneficiaries in addressing them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple beneficiaries highlighted the importance of effective communication during the preparation of the project with the stakeholders in the area. According to them, the actors that will be relied upon for the implementation of the project must be consulted, and during the implementation consultation is still needed on an ongoing basis. In the case of a project on employment, the partners consulted employers on average every three months to align the content of their training and mentoring programme with labour market needs. - The multilingualism of several municipalities from the border area is a factor that contributed to the success of the project. There was not a language barrier between the respective partners, as both sides could communicate in Hungarian fluently. - As a horizontal defining factor, it is important to highlight the cross-border character of the projects, and thus, their potential to generate common effects and strengthen the collaboration between peer institutions / organizations as to address more effectively common problems in each sector covered by the programme. The evaluation showed that, in general, in the case of PAs 1, 2 and 6 this condition has been met. In the case of PAs 3, 4 and 5 the cross-border effects were observed to a less extent than in the case of the other PAs. In the case of PA 3, even if projects were effective in increasing the employment rates at local level, their effects in terms of cross-border workforce mobility are not visible yet and also less plausible on a medium-term, without additional public 		<p>clause should have been used in order to prepare the tender in advance and be able to proceed with project activities earlier in the implementation period. Projects where this clause has been used face less delays. It is also recommended for the beneficiaries to conduct a thorough analysis of the procurement regulations, seek legal expertise to navigate its complexities, establish a clear and transparent procurement process, maintain proper documentation, and regularly monitor and review the process for effectiveness. This process should be better supported by programme authorities through recommendations, special budget sections (to allow beneficiaries to include not only the costs resulted from procurement but also project management costs for a thorough preparation of procurements) and trainings for beneficiaries.</p>
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<p>interventions. While PA 4 aimed to enhance cooperation on health-care and prevention, based on the case studies analyses, cooperation existed and was enhanced during project implementation, but it continued to a rather limited extend after project closure. In the case of PA 5, common effects were significantly influenced not only by the design of the financed interventions, but also by the national legislation that still does not allow common emergency intervention based on the existing needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The biggest external factor that hampered the achievement of the objectives at project level represents the public procurement process. Most beneficiaries identified the difficulties in public procurement as an external factor that hindered the smooth implementation of the project. According to the beneficiaries, the public tender process is very lengthy and complex in both Romania and Hungary. Beneficiaries encountered delays during public procurement procedures, caused by processes such as requested clarifications on award documentation, appeals, etc. Besides the issues encountered in the process of public procurement, there were situations in which the beneficiaries encountered non-compliance by contractors with deadlines and execution schedules. In one instance, one Romanian partner took into consideration the length of the procedure, and it still proved to be insufficient. The process lasted significantly longer than expected. - Administrative bottlenecks proved to act as a factor that hindered the achievement of the objectives for multiple projects. In the case of protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, situations where beneficiaries could not receive the necessary authorizations for constructions after the change in legislation related to the custodians of natural protected areas. In the case of infrastructure works, the implementation was significantly hampered and delayed by the bureaucratic red tape, hindering the progress in building the roads. Concerning the employment interventions, one partner encountered difficulties in carrying out the vocational training courses, caused by issues in authorizing the courses and issuing the diplomas for the trainees by County Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (AJPIS). Due to understaffing of AJPIS, the authorization of courses 		
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<p>and issuing of diplomas was a lengthy process, and the Lead Partner could not reach out to AJPIS for urgent matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of a pre-payment system for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary, for beneficiaries from Romania, was identified as a factor that hampered the implementation of the projects. The absence of the payment request instrument in the Interreg programme was identified as a negative factor in one case study. The partners, located in Romania, always need to have funds available for the coverage of expenses in the project, with reimbursement occurring several months from the payments. The amounts spent in the projects are large, as there were hard investments included in the intervention. 		
<p>The conclusion was formulated based on the entire answer provided to the evaluation question 11 and it summarizes the main findings presented.</p>	<p>Conclusion 9. The evaluation found that the financed projects contribute to a large extent to the progress observed for each specific objective of the programme, but not in all cases directly to the result indicator set at programme level (in line with the EC LoI 2014-2020). Even if not all projects are finalized, the case studies allowed an in-dept analysis at project level, which revealed the fact that most of interventions have already generated important positive effects at the level of the target groups. In regards with the actual and expected contribution to result indicators, based on the analysis of the projects' design and of the strength of the causal links between the output and result indicators at OS level, the following conclusions can be drawn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects contracted under SO 1.1 contribute directly to the to the result indicator <i>Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area</i>, but the sum of outputs is rather low, i.e.: 9 measurement points treated. In comparison, the expected rivers water quality increases based on the values registered at 95 measurement points in the eligible area. On the other hand, the current value of the programme result indicator has surpassed its target, but this increase cannot be attributed only to interventions financed under SO 1.1, nor to the Interreg V-A programme. - Regarding the projects contracted under SO 1.2, the current progress registered at project level in terms of already generated outputs is very good and the targets for both outputs are expected to be surpassed. However, the actual and potential contribution of projects/programme to sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area is difficult to be assessed, because of the inconsistency in the logic of intervention. Namely, the outputs of SO 1.2 are reflected in (a) the number of visits to supported 	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

	<p>sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions and (b) the surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status, while the result (outcome) of SO 1.2 was set to be the increased number of tourists overnight stays in the programme area. But only the first output indicators (the one referring to visitors) is directly linked with the expected result (referring to tourism growth). On the other hand, 59% of the financed projects do not aim to attract visitors, but only to enhance habitat protection/conservation, thus they do not generate effects directly linked with the number of overnight stays in the eligible area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project contracted under SO 2.1 contributes to the improvement of cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded/modernized roads, but their impact can be considered rather small, given its limited budget in comparison with the total budget of the programme and the need for road infrastructure investments. Moreover, the causal link between output indicators and result is moderate, since the physical road network can only partially measure accessibility in the context of mobility. - The projects contracted under SO 2.2 contribute to the increased use of sustainable transport, facilitating cross-border public transport, but if their share within the programme had been greater, a more significant impact could have been achieved. The causal link between output indicators and the result indicator is strong, the increase of cross-border public transport services having a direct impact on the ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border. - The projects contracted under SO 3.1 contribute to a higher access level to the labor market of the persons in the target groups of the projects, however the effect on employment is expected to occur rather on the long-term, given the moderated strength of the causal link between the outputs and the result and the need of several other supporting factors. - Projects contracted under SO 4.1 have an important contribution to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services particularly on the Romanian-side of the border and in counties benefiting of more support, due to the large budget allocated and contracted under PA 4 and the coherence of its design. - Under SO 5.1, the contribution of the 10 contracted projects is rather limited because of two factors. On one hand, there is a weak link between the output and result indicators: while the output indicator focuses on the target group of the projects, on the contrary, the result indicator focuses on those carrying out the investments. A 	
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	<p>better intervention logic design could link the programme output with funds beneficiaries and their partners and the results (outcomes) with the target group/population of the covered area. On the other hand, the contribution of projects to results is rather limited because of their limited budgets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regarding projects contracted under SO 6.1, their benefits for improved cross-border cooperation are visible in all municipalities of the programme beneficiaries. Taking into account this mix of beneficiaries and the findings of case studies, the programme provided support for intense exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge, creating professional linkages among the partner institutions. 	
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the following paragraphs:</p> <p>It is important to mention that not all projects estimated their contribution to the results indicators of the programme. Even if they have explained the causal link between the planned outputs and expected effects in line with the specific objective under which they were financed, not all beneficiaries set a target to be reached at the end of the project or after its closure. Thus, no quantitative estimation of the expected impact of the contracted projects to the programme results could be elaborated. Nevertheless, the data collected and analyzed under the framework of the 15 Case studies conducted⁴³ shows that most of the projects will reach their targets by the end of the implementation and will generate the expected effects / results. Many of the on-going projects have already produced significant effects in their sector and for their target groups (the complete analysis is presented in Annex 8).</p>	<p>Conclusion 10. Not all projects have set targets for result indicators, and this hampered the evaluators capacity to analyse the contribution of the projects to the programmes' objectives. An additional hampering factor for the evaluation, already mention, is the moderate or weak link between the result and output indicator(s) for some specific objectives. In this context, a cumulative expected effect of project portfolio by SO cannot be calculated, but rather approximated based on projects design, progress and additional qualitative data collected from beneficiaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 6. Regarding the potential of the programme to contribute to the development of the addressed sectors and the extent to which this contribution can be assessed, the logic of intervention under each SO need to better highlight the causal links between outputs and result indicators (for period 2021 – 2027), based on lessons learned from Interreg V-A. Moreover, the values of result indicators should be assessed with a frequency of 3 years, as the Managing Authority to be able to analyze the trends, external factors and adjust the targets in accordance in a timely manner. And, this activity should be separately budgeted, due to its complexity, where calculating the value of result indicators implies collecting

⁴³ Please see the complete Case Study Reports in [annex 8](#).

		data from stakeholders. At project level, all applications should cover all output indicators at OS level and should set target for programme result indicator, thus, estimate their contribution to the expected result in covered sector.
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the following paragraphs:</p> <p>Not many unintended effects were observed within the in-depth analysis conducted for projects included in the sample for Case Studies. Nevertheless, some of them are of utmost importance for the development of the sectors addressed by the projects. In terms of protecting natural heritage, the interventions financed under the programme managed to cover a significant gap of human and financial resources generated by the legislative change related to the responsible institutions in regards with the management of natural protected areas in Romania. In regards with TEN-T infrastructure, the examples analysed within the case studies, showed that the investments made in terms of new or modernized roads contributed to the overall prioritization of area of intervention at county and local level in both sides of the border.</p> <p>In the area of employment, the activities and results of the analysed projects generated spill-over effects. The supported centres that were built with the scope to accommodate vocational trainings courses and other types of employment initiatives, also started to host social and cultural events. Moreover, the results of the financed projects determine other institutions to replicate the models and develop similar facilities. In the area of health, the cases studies conducted highlighted some cases, the automation of laboratories required ongoing professionalization of medical staff, but this process has not been fully successful. This generated significant downsizing of personnel. On the other hand, the interventions made with the support of the programme increased the prestige of the institutions and medical staff at regional level. An important unexpected effect in the area of risk management was identified. During the implementation of the projects related to common management of emergency financed through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary programme, many beneficiaries</p>	<p>Conclusion 11. The evaluation did not identify a large number of unintended effects. Nevertheless, some of them are of utmost importance for the development of the sectors addressed by the projects, such as: covering the gap in financing and available human resources in the natural heritage protection sector; generating more interest at local and county level for the transport infrastructure; replications of projects financed under SO 3.1 and joint efforts made by beneficiaries under SO 5.1 in changing legislation in regards with joint interventions in case of emergencies. On the other hand, in the case of SO 4.1, some projects had negative effects in terms of loss of human resources caused by automatization and their low level of adaptation to the modernized approaches that were adopted. From a general perspective, the programme accelerated the development of several types of activities after the restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic were abolished and thus, the recovery after COVID19. In terms of indirect effects, continuation of joint projects and strengthening of collaboration between partners is the most visible one.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

<p>faced a common bottleneck related to the limitative legislation of both countries, that does not allow common emergency interventions. Thus, responsible institutions from both sides of the border join efforts in making the necessary steps for changing the relevant legislation. This process is currently ongoing. In the area of cooperation, one case in particular highlighted a novel type of indirect effects.</p> <p>From a general perspective, the programme accelerated the development of several types of activities after restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic were abolished and thus, the recovery after COVID 19. This was due to the already signed projects, ongoing works and the need to finalize at an accelerated pace the soft activities that were resumed.</p> <p>In terms of indirect effects, these are the continuation of common projects and strengthening of collaboration between partners. The data collected and analysed showed that in most cases where in depth analyses have been conducted, partners are planning future common projects and looking for external sources of financing, including current Interreg Romania – Hungary Programme.</p>		
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the following paragraphs:</p> <p>From the perspective of the population covered by the projects results, and therefore benefiting from the programme, the programme has a very good coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings is over 26,400, representing about 1% of the adult (25-64 years old) population in the programme area. The average proportion of population participating in learning activities at national level is 7.9% in Hungary and 5.4% in Romania (in December 2022), according to Eurostat⁴⁴, but this includes also students' participation in formal education. Therefore, we may assess that the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme is serving well the population of the eligible area, contributing to a medium extent to the population learning and employment, covering a satisfactory share of the adult population. 	<p>Conclusion 12. The programme is successful in producing change at the level of the eligible area for a large number of persons. The programme covers the entire eligible area and there are no parts of the area that are not covered at all by any project. From the perspective of the population addressed or benefiting from the projects results, the programme has a very good coverage (notable is that population having access to improved health services is surpassing the population of the programme area and population safeguarded by improved emergency system represents almost 60% of the population of the programme area). However, the benefits and effects of the programme are not distributed uniformly in the programme eligible area. More projects, beneficiaries and larger target groups are concentrated closer to the border and in the North of the programme area, with less projects implemented in the South of the programme area and in municipalities that are further from the border (in the East of the eligible Romanian counties and the West of the eligible Hungarian counties). Moreover, more projects are implemented by beneficiaries from the large cities. This type of project distribution, with larger projects density close to the border and the location of the joint secretariats is visible in other CBC programmes. However, in this context, actions are needed to attract new beneficiaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 7. Encouraging a more balanced distribution of project activities between Romanian and Hungarian partners, in line with needs, but with a view to foster CBC, would bring more benefits in the eligible area, for target groups and would increase trust, level of cooperation among partners / peer institutions. One way to attract new applicants sending personalized invitations for information and dissemination events. Organising events (even small-scale events in a large

⁴⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20proportion%20of,in%202020%2C%20see%20Table%201.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The population having access to improved health services is surpassing the population of the programme area, with a total of 4,749,042 persons being served by investments in the healthcare infrastructure, endowment and the development of competences of healthcare professionals. This number shows the programme is covering very well, with benefits in the field of healthcare services, the population of the programme area and there are some spill-over effects. However, as already mentioned in the analysis of the impact of the SO4.1, the programme had an important contribution to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services in the programme area, particularly on the Romanian-side of the border and in counties benefiting of more support (Satu Mare, Timis, Csongrád and Bihor). - The population safeguarded by improved emergency services is 2,248,259 persons, representing almost 60% of the population of the programme area. This number shows the programme is covering very well, with benefits in the field of risk prevention and disaster management, the population of the programme area. Considering that previous CBC programmes in the area also generated results in this field, the influence of the cross-border cooperation in the programme area is very high. <p>The map of projects partners distribution shows that projects are concentrated in the cities that are capitals of counties. Moreover, there are areas where no project is implemented. For example, no city, town or village in the east of Timiș county is benefiting directly from the Romania-Hungary CBC programme (not even the largest city of Lugoj). The same issue appears in the west of Csongrád-Csanád and Békés counties in Hungary and the east of the county of Arad in Romania. The programme covers better the northern part of the programme area, including the east of the Romanian counties and the west of the Hungarian ones: Bihor, Hajdú-Bihar, Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.</p>		<p>number of cities and even in the rural areas, within a caravan type campaign) in partnership with local authorities and NGOs (local or regional with grass-roots activities) may also contribute to attracting new applicants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 8. A larger number of beneficiaries can be also achieved with a smaller number of strategic, large projects being funded. Limiting the number of large strategic projects would allow a larger budget to be available for competitive calls. A larger budget available means that new organizations are encourage to apply as their chances to benefit can be higher.
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on Case Study Reports (presented in Annex 8) and on the following paragraphs of the report:</p> <p>The potential for strategic cross-border development is ensured through the compentence of the MC. This potential has been valorized by the strategic and regular projects implemented by partners such as the County Councils and County self-</p>	<p>Conclusion 13. The programme contributes in a significant manner to the cooperation and cohesion in the eligible area, under all SOs. While in some cases effects at sector level are less visible when assessing the common impact generated by the programme, cooperation especially among peer institutions is very present and it contributed to strengthening the relations and trust among programme beneficiaries. Most of them are planning new projects together. This is certainly the main added value of the programme, the general perspective being that no other available financing source could</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation 9. It is important to increase the number of municipalities involved in cross-border cooperation. In this context, it would be beneficial to encourage applicants with experience to include new

<p>governments in the eight counties covered by the programme. The actual “Interreg-V-A-demand of approved projects” is matching the initially planned “Interreg-V-A-funding supply”, as the entire budget of the programme was committed to projects.</p> <p>All approved projects included a mutual exchange of experience on the project’s themes. This is the element that determined 79% of programme beneficiaries and 76% of the programme stakeholders answering to the surveys for the evaluation to state that the programme contributed to increased intensity of cross-border cooperation to a large or very large extent, as confirmed by interviews. Moreover, some projects capitalized on previous results and limited number of projects are developing policy instruments, strategies, or other policy support tools.</p> <p>The level of involved administrative units proves that the intensity of cooperation is very high and most of the municipalities taking part in projects implementation have several partners on the other side of the border. All county, regional and district administrations and most of the large municipalities are taking part in contracted Interreg-V-A projects. However, most of the small local communities are still not covered and the cross-border cooperation at the level of rural public administration is limited.</p> <p>The population directly and indirectly covered by the programme implementation is significant, although a small percent has been directly involved in activities. As a result, there is the potential to generate intense cross-border cooperation beyond the administrative cooperation.</p>	<p>support the cooperation between entities on the two sides of the border or some of the sectoral interventions funded by the V-A RO-HU Programme.</p>	<p>institutions and organizations in their projects/partnerships. This is an important way to allow small municipalities and organizations to build their capacity to manage cross-border cooperation projects. This can be done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing small municipalities and organizations with dedicated help-desk materials; - organizing workshops (with funding from technical assistance) ensuring the participation of both (a) experience beneficiaries and (b) small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes. This can support partnership building and facilitate knowledge transfers; - allocating additional points in the appraisal of funding applications to partnerships including small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes, when the need for their inclusion in the project is well argued.
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<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the findings presented in tables 19 and 20 and on the following paragraphs of the report:</p> <p>In both countries, the complementarity with national investments (from national budgets) and with other EU programmes, including the regional development programmes, has been ensured in two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the programming phase, both the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme and other EU funded programmes in Romania and Hungary paid special attention to ensuring complementarities and avoiding overlapping. • The Monitoring Committee (MC), including representatives of the main funding institutions and authorities in the two countries, is performing projects' selection, ensuring that complementarities are indeed present and that the overlapping and double funding are avoided. <p>The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has played a significant role in contributing to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Union to address common challenges and promote cooperation among countries along the Danube River. Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has been instrumental in supporting various initiatives that align with the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Through its funding and collaborative approach, the program has contributed to the sustainable development and cooperation in the Danube region, helping to address common challenges and leverage the potential of the region's resources and opportunities.</p> <p>Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme has aligned its objectives and results with the Europe 2020 Strategy and has made contributions to its objectives. These findings are supported by the advised opinion of the beneficiaries, but – similar to the contribution of projects to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region – there is a lot of variation of the level of contribution of projects to the EU 2020 Strategy.</p>	<p>Conclusion 14. In both countries, the complementarity with national investments (from national budgets) and with other EU programmes, including the regional development programmes, has been ensured. Regarding the alignment and contribution of Interreg programme to EU 2020 strategy and Danube Region Strategy, this has been direct and important as types of effects already generated or to be generated. In relation to the magnitude of the contribution to the development of the addressed sectors, the findings vary from one SO to another (<i>see Conclusion 9</i>).</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the findings presented in the following paragraphs of the report:</p>	<p>Conclusion 15. Putting the potential contribution of the programme to the addressed sectors in the context of the overall EU existing financing in the eligible area, the funding framework shows that the programme has a significant contribution – surpassing 34% of the funds allocated in the</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

<p>Overall, the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme represents 8.65% of the EU funds allocated in the programme area under the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes (INTERREG V-A Slovakia – Hungary, Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme, Interreg-IPA CBC Hungary-Serbia Programme, 2014 - 2020 Romania - Ukraine ENI CBC, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020).</p> <p>As expected, the programme contribution to the cross-border regional development is high in areas where the programme allocation is high. The funding framework shows that the programme has a significant contribution – surpassing 34% of the funds allocated in the programme area within the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes, to: a) the use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area, corresponding to results of SO1.2 and b) the improved preventive and curative medical services in the eligible area, corresponding to results of SO4.1.</p> <p>The programme also has an important contribution to increasing employment, or employability in the programme area, with over 17% of the EU allocations.</p> <p>Overall, the funding framework shows significant contribution of the programme in the field of preserving and promoting the sustainable use of the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area, promoting lifelong learning and employability and the development of healthcare infrastructure and services. A less visible contribution was provided by the programme in the field of transportation and mobility, taking into account the large investments planned with ERDF and CF support in the Operational Programmes.</p>	<p>programme area within the Cohesion Policy and the cross-border cooperation programmes – in the sectors covered by SO1.2 and 4.1.</p>	
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the findings presented in the following paragraphs of the report:</p> <p>The programme beneficiaries are taking measures to ensure sustainability, and this is reflected in all the case studies conducted. Moreover, the answers to the survey show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 70% of the beneficiaries already allocated human resources for the sustainability of the projects results (they agree their institution allocated these resources to a large or very large extent); 	<p>Conclusion 16. Overall, the investments made through the Interreg V-A RO-HU programme are sustainable. The results achieved, especially the ones related to important infrastructure built and equipment purchased, are investments that generate positive effects on long-term. They are, in most of the cases, under the responsibilities of public institutions which are obliged to allocate distinct budgets for their maintenance and repairs. Thus, strategic projects seem to bring the most added value in terms of sustainability, due to significant hard/infrastructure support for the continuation of activities on promotion of cultural heritage, employment in each country and as cross-border activities, the provision of the necessary conditions for better healthcare services, improvement of safety road transportation in the border</p>	<p>- Recommendation 10. The VI-A RO-HU programme and future cross-border cooperation projects should support joint structure and joint provision of services in order to enhance further the quality/intensity of cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian</p>

<p>- 76% of the beneficiaries already allocated financial resources for the sustainability of the projects results (they agree their institution allocated these resources to a large or very large extent).</p> <p>Almost all beneficiaries consider to a large or very large extent that their projects generated positive non-financial results that can be re-used. In this context, 75% of the beneficiaries planned follow-up initiatives using results of the project / projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme (they declare they agree with the statement “I have planned follow-up initiatives using results of the project / projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme” to a large or very large extent).</p> <p>The strength of the strategic projects seems to be their sustainability. They are expected to be sustainable, as they offer significant hard/infrastructure support for the continuation of activities on promotion of cultural heritage and employment in each country and as cross-border activities. They also provide conditions to better healthcare services on both sides of the border and these conditions are of high quality and expected to be long lasting.</p> <p>The sustainability of projects funded under PA4 in the field of healthcare depends in continuing information campaign to raise awareness on health issues among people, to convince them to consult doctors for screening and tests as preventive measures for health protection etc.</p>	<p>area. They facilitate more cross-border exchanges for a long period of time. On the other hand, the sustainability of joint initiatives (for example the joint structures created in projects under SO 4.1 dedicated to improved healthcare) is not certain. In most cases these structures need additional funding to be institutionalized, to have a clear and well assumed ownership.</p>	<p>municipalities and organizations.</p>
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the findings presented in the following paragraphs of the report:</p> <p>Renewed roads and sites of cultural an historic importance, environment protection, hospitals renovations, add to the quality of life of the citizens as well as to the touristic potential of both countries. Moreover, there is a very high potential of the results of the strategic projects funded under SO1.2 and SO3.1 and of all projects funded under SO4.1 to be used in other projects and activities.</p> <p>Interviews with projects’ partners and stakeholders allowed evaluators to identify multiple cases of prioritization of the results of the previous Hungary-Romania programme, including projects under SO1.2 that developed education and cultural centers by expanding previous buildings supported by the previous cross-border cooperation programme and projects under PA4 that</p>	<p>Conclusion 17. In terms of capitalization potential of financed projects, the renewed roads and sites of cultural an historic importance, environment protection, hospitals renovations, add to the quality of life of the citizens as well as to the touristic potential of both countries. Moreover, there is a very high potential of the results of the strategic projects funded under SO1.2 and SO3.1 and of all projects funded under SO4.1 to be used in other projects and activities.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

<p>supported works and endowment of hospitals that also benefited from support previously. In these cases, the beneficiaries are able to make a step forward in developing the quality of their services due to the combined effect of the projects implemented under the current and the previous funding framework.</p> <p>76% of beneficiaries answering the survey conducted for the evaluation assess that their projects generated results that have a high or very high potential to generate economic positive results after their prioritization (have capitalization potential). Stakeholders are more cautious and only 52% answered that the capitalization potential of the projects is high or very high.</p> <p>Capitalization could be improved by forming thematic clusters (e.g. medicine, culture, environment) in order to generate projects with higher impact and added value.</p>		
<p>The conclusion is formulated based on the findings presented in the following paragraphs of the report:</p> <p>The first level of respecting the horizontal principles is following the legal provisions in all the areas covered by these principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental legislations in interventions related to nature, biodiversity, water management; - Building legislation covering respect for environmental protection, for the development of infrastructure of any type; - Environmental legislations and the legislation related to accessibility in interventions related to mobility; - Building legislation covering accessibility ensuring for the construction and rehabilitation of buildings; - Regulations on equal opportunities and non-discrimination followed in all operations, including project management. <p>Moreover, the horizontal principles are taken into account in planning project management, including: recruitment of team members ensuring equal opportunities and non-discrimination, ensuring accessibility to information to all people, including persons with disability, using new equipment and implementing green procurement.</p> <p>Under PA1 and OSO 2.1, on the other hand, all activities and planned results are promoting the horizontal principles of sustainable development. In the projects supporting the concerning of the historical and cultural heritage, activities and</p>	<p>Conclusion 18. All actors involved in the management and implementation of the programme follow the legal provisions in all the areas covered by the horizontal principles: equal opportunities, non-discrimination and sustainable development. Under PA1 and OS 2.1, all activities and planned results are promoting the horizontal principles of sustainable development. Especially in the projects concerning historical and cultural heritage the development of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue and relations is emphasized. Under PA4, the accessibility and non-discrimination have been also promoted, in order to ensure access to healthcare of the most disadvantaged people.</p>	<p>No related recommendation was formulated.</p>

<p>planned results are promoting non-discrimination, especially when taking into account the development of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue and relations.</p> <p>Under PA4 the accessibility and non-discrimination have been also promoted, in order to ensure access to healthcare of the most disadvantaged people. Within the project <i>RO-HU-357 - Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion</i>, the County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea implemented actions to improve the access of disadvantaged groups to the health infrastructure. As part of these efforts, they provided 50 free medical tests specifically for social cases.</p>		
<p>The conclusion is formulated, to a high extent, based on Case Study Reports (Annex 8) and on the findings presented under Evaluation Question 11 (sub-section 3.3.1).</p>	<p>Conclusion 19. The programme is visible in the covered counties as are its already achieved results, but even more promotion would be beneficial to increase the awareness of the general public on the support for cross-border cooperation. The investments made under 1.1, 2.1 and 4.1 are the most visible ones, being projects aiming to improve conditions for the entire population of the addressed localities and conducting important infrastructure works. Also, projects under SO 1.2 are very visible since they combine important infrastructure works with direct involvement of target groups in project activities.</p>	<p>- Recommendation 11. Better valorisation of the outputs and results of the implemented projects, through a more intense dissemination of good practice examples can benefit the programme and bring more applicants to calls. More efforts should be invested in disseminating successful projects such as this, to inform citizens of results booked with EU/CBC resources, as promote the idea that Interreg CBC projects generated useful effects for the community, including projects financed under SOs where the results are less visible for the general public (such as: 1.1, 3.1 or 5.1). This is not only beneficial for the 2014 – 2020, but of utmost importance for the new programming period, as a means through which new of reaching more potential</p>

		beneficiaries of the programme.
The conclusion was formulated based on the entire answer provided to the evaluation question 27 and it summarizes the main findings presented.	Conclusion 20. The beneficiaries are mostly satisfied with the programme and the support they received from the programme authorities, especially the Joint Secretariat and Info Points. However, the long time between the moment of submitting applications for funding and the start of the projects generated discontent and some challenges in projects implementation.	Recommendation 12. Programme authorities, especially the Managing Authority, should examine the project appraisal and contracting procedures and where possible introduce simplified rules or terms in order to ensure the shorter possible time between the moment projects are planned and submitted and the moment they can start.

Annex 2. Indicative Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations

	Recommendations	Actions to be taken by programme authorities	Responsible institution	Period / deadline	Budget source
1	Recommendation 1. A stronger connection between the operational (project) and strategic levels should be ensured in the project preparation (<i>in the case of the Interreg VI-A Programme</i>) and implementation phases, as the former influence the quality of interventions' designs. Thus, while in several cases the connection with sectoral stakeholders proved to be very strong, this approach has not been applied by all programme beneficiaries. This stronger connection would better orient and, possibly, sustain the results of the projects in the programme area and potentially beyond the eligible area of the programme, in the East of Hungary and the West of Romania (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (c), (d), (e) and (f)).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide recommendations to applicants to collect perspectives from key stakeholders during the development the applications - Include this topic in the information meeting organized with potential applicants 	Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	Programme, Technical assistance
2	Recommendation 2. In order to facilitate both the project and programme implementation, taking into account the risk of economic crisis and inflation (that already affected the programme in 2021-2022), applying indexation of projects' budgets with the inflation rate and making adjustment to the programme budget taking into account savings from public procurement and the impact of inflation , constitutes an important measure that can come to the support of beneficiaries, especially in the context of significant disruptive context factors, such as the energy and economic crisis (the recommendation has the potential to limit the effects of factors (b) and (c)). For example, if in the future the price of construction materials and works will be affected from inflation again, the projects, but also the programme priorities and specific objectives with significant budgets allocated to construction could be increased, using savings from projects that include services less affected by inflation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The indexation of projects' budgets should be made based on the provisions of the Law 98/2016, Art. 221 (1) and provisions of the financing contracts. - A financial reserve for each call, to be complemented by funds that are not used by projects that can save money due to public procurement where they obtain better prices than anticipated. The funds from the financial reserve can be afterwards distributed to projects facing serious challenges/bottlenecks due to inflation, based on an updated decision on funding (of the MC) and 	Managing authority	<p>The action proposed refer to the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme</p> <p>Due to the fact that the implementation period end on 31st of December 2023, the proposed actions should be taken as soon as possible as to face effects of programme implementation, thus, no later than October 2023</p>	n/a

	Recommendations	Actions to be taken by programme authorities	Responsible institution	Period / deadline	Budget source
		an addendum to the funding contract.			
3	Recommendation 3. It is important that future programme beneficiaries receive support from programme authorities for quality projects implementation. While in general the support of programme authorities was well appreciated, further reducing administrative burden and accounting difficulties would help ease the implementation process for beneficiaries, as this has been a horizontal bottleneck faced by those accessing the funds available through the programme.	- Simplify the administrative process, though, for instance, reducing the number of documents needed in the application phase, reducing the level of the details controlled,	Managing authority	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	n/a Part of implementation process
4	Recommendation 4. Moreover, financial incentives (100% grant, ERDF 50% pre-financing) can help, the beneficiaries of the projects, but also, they may increase the popularity of the programme. As in Hungary these instruments are already in place, in Romania, Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary does provide pre-financing to beneficiaries only in a limited number of cases. Efforts for a more consistent use of pre-financing for Romanian beneficiaries should be continued in order to increase the effectiveness and popularity of the programme.	Introduce: - 100% grant - ERDF 50% pre-financing (for Romanian beneficiaries)	Managing Authority	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	n/a Part of implementation process
5	Recommendation 5. The delays caused by the public procurement procedures should have been addressed earlier in the implementation of projects. The suspensive clause should have been used in order to prepare the tender in advance and be able to proceed with project activities earlier in the implementation period. Projects where this clause has been used face less delays. It is also recommended for the beneficiaries to conduct a thorough analysis of the procurement regulations, seek legal expertise to navigate its complexities, establish a clear and transparent procurement process, maintain proper documentation, and regularly monitor and review the process for effectiveness.	- This process should be better supported by programme authorities through recommendations, special budget sections and trainings for beneficiaries.	Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and Info Points	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	n/a Part of implementation process
6	Recommendation 6. Regarding the potential of the programme to contribute to the development of the addressed sectors and the extent to which this contribution can be assessed, the logic of intervention under each SO need to better highlight the causal links between outputs and result indicators (for period 2021 – 2027), based on lessons learned from Interreg V-A.	- The values of result indicators should be assessed with a frequency of 3 years , as the Managing Authority to be able to analyse the trends, external factors and adjust the targets in accordance in a timely manner. This activity	Managing Authority	Calculating the values of result indicators – 2024, 2027, 2030 For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	n/a Part of implementation process Technical Assistance

	Recommendations	Actions to be taken by programme authorities	Responsible institution	Period / deadline	Budget source
		<p>should be separately budgeted, due to its complexity, where calculating the value of result indicators implies collecting data from stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At project level, all applications should cover all output indicators at OS level and should set target for programme result indicator, thus, estimate their contribution to the expected result in covered sector. 			
7	<p>Recommendation 7. Encouraging a more balanced distribution of project activities between Romanian and Hungarian partners, in line with needs, but with a view to foster CBC, would bring more benefits in the eligible area, for target groups and would increase trust, level of cooperation among partners / peer institutions.</p>	<p>For the implementation of recommendation 7, a closer communication with potential applicants should be developed. In this regard, the following should be done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Widen the stakeholders' database, especially for counties that were less represented in Interreg V-A Romania Hungary Programme - Organize information event and caravans - Send personalised emails to programme stakeholders / eligible applicants - Organize regular online information meetings 	Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and Info Points	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	n/a Part of implementation process

	Recommendations	Actions to be taken by programme authorities	Responsible institution	Period / deadline	Budget source
8	Recommendation 8. A larger number of beneficiaries can be also achieved with a smaller number of strategic, large projects being funded. Limiting the number of large strategic projects would allow a larger budget to be available for competitive calls. A larger budget available means that new organizations are encourage to apply as their chances to benefit can be higher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocate more funds for regular / normal projects 	Managing Authority	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	Programme, Technical assistance
9	Recommendation 9. It is important to increase the number of municipalities involved in cross-border cooperation. In this context, it would be beneficial to encourage applicants with experience to include new institutions and organizations in their projects/partnerships. This is an important way to allow small municipalities and organizations to build their capacity to manage cross-border cooperation projects.	<p>This can be done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing small municipalities and organizations with dedicated help-desk materials; - organizing workshops (with funding from technical assistance) ensuring the participation of both (a) experience beneficiaries and (b) small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes. This can support partnership building and facilitate knowledge transfers; - allocating additional points in the appraisal of funding applications to partnerships including small municipalities and organizations with no experience in CBC programmes, when the need for their inclusion in the project is well argued. 	Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Info Points	For the programming period 2021 – 2027, during programme implementation	Programme, Technical assistance
10	Recommendation 10. The VI-A RO-HU programme and future cross-border cooperation projects should support joint structure and joint provision of services in order to enhance further the quality/intensity of cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian municipalities and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include in call for projects a requirement related to the development of joint 	Management Authority	During the implementation of the Programme Interreg VI-	Programme, Technical assistance

	Recommendations	Actions to be taken by programme authorities	Responsible institution	Period / deadline	Budget source
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> structures and joint services - Develop recommendations for potential applicants in this regard and widely disseminate this idea during information meeting with potential applicants 		A Romania Hungary 2021 - 2027	
11	Recommendation 11. Better valorization of the outputs and results of the implemented projects , through a more intense dissemination of good practice examples can benefit the programme and bring more applicants to calls. More efforts should be invested in disseminating successful projects such as this, to inform citizens of results booked with EU/CBC resources, as promote the idea that Interreg CBC projects generated useful effects for the community, including projects financed under SOs where the results are less visible for the general public (such as: 1.1, 3.1 or 5.1). This is not only beneficial for the 2014 – 2020, but of utmost importance for the new programming period, as a means through which new of reaching more potential beneficiaries of the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize wider dissemination events where beneficiaries of successful projects can be invited to discuss with other beneficiaries and potential applicants about their projects - Capitalize on the status of public authorities of information multipliers - Organize experience exchange meeting between project beneficiaries from the same sector 	Management Authority, Joint Secretariat and Info Points	By the end of the Interreg V-A Romania Hungary Programme and during the implementation of the Programme Interreg VI-A Romania Hungary 2021 - 2027	Programme, Technical assistance
12	Recommendation 12. Programme authorities, especially the Managing Authority, should examine the project appraisal and contracting procedures and where possible introduce simplified rules or terms in order to ensure the shorter possible time between the moment projects are planned and submitted and the moment they can start.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a system for monitoring project appraisal and contracting process which allows the MA to conduct time lead analyses. 	Management Authority,	During the implementation of the Programme Interreg VI-A Romania Hungary 2021 - 2027	Programme, Technical assistance

Annex 3. Reconstructed Theory of Change for each Specific Objective

Figure 25 - Theory of Change for Specific Objective 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters

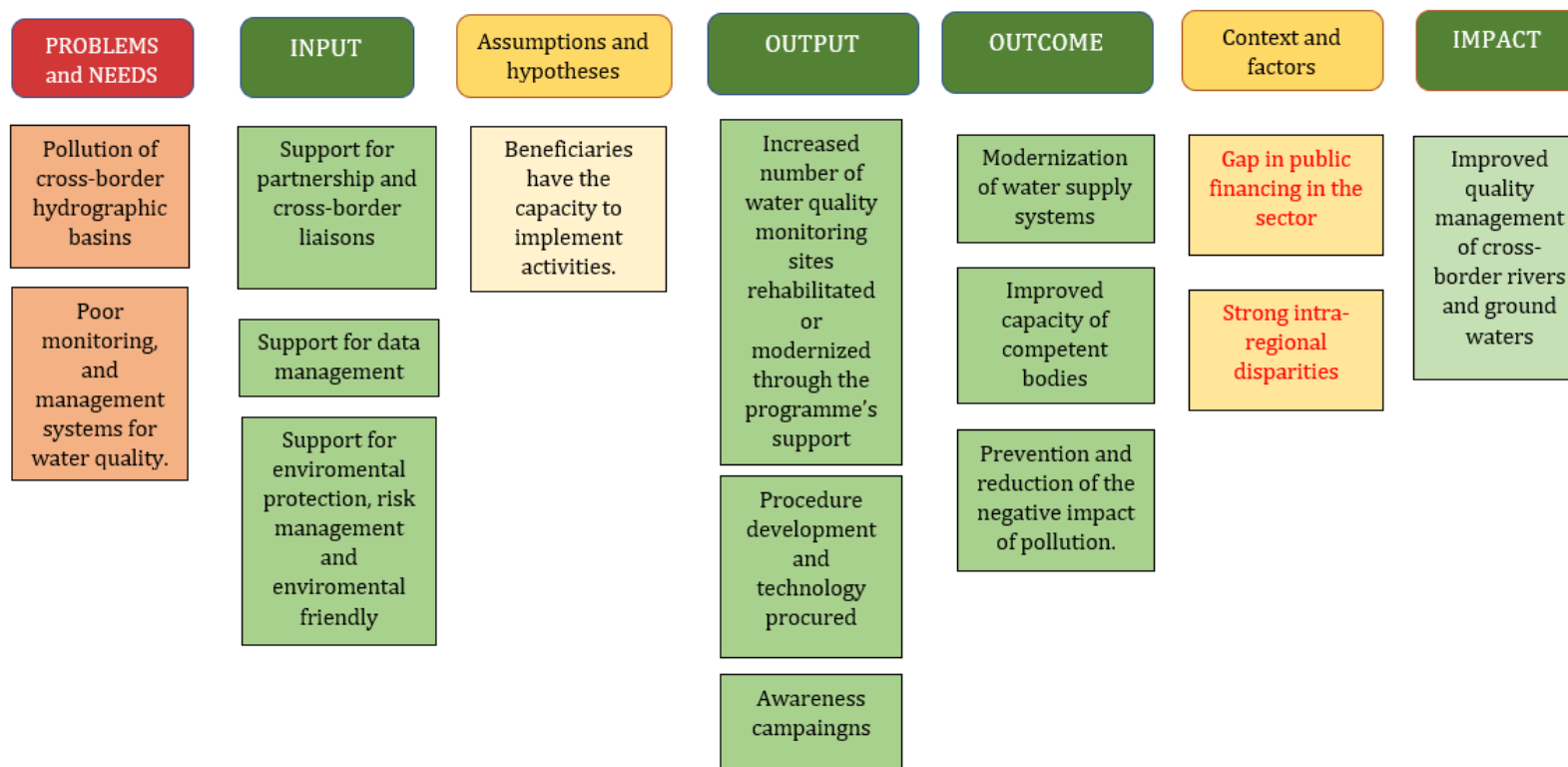


Figure 26 - Theory of Change for Specific Objective 1.2. Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area

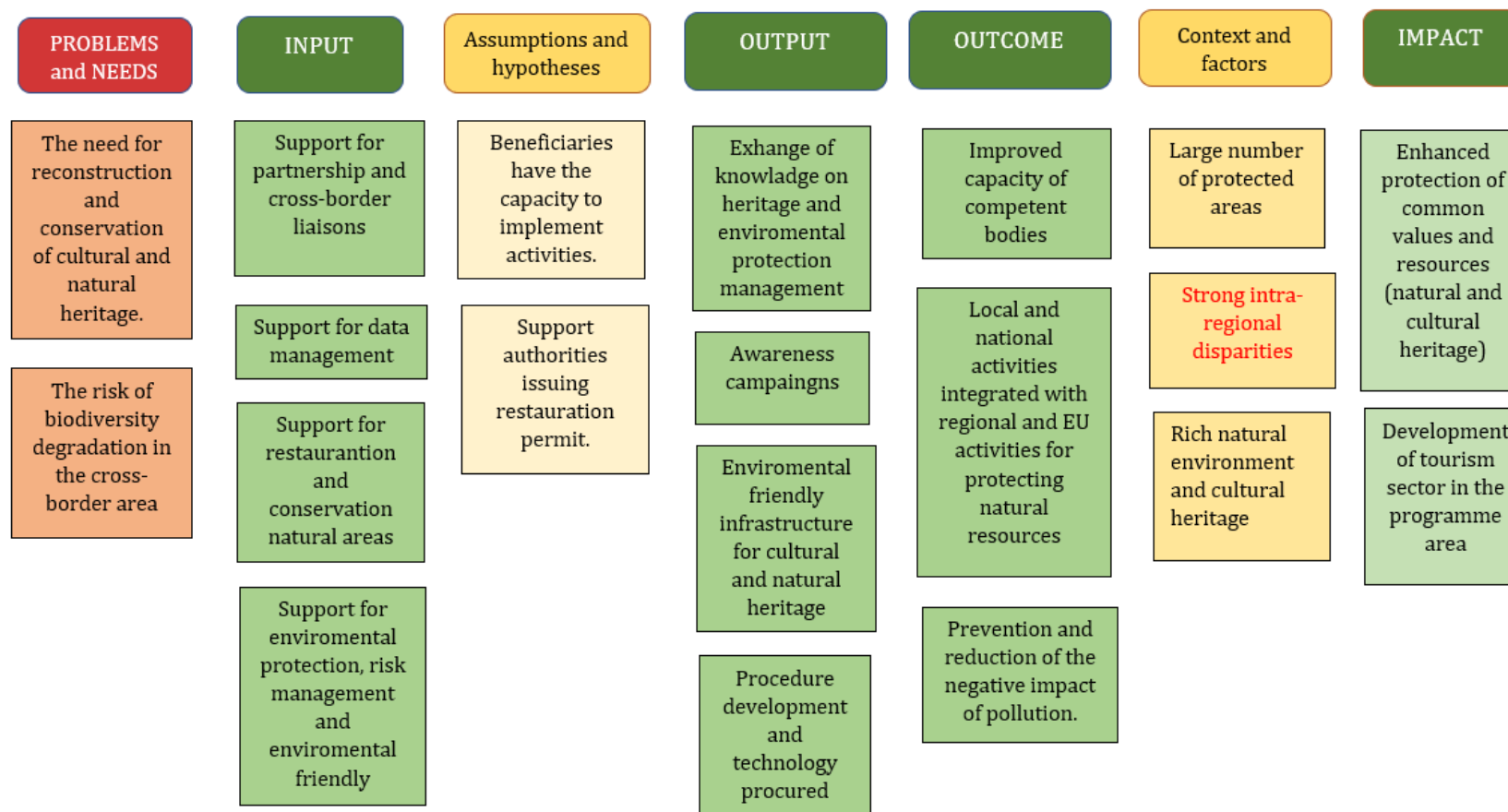


Figure 27. Theory of Change for Specific Objective 2.1. Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure

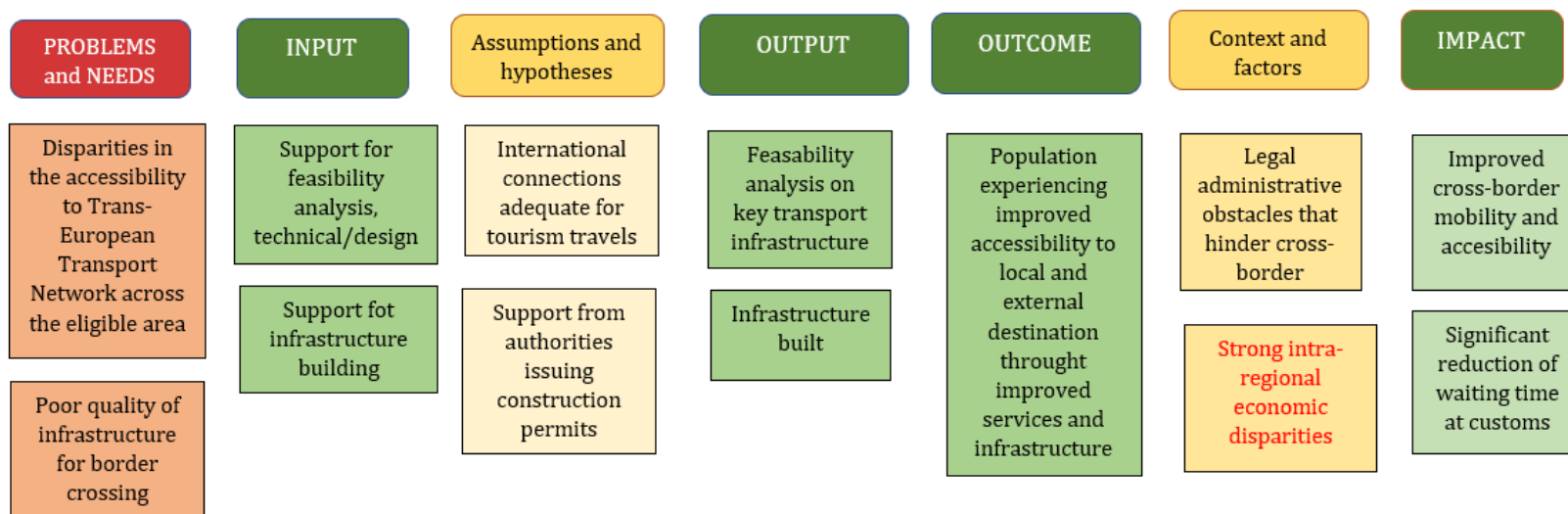


Figure 28. Theory of Change for Specific Objective 2.2. Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport

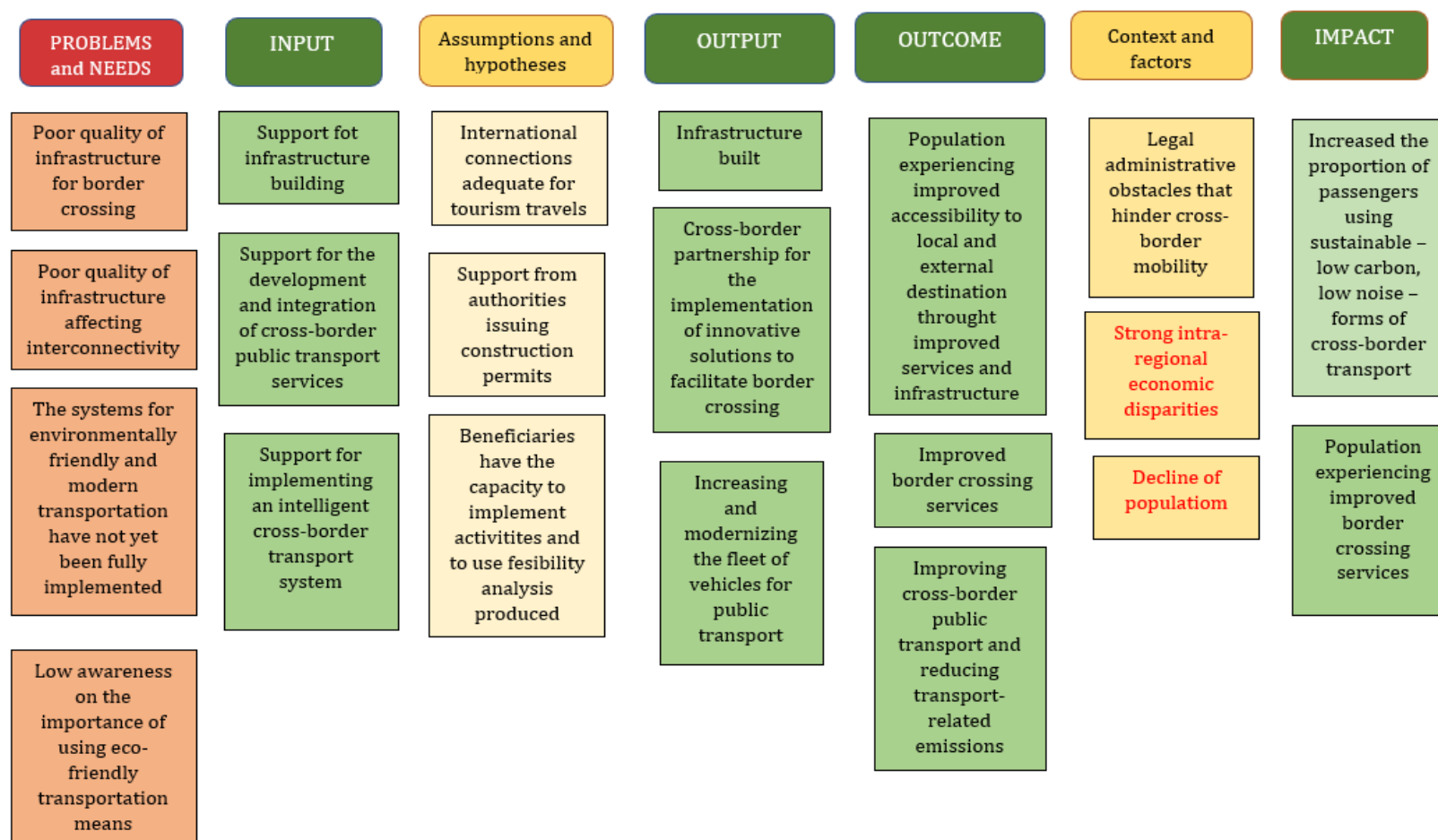


Figure 29 - Theory of Change for Priority Axis 3. Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)

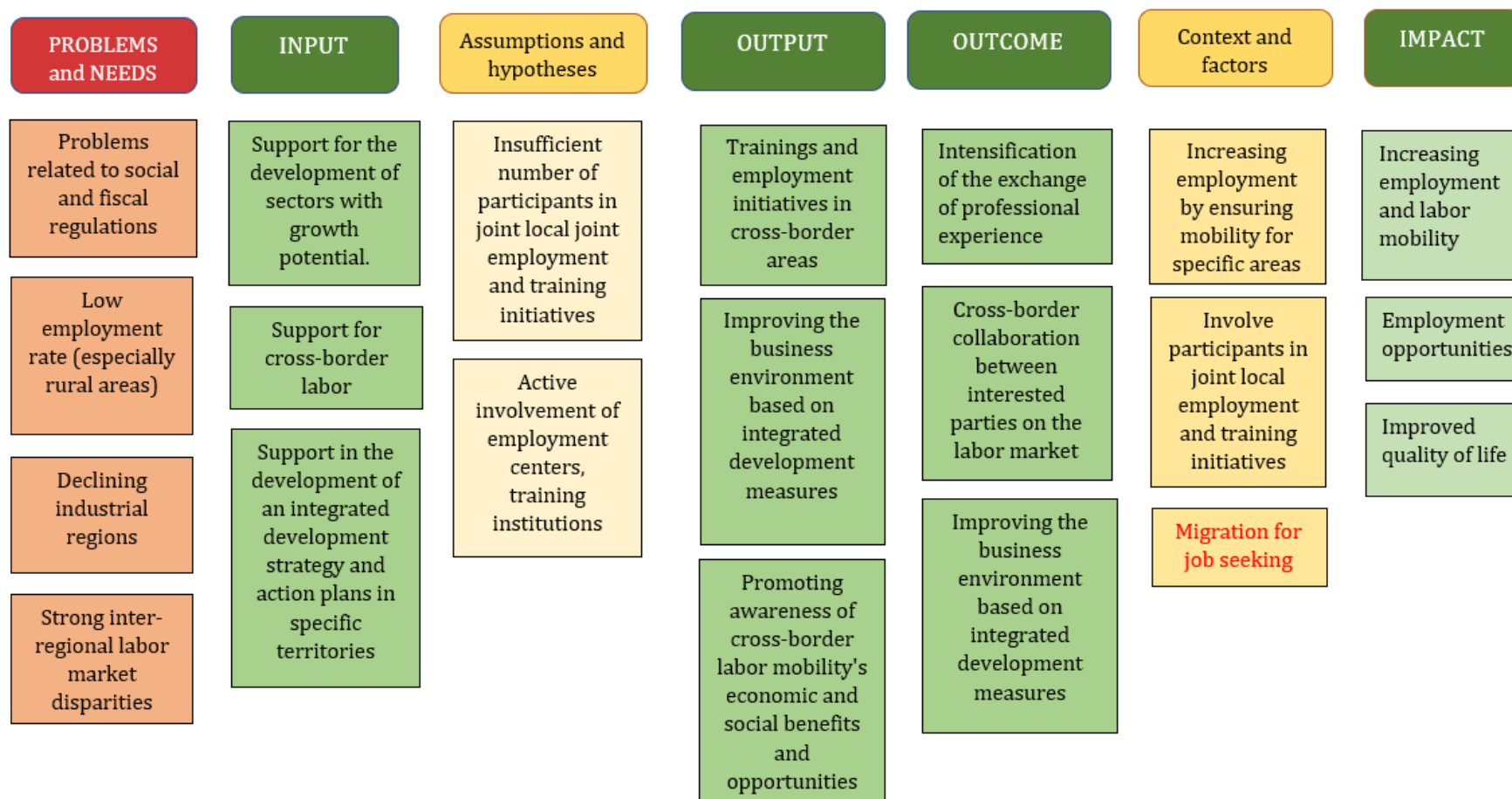


Figure 30 - Theory of Change for Priority Axis 4. Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)

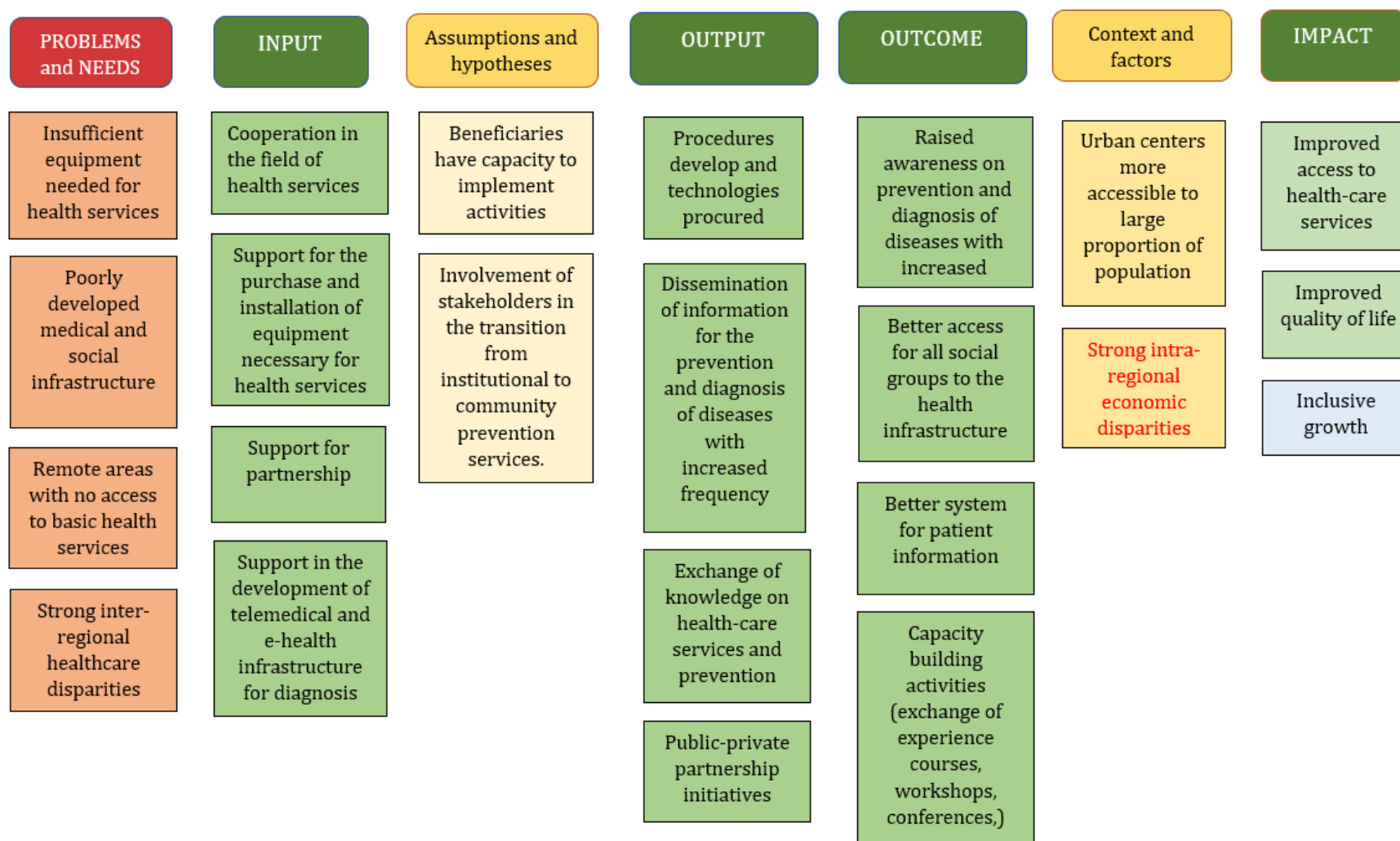


Figure 31 - Theory of Change for Priority Axis 5. Improve risk-prevention and disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)

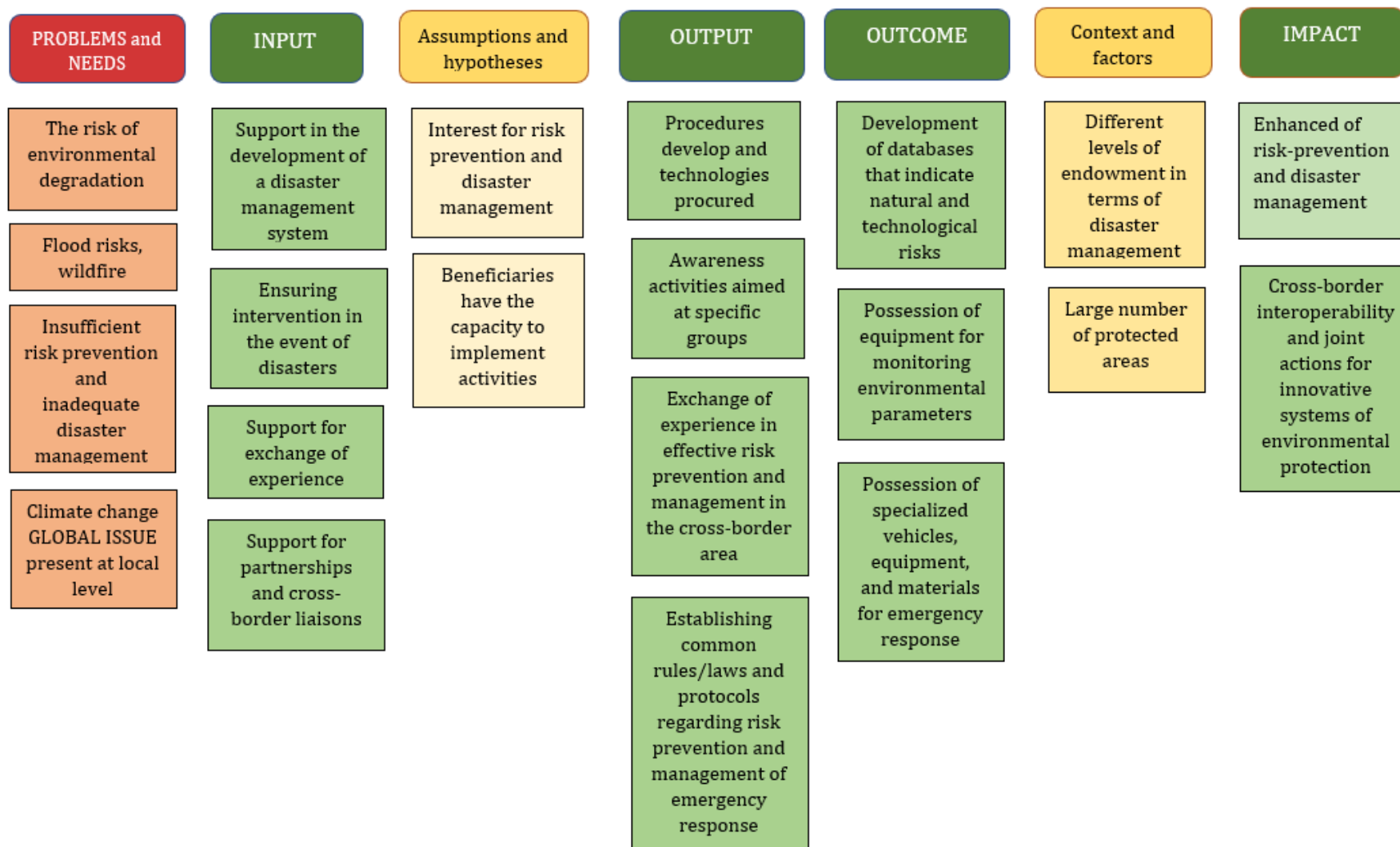
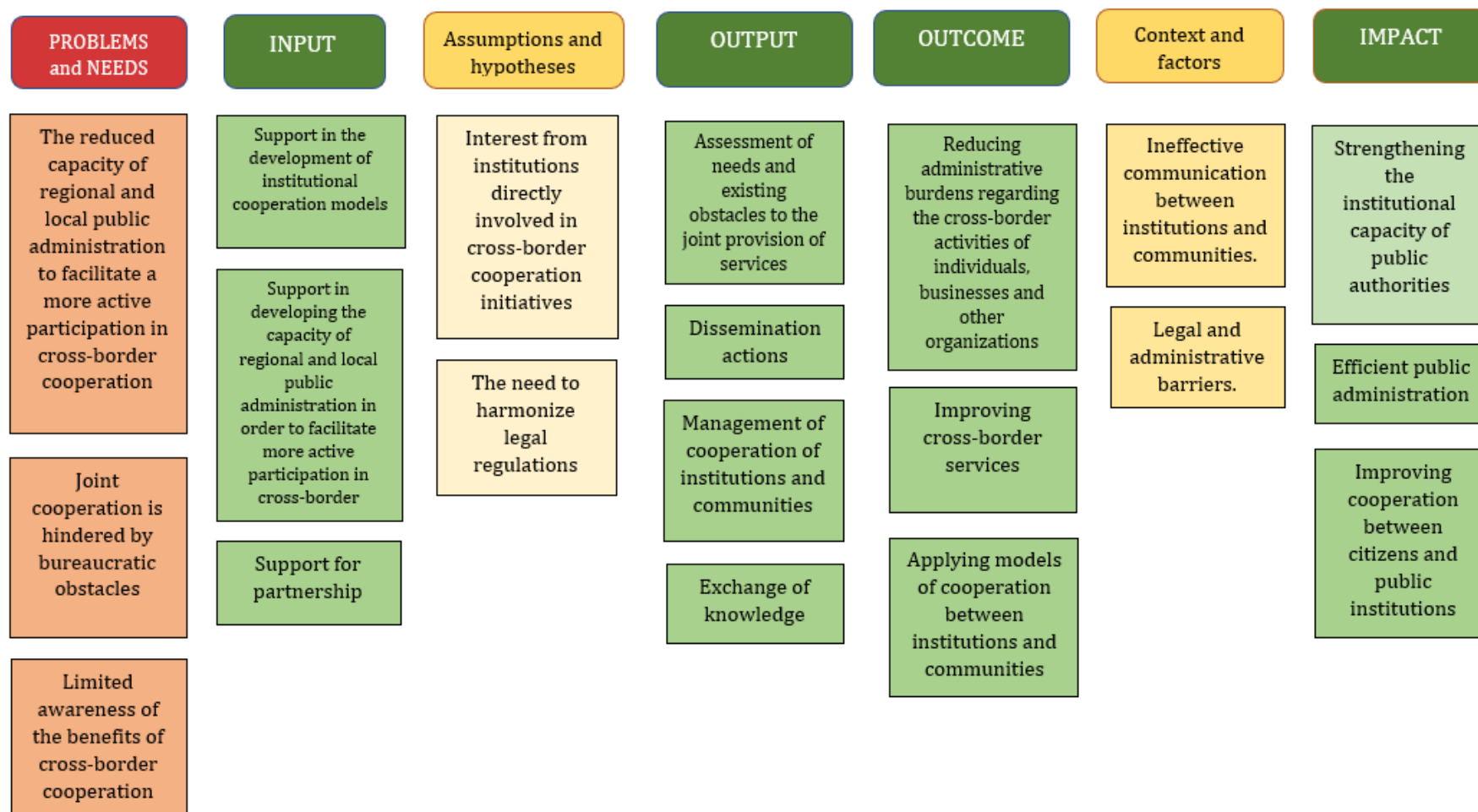


Figure 32 - Theory of Change for Priority Axis 6. PA6 - Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)



Annex 4. Evaluation matrix

EFFECTIVENESS					
According to the Better Regulation Guidelines of the European Commission (2021), “the effectiveness analysis ” considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. Thus, the effectiveness is assessing the extent to which the intervention, policy, strategy is achieving its objectives . Moreover, OECD Guidelines “Applying Evaluation criteria thoughtfully” (2021) includes an additional aspect to be taken into account when addressing the effectiveness of an intervention. In this respect, by addressing the effectiveness criteria, the evaluation aims to assess “the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups ”.					
Evaluation question	Operationalisation – how do we intend to answer this question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data sources (for each indicator)	Analyses contributing to answering the EQ (common per EQ)
General					
1. What is the progress in achieving each specific objective of the programme?	<p>This question refers to the gross results of the programmes (by opposition with the net results that need to be assessed under the impact criterion). In order to determine the progress that has been made we will be focusing on the results of the programme, for each specific objective. In order to determine the progress for each result indicator the evaluation team will use the methodology developed by the coordinating authorities for establishing the baseline (and targets) for each result indicator.</p> <p>Nevertheless, each design of an intervention should be based on the causal link specific objectives – results – outputs – input, namely a logic of intervention (LoI) and a theory of change (ToC) taking into account also external factors supporting and hindering the achievement of the programme's objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, we will start with the reconstruction of the LoI and the ToC. Thus, by reconstructing the LoI and ToC we will be able to highlight</p>	1.1. Progress registered at the level of all indicators of the programme, according to the Programme Document, against their targets.	<p>1.1.1. Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area (PA1, IP 6/b)</p> <p>1.1.2. Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area (PA1, IP 6/c)</p> <p>1.1.3. Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T (no. of inhabitants) (PA 2, IP 7/b)</p> <p>1.1.4. Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border (PA 2, IP 7/c)</p> <p>1.1.5. Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population (PA 3, IP 8/b)</p> <p>1.1.6. Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area (PA 4, IP 9/a)</p>	<p><u>Data collection from administrative sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VM National Environmental Institution (Nemzeti Környezetügyi Intézet) of Hungary - National Environmental Protection Agencies /Romanian Waters National Administration <p><u>Data collection from administrative sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Statistical Offices: KSH, INS <p><u>Data collection from administrative sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project monitoring, National Statistical Offices: KSH, INS <p><u>Data collection from administrative sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Statistical Offices: KSH - Border Police Romania / Hungary <p><u>Data collection from administrative sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Statistical Offices: KSH, INS <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representatives of hospitals and outpatient institutions (replicating the survey used for establishing the baseline and target) 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistic and administrative data analysis</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p>

<p>the causal chain and capture the relevance of the result indicators that are going to be further investigated.</p> <p>Programme and additional indicators cover the main elements of cross-border cohesion from the literature. In order to capture a more comprehensive image of the progress made in achieving programme objectives, additional indicators related to integration and regional competitiveness, from the list of common CBC indicators, were added to the 2 abovementioned categories (JC 1.3).</p> <p>Considering the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the previous evaluation, where the relevance of the result indicators is considered weak or data collection or quality can be challenging, the impact evaluation proposes additional evaluation indicators.</p>		1.1.7. Quality of the joint risk management (PA 5, IP 5/b)	<u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant organizations responsible for disasters and risk management in the eligible area (replicating the survey used for establishing the baseline and target) 	
		1.1.8. Intensity level of cross-border cooperation (PA 6, IP 11/b)	<u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions operating in the eligible area (replicating the survey used for establishing the baseline) 	
	1.2 Value of additional result evaluation indicators reflecting the perspectives of final beneficiaries / beneficiaries of the programme	1.2.1. PA1, IP 6/b – Number of data sources on water quality developed due to the programme	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme monitoring data <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
		1.2.1. PA1, IP 6/c – Tourist attractiveness	<u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stakeholders <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
		1.2.2. PA 3, IP 8/b – Quality of the workforce available for employment	<u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stakeholders <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
		1.2.3. PA 4, IP 9/a – Capacity to deliver healthcare services	<u>Structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsible institutions (health care providers) <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
		1.2.4. PA 5, IP 5/b – Capacity to safeguard population	<u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsible institutions <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
	1.3. Progress registered for the relevant common CBC indicators	Proposed common CBC indicators	<u>Desk review (administrative data)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Statistical Offices: KSH, INS - Border Police Romania / Hungary 	

			A. European integration 1.3.1.Waiting time due to border controls 1.3.2.Number of cross-border workers 1.3.3.Potential accessibility of the cross-border territory by/road/rail/air compared to previous years B. Regional competitiveness & sustainable economic development 1.3.4.Macroeconomic indicators (cross-border territory GDP, GDP per capita, number of employees at county / district level; unemployment rate and no. at county / district level)		
2. Were the indicator targets easily reachable?	The evaluation questions refer to the progress made by the programme throughout the implementation period and the extent to which, based on the achievement level, different types of situations were encountered, such as: - Target were well set and progress was achieved as planned, - Targets were well set, but contextual, disruptive factors slowed down the progress, - Targets were not very well set (too high or too low), in initial contextual factors, - Target were difficult to be reached due to implementation mechanisms	2.1. Achievement level of result indicators is satisfactory	2.1.1. Progress made according to findings under EQ1	<i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1</i>	Theory based evaluation Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results Literature and documents review Statistic administrative and data analysis Statistical analysis of surveys
		2.2. Indicator targets were well set.	2.2.1. Extent to which targets were realistically set.	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <u>Survey</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders	
			2.2.2. Extent to which contextual factors and risks in reaching the specific objectives were taken into consideration when setting the targets for indicators.	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <u>Survey</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Semi-structured interviews</u>	

	<p>and efficiency related elements.</p> <p>In order to answer to the evaluation question, the evaluation team will assess both if the programme authorities and beneficiaries were able, with normal efforts, to achieve the targets, or if, in normal conditions, the targets are reachable by December 2023.</p>			<p>- programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders</p>	
3. Which were the main obstacles or success factors?	<p>The question refers to the existence and weight of factors with both positive and negative influence on achieving indicators targets. The analysis for this question will focus on the specific mechanisms that make factors to be influential in the ToC. Therefore, in order to answer which are the main hindering or the main success factors in targets achievement, the evaluation team will identify the factors and will assess how each factor is influencing the programme results.</p> <p>In this case there is no difference in the attention paid to programme results indicators and additional indicators identified.</p>	<p>3.1. The values of the programme result indicators / additional result indicators (thus, the progress of the programme in achieving each specific objective), were significantly influenced by a set of internal and external factors.</p>	<p>3.1.1. List of internal facilitating factors for reaching the targets of result indicators, by specific objective (if significant differences are identified)</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistic and administrative data analysis</p>
			<p>3.1.2. List of external facilitating factors for reaching the targets of result indicators, by specific objective</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
			<p>3.1.3. Description of the influence mechanisms (factors, how does they influence the addressed result and qualitative appreciation of the level of influence) underlying the existing facilitating factors</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
		<p>3.2. The values of the programme result indicators / additional result indicators (thus the progress of the programme in achieving each specific objective), were significantly influenced by a set of negative factors.</p>	<p>3.2.1. List of internal hampering factors for reaching the targets of the result indicators, by specific objective (if significant differences are identified)</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	

			<p>3.2.2. List of external hampering factors for reaching the targets of the result indicators, by specific objective</p> <p>3.2.3. Description of the influence mechanisms (factors, how do they influence the addressed results and qualitative appreciation of their level of influence) underlying the existing hindering factors</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders <p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 1, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
4. Did the Pandemic (Covid-19) have a significant aggregate effect on the Programme?	<p>The evaluation question focusses on a potential important hindering factor – the Covid-19 pandemic. In the analysis of the mechanisms intervening in the ToC for each specific objective, the influence of the pandemic will be assessing separately, even if it is not mentioned as a hindering factor by consulted stakeholders.</p> <p>Moreover, the evaluation will include an assessment of the aggregate effect of the pandemic on the programme, going beyond achieving targets (e.g. if additional administrative burden was generated by the pandemic, without an impact on indicators, this will be considered in the analysis).</p>	<p>4.1. Covid19 had a significant impact on result indicators (analysis conducted by specific objective)</p> <p>4.2. Covid19 had significant impact on programme administration and procedures</p>	<p>4.1.1. Level of influence of the pandemic on the achievement level registered for each result indicator, according to the list detailed under EQ 1</p> <p>4.2.1. Identified influence of the pandemic on procedures, at both levels: programme and project</p>	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 3, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders <p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 3, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistic and administrative data analysis</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p>

5. Was there any effect generated by the conflicting geopolitical context?	<p>The evaluation question focusses on a potential important hindering factor – the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context. In the analysis of the mechanisms intervening in the ToC for each specific objective, the influence of this factor will be assessing separately, even if it is not mentioned as a hindering factor by consulted stakeholders.</p> <p>Moreover, the evaluation will include an assessment of the aggregate effect of the factor on the programme, going beyond achieving targets (e.g. if additional administrative burden was generated by the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context, without an impact on indicators, this will be considered in the analysis).</p>	5.1. The armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context had a significant impact on result indicators (analysis conducted by specific objective)	5.1.1. Level of influence of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context on the achievement level registered for each result indicator, according to the list detailed under EQ 1	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 3, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistic and administrative data analysis</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p>
		5.2. The armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context had a significant impact on the administration and procedures of the programme	5.2.1. Level of influence of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context on procedures, at both levels: programme and project	<p><i>Input from the findings related to EQ 3, if relevant</i></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders 	
6. How effective and timely were the launching of the different Call for proposals?	<p>The evaluation question focusses on a potential important factor for the overall effectiveness of the programme – the management of the calls for projects. In the analysis of the mechanisms intervening in the ToC for each specific objective, the influence of this factor will be assessed separately, even if it is not mentioned as a hindering factor by consulted stakeholders.</p> <p>The level of influence of the calls management on the programme indicators, additional result indicators and overall Programme effectiveness/success;</p>	6.1 Calls for proposals have fully reached their relevant audience, according to monitoring data and normative judgment of the stakeholders. (Normative judgement on the influence of the calls management on all program indicators at the time of launching the calls.)	<p>6.1.1. Level of agreement among stakeholders and beneficiaries that the moment when the calls have been launched allowed for and adequate selection and a successful implementation of projects (broken down by PA and IP)</p> <p>6.1.2. Number of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (among the stakeholders) identifying problems related to the moment when the calls have been launched</p> <p>6.1.3. Percent of available funds covered by applications submitted</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection from eMS and other admin. sources <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <p><u>Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Desk research/literature review</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Systematic document analysis</p> <p>Statistic and administrative data analysis</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p>

		6.2 Selection criteria have an impact on all performance indicators.	<p>6.2.1. Level of agreement among stakeholders and beneficiaries that the projects selection criteria allowed for an adequate selection and a successful implementation of projects (broken down by PA and IP)</p> <p>6.2.2. Number of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (among the stakeholders) identifying problems related to projects selection criteria</p> <p>6.2.3. Percent of available funds covered by selected applications for contracting</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection from eMS and other admin. sources <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <p><u>Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities 	
		6.3 The overall management of applications and the evaluation process have a significant impact on all indicators.	<p>6.3.1. Level of agreement among stakeholders and beneficiaries that the applications and appraisal process on allowed for a successful implementation of projects (broken down by PA and IP)</p> <p>6.3.2. Number of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (among the stakeholders) identifying problems related to the applications and appraisal process</p> <p>6.3.3. Number of appeals to the appraisal and selection process (if any)</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection from eMS and other admin. sources <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <p><u>Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities 	
7. How effective was the institutional setup / staffing of the implementing bodies?	The evaluation question focusses on a set of two important factors for the overall effectiveness of the programme – (1) the institutional setup and (2) the staff of the implementing bodies.	7.1 The institutional setup has an impact on all result indicators.	7.1.1. Level of influence of the institutional setup on all result indicators/projects success in achieving their	<p><u>Desk review:</u></p> <p>admin. sources: programme procedures</p> <p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries 	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p>

<p>The assessment will focus on two issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The level of influence of the institutional setup / staffing of the implementing bodies on the programme indicators, additional result indicators and overall Programme effectiveness/success; - How the influence was generated – the mechanism of influence 		results (broken down by PA and IP)	<u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities	Desk research/literature review Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results Systematic document analysis Statistic and administrative data analysis Statistical analysis of surveys
	7.2 The structure of the Managing Authority (MA) have an significant impact on all results/ indicators.	7.2.1 Level of influence of the MA structure and position on all result indicators/projects success in achieving their results (broken down by PA and IP).	<u>Desk review</u> -admin. sources: : programme procedures <u>Survey</u> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities	
	7.3. The JS-BRECO structure and position have a significant impact on all indicators.	7.3.1 Level of influence of the JS-BRECO structure and position on all indicators/projects success in achieving their results (broken down by PA and IP).	<u>Desk review</u> admin. sources: programme procedures <u>Survey</u> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities	
	7.4 The NA structure have an impact and position on all indicators	7.4.1 Level of influence of the NA structure and position on all indicators/projects success in achieving their results (broken down by PA and IP)	<u>Desk review</u> - admin. sources: programme procedures <u>Survey</u> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities	
	7.5 The competences of the MA/ BRECO/ NA staff have an impact on all indicators.	7.5.1 Level of influence of the competences of the MA/ BRECO/ NA staff on all indicators/projects success in archiving their	<u>Desk review</u> admin. sources: programme procedures <u>Survey</u> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries	

			results (broken down by PA and IP).	<u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities	
		7.6 The number of the MA/ BRECO/ NA employees have an impact on all indicators.	7.6.1. Level of influence of the number of the MA/BRECO/ NA employees on all indicators/projects success in achieving their results (broken down by PA and IP)	<u>Desk review</u> admin. sources: programme procedures <u>Survey</u> - Stakeholders - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews</u> -beneficiaries -stakeholders - programme authorities (MA/ BRECO/ NA)	
Project level effectiveness					
8. To what extent have the objectives of the projects financed under this programme been achieved or are about to be achieved?	<p>The question refers to the effectiveness of projects, focusing on programme output indicators and the specific indicators of projects, as reported by beneficiaries.</p> <p>The evaluation will take into account that projects contribute to achieving programme results, but in many cases achieving output results represents already an important progress in the programme area. Moreover, the evaluation will consider additional benefits the project generates, within the ToC of the programme or beyond it.</p>	8.1. Progress registered at the level of projects in achieving their targets, against their targets.	8.1.1. The extent to which projects achieved the targets of the specific indicators of projects	<u>Descriptive analysis</u> - eMS data - administrative data on specific project indicators: project reports.	Statistic administrative and data analysis Case studies
9. What are the internal and external factors that affected/ supported the achievement of the objectives at project level?	The question refers to the existence and weight of factors with both positive and negative influence on achieving indicators targets at project level. In order to answer which are the main hindering or the main success factors in targets achievement, the evaluation team will identify the factors and will	9.1. To what extent did internal factors at the micro and meso level contributed to/ hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level	9.1.1. List of internal factors that contributed to the achievement of the objectives at project level 9.1.2. List of internal factors that hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level	<u>Desk review</u> - Project documents - Other relevant studies and reports <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> - Programme authorities - Stakeholders <u>Survey</u> - Beneficiaries	Theory based evaluation Literature and documents review Statistical analysis of surveys Case studies

	<p>assess how each factor is influencing the project results.</p> <p>A distinction will be made between meso level factors, influencing the programme, analysed under evaluation question 3 and micro level factors, influencing the projects. This is useful as the management of these factors and the risk they generate should be recommended at the respective level (programme authorities or beneficiaries).</p>	<p>9.2. To what extent did external factors at the micro level contributed to/ hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level</p>	<p>9.2.1. List of external factors that contributed to the achievement of the objectives at project level</p> <p>9.2.2. List of external factors that hindered the achievement of the objectives at project level</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Project documents- Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Programme authorities- Stakeholders <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Beneficiaries	
10. How the Covid-19 pandemic affected the project's implementation?	The evaluation question focusses on a potential important hindering factor – the Covid-19 pandemic. This is useful as the management of risks and mitigation measures should be recommended at the respective level (programme authorities or beneficiaries).	10.1. The influence of the COVID-10 pandemic on the achievement of the objectives at project level	<p>10.1.1. The extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of the projects</p> <p>10.1.2. Main channels through which the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of the projects</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Project documents- Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Programme authorities	<p>Theory based evaluation</p> <p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Theory of change reconstruction and design of additional indicators for gross results</p> <p>Case studies</p>
		10.2. The response provided by the AM in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic	<p>10.2.1. Main measures undertook by the AM to mitigate the effects if the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>10.2.2. The perceived effectiveness of the measures undertook by the AM in mitigating the effects of the COVID-10 pandemic</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Programme documents- Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Programme authorities	
IMPACT					
As per Better Regulation Guidelines, “impact refers to the changes associated with a particular intervention which occur over the longer term ”. Impact addresses the transformative effects which can be observed after the intervention, in terms of social, environmental, and economic aspects . It examines the intervention in a holistic manner, broadening the perspective and functioning as a corrective instrument which intervenes to close the gap between what was planned and implemented and what happened in the territory where nobody tuned the observational lens before. The examination of the transformational change which took place in a territory offers relevant information about the systemic change, and for whom that change appeared.					
Evaluation question	Operationalisation – how do we intend to answer this question / Specific Objective	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data sources (for each indicator)	Analyses contributing to answering the EQ (common per EQ)
Impact (for each specific objective of the Programme)					
	The question refers to the net impact of the programme compared to the gross results of the programme assessed under evaluation question 1.				

<p>11. What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to the progress in achieving this specific objective?</p>	<p>There are two elements to be considered in the evaluation of the current net impact of the programme:</p> <p>a) the proportion of the gross impact generated by the programme implementation, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the results of all implemented projects - the spill-off effects of the funded projects <p>b) the results of the projects compared to a baseline, when available.</p> <p>All projects' contributions will be assessed based on their reported results (registered by eMS). The analysis will be made at the level of the programme output indicators related with each SO outcome indicator. The methodological approach consists in the identification of the cumulative results of all projects financed under each SO (based on current values of programme output indicators) and the analysis of the extent to which projects' results generated the progress made at programme level in terms of SOs achievement (current value of programme outcome indicators + additional result evaluation indicators + relevant common CBC indicators addressed by this evaluation). In order to strengthen this approach, the evaluation team will test the causal link between output indicators and the outcome indicator under each SO, based on desk / literature review and common judgement of key stakeholders.</p> <p>Current and expected (spilling-over) contributions of finalised projects will be also assessed based on case studies. Expected contributions of unfinished projects will be assessed based on the survey addressed to programme and funding beneficiaries and their partners and data registered in eMS (planned and partially achieved outcomes).</p> <p>In order to answer the evaluation question, the evaluation team will follow the "funding framework" approach recommended by the project "Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation", financed under the ESPON 2020 Programme. and the key steps presented in the Workshop for the Qualitative /Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment, as recommended by recommended by the project "Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation", financed under the ESPON 2020 Programme.</p> <p>A separate answer will be given to this specific question referring to each SO, as the framework presented below indicates.</p>				
	<p>SO1.1: Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters (IP6/b)</p>	<p>11.1. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO1.1</p>	<p>11.1.1. Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)</p> <p>11.1.2. Level of contribution of projects/programme to the improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters</p> <p>11.1.3. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO1.1.</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme monitoring (eMS) <p><u>Case studies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <p><u>Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 interviews with stakeholders in the field of rivers and water management (county / districts level drainage basins administrations) <p><u>Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beneficiaries <p><u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u></p> <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <p><u>Interviews</u></p>	<p>Theory based evaluation:</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Realist evaluation</p> <p>Case studies</p>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 interviews with stakeholders in the field of rivers and water management (county / districts level drainage basins administrations), programme authorities <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
	S01.2: Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area (IP6/c)	11.2. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with S01.2	11.2.1. Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme monitoring (eMS) 	
			11.2.2. Surface of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme monitoring (eMS) 	
			11.2.3. Level of awareness on environmental issues of the persons informed within the funded projects	<u>Desk review</u> <u>project reports</u>	
			11.2.4. Level of contribution of projects/programme to conservation and safeguarding of natural and national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas in the eligible area of the programme	<u>Case studies</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders in the field of natural, historic and cultural heritage preservation <u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
			11.2.5. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to S01.2.	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders in the field of natural, historic and cultural heritage preservation, programme authority 	

				<u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
	S02.1: Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure (IP7/b)	11.3. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with S02.1	11.3.1. Total length of newly built road	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.3.2. Total length of reconstructed or upgraded road	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.3.3. Level of contribution of the projects / programme to improved cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded / modernized roads	<u>Desk review</u> - project reports <u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
			11.3.3. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to S02.1.	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
	S02.2: Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport (IP7/c)	11.4. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with S02.2	11.4.1. Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.4.2. Total length of newly built bicycle road	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.4.3. Level of contribution of projects / programme to the increased use of sustainable transportation means, facilitated through projects (cross-border public transportation means and bicycles)	<u>Desk review</u> - project reports <u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners	

				<u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
			11.4.4. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO2.2.	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
	SO3.1: Increased employment within the eligible area (IP8/b)	11.5. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO3.1	11.5.1. Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.5.2. Level of satisfaction with the access level to the labour market of the persons in the target groups of the projects	<u>Desk review</u> - project reports <u>Case studies</u> 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group	
			11.5.3. Level of contribution of projects/programme to increased access to labour market (estimated by stakeholders)	<u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with stakeholders in the field of health (county / districts health officials) <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries - <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	

			11.5.4. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO3.1.	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
SO4.1: Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible (IP9/a)	11.6. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO4.1	11.6.1. Population having access to improved health services	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)		
		11.6.2. Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)		
		11.6.3. Level of contribution of projects/programme to increased access to preventive and curative health-care services (estimated by stakeholders)	<u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with stakeholders in the field of health (county / districts health officials) <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>		
		11.6.4. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO4.1.	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>		
SO5.1: Improved cross-border disasters and risk management (IP5/b)	11.7. Cumulative progress	11.7.1. Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)		

	registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO5.1	11.7.2. Number of cooperation protocols and emergency coordination procedures for emergency response services	<u>Desk review</u> project reports	
		11.7.3. Level of contribution of the programme to the potential for cross-border disasters and risk management, based on shared procedures and technology (qualitative and quantitative estimation)	<u>Desk review</u> - project reports <u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with stakeholders in the field of risk management (such as: County subunits of The Inspectorate for Emergency Situations) <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
		11.7.4. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO5.1.	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> - 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
	SO6.1: Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities (IP11/b)	11.8. Cumulative progress registered at project level in terms of results corresponding with SO6.1	11.8.1. Number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives	<u>Desk review</u> - programme monitoring (eMS)
			11.8.2. Level of contribution of projects / programme to improved, sustainable cross-border cooperation (estimation)	<u>Desk review</u> - project reports <u>Case studies</u> - 1 - 2 case study based on desk research and interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group (if relevant / if possible) <u>Interviews</u>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Key stakeholders (border management institutions) <u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
			11.8.3. Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives	<u>Desk review</u> programme monitoring (eMS)	
			11.8.4. Normative judgement on the strength of the causal link between output indicators and outcome indicator related to SO6.1.	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- programme documents, other relevant literature, studies and reports <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2-3 interviews with key stakeholders <u>Expert panel for validation of findings</u>	
12. What are the internal and external factors facilitating that contribution?	<p>The question refers to the context of the programme implementation and the way the context affects the programme results, especially the net impact. According to the realist evaluation we are going to use to answer this question, the contexts in which the programme operates make a difference to the results achieved by the programme directly or indirectly/its contribution to the progress in the programme area.</p> <p>Programme contexts include features such as social, economic and political structures, organizational context, programme stakeholders, programme staffing, geographical and historical context and so on. Some factors in the context may enable particular mechanisms to be triggered. Other aspects of the context may prevent particular mechanisms from being triggered. There is always an interaction between context and mechanism and that interaction is what creates the programme's results: Programme + Context + Mechanism = Result.</p> <p>In the process of drafting the answers for each SO of the programme, under EQ12, the evaluation team will corroborate the findings related to the evaluation question 3 on the identification of facilitating and hampering factors that have influenced the progress made in terms of targets achievement level which the results of the analysis conducted based on the below presented methodological framework (judgement criteria, indicators and related sources of data).</p> <p>Under each SO, the evaluation team will assess the extent to which specific funding procedures have positively influenced the achievement of results.</p>				
SO1.1: Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters (IP6/b)	12.1. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 1.1	12.1.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to the quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration factors such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Level of attention (activities, campaigns and awareness raising events) on the importance of proper cross border rivers and ground water management</i>- <i>Level of staff turnover in responsible institutions (estimation)</i>- <i>Number human resources capacity building projects / activities carried out in relevant institutions</i>	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- programme documents- relevant evaluations, studies, reports- administrative data <u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries- programme authorities <u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries	Theory based evaluation: Contribution analysis Realist evaluation Case studies	

SO1.2: Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area (IP6/c)	12.2. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 1.2	12.2.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration factors such as: level of attention (activities, campaigns and awareness raising events) on environmental issues, at national and European level.</i>	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents - relevant evaluations, studies, reports <u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> - beneficiaries - programme authorities <u>Survey</u> beneficiaries
SO2.1: Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure (IP7/b)	12.3. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 2.1	12.3.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to the current status of cross-border accessibility <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration indicators of economic growth (number of employees at county / district level; unemployment rate and no. at county / district level; average salary at county/district level).</i>	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents - relevant evaluations, studies, reports - administrative data (Statistical offices in Romania and Hungary)
SO2.2: Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport (IP7/c)	12.4. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 2.2	12.4.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to current level of passengers using sustainable cross-border transport <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration indicators of economic growth (number of employees at county / district level; unemployment rate and no. at county / district level; average salary at county/district level).</i>	<u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> - beneficiaries - programme authorities <u>Survey</u> - beneficiaries
SO3.1: Increased employment within the eligible area (IP8/b)	12.5. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 3.1	12.5.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to the employment rate in the eligible area <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration indicators of economic growth (number of employees at county / district level; unemployment rate and no. at county / district level; average salary at county/district level).</i>	
SO4.1: Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible (IP9/a)	12.6. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 4.1	12.6.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to the improvement of preventive and curative health-care services <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration factors such as: European or national investments (in Romania and Hungary) for the development of human resources preventive and curative health-care services.</i>	<u>Desk review</u> - programme documents - relevant evaluations, studies, reports - administrative data <u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> - beneficiaries - programme authorities <u>Survey</u> beneficiaries

	SO5.1: Improved cross-border disasters and risk management (IP5/b)	12.7. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 5.1	12.6.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to cross-border disasters and risk management <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration factors such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Level of attention (activities, campaigns and awareness raising events) on the importance of disaster and risk management</i>- <i>Level of staff turnover in responsible institutions (estimation)</i>- <i>Number human resources capacity building projects / activities carried out in relevant institutions</i>	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- programme documents- relevant evaluations, studies, reports- administrative data <u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries- programme authorities <u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries	
	SO6.1: Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities (IP11/b)	12.8. There are factors that facilitated the net contribution of the programme to SO 6.1	12.7.1. List of factors facilitating the contribution of the programme to cross-border cooperation <i>The analysis will particularly take into consideration factors such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Level of staff turnover in relevant institutions (estimation)</i>- <i>Number of human resources capacity building projects / activities implemented in relevant institutions</i>- <i>European or national investment (in Romania and Hungary) supporting joint initiatives in the fields of sport, culture and leisure, exchange programmes, promoting cultural diversity and joint traditions.</i>	<u>Desk review</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- programme documents- relevant evaluations, studies, reports- administrative data <u>Case studies</u> <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries- programme authorities <u>Survey</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- beneficiaries	
13. Did the interventions financed under the programme produce the intended effects? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?	<p>The EQ 13 refers to: (1) the intended net impact and if it was achieved; (2) the unintended effects of the programme.</p> <p>(1) Regarding the intended impact, the net impact assessed under question 11 will be compared to the expected impact presented in the Programme, as identified in the reconstruction of the ToC.</p> <p>(2) The evaluation team will address possible effects that have not been foreseen within the programme design. Using desk research and literature review the evaluation team aims to identify plausible unintended effects of the financed activities, linked to each of the eight specific</p>	<p>The net impact assessed under EQ 11, for each SO, will be compared to the expected impact presented in the Programme, using desk research and during the workshop for the Qualitative/Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment.</p> <p>The evaluation team will address possible effects that have not been foreseen within the programme design, following 2 steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Step 1. First, by using desk research and literature review the evaluation team will identify plausible unintended effects of the financed activities, linked to each specific objectives that are addressed by this question. We are going to use this perspective looking at:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- possible unintended effects in the same programme area, for the same stakeholders,- possible unintended effects in other thematic area than the one that the specific objective is addressing to,- possible unintended effects for other stakeholders.- Step 2. Second, a great importance within this process has the approach regarding the data collection methodology. Hence, the evaluation team will include specific methods and instruments of data collection which facilitate access to new information, like open-ended	<u>Desk research</u> <u>Case studies</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- project documents- interviews with beneficiaries/partners and target group <u>Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2-3 interviews with the programme authorities <u>Workshop for the Qualitative/Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment</u> <u>Expert panel to validate the results</u>	Theory based evaluation: Realist evaluation Case studies	

	objectives that are addressed by this question.	questions in interviews and by encouraging reporting of unexpected results. There will also be investigated plausible unintended effects based on the findings from step 1. Each investigation tool used for answering the previous evaluation questions will include a set of questions regarding the unintended effects of the programme within each thematic area.			
General impact of the Programme					
14. Is the expected change produced at the level of the eligible area?	The question refers to the area covered by the programme and how it is reflected in its results. There are two sub-questions in this respect: - did the programme generated change in the entire programme area – in connection with evaluation question 17? - did the programme has a spill-over effect for other areas in Romania and Hungary or even in other countries?	14.1. The programme results are significant enough to influence the entire eligible area and they are relevant for the entire population of the eligible area (even if some differences between counties may be observed)	All result indicators planed in the Programme document, as for the assessment under evaluation question 1 Additional result evaluation indicators, as mentioned above for the assessment under evaluation question 1 Selected common CBC indicators for the assessment under evaluation question 1	<u>Data collection from</u> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>interviews</u> - <u>surveys with stakeholders</u> according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)	Statistical analysis of data on indicators (based on statistical data, administrative data, data from eMS) Statistical analysis of surveys Workshop for the Qualitative/Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment , in order to determine what part of the observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme.
		14.2. The programme has a spill-over effect for other areas in Romania and Hungary	All result indicators planed in the Programme document, as for the assessment under evaluation question 1 Additional result evaluation indicators, as mentioned above for the assessment under evaluation question 1 -except for indicators where the source of data is the survey with stakeholders (or different stakeholders' types in the programme area)	<u>Data collection from</u> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>interviews</u> according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)	Case studies (based on interviews), in order to determine what part of the observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme. GIS analysis
15. Were the strategic projects able to increase the impact of the programme as compared to regular projects?	A comparison will be made between the strategic projects and the regular projects on the output and outcome indicators identified at the level of each specific objective of the programme. The budget of these projects will be taken into account and the results / impact of the projects will be assessed reported to the projects' values. In this respect, when possible, a unit cost will be established for similar achievement of the strategic projects and	15.1. Strategic projects contributed to a significant extent to the programme results	All results indicators in the Programme document, additional result evaluation indicators and selected common CBC indicators, for each specific objective, compared at the level of strategic projects and regular projects	<u>Data collection from</u> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>interviews</u> according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)	Statistical analysis of data on indicators (based on statistical data, administrative data, data from eMS) Workshop for the Qualitative/Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment , in order to determine what part of the

	the regular projects in order to allow a balanced comparison of both achievements and the cost-effectiveness of these projects.			<u>Interviews and data collected</u> from beneficiaries of strategic projects <u>Interviews</u> with representatives of the programme authorities	<i>observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme.</i> Case studies (based on interviews), <i>in order to determine what part of the observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme.</i>
16. To what extent did the programme add benefits to the cross-border regional development and complement and enhance the effect of other related policies or strategies?	<p>The question refers to the added value of the programme, in the programme area, compared to other programmes, funds and policies (national or European).</p> <p>The answer to this question is very much linked with the evaluation question 11 on the net impact of the programme, but in this case the evaluation will focus on complementarities with other interventions, thus other interventions that possibly contribute to reaching the specific objective and the targets of the result indicators.</p>	<p>16.1. The programme contributed, together with other EU funded programmes and national policies, to the cross-border regional development in the programme area</p>	<p>16.1.1. Value of the contracted budgets/specific objectives</p> <p>16.1.2. Value of contracted budgets of other EU funded programmes in the same fields as the ones covered by the CBC RO-HU Programme, in the programme area</p> <p>16.1.3. Value of allocated budgets of national policies in the same fields as the ones covered by the CBC RO-HU Programme, in the programme area</p>	<u>Data collection from</u> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>the budget of the programme and projects</u> - <u>the budgets spent by other programmes in the same areas as</u> - <u>interviews</u> - <u>surveys with stakeholders</u> according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)	The “funding framework” approach Analysis of statistical and administrative data
		<p>16.2. The programme results are contributing, together with the results of other EU funded programmes and national policies to development and achievements in the programme area</p>	<p>All result indicators planned in the Programme document, as for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p> <p>Additional result evaluation indicators, as mentioned above for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p> <p>Selected common CBC indicators for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p>	<u>Data collection from</u> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>interviews</u> - <u>surveys with stakeholders</u> according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)	Literature and documents review Analysis of statistical and administrative data Statistical analysis of surveys

17. Are there any regions or fields where the effects are disproportionately low or high, negatively or positively?	<p>The question is linked with evaluation question 14. The evaluation will assess how homogenous are the programme results in the programme area, will identify the under-served regions/zones and the ones with significant higher results compared to the programme area average. The evaluation will also assess why the geographical differences appear.</p> <p>Moreover, the evaluation will focus also on fields/sector of activities where the results of the programme are low and high and the level of reaching results of the specific objectives will be compared.</p>	17.1. Different levels of the programme results can be observed in different counties	<p>All result indicators planed in the Programme document, as for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p> <p>Additional result evaluation indicators, as mentioned above for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p> <p>Selected common CBC indicators for the assessment under evaluation question 1</p>	<p><u>Data collection from</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>interviews</u> <p>according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)</p>	<p>Statistical analysis of data on indicators (based on statistical data, administrative data, data from eMS)</p> <p>Workshop for the Qualitative/Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment, in order to determine what part of the observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme.</p> <p>Case studies (based on interviews), in order to determine what part of the observed progress related to programme indicators is determined by the programme.</p> <p>GIS analysis</p>
18. Are the programme results likely to be sustainable on long term? What are the major factors that influenced sustainability?	<p>The question focuses on the sustainability of the programme outputs and results. In order to answer this question, the evaluation will take into account all programme indicators concerning the outputs and outcomes (results), as well as for the other impact indicators used by the impact evaluation. For these indicators the evaluation will take into account four elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders opinion on the sustainability of the programme outputs and results Stakeholders commitment to contribute to the sustainability of the programme outputs and results The possibility to replicate projects/actions with limited sustainability, but with good results 	<p>18.1. Programme stakeholders consider the programme results sustainable</p> <p>18.2. Programme stakeholders are committed to allocate resources, including financial and human resources, needed to ensure the sustainability of the programme results</p>	<p>18.1. Number and percent of stakeholders who considers that the programme results are sustainable</p> <p>18.2.1. Number and percent of stakeholders commitment to contribute to the sustainability of the programme outputs and results</p> <p>18.2.2. Number of stakeholders who identify funding sources to contribute to the sustainability of the programme outputs and results</p>	<p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities, stakeholders <p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries 	<p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p> <p>Case studies</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p> <p>Case studies</p>

	and responding to important and persistent needs.			- Programme authorities, stakeholders	
	d. Possible sources of funding or fundraising activities needed to ensure the sustainability of outputs and results that are not sustainable without additional investments/funds.	18.3. Programme stakeholders identify projects/actions that can be replicated	18.3. Number of projects/actions that can be replicated, identified	<u>Survey:</u> - Stakeholders <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities, stakeholders	Statistical analysis of surveys Case studies
		18.4. Several factors can influence, in a positive or in a negative way, the programme sustainability, even if not all of them are not yet materialized	18.4. List of factors able to influence the sustainability of the programme: - in a positive way - in a negative way	<u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities, stakeholders	Theory based evaluation Case studies
19. Did the programme have a positive contribution to the application of the horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (especially as regards the equality between men and women) and sustainable development?	The question refers to the programme and projects approach and results on the horizontal principles regulated by the Common Provisions Regulation: the horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (especially as regards the equality between men and women) and the principle of sustainable development. Three issues will be assessed: a. How the horizontal principles have been integrated in the programme design and management? b. How the horizontal principles have been integrated in the projects design and management? c. What results generated the programmed (through projects) for equal opportunities and non-discrimination (especially as regards the equality between men and women) and sustainable development?	19.1. The horizontal principles have been integrated in programme preparation (in the territorial analysis and Programme, the ex-ante evaluation and SEA)	19.1. List of elements ensuring respect for the horizontal principles in the programme preparation documents (in the territorial analysis and Programme, the ex-ante evaluation and SEA)	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports	Literature and documents review
		19.2. The horizontal principles have been integrated in calls and contracting procedures	19.2. List of elements ensuring respect for the horizontal principles in the calls and contracting procedures	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme documents and calls documents <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Literature and documents review Case studies
		19.3. Programme authorities offered support for beneficiaries on horizontal principles	19.3. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the support received from programme authorities	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries	Statistical analysis of surveys

				- Programme authorities	
		19.4. The horizontal principles have been monitored	19.4. List of monitoring activities concerning the horizontal principles	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme documents and calls documents <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Literature and documents review Case studies
		19.5. Programme communication activities integrated the promotion of horizontal principles	19.5. List of communication activities including the promotion of the horizontal principles	<u>Desk review</u> - Programme website - Programme promotion materials <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Literature and documents review Case studies
		19.6. Beneficiaries considered the horizontal principles when planning and implementing the projects	19.6.1 List of beneficiaries' activities implemented at project level in order to promote the horizontal principles 19.6.2. List of projects results (including programme and additional indicators used for EQ1) that contribute to promotion of the horizontal principles	<u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Case studies
		19.7. Stakeholders in the programme are aware and support the promotion of horizontal principles	19.7. Level of stakeholders support for the horizontal principles	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Statistical analysis of surveys Case studies

20. How did the Programme contribute to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?	<p>The question focuses on the relevance of the CBC Romania – Hungary Programme results/impact for the most importance strategies for the programme area and for the European Union overall: the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Europe 2020 Strategy. The relevance of the model vis-à-vis these strategies will be evaluated at three levels:</p> <p>a. What are the key objectives and interventions funded under the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme that makes it relevant for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Europe 2020 Strategy?</p> <p>b. Which are the objectives of the strategies where the Programme contributed, according to the data collected to answer all the previous questions?</p>	<p>20.1. The programme has been planned in order to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p> <p>20.2. The programme achieved results contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p>	<p>20.1. Number of key elements of the CBC RO-HU Programme that makes it relevant for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and their list, organised by the EU strategy objectives</p> <p>20.2.1. List of projects results (including programme and additional indicators used for EQ1) that contribute to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p> <p>20.2.2. Level of stakeholders' agreement that the CBC RO-HU Programme contributed to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	<p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p> <p>Case studies</p>
21. To what extent did the Programme contribute to the targets of Europe 2020 Strategy?	<p>c. How important is the contribution of the Programme to the overall objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Europe 2020 Strategy.</p>	<p>21.1. The programme has been planned in order to support the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy</p> <p>21.2. The programme achieved results contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy</p>	<p>21.1. Number of key elements of the CBC RO-HU Programme that makes it relevant for the Europe 2020 Strategy and their list, organised by the EU strategy objectives</p> <p>21.2.1. List of projects results (including programme and additional indicators used for EQ1) that contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy</p> <p>21.2.2. Level of stakeholders' agreement that the CBC RO-HU Programme contributed to the Europe 2020 Strategy</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Other relevant studies and reports <p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	<p>Literature and documents review</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p> <p>Case studies</p>
22. To what extent did the programme contribute to the increase of the level of the cross-border cooperation and the cohesion in the eligible area?	<p>The question refers to the cross-border cooperation and cohesion intensity. The criteria in place for cooperation intensity and the added value of cooperation (as suggested by INTERACT⁴⁵) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic leadership & catalyst: Articulating & communicating development needs in the programme area - Strategic influence: Carrying out or stimulating activities that define the 	<p>22.1. The programme ensures the strategic cooperation in the region</p>	<p>22.1.1. Range of actors represented on the Programme Monitoring Committee and extent of their formal powers in the strategic-level decision making process (qualitative).</p> <p>22.1.2. Extent to which the actual "CBC-demand of approved projects" matched the initial "CBC-funding supply"</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Programme reports and other documents on programme results <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	<p>Literature and documents review</p>

⁴⁵ Source: Theories, impacts, & evaluation, Simon Pringle, SQW Ltd, available at <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#763-presentation-theory-based-impact-evaluation-methods-simon-pringle-0>.

<p>distinctive roles of partners, sharing strategic objectives and allocating their resources accordingly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leverage: Providing/securing financial & other incentives to mobilise partner & stakeholder resources – equipment & people, as well as funding - Synergy: Using organisational capacity, knowledge & expertise to improve information exchange & knowledge transfer & coordination &/or integration of the design & delivery of interventions between partners - Engagement: Setting-up the mechanisms & incentives for the more effective & deliberative engagement of stakeholders in the design & delivery of the programme <p>Indicators referring to cross-border cooperation and cohesion developed for the project “Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation” have been considered and adapted, taking into account available data sources and the potential knowledge of stakeholders about the programme area. Indicators developed withing the project “Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation” that are already covered by other evaluation questions have not been taken into account for this question.</p>		<p>22.1.3. Extent to which the approved projects have performed, together, all of the following project activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mutual exchange of experience on the project's themes. - A joint development of policy strategies, policy instruments and other policy support tools. <p>Joint pilot projects (always carried out by more than one project partner), which tested or applied joint outcomes and generated tangible cross-border, transnational, or interregional results.</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Programme reports and other documents on programme results <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	Literature and documents review
	<p>22.2. The programme ensured enough leverage at the level of the programme in order to determine intense cooperation</p>	<p>22.2.1. Extent to which public administrative units existing in the programme area were directly involved in all approved projects</p> <p>22.2.2. Number of persons directly involved in and reached by all approved projects compared to the total population living in the eligible area</p>	<p><u>Desk review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme documents - Programme reports and other documents on programme results <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	Literature and documents review
	<p>22.3. The programme contributed to the development of competitiveness in the region</p>	<p>22.3.1. Share of common initiatives for cross-border research and to access funding</p> <p>22.3.2. Quality of cross-border research</p> <p>22.3.3. Share of common initiatives for cross-border business development</p>	<p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	The “funding framework” approach
	<p>22.4. The quality of cross-border cooperation among different stakeholders increased during the programme implementation</p>	<p>22.4.1. Level of cross-border cooperation between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local public authorities - Government public authorities represented in the programme area - Businesses - Civil society organisations <p>22.4.2. Level and direction of the cooperation evolution between the same stakeholders</p> <p>22.4.3. Perceived level of programme contribution to the cooperation</p>	<p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	<p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p> <p>Case studies</p>

			22.4.4. Number of cross-border organisations / networks / cooperation instruments		
23. What is the added value of the interventions under this programme, compared to what could have been expected from the two member states acting separately?	This question is linked with evaluation question 16, but implies a counterfactual approach: what if the programme or other European interventions were not implemented in the programme area.	23.1. Compared to other programmes, the CBC RO-HU Programme has a considerable value because it answers better the needs in the programme area	<p>23.1.1. Value of the contracted budgets/specific objectives</p> <p>23.1.2. Value of contracted budgets of EU funded projects in the same fields as the ones covered by the CBC RO-HU Programme, in the programme area</p> <p>23.1.3. Value of allocated budgets of national policies in the same fields as the ones covered by the CBC RO-HU Programme, in the programme area</p>	<p><u>Data collection from</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>administrative sources,</u> - <u>the budget of the programme and projects</u> - <u>the budgets spent by other programmes in the same areas as</u> - <u>interviews</u> - <u>surveys with stakeholders</u> <p>according to the data needed for each programme and additional indicator (see data sources planned for each indicator under EQ1)</p>	<p>The “funding framework” approach</p> <p>Analysis of statistical and administrative data</p>
			23.1.4. Level of stakeholders’ agreement that the CBC RO-HU Programme answers better the needs in the programme area compared to other programmes and policies	<p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	Statistical analysis of surveys
24. What is the progress on raising awareness among the beneficiaries /potential beneficiaries of the Programme/the general public?	The question refers to the gross impact of the communication activities that have been developed within the programme in term of awareness and will be referred to as the value of the results indicators set within the Communication Strategy of the programme linked to the specific objectives of the strategy. In order to determine the relevance of the set indicators we will recreate the logic of intervention and the theory of change. The expected results will be further analysed in	24.1. Potential beneficiaries are well informed about the programme calls and results	<p>24.1.1. Number of participants in programme promotion events</p> <p>24.1.2 Level of stakeholders’ awareness about the programme</p>	<p>Data provided by the programme authorities</p> <p><u>Survey:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <p><u>Interviews:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities 	<p>Secondary data analysis</p> <p>Statistical analysis of surveys</p>

	the light of the previous findings and, where appropriate there will be address additional qualitative/quantitative aspects.	24.2. Beneficiaries are well informed about the programme results	24.2. Level of awareness of beneficiaries about the programme results	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries	Statistical analysis of surveys
		24.3. The general public is well informed about the programme results	24.3.1. Number of visitors of the programme website	Google analytics data on website traffic	Secondary data analysis
			24.3.2. Number of people receiving information about the programme due to promotion activities targeting the general public	Data provided by the programme authorities	Secondary data analysis
			24.3.3. Number of positive articles about the programme and the funded projects in local, regional and national media	Media monitoring of 20 media outlets (10 in each country)	Content analysis
25. How can potential applicants (without previous experience in the Programme) be motivated to submit projects under calls?	In order to answer this question, we will use information regarding the experience of project potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries on the following aspects: - Importance of communication actions and tools when first time accessing this type of funds (for beneficiaries of the programme) - Challenges in terms of access to information - Key observed aspects in terms of access to information	25.1. Inactive potential applicants can be motivated and supported to submit projects under calls	25.1.1. List of recommended actions to motivate potential applicants 25.1.2. List of recommended actions to support new potential applicants	<u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities - Stakeholders	Content analysis
26. What is the capitalization potential of the projects?	The question focuses on the benefits of projects and the potential of projects to be used in the future. Capitalisation is defined as a process that has a seeding function. One can take advantage of reached results and thus facilitate future activities. And where is seeding there is always harvesting so you can produce new knowledge building on existing experience and practices. Through capitalization one can reinforce existing or create new cooperation networks, under which partners share practice, experience, knowledge and give you new insights for one's work in future, as well. In order to answer the question, we will use quantitative data collected through the	26.1. Projects results can be used to support the initiation and implementation of new initiatives, therefore generating a more significative, long-term impact	26.1.1. Percent of stakeholders who estimate a capitalization potential of projects	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders	Statistical analysis of surveys
			26.1.2. Number of planned initiatives using results of projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries - Stakeholders <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries - Programme authorities	Statistical analysis of surveys
		26.2. Some projects results are already used to support the initiation and implementation of new initiatives, therefore	26.2. Number of projects capitalizing results from other projects		

	on-line surveys among programme stakeholders, as well as qualitative data collected through interviews.	generating a more significant, long-term impact			
27. What is the level of satisfaction of beneficiaries of the Programme?	The question focuses directly on the perception of beneficiaries concerning the Programme. The evaluation will take into account the satisfaction of beneficiaries of management and procedures, the cooperation and communication with programme authorities, the available funding, opportunities for funding, the organisation of calls	27.1. Beneficiaries are very satisfied with the programme management, including procedures and the support received from programme authorities	27.1.1. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with programme procedures, including monitoring and reporting procedures, 27.1.2. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the cooperation and communication with programme authorities, - the available funding, - opportunities for funding, - the organisation of calls	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries	Statistical analysis of surveys
		27.2. Beneficiaries are very satisfied with the funding opportunities	27.2.1. Level of agreement of beneficiaries that programme calls are aligned with their needs 27.2.2. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with the available funding 27.2.3. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with how calls have been organised	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries	Statistical analysis of surveys
		27.3. Beneficiaries are very satisfied with the cooperation with partners	27.3. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries with partners cooperation	<u>Survey:</u> - Beneficiaries <u>Interviews:</u> - Projects beneficiaries	Statistical analysis of surveys

ADDITIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The proposed additional evaluation questions are looking inwards to the evaluation process and are designed to provide **lessons learned** from the impact evaluation of the 2014-2020 Programme for the impact evaluation of the 2021-2027 Programme.

Evaluation question	Operationalisation – how do we intend to answer this question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data sources (for each indicator)	Analyses contributing to answering the EQ (common per EQ)
AEQ 1. Which data needs are there for future programming periods?	The evaluation will compare indicators in the two programming periods (2014-2020 and 2021-2027) and will assess data availability for the future period, based on the lessons learned during the current evaluation.	New data are needed for the evaluation of the programme for the period 2021-2027	List of new indicators and data sources	<u>Data collection from</u> - administrative sources, - interviews	n/a
AEQ 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses	The lessons learned of this evaluation, concerning the connection between the	The evaluation of the programme for	n/a	<u>Data collection from</u>	Content analysis

of the intervention logic and theory of change that affected the evaluation?	theory of change of the programme and the proposed results indicators will be formulated to address the evaluability of the future programme and, if needed, additional indicators for the impact evaluation of the future programme will be recommended.	the period 2021-2027 can be improved if the theory of change is made explicit and has internal coherence		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme documents - interviews (on expectations from the programme 2021-2027) 	
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Annex 5. Strength of the causal links between output indicators and result indicators by SO

Specific Objective	Result indicators	Output indicators	Level of strength (on a Likert scale, from very weak to very strong)	Explanation
SO 1.1	Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area	Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)	STRONG	The expected result of the programme - <i>Water quality (ecological condition) of crossborder rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area</i> is directly linked with the output indicator - <i>Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)</i> . Thus, the contribution of the projects to the expected result under the SO 1.1 can be easily assessed. Nevertheless, the conducted case studies showed several overlaps between the activities conducted by the projects financed under SO 11 and the one financed under SO 5.1, which can contribute also to the water quality of cross-border rivers.
SO 1.2	Increased number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	WEAK	The expected result is insufficiently linked with the overall objective, this being an exception in the case of Interreg RO-HU programme. Also, just one output indicator is contributing directly to the expected results of the SO 1.2. While indicator <i>CO09 - Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions</i> has a direct contribution, indicator <i>CO23 - Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status</i> does not have a direct link with the expected increase of overnight stays in the eligible area. It is important to mention here that also the definition of the indicator CO23 is rather weak and the number of Ha taken into contact cover also and in the largest proportion, the surfaces for which studies have been made but not direct intervention was planned or realized. Thus, the definition does not reflect in an appropriate way the title of the indicator, because no prospects of future interventions on these areas for better conservation of the biodiversity is required from the beneficiary's side. In some cases, the output indicator CO23 and the result indicator have proven to be conflicted, in the absence of remedial external interventions. Like in the case of example of the project RO-HU 29 shows that intensive touristic activities facilitated by the existence of thermal water in the area leads directly to the deterioration of the natural heritage.
SO 2.1	Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T	Total length of newly built road Total length of reconstructed or upgraded road	MODERATE	It is important to note that the physical road network can only partially measure accessibility in the context of mobility. The main reason for this is that it does not matter where the road section is built, what network role it plays, how well it actually serves the population. The project has mainly implemented access roads and inter-municipal roads, which significantly and substantially improve the accessibility of the individual municipalities and help the transport potential of the cross-border area, but their macro-network impact is marginal (although it is not necessarily the task of the INTERREG programme to provide a complex development of the main TEN-T network). Based on our expert opinion, challenges (CH15 - <i>Problems with the density and the quality of roads with</i>

				<p><i>cross-border impact cause mobility inconveniences (long access time, risk of accidents, etc.) directly and economic disadvantages indirectly)</i> and potentials (P12 - The new border crossing points and other reconstructed or improved roads (regional or local) can multiply the mutually beneficial interactions between people and businesses living and functioning in the border region, P13 - <i>Existing and potential new logistic centres contribute to enhancement of crossborder transport and business connections</i>) as identified in the Programme Documents through the SWOT Analysis have been addressed by the projects implemented, but their impact can be considered more local.</p>
SO 2.2	Increased ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border	<p>Number of cross-border public transport services developed / improved</p> <p>Total length of newly built bicycle road</p>	STRONG	<p>The increase of cross-border public transport services can help the achievement of the result indicator. All the improvements made have contributed to the development of public transport and cycling. Some of the projects specifically target the development of cross-border transport, thus helping to achieve the result indicator. The programme has made significant progress towards addressing the challenges (CH14 - Deficiencies of the cross-border public transportation system (railway and bus) hinder the economic and labour market integration and indirectly make difficult the achievement of the CO2 reduction targets and CH16 - Shortcomings of the bicycle road infrastructure weaken the mobility of people living in the border area.) and potentials (P13 - Existing and potential new logistic centres contribute to enhancement of crossborder transport and business connections, P14 - Development of bicycle road network can contribute to increase the mobility of people and to better exploit the touristic potential of the border area.) identified by the programme, notably in the areas of public transport and cycling improvements.</p>
SO 3.1	Slight increase in employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population	<p>Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training</p>	MODERATE	<p>The employment institutions that participated to the survey do not consider that the programme contribute to increasing the employment rate and the quality of work to a high extent. The case studies found that the most important results of the projects were the construction of the training facilities and/or procurement of equipment, which do contribute to the employment rate and quality of work. However, the participation to the vocational training courses does not ensure a path to employment/change of the workplace for the target group. While there are instances of participants finding a new employment as a consequence of participating to the vocational training courses, the relevant employment agencies from the region did not notice a high contribution. The main contribution of the projects to increasing access to the labour market in the region represents the development of the training facilities, as they will serve on the long term as a place where continuous adult education learning can take place.</p>
SO 4.1	Improved average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area	<p>Population having access to improved health services</p> <p>Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment</p>	STRONG	<p>While not all medical entities in the 8 counties were financed, the investments were considerable, focused on key institutions and services in at least 5 out of the 8 counties (serving also patients also outside of the programme area) and the effectiveness of the projects as such, as well as the synergy between some of them at county level or in the border area (to a more limited extent) do produce a wider change from the perspective of service quality and access. Consequently, challenge 19 - <i>Inequalities in health- and social care infrastructure (together with various other factors) and services contribute to, worse health status on the Romanian side of the border</i></p>

				<p>and also to patient migration from Romania to Hungarian hospitals and challenge 20 - Failure to create proper administrative conditions for cross-border health care financing may lead to the increase of semi-legal or illegal practices and hinders the evolvement of a consistent cross-border health care system, as well as problem 17 - High proportion of people at risk of poverty (15-25%) and of population living in poor areas (17.4%) in the eligible area leads to increasing risk of irreversible socioeconomic marginalization of the concerned social groups and areas (struggling economy, underdeveloped infrastructure and services, compromised accessibility, low income of people, social problems, often high proportion of extremely poor Roma communities, strong outmigration)., planned to be solved by the programme, were partially addressed by the projects.</p>
SO 5.1	Improved quality of the joint risk management	Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	WEAK	<p>The value of the result indicator is assessed through a questionnaire survey of relevant organisations on a Likert-scale. While, the output indicator focused on the target group of the projects, on the contrary, the result indicator focuses on those carrying out the investments. It would have been more appropriate to define a result indicator that also has a direct impact on the target group. One such indicator could be the reduction in central budget resources spent on natural disasters.</p>
SO 6.1	Increased level of the cross-border cooperation intensity of the public institutions and non-profit organizations	<p>Number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives</p> <p>Number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives</p>	VERY STRONG	<p>The high number and frequency of workshops and meetings organised within the projects generated a solid platform of communication on technical level among the participants on different issues, including public administration, civic engagement, education and culture promotion, sports, border security, administrative capacity for water management. In many cases the exchange of experience allowed the presentation of good practices and generated plans for new projects among partners and among other organisations in the involved municipalities. Moreover, in some cases, the participation of citizens, of different ages (children, young people, adults or elderly) in projects activities, including promotion and dissemination activities, is encouraging further cross-border cohesion and cooperation among civil society organisations and informal groups. However, PA6 only covers a fraction of the municipalities in the programme area, as there are about 780 municipalities in the programme area. 84% of these municipalities are small, rural municipalities, with limited administrative capacity, including limited capacity for cross-border cooperation.</p>

Annex 6. List of documents and literature reviewed

A. Programme level documents

- Available Annual Implementation Reports
- Communication Strategy
- eMS Data – project portfolio 31.12.2022
- Evaluation Plan
- Ex-ante evaluation
- Final Evaluation Report: Services for evaluating the implementation of The Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Beneficiary: Ministry of Public Works Development and Administration Bucharest, Romania August 2020
- Launched calls during Interreg V
- List of financed projects and presentation of projects
- MC Members list
- Official data published by the Management Authority of the Programme, Projects results - <https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/>
- Programming related documents for the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme
- Project progress reports (for the CSs)
- Summary advertising activities Ro-Hu 2015-2020
- Summary Deliverables, Results, Indicators, Objectives JS, 31.01.2023
- Summary Deliverables, Results, Indicators, Objectives, JS, 31.07.2022
- Summary indicators as per Communication Strategy 2016-2022
- Summary Output indicators per project 31.12.2022
- Summary Project Ideas 2016-2017
- The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary (the most recent version, modified by COM Decision, 16 November 2020);
- The study “Assessment of methodologies for defining the output and result indicators, the milestone output targets and the financial milestones for the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme”, 2018

B. Project level documents

Specific objective	Project code	Status	Document / data needed
SO 1.1	ROHU -224	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.2, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1)
SO 1.2	ROHU -446	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 11.1)
	ROHU -29	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports

			Rapoarte monitorizare PLAM-BIHOR http://apmbh.anpm.ro/stadiul-planului-de-actiune-pentru-mediul-la-nivel-judetean (accessed June 9, 2023)
SO 2.1	ROHU -444	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 10.1, 10.2, 11.1, 11.2)
SO 2.2	ROHU -390	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2)
			Final report (9.3)
			Sustainability reports (9.4)
SO 3.1	ROHU -452	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1)
	ROHU -380	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 12.1)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports
	ROHU -395	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 8.1)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports
SO 4.1	ROHU - 396	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports
			Project Website: https://interreg-rohu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ROHU-396-EN.pdf
			Pediatric Interventional Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance, Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance (Third Edition) https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B97803234156130004950 (accessed June 9, 2023)
	ROHU -449	On-going	Application form
			Progress reports (1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1)

			Project Website https://iphealth.ro/en/obiective/ (accessed April 15 2023)
			Activity report of the Salvamont - Salvaspeo Bihor County Service, related to 2018 https://www.salvamontbihor.ro/app/webroot/files/Raport%20de%20activitate%202022.pdf (accessed June 8, 2023)
			Activity report of the Salvamont - Salvaspeo Bihor County Service, related to 2022 https://www.salvamontbihor.ro/app/webroot/files/Raport%20de%20activitate%202022.pdf (accessed June 8, 2023)
	ROHU - 357	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 10.1, 10.2)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports
			Project Website https://rohu357.spitaljudetean-oradea.ro/despre-proiect/ (accessed April 14 2023)
			Raport de activitate 2021, Directia de Sanatate Publică Județeană Timiș
SO 5.1	ROHU -28	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3)
			Final report (10.2)
			Sustainability reports (10.3)
	ROHU -11	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 10.1, 10.2, 11.1, 12.1, 12.2, 13.1, 13.2)
			Final report
			Sustainability reports
SO 6.1	ROHU -179	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
			Final report (5.1)
			Sustainability reports (5.2, 5.3)
	ROHU -297	Finalized	Application form
			Progress reports (0.1, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2)
			Final report (6.3)
			Sustainability reports (6.4)

C. Other sources

- Data on output indicators provided by the eMS system.
- European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, Action Plan, 2010
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.
- Statistical data form Tempo/INS database (Romania)
- Statistical data on border crossing and illegal migration provided by the Romania Border Police
- Statistical data published and communicated by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HSCO)
- Report of the Environment Guard of Bihor County for 20204
- Theories, impacts, & evaluation, Simon Pringle, SQW Ltd, available at <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#763-presentation-theory-based-impact-evaluation-methods-simon-pringle-0> (accessed June 11, 2023)

Annex 7. List of participants to qualitative data collection process

A. Programme authorities' interviews

PROGRAMME AUTHORITY	NO.	INTERVIEWEES
Managing Authority	1.	<i>Dan Bălănescu – Head of the Romania-Hungary Management Authority;</i> <i>Florin Gheorghe-Pop – evaluation-examination adviser;</i> <i>Tudor Guset , Public Manager</i>
Joint Secretary	2.	<i>Livia Banu, executive director</i> <i>Monica TEREAN, Head of Joint Secretariat</i> <i>Cosmin CHIRILA, coordinator CPN</i> <i>Sebastian STURZ, project monitoring department coordinator</i> <i>Marius OLARIU, expert</i> <i>Lavinia CHIRILA, expert</i>
National Authority	3.	<i>Nikoletta Horvath, MFA</i>
Info Point of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	4.	<i>Viktor Fekete, expert</i>

B. Stakeholders' interviews

COUNTRY	CATEGORY	NO	INSTITUTION AND PARTICIPANT (S)
Romania	County councils	1.	County Council Arad <i>Gabriela Chiricheu, Executive Director</i>
		2.	County Council Bihor <i>Dimiter Aurelia, Institution representative</i>
	Municipalities	3.	Municipality of Carei <i>Diana Marcovici, Institution representative</i>
		4.	Municipality of Lipova
	Environment protection and risk management	5.	Water Basin Administration Someş – Tisa <i>Bogdan Neciu, Institution representative</i>
		6.	Environmental Protection Agency Arad <i>Institution representative</i>
		7.	Agenția Protecția Mediului Bihor <i>Timea Mare, Director of Projects Department</i>
	Universities	8.	University Aurel Vlaicu from Arad
		9.	University from Timișoara

			<i>Otilia Hedeşan, University representative</i>
Hungary	County councils	10.	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County council, <i>Oszkár Seszták, president of the council</i>
		11.	Hajdú-Bihar County council, <i>Zsuzsa Mihalik, County Council representative</i>
		12.	Csanád-Csongrád County Council, <i>Eszter Csókási, County Council representative</i>
	Municipalities	13.	Szeged municipality <i>Péter Pásztor – Deputy Head of the Development Office of the Mayor's Office, the Municipality of Szeged</i>
	Natural heritage protection institutions	14.	Lower Tisza Water Management Directorate (Alsó-Tisza-vidéki Vízügyi Igazgatóság – ATIVIZIG) <i>Szabolcs Frank, Flood Protection and River Management Division, Head of Department</i> <i>Attila Nagy, Department for Proposals and Investments, Project officer</i>
	Universities	15.	University of Debrecen <i>Tibor Antal, Head of Department of International Projects</i>

C. Case study level interviews

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	PROJECT	NO.	TYPE OF ACTOR	NAME OF THE INSTITUTION AND PERSON INTERVIEWED
SO 1.1 (IP 6/b)	ROHU-224 - Development of the internal water system of common interest on the Mureşel Channel, Ier Connecting Channel and Ier Channel	1.	Lead beneficiary	National Agency for Land Improvements (Romania) <i>Ana Maria Dragos - tehnic consultant</i> <i>arad@anif.ro</i> <i>Hortensia Tobă - project manager</i>
		2.	Partner	Lower Tisza Water Directorate (Hungary) <i>Attila Nagy - project assistant</i>
SO 1.2 (IP 6/c)	ROHU-446 - Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage	3.	Lead beneficiary	Debrecen City Hall (Hungary) <i>Mihalik Zsuzsa - project representative</i>
		4.	Partner	Tarii Crisurilor Museum (subordinated institution to the County Council of Bihor) (Romania) <i>Negru Ileana, project representative</i>
		5.	Partner	Gheorghe Sincai County Library, successor in rights and obligations of Varad Cultural Journal (subordinated institution to the County Council of Bihor) (Romania) <i>Oana Laura Nicula, Libery director and project representative</i>

	ROHU-29 - Conservation and protection of ecosystems threatened by the lack of thermal water and fresh water in the cross-border area	6.	Final beneficiary	Szilágycsehi Berekenye acting group (Romania) <i>Bodea György, Coordinator of the group</i>
		7.	Lead beneficiary	Intercommunity Development Association Oradea Metropolitan Area (Romania) <i>Motoc Letitia, Project manager</i>
		8.	Partner	University of Oradea (Romania) <i>Blidar Cristian Felix - project representative</i> <i>Maria Bittenbinder, project assistant</i>
		9.	Partner	Institute for Nuclear Research (Hungary) <i>László Palcsu, Project representative</i>
		10.	Partner	Aqua Crisius Angling Association (Romania) <i>Andrei Togor, Project representative</i>
SO 2.1 (IP 7/b)	ROHU-444 - Connecting communities to TEN-T infrastructure in the cross-border area Romania-Hungary	11.	Lead beneficiary	County Council Arad (Romania) <i>Alisa-Elena Cojocaru, Project manager</i>
		12.	Partner	Békés County Foundation for Enterprise Development / Fundația de Dezvoltare a Afacerilor Békés (Hungary) <i>Szász Zsolt, Executive Director</i>
SO 2.2 (IP 7/c)	ROHU-390 - Improving the public transport service in cross-border urban centres Oradea and Debrecen	13.	Lead beneficiary	Public Transport Company Oradea (Romania) <i>Barna Ciprian, Project Manager</i>
		14.	Partner	Public Transport Company Debrecen (DKV) (Hungary) <i>Zoltán Szabó, Head of investment and development</i>
SO 3.1 (IP 8/b)	ROHU-452 - JEDI – Joint employment initiative	15.	Lead beneficiary	Training Centre Szeged (Hungary) <i>Peter Varga, Project manager</i>
		16.	Partner	Timis Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (Romania) <i>Cristina Bădulescu, Project representative</i>
		17.	Final beneficiary	Szegedi SZC Déri Miksa Műszaki Technikum (Hungary) <i>Deputy Technical Director Kis Zoltán and Deputy Director-General Mitykó Csaba</i>
	ROHU-380 - Adult education in health and sustainable living environment	18.	Lead beneficiary	Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Values of Banat and Crișana "EXCELSIOR" (Romania) <i>Mihai S. Pascu, Project Manager</i>
		19.	Partner	Koros-Maros Foundation for Rural Development and Eco-agriculture (Hungary) <i>Zsolt Ráki, Project Representative</i>

		20.	Partner / final beneficiary	<i>György Kajári - training beneficiary (Hungary)</i>
	ROHU-395 - CO-LABOUR Nyírbátor și Carei cooperation for the improvement of employment and promoting development based on endogenous potential	21.	Lead beneficiary	Nyírbátor Local Council (Hungary) <i>Enikő Fülöp, Project manager</i>
		22.	Partner	Municipality of Carei (Romania) <i>Diana Bochiș, Project representative</i>
		23.	Final beneficiary	AGES Association <i>Csengeri Zsolt, Director</i>
SO 4.1 (IP 9/a)	ROHU – 396 - Team-Cardio-Prevent Cross-border cooperation in the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in Bekes-Timis counties	24.	Lead beneficiary	Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara (Romania) <i>Andrada Artan – Project manager</i>
		25.	Partner	Békés County Central Hospital (Hungary) <i>László Becsei, Chief Medical Director of Békés County Central Hospital</i>
		26.	Partner / final beneficiary	Public Direction for Health Timiș (DSP Timiș) (Romania)
	ROHU-449 - Integrated project for sustainable development in the mountain area of Bihor County, improvement of access and development in health care services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations	27.	Lead beneficiary	Bihor County Council (Romania) <i>Delorean Ion Iulius, Proiect manager</i>
		28.	Partner	Local Government of Berettyóújfalu City (Hungary) <i>Zsuzsa Mihalik, Project Manager</i>
		29.	Partner	Salvamont County Service Salvaspeo Bihor legally represented by the Bihor Montani Rescue Association (Romania) <i>Istvan Pinter, Project representative</i>
	ROHU - 357 - Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion	30.	Lead beneficiary	Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital (Romania) <i>Marcela Bota, Project manager</i>
		31.	Partner	Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital Berettyóújfalu (Hungary) <i>Szabolcs Svéda, Project Manager</i>
		32.	Final beneficiary	Beneficiary medical staff (Romania) <i>Marcela Bota, Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital</i>
	ROHU-28 - Development of flood protection center of Szanazug	33.	Lead beneficiary	Romanian Waters National Administration-Crișuri Water Basin Administration (Romania)

	and rehabilitation of the penstock and hydro-mechanical equipment in Tulca	34.	Partner	<i>Andrisca Simona Gabriela, Project manager</i>
				Körös-Vidék Water Directorate (Hungary)
				<i>Melinda Varga, Head of Asset Management and Operations Department</i>
	ROHU-11 - Flood risk management improvement on the Mures River in the cross-border area	35.	Lead beneficiary	Mures Water Administration (Romania)
				<i>Gheorghe Monica, Project manager</i>
		36.	Partner	Lower Tisza Region Water Directorate (Hungary)
				<i>Szabolcs Frank, Head of Department of Flood Protection and River Management</i>
SO 6.1 (IP 11/b)	ROHU-179 - Administrative bridge between towns in the Romania - Hungary cross border region	37.	Lead beneficiary	Town of Aleșd (Romania)
				<i>Pantea Bogdan, Project manager</i>
		38.	Partner	Municipiul Marghita (Romania)
				<i>Liliana Mierea, counselor European projects</i>
		39.	Partner	Szarvas Varos Onkormanyzata (Hungary)
				<i>Tusjak-Dávid Zsófia, project representative, employee of the Municipality of Szarvas</i>
		40.	Final beneficiary	Aleșd Municipality (Romania)
				<i>Nicoleta Luran, Secretary of Aleșd Municipality</i>
	ROHU-297 - A Cross-Border Open Model of A Digital Museum Database	41.	Lead beneficiary	Jósa András Museum (Hungary)
				<i>Eszter Istvánovits, Project representative, Chief Archaeologist of Jósa András Museum</i>
		42.	Partner	County Museum of Satu Mare (Romania)
				<i>Péter-Levente Szőcs, Project representative</i>
		43.	Final beneficiary	County Museum of Satu Mare (Romania)
				<i>Norbert Nagy, Archaeologist at the County Museum of Satu Mare</i>

D. Participants to the expert validation focus group on SO 1.2 of the Programme

COUNTRY	CATEGORY	No.	INSTITUTION /PARTICIPANTS
ROMANIA	Public institutions	1.	National Agency for Protected Natural Areas - Timiș <i>Mariana Caplat</i>
		2.	National Agency for Protected Natural Areas – Satu Mare <i>Adriana Culda</i>
		3.	Regional Development Agency North-West <i>Marian Alca</i>

			<i>Bianca Gaviola</i>
		4.	Regional Development Agency West <i>Marius Niculae</i>
	NGOs in the area of natural and cultural heritage protection	5.	Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Values of Banat and Crişana "Excelsior" <i>Mihai Pascu</i>
	NGOs in the area of tourism	6.	Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Timiş (APDT)
HUNGARY	NGOs in the area of natural and cultural heritage protection	7.	Green Circle – Friends of the Earth Hungarian member <i>Suzanna Şerban</i>
		8.	Green 14 - Association for Sustainable Development of Békés - Bihar Euroregion <i>Balázs Duray</i>

E. Participants to the simpact assessment workshop on cross-border cooperation as both, horizontal and vertical components of the Programme

No.	INTERNATIONAL EXPERT	AFFILIATION / EXPERTISE
1.	Bernhard Schausberger	Expert in international communication and cooperation INTERACT Programme, Vienna, Austria
2.	Rolf Bergs	Expert in cross-border cooperation and regional disparities
3.	Liliana Lucaciu	Evaluation expert, with experience in Interreg Programmes Evaluation Managing Director of Lideea Romania
4.	Tomasz Kilianski	Development specialist, leader and expert in strategic policy planning and programming
5.	Olha Krashovska	Evaluation experts President of the National Ukrainian Evaluation Society
6.	Melinda Benczi	International Relations Coordinator Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives - CESCO Budapest

Annex 8. Case studies reports

Specific Objective 1.1 - Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters

Case Report

ROHU-224 - Development of the internal water system of common interest on the Mureşel Channel, Ier Connecting Channel and Ier Channel

1. General data on project

Title	Development of the internal water system of common interest on the Mureşel Channel, Ier Connecting Channel and Ier Channel (MURESE)
Code	ROHU-224
Priority axis	Priority axis 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 1.1: Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies Investment Priority 6/b, Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements
Lead Beneficiary	National Agency of Land Improvements Arad
Partners	Lower Tisa District Water Directorate (ATIVIZIG)
Target Group / Groups ⁴⁶	The population and the areas of the localities crossed by the three channel sectors: Muresel, Ier Legator and Ier from Arad County (Romania), which connects to the Tiganca channel in Bekes County (Hungary).
Covered geographical area	Arad and Bekes counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 15 months (01.04.2019-31.07.2022) After extension: 29 months (01.04.2019 – 30.09.2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	1.890.017,55 Euro, out of which ERDF 1.606.514,91 Euro
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 357.812,05 EUR out of which 304.140,2EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 351.370,76 EUR out of which 298.665,11 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	UNDER IMPLEMENTATION
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Information Fiche Project Website: www.ativizig.hu/projektek/rohu/ROHU_224
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⁴⁶ According to Application Form

	E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022 Projects results (Official data published by the Management Authority of the Programme) - https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/
Interviews	<u>Lead Beneficiary</u> - National Agency of Land Improvements Arad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Hortensia Tobă, project manager and - Ms. Ana Maria Dragoş, technic consultant <u>Project partner</u> - Lower Tisa District Water Directorate (ATIVIZIG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. ATTILA NAGY, Project assistant

3. Short presentation of project context

The Water Directive of the EU requires Member States to prepare and implement River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures in order to protect and improve water quality. The Directive covers both chemical and ecological status of the water bodies. Romania and Hungary signed a convention in **2003 to develop bilateral cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of cross-border water courses**, subsurface cross-border aquifer layers, protection of aquatic ecosystems and on the environment protection, including to improve water quality.

The logic of intervention of the programme is clearly reflecting the existing needs in the area of cross-border rivers and ground waters management. SO1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters addresses directly the:

- the requirements of the European Union's environmental acquis,
- the existing needs in the cross-border area in regards with the management of rivers and ground waters.

The status of the water in Mureş River and the management capacity of responsible institutions from Romania, affects in a direct way the quality of the river water that crosses Hungary border area. While, Romania is upstream, Hungary in the downstream side, thus, all waste, pollution, sludge affects also the Hungarian part of the border. Romania and Hungary need to find solutions together as to improve the cross-border management of rivers, being co-dependent. The collaboration between the two governments in this area has been formalized since 2003, when the bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Romania on cooperation in the field of protection and sustainable use of transboundary waters was adopted.

The application form mentions that the project contributes to the objectives of the program in terms of water quality improvement **at three measurement points in the Arad (Ro) and Bekes (Hu) cross-border area: Pecica, Turnu, Battonya**. At the same time, the application form presents **a set of investments in water infrastructure in the hydrotechnical developments along 4 segments of the water channels, Mureşel, Ier Legator, Ier and Ţiganca**, and will acquire equipment for carrying out water quality monitoring works. The project aims at tackling the common challenges identified through a partnership between the ANIF Arad and Lower Tisa District Water Directorate, Hungary. Project activities are consistent with the responsibilities of the institutions involved.

The activities planned and conducted under the project addressed directly two specific situations related to the status of the river and ground waters and their management:

- draughts, water lagging,
- excess surface water after extreme rains.

The drainage system is key for a significant part of the population addressed by the project, where many people depend on the agricultural activities. Also, in the Romanian part of the channels, de-clogging has not been made for 20 years. The aquatic vegetation and the sludge accumulations did not permit anymore an effective irrigation of the soils in the vicinity of the 3 channels.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The general objective of the project is **“to improve quality management of cross border rivers in area of Arad and Bekes Counties through investments in water infrastructure and cross border management”**. It falls under the Investment Priority 6/b, “Investing in the water sector to meet the

requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements" accordingly to the specific objective that refers to "Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies" of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme.

More concretely, the cooperation between the partners is meant **to increase the quality of water in the cross-border river basin by rehabilitation of the canal beds, realization of an effective and environmentally friendly water supply**. The complete logic of intervention of the project is presented in the below table:

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
To improve quality management of cross border rivers in area of Arad and Bekes Counties through investments in water infrastructure and cross border management.	To increase the quality of water in the cross-border river basin by rehabilitation of the canal beds, realization of an effective and environmentally friendly water supply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of 2 existing pumping stations for an environmentally-friendly and effective water supply on the Cigányka-ér - purchase of electric pumps and its fittings, development of electric supply and Muresel channel; - Restoration of the canal bed and its water transport capability for reaching the "good status" of the affected water bodies; - Purchase of auxiliary fittings for maintenance machines and equipment; - Rehabilitation of 4 auxiliary buildings in the administration of the LP - ANIF Arad: cantons and administrative buildings. 	Output indicator - 6/b 1 Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project) <u>Target:</u> 3 measurement points	Result indicator - R 6/b Water quality (ecological condition) of crossborder rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area <u>No specific target set.</u> By rehabilitation of the canal beds and by realization of an environmentally-friendly and effective water supply, the water quality of the transboundary waterbody Cigányka-ér should have been increased.

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, the progress made so far has not been reported yet, due to the fact that the value achieved will be calculated after the finalization of the planned activities. The set target group and the target value are presented in the below table⁴⁷.

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
General public - the population of the localities crossed by the 3 channel sectors addressed by the project: Muresel, Ier Legator and Ier from Arad county (Romania), which connects to the Tiganca channel in Bekes county (Hungary).	189.842 inhabitants , out of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 178,024 inhabitants in Romania - 11,818 in Hungary Muresel channel affects 161.420 inhabitants in Arad County and Sintoma Municipality Ler channel affects 17,299 inhabitants of Pecica and the villages of Sederhat	0 reported so far	0%

⁴⁷ according to the application form of the project

	and Turnu, Variasu Mare, Iratos, Sofronea		
	Tiganca channel affects 11,818 inhabitants of the Battonya and Mezohegyes		

More detailed, in terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of workpackages:

- **management** – where the responsible partners was National Agency of Land Improvements Arad;
- **investments** – where 2 main activities were carried out by the Romanian Partner: a) Rehabilitation of three cantons and an administrative headquarters as well as the pumping station; Rehabilitation of **25 hydrotechnical constructions** on the studied channels (Muresel, Ier Legator, Ier), Rehabilitation of **pumping station SP Muresel**; b) **Clogging of the 32,700 KM LOADS - Muresel, Ier, Ier Legator channels (section rebuilding, pear repair)**. Regarding the Hungarian partner, the following activities were planned: a) **Reconstruction of Cigányka-ér main channel and Battonyai Nagy canal**; b) **Development of electric supply**; c) **Water quality monitoring**.
- **implementation** – which envisions: the following activities a) procurement of external services in order to contract an independent official public procurement consultant to arrange the whole public procurement procedure for each partner.
- **communication** – press releases (4 pieces), events (conferences) at opening and closing the project, announcement in media, advertising materials.

The work package for ANIF contains activities specific to the needs identified in Romania. First activity of the project from the Romanian partner was meant to have a duration of 1 year and 7 months, starting with February 2020. According to the Progress Report 10.1 which covers the implementation period until July 2022, the clogging of 3 water channels and the rehabilitation of hydrotechnical construction along the 3 channels it had not yet started in mid-2022. The third activity planned is the Rehabilitation of pumping Station Muresel, followed by the rehabilitation of canton and administrative headquarters, but none of them were initiated by then. Regarding the elaboration of technical documentation for the construction works delays were also registered.

On the Hungarian side, the work package involved channel dredging and maintenance accessories, but the Progress Report indicates delays for this activity. Also, ATIVIZIG planned the electrification of pumping station with an end date in 2020, but the deadline has also not been met. Neither the Building of a monitoring station, the third activity for the Hungarian Partner, did not show any progress in July 2022.

The information available in the reports made by the project beneficiary was complemented with the data collected through the interviews conducted with project partners. Thus, until May 2023, when the interviews were conducted, the progress made in regard with the implemented activities advanced significantly. For the beginning of 2023 the following activities were planned:

- Development of 2 existing pumping stations for an environmentally-friendly and effective water supply on the Cigányka-ér (0+343) km: purchase of electric pumps and its fittings, development of electric supply and Muresel channel;
- Restoration of the canal bed and its water transport capability for reaching the "good status" of the affected water bodies - app. 40 km
- Development of a monitoring system on the Cigyánka-ér channel, through the construction of a monitoring point and purchase of an ADCP device, which is suitable for measure of water discharge on small rivers.
- Purchase of auxiliary fittings for maintenance machines and equipment;
- Rehabilitation of 4 auxiliary buildings in the administration of the LP - ANIF Arad: cantons and administrative buildings.

The data collected through interviews showed that the status of the implementation had advanced significantly since July 2022. The status of the activities as presented by the beneficiaries is the following:

- Clogging of the 32,700 KM LOADS - Muresel, Ier, Ier Legator channels – finalized in a proportion of 80%,

- Purchase of auxiliary fittings for maintenance machines and equipment – 100%,
- Rehabilitation of 4 auxiliary buildings in the administration of the LP – 100%,
- Reconstruction of Cigányka-ér main channel and Battonyai Nagy canal– 100%,
- Development of electric supply – 60%,
- The rehabilitation of hydrotechnical constructions - 5%.

The Lead Beneficiary mentioned that the progress of the project can be considered to be at the level of 70% of the work plan and that the project will finish all work packages by the end of the revised implementation period, thus, by September 2023.

No significant modification was done at the level of the design of the project. The main revisions consisted in the extension of the implementation period of the project due to the delays encountered many in the public procurement process, where several public tenders had to be relaunched. The implementation period has been extended with 14 months in total. The partner from Hungary faced less this type of bottlenecks, due to the fact that its budget was mainly directed to equipment purchasing, which involves an easier procedure and less amounts of money. On the other hand, the Romanian partner had to implement a bigger investment which included infrastructure works, for which the public acquisition process lasted longer. Also, it is important to mention here, that, as the collected data showed, the instability of the management level of the Lead Beneficiary institution affected the implementation of the project in a significant manner.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The intervention financed through project RO-HU 224 under the framework of the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme contributes directly to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The Mures River flows into the Tisa, and the Tisa is the largest river of the Danube. The project objectives (general and specific) are in line with the pillar 2 of the Strategy – Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region, and 2 of its priorities:

- Priority Area 04 Water Quality,
- Priority Area 05 Environmental Risks,
- Priority Area 06 Biodiversity, Landscapes, Air & Soil Quality.

The EU Strategy for Danube Region contributes directly to the Europe 2020 Strategy through the promotion of sustainable developments and the aim to tackle the climate challenges and in the end contributing to securing quality of life⁴⁸. The project contributes to the use of water pumping through the modernization of the base station, reducing energy consumption and increasing water quality.

The project also constitutes an implementation mechanism for the bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Romania on cooperation in the field of protection and sustainable use of transboundary waters (15 Sept 2003).

In terms of established complementarities with other projects / investments made in the same area, the application form mentions the following past and current EU programmes that are in synergy with the project:

- RO-PHARE – 2005/017-690.01.05 where the specific objective of the program was to provide assistance to flood-affected communities and to adopt measures against flood disasters, rehabilitating damaged infrastructure at regional and local;
- Hungarian-Romanian Phare CBC Common Small Projects Fund: Development of Hungarian-Romanian Transboundary Water Connection in the Mures river basin where the objectives were related to environmental protection, water management, institutional development and other;
- Common Interest DEWIPS- HURO/0802/106, Development of the Inland Water System of the Mures riversides. The objective is to increase the safety against inland water in case of those watercourses where the interest is common;
- Forming a Sustainable Water Management Infrastructure – Next to the Romanian Border Area ESUWATER - HURO/1101/102/1.3.2 –Objection: Reducing the problem of Cigányka-ér area which

⁴⁸ Strategy for Danube Region, Action Plan, 2010 - <https://danube-region.eu/download/actionplaneusdr/?wpdmdl=624&refresh=5d5fe169b896a1566564713> and Revised Action plan, 2019 - https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EUSDR_Consolidated-Input-Documents-AP-Revision_2019.pdf

located on the alluvial ridge of the Mures with the restoring of the water source, and with water supply.

The beneficiaries of the project highlighted the importance of a second project financed through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme, RO-HU 11 – “Flood risk management improvement on the Mures River in the crossborder area”, implemented by the Mureş Water Administration in partnership with the same institution from Hungary, Lower Tisa District Water Directorate. The main objective of this second project was to improve cross border disaster and flood risk management in Mures River basin, by promoting intensive cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian water management authorities across national and administrative borders⁴⁹. Together with this project, the investments made under RO-HU 224 project will create synergies and contribute to a better cross-border management of rivers, mainly at the level of Mureş River.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The expected results of the project are the following:

- Developing the bilateral cooperation on the protection and sustainable usage of cross-border rivers and water courses, subsurface cross-border aquifer layers, also on the the protection of aquatic ecosystems and on the enviromment protection including to improve water quality;
- Elimination of water losses through seepage from the channels, the removal of degradation occurring in the hydrotechnical constructions and reduction of costs for ensuring the operation to the initially design parameters;
- Water quality improvement at three measurement points in the ARAD and BEKES cross-border area: Pecica, Turnu, Battonya.

Cleaning the water channels lead to better quality of water, but also less pollution. The population from the areas where the channels are located was affected by the level of ferrous, non-ferrous and household waste accumulated in the riverbed, existing microbes and bacteria. Thus, already the effects of this activity are visible not only for the institutions involved, in terms of water management and quality of water, but also for the inhabitants of the areas where the 3 channels are located.

The so far conducted rehabilitation works done at the level of the 3 channels also led to reducing the level of soil infiltration, which improved not only the quality of the water but also of the soil.

The water yield increased after the de-clogging works done for the channels addressed by the project. The contractor that conducted this activity initially encountered significant difficulties in identifying the river bed, due to significant amounts of aquatic vegetation, this being the first intervention on the channel in the past 20 years. Thus, its effects are significant and very visible in the area.

Also, the rehabilitation of the hydrological stations is expected to contribute significantly to the quality of the river and ground waters in the addressed areas. But, as mentioned in the above section, this activity is at its initial stage and its effects could not be observed at the moment when the case study report was drafted⁵⁰.

Both beneficiaries emphasized the importance of the investments made for the improvement of the cross-border management. The opportunities provided by the Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary programme for cooperation and joint implementation of public interventions led a better collaboration between the institutions responsible with the management of water in Romania and Hungary. Further common investments are planned for the current Interreg VI-A Romania – Hungary Programme.

Moreover, according to the perspectives of the beneficiaries, the project contributed directly to the improvement of the cross-border management in the area of rivers and ground water. Based on the estimations made, the quality of the formal collaboration between parties and their results as regards with the quality of water increased with 15% - 20% since the implementation of the two projects aforementioned, financed though the cross-border programme (RO-HU 224 and RO-HU 11). Thus, this estimation does not only refer to the projects constructed under the SO 1.1 of the programme but also to the contribution of one project financed under the SO 5.1 “Improved cross-border disasters and risk management” of the programme, but have had also impact in the area of cross-border management of rivers through its specificity.

⁴⁹ Project RO-HU 11 is also the subject of the in dept analysis conducted under the evaluation. The current annex includes the Case Report drafter for this intervention.

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In order to estimate the contribution of the project to the specific objective of the programme, the following 3 steps were conducted: a) analysis of the achievement of the project in the context of the project portfolio under the SO, b) analysis of the causal link between the **expected outputs** of the programme (achievements) and **expected results** under and c) drawing a conclusion based on the findings of the previous 2 steps.

Thus, it is important to highlight here the following main aspects when addressing the contribution of the investments made through the project to the overall achievements under the related specific objective (*output level*):

- The project covers approximatively 30% of the allocated budget per SO 1.1;
- Also, the project covers 3 out of the 9 measurements points that are expected to be positively affected by the two interventions financed under SO 1.1;
- The programme target for the output level indicator under SO 1.1 is 7, thus the project covers approximately 43% of the target.

The causal link between the expected output and the result of the programme at the level of the specific objective is very strong.

Output indicator	Result indicator
<p><i>"Number of measurement points positively affected by the interventions (after the completion of the project)"</i>,</p> <p>where <u>„positively affected“</u> means that the interventions delivered contribute to improving the ecological quality of the water measured at the given measurement point, and this has to be demonstrated at the end of the project⁵¹.</p>	<p><i>"Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area"</i></p>

Based on the above table, the causal link between the achievements of the projects and the overall expected effects on the quality of water of cross-border rivers is direct and positive. **The expected effects should be produced by the end of the project**, taking into consideration the importance of the project as regards to the programme's design and also within the portfolio of projects. Most probably, the project will contribute to the quality of river water in the addressed areas. Currently, the project partners are analyzing the level of water quality as measured through the 3 measurement stations addressed by the project (Pecica and Turnu in Romania and Battonya in Hungary). But the final values were not available at the moment when data was collected from the Lead Partner, this situation being expected due to the fact that the project will be finalized in September 2023.

On the other hand, in regards with **the level of the contribution of the project to the expected result of the programme**, namely "Slight increase in water quality (ecological condition) of cross-border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area", the impact of the project is expected to be rather low due to the fact that the programme methodology regarding the calculation of the result indicator value takes into consideration all 95 measurement points in the eligible area. Thus, an observable improvement at the level of the rivers water quality in the eligible area of the programme is rather less plausible and also, less expected, taking into consideration the formulation of the indicator title (i.e., "slight increase").

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Regarding the **sustainable development (environment)** horizontal theme, the project planned outputs will bring automatically additional value due to its specificity-to improve the quality of the water in the designated area. The data collected from the interviews conducted with project partners already showed a positive impact on the environment by contributing to the improvement of quality and quantity water on the channels, in order to reduce the negative impact of the water pollution caused by the floods, collection and utilization of the excess water in cross border area.

In regards with **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the project application form mentions that the Romanian and Hungarian teams are both formed on equal opportunity and fair treatment principles. The measures proposed to be taken are to ensure accessibility for persons by preventing

⁵¹ Programme annex IX_Mehodology

discrimination of any kind (gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) during the development and implementation phases of the project, to promote the inclusion of minorities and using English as neutral language in the project communication.

For the **equality between man and women** principle, the application form states that the project will contribute to the principle of equality between men and women and prevent discrimination of any kind during the preparation, design and implementation of the project by promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Both partners have met the legislative requirements in this regard. Nonetheless, the qualitative data collected showed that no additional positive measures were taken for the promotion of equality between men and women.

It is important to mention, as also highlighted by the institutions that have benefited from the funds provided through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme, by the nature of the interventions, the inhabitants of the areas where the 3 channels are located benefitted equally from the result of the project regardless of their gender, age or social status. The improvement of the quality of water and also of the air has been beneficial for the entire target group addressed by the project. As presented in the previous section the cleaning and de-clogging of the 3 channels leads to less pollution, by removing waste along a length of 40 kilometers.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors

In regards with the **positive, internal factors**, the support provided to the beneficiaries by the programme authorities has been mentioned several times during the interview conducted with project partners. The Management Authority of the programme has conducted many information events meant to increase the visibility of the programme and of the available funds and has supported the beneficitation in the process of finding and implementing mitigations actions when needed.

As regards with the **positive, external influencing factors**, the data collected through the interviews conducted with the project partners shows that the awareness regarding the importance of environment protection, reduction of pollution and thus, sustainable developed has increased in the past years. The political interest in regards with the management of cross-border rivers has also increased in last period of time.

The EU legislation, especially though the Water Directive of EU, facilitated investments in the area of ground eaters and river waters in member states, including Romania and Hungary. Also, the Directive contributed to the cooperation between the two countries.

Negative factors

In terms of **negative, external factors**, Covid19 pandemic may be consider the most important factor that has hampered the implementation process. The increase in material process was one of the main bottlenecks that led to difficulties in conducting successful public tenders, based on the initially planned budget.

In terms of internal influencing factors, the Lead Partner of the project emphasized that the turnover of personnel within the institution has been influencing the implementation process in a negative manner. Especially the fact that the director of ANIF has been changed 3 times during the lifespan of the project affected the decision-making process and caused important delays. Based on the data collected, the infrastructure works have not been a priority of the institution during the period when the instability of the management was high. Only recent, the project, thus the investments financed through the programme become a priority at institutional level and significant progress could be observed.

Moreover, in regards with the public acquisition process, while the lead beneficiary benefited from the necessary technical expertise, having a distinct department responsible in this area of activity, the fact that all acquisitions are conducted in a centralized manner, from the department established in the headquarters of the institution (in Bucharest) also caused several delays in this process. Even if the beneficiary took into consideration the length of the procedure, it proved to be insufficient. Process lasted significantly longer than expected, but after the services were purchased, the implementation advanced in a more rapid pace, with no major problems.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

No unexpected or indirect effects of the project were identified.

10. Sustainability of project results

The final report, nor the sustainability reports are not available at this moment and the progress reports do not include information regarding the durability of project results. But the analysis of prospective sustainability shows that both beneficiaries are aware of their obligations in regards with the maintenance of the infrastructure works financed through the programme. While, the benefits of the activities conducted under the project are clear, the existing needs in the sector are significantly higher than the potential impact of the investments made. Nevertheless, further interventions are planned to be made in this area in order to continue the effects of the project and multiply them.

In order to maintain the current status of the 3 channels further works will be necessary on a medium-term perspective. The vegetation that has been removed may grow back in 5 – 7 years, thus there is a need for continuing these actions in order to prevent the further deterioration of the channels. The institutions involved acknowledge the situation and are looking for additional sources of financing in this regard.

For the consolidation works that have been made or that are currently⁵² ongoing, the responsible institutions will ensure the maintenance works as per the legislative requirements. The Lead Beneficiary budget includes a category addressed directly to maintenance works. The functioning of the renovated stations will be ensured by the partners for period of minimum 5 years of the end of the project.

Also, one of the investments that were made through the project, namely the purchase of auxiliary equipment, is meant for ensuring the sustainability of project results, as it is specified in the application form of the project.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

As mention in the case study report, the project RO-HU 224 “Development of the internal water system of common interest on the Mureşel Channel, Ier Connecting Channel and Ier Channel (MURESE)” aimed to improve quality management of cross border rivers in area of Arad and Bekes Counties through investments in water infrastructure and cross border management.

In terms of **conclusions**, the finding presented in this report on the implementation and effects of the analyzed project, ROHU 244 - Development of the internal water system of common interest on the Mureşel Channel, Ier Connecting Channel and Ier Channel (MURESE), showed that:

- The logic of intervention at project level is strong and it addresses in a proper way the cross-border management of river waters, in the context of the SO 1.1 of the programme.
- The project has significant potential of contributing to the specific objective of the programme, through:
 - o the importance of the project under the specific objective, covering one third of the allocated budget;
 - o the importance of the so far achievements and produced positive effects in terms of river water quality (not quantified yet, but observed during the finalization of the works) and also of the expected effects that will be delivered when the project will be finalized;
 - o the improved cross-border management acknowledged by both partners.
- The most important already observed effects are:
 - o Cleaning the water channels lead to better quality of water, but also less pollution;
 - o Rehabilitation works done at the level of the 3 channels also led to reducing the level of soil infiltration, which improved not only the quality of the water but also of the soil;
 - o The common implementation of the intervention led to a strengthened cooperation between partners, which are currently developing new project ideas and searching for additional sources of financing.
- The project is complementary with several other projects financed under SO 5.1 and together they create synergies, but this conclusion must be perceived with caution due to several overlaps identified in regards with the effects generated by the investments made under the two specific objectives of the programme.
- The EU and legislative regulations and bilateral government agreements facilitated the cross-border cooperation in the area addressed by the programme, but the sector remained underfinanced. Due to the fact that part of the interventions financed under the project had not

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been made earlier, even if there was a clear need even 15 years ago, the degradations status of the river channels was severe and the inhabitants from the areas the channels were located were significantly affected at the moment when the project was designed. Through its so far produced outputs it managed to improve the situation in the address areas.

- Also, the good cooperation among partners and with programme authorities was identified as being a facilitating factor for the successful implementation of the project.
- Significant delays were encountered in the initiation of activities due to the procurement procedure and rather low interest at decision-making level for the implementation of the project. The identified reasons, such as: instability at the level of the management of the institution, personnel turnover, were detailed and explained in the previous sections.

The most important **lessons learned** from the management and implementation of the project are related to the: a) crucial importance of project ownership at the decision and management level of the Lead partner institutions and b) the significant influence of the risk management capacity at the level of the beneficiaries. The encountered bottlenecks related to the first aforementioned issue could not be avoided. The several changes that took place in the management of the Lead Beneficiary made the project not one of the priorities of the institution and the internal approval procedure become lengthier than usually. On the other hand, as a **key recommendation**, the delays caused by the public procurement procedures should have been addressed earlier. The suspensive clause should have been used in order to prepare the tender in advance and be able to proceed with project activities earlier in the implementation period. Projects where this clause has been used face less delays, this being a horizontal recommendation.

Specific Objective 1.2 - Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area

Case Report

ROHU-29 - Conservation and protection of ecosystems threatened by the lack of thermal water and fresh water in the cross-border area

1. General data on project

Title	Conservation and protection of ecosystems threatened by the lack of thermal water and fresh water in the cross-border area (AQUARES)
Code	ROHU-29
Priority axis	Priority axis 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 1.2: Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area Investment Priority 6/c, conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Lead Beneficiary	Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association
Partners	Aqua Crisius Angling Association – Project Partner 2 University of Oradea – Project Partner 3 Institute for Nuclear Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Project Partner 4
Target Group / Groups ⁵³	a) Local public authorities - Municipality of Debrecen, Municipality of Sinmartin and Municipality of Oradea b) National public authorities – National Agency for Environment Protection in Romania (ANPM) c) Interest groups and NGOs (5 NGOs) d) Higher education and research institutions (2 institutions) e) Education/training center and school (2 institutions) f) General public (611 038 people) g) Tourists visiting the addressed areas (587 834 people)
Covered geographical area	Bihar and Hajdu-Bihar Counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 24 months (01.05.2018 – 30.04.2020) After 2 extensions: 34 months (01.05.2018 – 28.02.2021) The project went through 24 modifications done through notifications and 4 addendums. 3 of them were related to the extension of the implementation period.
Budget allocated/contracted	1.346.941,55 Euro, out of which ERDF 1.144.900,31 Euro
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 1.325.446,86 EUR out of which 1.126.629,62 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 1.259.099,31 EUR out of which 1.070.234,22 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	FINALIZED
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

⁵³ According to Application Form

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Final Implementation Report Project Information Fiche <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	<u>Lead partner</u> - Motoc Letitia, project manager, representative of Lead Partner Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (Romania) <u>Project partners</u> - Blidar Cristian Felix and Maria Bittenbinder, representatives of Project partner University from Oradea (Romania) - Laszlo Palcsu, representative of Project Partner the Institute for Nuclear Research – ATOMKI (Hungary) - Andrei Togor, Representative of the Project Partner Aqua Crisius Angling Association (Romania)

3. Short presentation of project context

The context analysis presented in the application form indicates that the territory of neighboring counties Bihor (Ro) and Hajdú-Bihar (Hu) aquatic habitats is fed by groundwater, characterized by ecosystems with species of animals and plants that are specific, whose survival is ensured by hot and cold groundwater supply. Most of them are protected natural reserves and Natura 2000 sites. Due to its special particularities of these aquatic habitats, the most important is Petea stream from Baile 1 Mai, near Oradea. Warm water of the lake Ochiul Mare, from sub-glacial springs, shelters endemic fauna, unique in Europe: thermal lily (*Nymphaea lotus* var. *thermalis*), snail *Melanopsis parreyssii*, and Rudd (*Scardinius racovitzai*).

Based on the application form, the design of the project was developed based on the existing research covering the natural habitats in the area of the project, which dates from 17th century; existing data shows that survival of the living species identified there is dependent on the sublacustre springs with water temperature of 35-45 Celsius degrees. After 1990, the institutional supervision of the thermal waters in Romania was abolished. In addition, many permits have been issued for water drillings in and around the two resorts. The hypothesis planned to be tested through the research component of the project was that these drillings exploit thermal water, worsening the state of the reservation and putting in danger the species in this habitat. According to the application form of the project (and as confirmed through interviews), in Oradea, some community projects went to forced exploitation by pumping many probes, without the application of reinjection, having adverse effects on the aquifer. At the same time, the probes have been moved from free-spillage to forced spill, pumping to provide thermal water for new treatment bases, waterparks, pools or households warming⁵⁴. In Hungary also, the artificial forced exploitation of groundwater has led to gradual drying up, accompanied by the disappearance of ecosystems. **Thus, the main problem in the covered geographical area, problem targeted by the project, is the lack of thermal water and fresh water and as a consequence, the extinction of a natural habitat.** This idea is supported by the reports of the Environment Protection Agency of Bihor County (2018, 2019 and 2020)⁵⁵, which indicate as weaknesses of the county in the area of tourism and leisure the following:

- lack of national and regional studies/strategies regarding existing resources and exploitation mineral resources (shale gas, deposits petroleum, thermal mineral waters, resources metalliferous and non-metalliferous, mineral aggregates);
- lack of endowment of geothermal water wells with pumps corresponding to the hydraulic system;
- the general failure of economic operators to comply with the regulations regarding the geothermal sources.

Moreover, according to the information collected during the interviews conducted with project representatives, during the implementation period a very important change in the context and status of the natural heritage occurred. The Covid 19 pandemic-related restrictions led to a significant decrease of the number of tourists, especially in the balneo-climatic resort Băile 1 Mai. Consequently, the thermal water usage in the area decreased significantly. This context change led to the increase of the quantity of thermal water of the thermal springs. When the sanitary situation in Romania returned to a relative normal status

⁵⁴ According to the Report of the Environment Guard of Bihor County for 2020, in the municipality of Beiuș, the use of geothermal energy in the centralized system has completely replaced the thermal agent based on classical preparation systems (kerosene, light liquid fuel 50) with geothermal energy.

⁵⁵ <http://apmbh.anpm.ro/stadiul-planului-de-actiune-pentru-mediul-la-nivel-județean>

and most of the restrictions were abolished, problems related to the thermal springs started again to be observed, currently many thermal water sources being already drained. This dynamic confirmed the problem the project was aiming to solve, but also the causes outside the control of the project. At the same time, the intervention was conducted at an auspicious moment for analyzing the influence factors for the status of thermal waters in Bihor County. The decreasing flow of thermal springs will lead eventually to the extinction of rare species of plants and animals, like in the case of snail *Melanopsis parreyssii*, which even if included in the species addressed by the project, could not be found anymore in the area. Specialists interviewed in the framework of the evaluation emphasized that even if this species is not officially considered extinct in Romanian natural habitat, alive specimens could not be found in our territory for a long time now.

This brief presentation of the context and of the conclusions to which specialists have come to, especially in the context of the Covid19 positive effect on the natural environment, describes the complexity of the addressed subject of the project and also the magnitude and nature of main influencing factors that contribute to the deterioration of the environment status and natural heritage. Many of them were not and could not have been addressed through the project ROHU 29. Further details are presented in the following sections of the case study report.

Also, important to highlight under the context analysis, is the legislative change regarding the management of the natural protected area which was transferred from the natural areas custodes under the responsibility of the National Agency for Protected Areas. Once the *Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2018 for the amendment and completion of normative acts in the field of environmental protection and the regime of foreigners* was put into force, in the Bihar County from 100 experts responsible with monitoring the status of the natural heritage and natural protected areas from the county, only 3 experts are currently responsible with this activity, working under the Bihor Territory Office of the National Agency for Protected Areas.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The project concept was developed by a group of professors at the University of Oradea, that had previously conducted research works on the habitats in which thermal lily has lived and the natural conditions that facilitate the species survival, among which the characteristics of thermal water. The idea of the interventions started from the study made also by the University of Oradea in 70' regarding the basins of thermal water in the Bihor County which were drying up because of the drilling works done. Through this project, the partnerships aimed to replicate the study conducted in 1970 in order to analyze the evolution of the thermal water status and identify factors that have hampered the preservation of natural habitats in the past 50 years.

Thus, the main objective of the project, thus the expected gross effect of the project, was the **“preservation and protection of ecosystems endangered by lack of thermal water and freshwater in cross-border area”**. The overall objective of the project is correlated with the specific objective of the programme to which it should contribute to, SO 1.2 - *Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area*, corresponding to Investment Priority 6/c, conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage. The application form, mentions as specific objective of the project the **“investigation of the natural hydrogeological conditions that determined the drying of the thermal/water springs of natural reservations”**, this being the expected net effect of the project, thus the contribution of the project to the gross effect. In line with the specific objective and as for being able to revitalize the addressed habitats, the intervention includes a set of investigations meant to determine the conditions necessary for the revitalization of the reservation and the assessment of the chances of restoring the water sources and artificial recovery.

The total budget of the project is 1.346.941,55 Euros. The project is built on the partnership of 4 institutions, as it follows: Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association – lead beneficiary (with a budget of 314.200 Euros) and Aqua Crisius (with a budget of 122.563 Euros), University of Oradea (with a budget of 459.840,55 Euros) and Institute for Nuclear Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (450.338 Euros). Aqua Crisius (from Romania, Bihor County) planned to build the Center for protection and conservation of endangered species and to elaborate the 2 studies, one on the concept of ecotourism in the area and another one on the specific bacteriological thematic. University of Oradea (from Romania Bihor County) planned to renovate the lake within its precinct, to elaborate 4 scientific reports, to elaborate a study regarding the *Nymphaea Lotus Thermalis*, and provide 4 sets of analysis bulletins based on prevailed water samples from the area. Atomki (from Hungary, Hajdu-Bihar District) planned to

elaborate 2 paleo-botanical studies and 6 studies regarding the identification, characterization and research of hydrogeological conditions necessary for restoration and operation of thermal springs.

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
Preservation and protection of ecosystems endangered by lack of thermal water and freshwater in cross-border area	Investigation of the natural hydrogeological conditions that determined the drying of the thermal/water springs of natural reservations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carrying out a research study of the aquatic habitat in the reserve natural "Pocsaji-kapu"; - Research activities in the Băile 1 Mai habitat; - Construction and rehabilitation activities of the new conservation center, the Expo Flora center and the water lily relocation pool on campus University of Oradea; - Promotion and information activities. 	<p>Output indicator - C023 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of the conservation status of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest (Scardinius racovitzai – Thermal rudd) – covering an area of 186.00 Ha - Relocation and adequate monitoring of the species Nymphaea Lotus var. thermalis – covering an area of 186.00 Ha - Improvement of the conservation status of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest – covering an area of 284.00 Ha 	<p>Result indicator - R 6/c Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the overnight stays of the tourists by 1% in the area (Oradea City and Sînmartin commune)

More detailed, in terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of work packages:

- **management** – where the responsible partners was Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association;
- **investments** – where 2 main activities were planned: a) construction works and equipment for Aqua Crisius and b) construction works in the University of Oradea Campus, for the relocation of specimens of thermal lily from the greenhouse, in artificial spaces that mimic the natural conditions, where a permanent course of geothermal water is provided;
- **implementation** – which included: a) organizing the Protected Area Open Day for the Natural reservation in Baile 1 Mai and developing the Garbage free strategy for the protected area, by ZMO, b) organizing the Protect area clean-up campaign and developing a bacteriological study, by Aqua Crisius, c) studies, analyses and researches for the reallocation and adequate monitoring of the species Nymphaea Lotus var. thermalis, acquisition of office equipment and laboratory equipment and developing a promotional album, by University of Oradea, d) Research of the Tövises-meder aquatic habitat in Hungary's "Pocsaji-kapu" natural reserve, by the Institute for Nuclear Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences;
- **communication** – drafting a communication plan, drafting and printing promotion materials, publishing press releases, organizing digital activities, organizing public events (conference in Oradea, workshop in Debrecen), web page of the project.

Taking into consideration that the project is finalized, the implementation period ending in February 2021, **all activities have been conducted and finalized according to project planning and contract addendums.** In terms of **project modifications**, the implementation period was extended initially with 6 months as Aqua Crisius could not build the Conservation Center because of legislative and administrative bottlenecks. During the implementation of the project, due to the enforcement of the aforementioned Emergency Ordinance (i.e., 75/2018), Aqua Crisius partner lost its status of natural area custode and was not able any more to build the Center for protection and conservation of endangered species. The Romanian National Agency for Protected Natural Areas (ANANP) become the administrator of the natural protected area and the very cumbersome communication between Aqua Crisius and the Agency, endangered the successful implementation of the project. Thus, the Lead Partner requested a project extension and the revision of this activity, which was moved under its responsibility and the investment relocated. The initially planned investment was replacement with the construction of the Conservation center with the establishment of a metropolitan center for geothermal development.

As per MA monitoring data, the final achievements of the project were the following:

- The Metropolitan Center for Geothermal Development rehabilitated,
- 1 Protected Area clean-up campaign -30 participants organized a hygiene campaign in the Petea and Hidisel streams, the Petea brook, in the meadow and in the fenced area,
- 1 Eco-tourism concept study,
- 1 Bacteriological study,
- 1 Paleobotanical study,
- 6 Studies on restoration of thermal springs,
- 1 renovated pool with thermal water lilies, where the protected species of thermal Lilly was relocated from the greenhouse.

The final report of the project shows that all outputs expected were generated by end of the implementation period. The values reached for the output indicator by the end of the implementation period were the following:

Output indicator	Contribution to the programme output indicator	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value	% of the target
CO23 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status	Improvement of the conservation status of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest (Scardinius racovitzai – Thermal rudd)	186,00 Ha	186,00 Ha	100%
	Relocation and adequate monitoring of the species Nymphaea Lotus var. thermalis	186,00 HA	186,00 HA	100%
	Improvement of the conservation status of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest	284,00 Ha	284,00 Ha	100%

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, all targets were reached, some being even surpassed⁵⁶.

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
Local Public Authorities	3	3	100%
National Public Authorities	1	1	100%
Interest Groups (including NGOs)	5	5	100%
Higher education and research institutions	2	2	100%
Education/training centers and schools	2	2	100%
General public	611.038	674.614	110,40%
Other	587.834	773.289	131,54%

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight here the lack of correlation between the overall objective of the project **“to improve the protection of underground thermal waters and better conservation status of thermal species in Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar Counties”** and the result indicator of the project **“Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area”**. This inconsistency caused difficulties in analyzing the effectiveness of the project. The core component of the project is focused on conducting research for establishing the necessary conditions that need to be replicated in an artificial habitat for ex situ conservation of Thermal Waterlily and its relocation in the new created habitat. The actions that were meant to contribute to the increases of the number of visitors in the area addressed by the project constitute a small part of the budget. Thus, the effectiveness of the project is affected by its design. The

⁵⁶ according to the final report of the project

problems identified in relation with the project design are directly related with the design of the SO 1.2 at programme area, where the causal links between the expected outputs and results are also limited:

SO 1.2	Programme level output indicators	Programme level result indicator
Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area	6/c 1 Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions (Common output indicator)	R 6/c Increased number of tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area
	6/c 2 Surface of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (Common output indicator)	

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project is coherent with **PA 06 - Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soils of EU Strategy for Danube Region**, target no. 1- To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement, adapted to the special needs of the Danube region by 2020. The activities conducted under the project aimed at saving refugee species thermal lily (*Nymphaea lotus* var. *thermalis*), the snail *Melanopsis parreyssii*, and Rudd (*Scardinius racovitzai*). The species addressed by the project ROHU – 29 have been in the attention of the researchers in the area for a long period now. The project “Captive reproduction and ex situ maintenance of populations of *Scardinius racovitzai* and *Melanopsis parreyssii*”, funded with \$13,000 by The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), implemented in 2013 – 2014, was through the first recent initiatives aiming at saving *Scardinius racovitzai* and *Melanopsis parreyssii* from extinction. Another project funded by EU and implemented by the partnership between Muzeul Țării Crișurilor and Gödölő University from Hungary, through which *Scardinius racovitzai* was saved from extinction, but relocated in artificial environments replicating their natural habitats, thus, being ex situ conserved.

Moreover, in terms of complementarity of the project with other interventions conducted in the area of environment protection and natural heritage conservation, each beneficiary has a vast experience in implementing this type of measures, that contribute together to the preservation of natural heritage. In this regard, we can mention the following relevant projects implemented by each partner:

- Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association - project „ECOLIFE”, financed by Environment Fund Agency, project “Promoting the historical, geographical and cultural values within Oradea Metropolitan Area”, financed by National Cultural Fund Agency or project “Clean Rivers Operation – Joint Action for the Elimination of Illegal Waste Deposits of 5 Cross-Border Rivers of Hungary and Romania” (Code HURO/0802/035_AF);
- Aqua Crisius – project "Planning management, integrated management measures and capacity building management sites ROSCI0049, ROSCI0050 and ROSPA0123, ROSCI0061, ROSCI0104, ROSCI0068 and ROSCI0262", project "Integrated Management ROSCI0049 conservative and participatory sites, ROSCI0050, ROSPA0123, ROSCI0262, ROSCI0061, ROSCI0104, ROSCI0068", project "Protecting endangered islands at the border", project "News valleys Cris-newsletters about natural values, cultural and tourist attractions in the Cris" or project "To rediscover the natural values of Valley Iadei";
- University of Oradea – project “Research of geothermal resources in the area of border, with a view to common sustainable use (HURO/1001/194/2.2.2)”, project “Mobile laboratory for analysis biological quality of waters in the Bihor-Bihar microregion (HURO/1101/142/1.3.2)” and several studies and research addressing the necessary hydrogeological conditions for the restoration and operation of thermal springs and for the development of artificial habitats for Thermal Waterlily;
- Institute for Nuclear Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences – project “Training of early-stage researchers for determination of very low-level tritium analysis of groundwater samples”, project “Verification and calibration of infiltration model using 3H/3He dating of groundwater and natural tracer techniques” or project „Use of Long-lived Radionuclides for Dating Very Old Groundwaters”.

As presented above, all partners have been previously implementing interventions in the area of natural heritage and environment protection. While the projects developed by Atomki did not address the area covered by Bihor County, as the focus of ROHU - 29, their expertise was complementary with the one of the experts participating in the project from Romanian side, which brought added value to the interventions.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The programme result indicator to which the project is contributing is **R 6/c Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area**. The initial estimation of the project applicants regarding their contribution to the programme indicator was of 1% increase of tourist overnight stays in Oradea City and Sînmartin Commune. The application form does not estimate or identify a contribution of the project in Hajdu-Bihar District in regards with the programme result indicator. This is showing that the project was not expected to contribute to the programme result indicator related to SO 1.2 through its effects generated in Hungary. The final report of the project presents the following data regarding the result indicator:

Programme result indicator to which the project contributed	The target value indicator established in the financing contract	The value of the indicator at the closure of the project	% of the target value
R 6/c Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area	1.050.902 overnight stays in Oradea City and Sînmartin Commune	645.279 overnight stays in Oradea City and Sînmartin Commune	61,40%

The cause of this significant level of underperformance is explained in the final report of the project through the important negative effects of COVID19 pandemic on the tourism sector, this being very visible in the administrative available data. The project planned to increase the number of the overnight stays in the area targeted by the project by 1%. According to application form, in Oradea, 360,332 overnight stays were recorded in 2015, and 690,570 overnight stays in Sînmartin commune (1,050,902 overnight stays in the area of the county). The available administrative data shows a significant decrease in the number of overnight stays in the Bihor County in 2020, from 1.547.915 overnight stays in 2019 to 729.449 next year, when the pandemic started. The most recent available data is from 2022 and shows that by the end of the year the number of overnight stays increased significantly, reaching 1.160.010⁵⁷, but still lower than the level registered before the restrictions were imposed due to Covid19 crisis. In this context, and based on evidence collected, the project contribution to this indicator is low and unquantified further than the participants to the promotion activities (i.e., the Protected Area Open Day for the Natural reservation in Baile 1 Mai or the Protected area clean-up campaign organized in Petea).

The project achievements, as per eMS monitoring data, by end of the intervention were:

- Better conservation status of thermal species in Protected Areas in Romania and Hungary (372 ha in Petea Natural Park and 284 ha in „Pocsaj-kapu” Protected Area), especially of the thermal lily or dretea (*Nymphaea lotus* var. *thermalis*), the snail (*Melanopsis parreyssii*) and the Thermal Rudd (*Scardinius racovitzai*),
- A renovated pool assuring better conservation conditions for the thermal lilies in Oradea University Camp,
- 9 studies completed, helping the characterization and research of hydrogeological conditions necessary for restoration and operation of thermal springs, thus providing a better conservation status for thermal species in Romania and Hungary.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress out that, **2 out of the 3 protected species that were addressed through the project were not relocated as initially planned**. No alive specimen of snail *Melanopsis parreyssii* could be found in the habitats covered by the geographical scope of the project. Thus, its relocation was not possible. In the case of Thermal Rudd, while the species is not extinct, the partner who was meant to construct an artificial habitat and relocate it, lost its status of natural area custode, during the implementation period and could not receive any more the necessary authorization for the planned constructions. According to the data collected from the interviews carried out with project partners, even if Aqua Crisus could have arranged the location, there would have been a significant problem regarding the sustainability of the intervention. No thermal water is currently presented in the area where the artificial habitat should have been constructed. The areas where thermal water was present in the beginning of the

⁵⁷ Based on official available INS data

project has drained out by its end. Thus, the beneficiary should have ensured the necessary water on a long-term, expense that were not foreseen initially.

The output indicator at project level was **CO23 Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status** and the target was 656 Ha, which was reached by the project partners, 284 ha in Hungary and 372 ha in Romania. From the total area:

- 186 Ha where improvement the conservation status was improved, in terms of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest, were in Scardinius racovitzai – Thermal rudd (under the responsibility of Aqua Crisius Angling Association),
- 186 Ha represented the area of relocation and adequate monitoring of the species Nymphaea Lotus var. thermalis (under the responsibility of the University of Oradea),
- 284 Ha represented the area of Hungary where improvements of the conservation status of habitat and species of flora and fauna of conservative interest were reached (under the responsibility of the Institute for Nuclear Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

In regards with the effects of the project based on its **cross-border specificity**, the application form tackles to a limited extent the need for cross border cooperation in the addressed matter. The activities, as designed, are co-dependent and for one output of the project input from more than one partners is needed, and the generated effects of the project were the results of the common work of partners. The data collected through interviews showed that the collaborations between partners has been strengthened, since they are further working together in other projects, such as students and teachers exchange projects funded through EU programme Erasmus. While, for the partners Oradea University and Atomki, this project constituted one component of their long-lasting collaboration, for the other partners, the project meant the initiation of a new cooperation relations. The information gathered through interviews indicated that several other common projects are currently prepared by the partners, that have maintained their communication also after the termination of the project and continued to organized online meetings. **Atomki, the partner located in Hungary, considers that the main outcome of the project was networking.** It is important to highlight that **while the common impact of the project in regards with the preservation of natural heritage is rather limited**, being concentrated in Bihor County, the contribution of the project in relation with the cross-border specific of the programme is mainly related to the strengthened collaboration between old partners (such as: the partnership between Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association and the University of Oradea or the partnership between the University and Atomki) and initiation of new collaborations that continued after the end of the project (such as: the collaboration between Atomki and the lead beneficiary).

Additionally, it is important to emphasize that the project progress reports mention that the activity / investment related to the construction of the Conservation Center for the endangered species (initially planned as an activity in the responsibility of Aqua Crisius, that during implementation needed to be changed) **did not have any impact on the project indicators.** Another important **change that did not affect the expected effects of the project**, not being reflected in the indicators' values, is the process of collecting samples of water and soil for the studies conducted by the University of Oradea, which was adjusted given the impossibility of entering several private properties. This change made the comparison with the study conducted in 1970, which was initially planned, rather limited. These situations indicate a **gap in the design of the project.**

As regards to the magnitude of the potential impact of the project, in line with its overall objective, the total value of the projects contracted under Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1.2 is 47.800.566,40 Euro, from which project RO-HU 29 represents 2,81%, meaning 1.346.941,55 Euro. While important in regards with its main achievement, the relocation of Thermal Lily, its budget and the complexity of the situation in the addressed area, related to the extinction of natural habitats for various species of plants and animals, the limited budget could not permit the investment to contribute significantly to the specific objective of the programme. As the data collected from interviews showed, the solution proposed by the project can be considered, although utmost important, temporary for the survival of the Thermal Lily. University of Oradea is currently working on a continuation of the project planning to build a water hole on the course of the river Ochiul Mare, where the species can be relocated in its natural habitat. **Nonetheless, the threat of drainage of thermal springs in the area remains the most important factor for protecting the thermal water lily, problem which has not been addressed yet through major interventions.** Thus, the objective of the project was only partially achieved, not due to the less effective implementation process (although the design related identified problems are important), but mainly due to the contextual factors

and specificity of the addressed issues (i.e., decrease of thermal water sources in the area or excessive exploitation).

As previously mentioned, the expected result of the project is insufficiently linked with its overall objective. All the collected data and perspectives indicated that in the case of touristic activities facilitated by the existence of thermal water in the area, the two types of expected effects of the programme:

- expected outputs: surface of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status and
- expected result: increased number of tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area

can be considered to be conflicting. While the programme is expected to generate an increase in the number of the tourist overnight stays in the addressed areas, the experience of the project ROHU 29 during Covid19 pandemic, when tourism has been affected significantly, showed that the normal flux of tourists contributes directly and rather aggressively (through the water consumption level registered at the level of accommodation units) to the drainage of thermal water in the area.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

In regards with the **sustainable development (environment) horizontal theme**, the project is directly addressing this principle, through its general and specific objective. Thus, the effects of the intervention were positive for the environment, by contributing to the preservation of 2 natural habitats. Moreover, the project also ensured:

- rational use of resources and rational expenditure, taking into account market prices,
- use of low-carbon emission vehicles (purchased within the project),
- use of green infrastructure,
- use of recyclable products, such as paper bags.

In regards with **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the project application form mentions that the entire implementation will follow the relevant legislation. The activities were designed and implemented as to reach the widest possible segments of population and the participation to project activities will be unrestricted. While the estimated effect of the project on this principle is positive, the application does not mention specific measures to be taken as to ensure equal access to all target groups to the results of the project. Thus, the impact of the project may be considered to be neutral.

In the case of **equality between man and women**, the application form also states that all relevant legislation requirements will be applied and no discrimination forms will be encouraged (access to project activities, project team, salary levels or other). Thus, the effects of the project in this regard are also neutral. No positive activity has been identified in project documents.

The monitoring system of the project was not gender sensitive; no data was collected in this regard.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors

In regards with the **positive, internal factors**, the in-depth analysis of the project showed that the very well-designed partnership with the strong leader, whose management capacity has been acknowledged by all institutions involved. Thus, one of the main elements that ensured an effective implementation of the project was the very well coordination of the project done by the Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association. Another positive factor, that contributed to the effectiveness of the project, was the high expertise of the human resources employed. On one hand the experience in the area of environment protection, natural heritage preservation, biological research, advanced research was a key element for the success of the project.

All data collected from the implementing partners showed that the communication with the programme authorities was very good, the support needed was timely delivered by BRECO and the Managing Authority and all their revision requests have been approved, the process being considered very smooth.

Moreover, the fact that the programme permitted research activities which are essential for the protection of the environment and conservation of natural heritage, allowed Atomki institute to participate to the project and in this way, not only establishing common research teams with the University from Oradea, but also starting a new collaboration with the other project partners. The presence of this partner in the project brought important added value to its results due to the fact that some pieces of equipment that they own are unique in Europe and also due to the fact that they have highly qualified personnel, who was involved

in the collected samples of water and soil from Romania and examining them, together with the experts from the University of Oradea.

As regards with the **positive, external influencing factors**, the partners that have been involved in the project consider that the Covid19 pandemic was not an external negative factor hampering the implementation and results of the project, even though the value of the result indicator of the project - number of overnight stays, was significantly affected by the restrictions imposed as to decrease the negative effects of this crisis. The interviewee highlighted that traveling restrictions and thus the decrease of tourists in the addressed area created a very important opportunity for them in the context of the objectives of the project ROHU – 29. The natural habitats were revitalized during the pandemic and the results of the studies made on the necessary conditions for the survival of Thermal Waterlily were more accurate, presenting evidence that could not have been collected otherwise. At the same time, a clearer and more trustful link between the touristic activity and the drainage of thermal water in the area could be drawn.

Negative factors

In terms of **negative, external factors**, the change of Romanian national legislation in the area of custodians of protected areas, affected the implementation of the project, especially in regards with the activity of the partner Aqua Crisisus. The Conservation center for endangered species was not built as initially planned due to the fact that when the project was written, the association was the custodian of the protected area and did not need any authorizations for investments in the area. When the legislation was changed, they lost the status of custodian and all process become lengthier, due to additional approvals and authorizations needed. This contextual factor had important consequences in general for the existing capacity of natural protected area management. This also is reflected not only as a negative influence on the effectiveness of the project, as mentioned in previous sections, but also on the sustainability of its results. The partners involved in the project consider that the legislation change regarding the custody of natural protected areas had a negative impact on their conservation status, because of the drastic decrease of the capacity of monitoring, supervision and action at local level, and in the end for the implementation of the Natural Areas Management Plans.

The data collected through interviews showed that administrative bottlenecks have been encountered by project partners. On one side, after the change of natural protected areas regulations, Aqua Crisisus could not receive the necessary authorizations for the construction of the Center for protection and conservation of endangered species. On the other hand, the process of collecting samples from the areas with thermal water for developing the bacteriological study could not been conducted as initially planned due to the fact that the experts were not authorized to enter on several properties. The interviewees mentioned that during the field work they have noticed that some fake information in regards with their intentions and the aim of the project were disseminated among locals as to hamper their research in the area. At some point there was a general belief that they are testing the waters to prove that it has lower quality then the one from Hungary and in this way, redirect tourists to Hajdu – Bihar County. The fact that the sampling process needed to be adjusted led to the impossibility of making a thorough comparison between the results of the study conducted in 1970 in the same area by the University of Oradea, which was initially planned and the results of the research conducted under the framework of the project.

The public tender process (in both sides, Romania and Hungary), which is very lengthy and complex, was considered to be an important hampering factor, that led to several problems and delays in the implementation.

In terms of internal influencing factors, the project partners mentioned:

- Less flexible approach of programme authorities when it comes to minor changes than in other programmes (such as: mainstream programmes), but this programme's authorities provided essential support to the beneficiaries when important risks were identified and changes in the design of the project or implementation period were required.
- Difficulties in filling out project related data in eMS.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

Only one indirect effect of the project was mentioned during the conducted interviews, which referred to the further development of common projects, based on good collaboration and common interests.

Nevertheless, the project partners have emphasized the negative impact of the water consumption in accommodation units in the area address by the project on the thermal water. Thus, the increase of tourist

and overnight stays, which is the expected result of the project, in the absence of strategic common actions for the preservation of natural areas, affects the chances of survival for natural protected species that live in thermal water habitats. This may be considered an indirect effect of the project, opposite to its planned objective.

10. Sustainability of project results

As the project application form mentions, the results of the intervention should have led to better knowledge regarding the 2 addressed habitats at the level of specialists, researchers but also at the level of the general public (including tourists). The form also mentions that the custodian will remain in service and develop activity and action plans on short and medium term (at least 5 years), nevertheless, its responsibilities during the implementation of the project decreased significantly. New tourist routes can be created, due to the fact that the new established conservation center is located near to two spa resorts. Thus, it may become a touristic place. On the other hand, the research results can be the foundation for other types of studies and reports addressing the protection and conservation of natural habitats in the area, but not only.

According to the application form, the organizational sustainability of the project should be assured of continuous operation of the structures built within the project which will ensure both continuity of activities and project's results. Each partner will continue to support the costs necessary for maintaining the achieved constructions and they are responsible for their maintenance after the project is completed. However, no sustainability report was available at the moment of drafting the case study report and the progress reports of the project do not include information regarding the durability of project results. It is important to mention that the website of the project (www.aquares.ro) did not function during the period in which the evaluation was conducted.

The findings presented in regards with the broader context, results and impact of the project show that the constant degradation of the status of natural habitats addressed by the project (caused mainly by the lack of thermal water), has significantly affected the chance of survival of endangered species located in the area. While there is no official recognition of the fact that the drillings and the water consumption in the touristic sector are affecting the levels of thermal water, no major public initiatives were made in this regard. Thus, besides the **durability of the project's outputs, which is ensured by the project partners**, the impact (medium and long-term effects) may be considered to be at risk in the absence of future coordinated public interventions for environment protection. As an example, the perspectives collected from the interviews showed that sustainability issues could emerge also in the case of the investment that was initially planned by Aqua Crisius. No thermal water is currently presented in the area where the artificial habitat should have been constructed. The areas where thermal water was present in the beginning of the project has drained out by the end of the project. Thus, the beneficiary should have ensured the necessary water on a long-term, expenses that were not foreseen initially.

As emphasized previously, the snail *Melanopsis parreyssii* is considered by the specialists an extinct species in Romania, even if this fact has not been yet officially declared. Thus, in the absence of centralized, coherent measures for the protection of the natural habitat and heritage the results of distinct, reduced in scope and budget intervention cannot be sustainable. If contextual factors affecting constantly the status of the environment are maintained, the effects of the continuous deterioration of the natural habitats on the protected species cannot be annulled by small scale interventions, such as the project RO-HU 29.

Regarding the partners approach on ensuring the sustainability of projects result, the concept of a continuation of ROHU – 29 project is currently under development, in order to create a more sustainable habitat, closer to the natural one for Thermal Lily, where the plant could be relocated again.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

Unforeseen events, with significant impact on the progress of the project, manifested during its implementation: Covid19 pandemic and the legislative change that transferred the natural protected areas from the custody of NGOs to the responsibility of the National Agency for Protected Natural Areas. Nonetheless, the flexibility and effective risk management conducted by the programme authorities and the beneficiaries, especially the Lead Beneficiary, Oradea Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association, led to an effective implementation and finalization of the project.

In terms of conclusions, the findings presented in this report on the implementation and effects of the analyzed project, ROHU 29 - Conservation and protection of ecosystems threatened by the lack of thermal water and fresh water in the cross-border area, showed:

- A lack of correlation between the aim / general objective of the project and the result indicator and between the output indicator and the planned and conducted activities was identified. This inconsistency of the logic of the intervention comes mainly from the logic of the programme.
- The project was well designed in terms of complementary expertise of partners and the common actions that were planned (such as: mixed teams of researchers, common raising awareness campaigns). This approach led to a well-developed collaboration among partners which has been continued also after the termination of the project.
- The project successfully finalized the activities and generated all planned outputs, with one exception related to the construction of the new conservation center by Aqua Crisius, which has been replaced with the renovation of the Metropolitan Center for Geothermal Development. The outputs of the project are:
 - o The Metropolitan Center for Geothermal Development rehabilitated,
 - o 1 Protected Area clean-up campaign organized in the Petea and Hidisel streams, the Petea brook, in the meadow and in the fenced area,
 - o 1 eco-tourism concept study, 1 bacteriological study, 1 paleobotanical study,
 - o 6 studies on restoration of thermal springs,
 - o 1 renovated pool with thermal water lilies, where the protected species of Thermal Lilly was relocated from the greenhouse.
- In terms of impact, the most important effect of the project is relocating the Thermal Lilly in a newly constructed artificial habitat, which meant an important step forward for saving the species. Other important achievements are: the generation of new data, evidence and knowledge on the current status of the thermal water in area addressed from Romania and freshwater in the Hungary, on the causes of the drying up of the heat generation of the Lake Ochiul Mare in the area of Baile 1 Mai and the necessary habitual conditions for the survival of Thermal Waterlily.
- The good cooperation among partners and with the programme authorities, the very appreciated management of the project and the highly qualified human resource deployed for the coordination and implementation of the planned intervention facilitated the projects successful closure.
- Covid19, while not influencing the implementation of the project, affected the value of the result indicator (number of overnight stays in the project area), but created significant opportunities for developing the research and studies financed through the project. The decrease of touristic activities due to the enforced restrictions, led to the increase of the quantity of thermal water in the area and thus improved natural habitat for multiple species. Nevertheless, when the effects of the pandemic started to fade, the existing thermal water in the area reverted to its 2019 status.
- In the absence of coordinated, strategic measures taken at the level of the addressed area, mainly directed to the reduction of thermal water consumption for leisure activities and households warming, the status of the natural protected area and natural heritage will continue to deteriorate and interventions such as ROHU – 29, limited in terms of budget, geographical scope and objectives, won't be able to stop this trend.
- In the broader context of the specific objective of the programme “Sustainable use of natural resources”, this example of ROHU – 29 project along with other similar projects in the area, show that these type of actions, although of utmost importance due to saving certain species being at risk of extension (Thermal Waterlily through project ROHU – 29 and the Rudd - Scardinius Racovitza through other intervention implemented in the same period), cannot significantly contribute to the sustainable use of thermal water. The possibility of relocating the two species in their natural habitat is limited and their survival remains at risk.

Case Report

RO-HU 446 - Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage

1. General data on project

Title	Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage (EduCultCentre)
Code	RO-HU 446
Priority axis	Priority axis 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources

Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 1.2: Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area Investment Priority 6/c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Lead Beneficiary	Municipality of Debrecen (HU)
Partners	Csokonai Theatre – Debrecen (HU) – project partner 2 Țării Crișurilor Museum (RO) – project partner 3 Varad Cultural Journal (RO) – project partner 4
Target Group ⁵⁸	a) Artists, cultural professionals and researchers and cultural organisations – 2.000 entities (all active cultural entities in the border area, according to the data from National Statistics Offices of RO and HU) b) Young people / students (involved in the activities of the education/training centre and school) – 250 people c) General public – 720.000 people
Covered geographical area	Cross-border area Romania-Hungary
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 36 months (June 1, 2019 – May 31, 2022) After extension: 51 months (June 1, 2019 - August 31, 2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	10.172.739,24 EUR out of which ERDF 8,398,518.43 EUR
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 2.731.466,06 EUR out of which 2.226.164,83 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 2.417.980,31 EUR out of which 1.980.080,13 EUR ERDF
Status (under implementation / finalized) ⁵⁹	UNDER IMPLEMENTATION
Type of project (regular/ strategic)	Strategic project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress reports Project Information Fiche Project Website: https://www.educultcentre.hu/ro <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i> Projects results (Official data published by the Management Authority of the Programme) - https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/
Interviews	<u>Lead beneficiary:</u> Municipality of Debrecen (HU) - Mihalik Zsuzsa - project representative <u>Project partners</u> – Subordinate institutions to the County Council of Bihor - Negru Ileana, Tarii Crisurilor Museum (Romania) / - Oana Laura Nicula, Gheorghe Sincai County Library, successor in rights and obligations of Varad Cultural Journal

⁵⁸ According to Application Form RO-HU 446 - Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage (EduCultCentre)

⁵⁹ At the moment when the CS Report was drafted

	<u>Representative of the Target Groups</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bodea György, Director of the Szilágycsehi Berekenye acting group
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3. Short presentation of project context

The application form details to a limited extent the context in which the project was implemented. While the specificity of the areas and the common elements of cultural heritage that are going to be addressed through the project are explicitly presented, the application briefly describes the status of cooperation between key actors from Romania and Hungary being involved in the cultural field.

The application form mentions that the eligible area has significant common historical and cultural heritage, but for a long time, the state border has hindered their joint protection, processing and presentation. Although the common cultural values are not lost, many of them have not been properly processed, mainly because a consistent system of exploration is not in place. Additionally, the already discovered and processed joint heritage is not stored in a uniform, easily accessible way. The widest possible access to cultural values can be ensured by digitization, but at the moment when the project design was drafted, there were no institutions that could perform this activity or that had this type of responsibilities. Tangible and intangible cultural values are both important components of the attractiveness of any region, and in border territories they also offer a unique opportunity to learn about each other. Based on the perspective of project beneficiaries, the systematization of common heritage could be a starting point for cultural and ethnographic tourism that has great importance in each country, according to the Strategic Territorial Analysis of the Cohesion Policy. The infrastructural and institutional background of practical learning programmes is insufficient in the border area⁶⁰. As a result, most artists do not have the chance to continuously develop themselves and to learn the latest methods. In addition, more advanced artistic training requires special infrastructure (rooms, sound systems, lighting, projection technology, etc.), which cannot be sustained in a cost-effective manner unless it serves a larger area. The premises from which the project started is that:

- the 8 counties of the border region, which are eligible under the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme can provide the critical mass needed in order to be able to maintain the infrastructure planned to be developed, through the existing demand, and
- the joint events included in the design of the intervention are the best means through which expanding artistic cooperation can be achieved.

Moreover, at the moment when the project was drafted, there were **no institutions in the Romanian-Hungarian border region that could perform the task of systemized protection, research and use of common cultural values**. The infrastructural and institutional background of artistic creation, training courses, master classes and practical learning opportunities is insufficient in the borderland. As a result, most of the artists do not have the chance to learn about the latest trends and methods. Further, **cooperation between cultural organizations in the border area was partially random and non-formalized**. There were no institutions that provided complex services for these cultural organizations.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project is, according to the application form, **“the sustainable use, protection and transfer of common Romanian - Hungarian cultural values and heritage”**. The specific objectives of the project are:

- improve access to the joint cultural heritage of the border area;
- increase awareness of common Romanian-Hungarian cultural values;
- enhance cultural/artistic creativity and knowledge transfer in the region.

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
The sustainable use, protection and transfer of	- Improve access to the joint cultural heritage of the border area;	- Newly established Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education	Output indicator - 6/c CO09 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in	Result indicator - R 6/c Tourist overnight stays in

⁶⁰ Application Form, RO-HU 446 - Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage (EduCultCentre)

common Romanian - Hungarian cultural values and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase awareness of common Romanian-Hungarian cultural values; - Enhance cultural/artistic creativity and knowledge transfer in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen - Development of the Tarii Crisurilor Museum in Oradea; - Infrastructural development of the Cultural House in Oradea; - Development of dance methodology, supported youth and actors through organized conferences, camps, meetings, educational programmes, newly established cultural archive; - Common cross-border cultural activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 15 theoretical and practical training programmes, o 3 conferences of drama pedagogy, o 4 art camps, o 2 art meetings for youths, o 2 conferences and training sessions, o 10 major cultural events recorded from the Romanian-Hungarian border, o 3 international conferences of dance anthropology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions - 25,056 visits/year - to be reached in the year following project completion 	the eligible programme area
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The renewed common cultural facilities are aimed to serve for the protection, creation, use and dissemination of common cultural values in the addressed area. The unique cultural institution, being the first in Europe, should increase the visibility of the common Romanian and Hungarian values. Also, through planned common cultural events it is expected to be created the opportunity to strengthen the links between the different cultures, cultural organizations, artists and cultural professionals. Thus, the project also aims to promote cultural dialog between relevant key actors in the area. The application form emphasizes that culture plays a crucial role in cross-border partnership and mutual understanding, thus, creating and sharing common cultural values and knowledge has a particular importance in border regions. In terms of cooperation, the structure of the project facilitates the collaboration and common work of partners, who plan to provide joint cultural services during and after the implementation period⁶¹.

The EduCultCentre project aims to establish common spaces for cultural interactions, the protection and sustainable use of common cultural values as well as the expansion of tourist attractions in the Romanian-Hungarian border area and the project design is structured on two main pillars, as it follows:

1. **Protecting and promoting common cultural heritage:** the Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen and the Țării Crișurilor Museum in Oradea will ensure the **joint protection and mutual presentation of cultural heritage as a catalyst for strengthening a common identity**.
2. **Knowledge sharing for creating new cultural values:** the education centre and the Cultural Centre in Oradea will offer jointly organized workshops/trainings for RO and HU cultural institutions, actors, artists, cultural professionals and youth – the goal is to share the latest knowledge and foster innovation in every field of culture.

The final beneficiaries of the project are expected to be:

- cultural professionals use the cross-border cultural facilities and their services for learning new methods, sharing knowledge, creating new performances and cultural goods;
- the general public as consumers of culture are different groups of tourists, local inhabitants and the population of the entire region.

⁶¹ In the section related to the results and impact of the project the report analyses the extent to which this objective has materialized and to which extent.

The set target group and the target value are presented in the below table⁶².

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project*	% of the target value
Artists, cultural professionals and researchers and cultural organisations –	2.000 entities (all active cultural entities in the border area, according to the data from National Statistics Offices of RO and HU)	0 reported so far	0%
Young people / students (involved in the activities of the education/training centre and school)	250 people	0 reported so far	0%
General public	720.000 people	0 reported so far	0%

** The data collected through interviews showed that a significant part of the soft activities has been conducted so far. These activities involved the participation of all 3 types of target groups. But, at the moment when the report was drafted, no data regarding the level of reach of the target group had not been reported.*

In terms of the innovative character of the project, the Cross-Border Education Centre will be **the first one in Europe** that has a clear cross-border mission. In order to successfully implement this idea, strong cooperation among partners is needed. As per the application form, the project components which are innovative are the following:

- The center in itself, due to the fact that here is no other cross-border education center explicitly focusing on protecting and sharing common cultural values in the EU;
- New training materials and methodologies were designed, tested, and disseminated by the partners and other experts. The innovativeness of these documents is reflected both in their target groups (focusing on youth from age 3 to university students) and in their topics (e.g. dance methodology, drama pedagogy);
- The education centre, besides hosting creative cultural processes and training courses, it is meant to nurture related research and innovation activities, focusing on cultural education and awareness raising, bringing up a new generation of culture-consumers.

The activities planned under the framework of the project were:

Hard activities	3 buildings planned to be modernized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - education centre in Debrecen (3911.66 m²), providing rooms for knowledge sharing, artistic production and the protection/promotion of common cultural heritage in an innovative way (e.g. training space with multifunctional, variable auditorium, blackroom, training rooms, floor for dance classes); - new exhibitions on the 2nd and 3rd floors of Țării Crișurilor Museum in Oradea (3907 m², history, ethnography and art sections, conference room for 200 people, other necessary rooms, holograms, multimedia information system); - partially reconstructed and enlarged Cultural Centre in Oradea (568 m², exhibition and event halls, other rooms necessary for providing cultural trainings and events).
Soft activities	Joint cross-border cultural activities (focusing on youth), coordinated by the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 35 common events are planned to be organized, - 2 written documents and - 16 videos (i.e., dance methodology workshop + training material, conferences of drama pedagogy/dance anthropology, youth art camp + meeting, "movement as a

⁶² according to the application form of the project

	Csokonai Theatre cultural stakeholders.	language” educational programme, cultural archive with portrait films and cultural spots).
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In order to implement the 3 building modernization activities, the planned budget has been allocated among partners as it follows:

- Centre for Cross border cultural education – 5 mil Euros;
- Țării Crișurilor Museum – 1,3 mil Euros;
- Cultural House Oradea – 0,6 mil Euros.

Output indicator	Contribution to the programme output indicator through the modernized building:	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value*	% of the target*
6/c C009 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions 25,056 visits/year - to be reached in the year following project completion	Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen	15 870.00	0	0%
	Developed building of the Tarii Crisurilor Museum	7 376.00	0	0%
	Developed building of the Cultural Centre	1 810.00	0	0%

* The target value of the output indicator is meant to be met at one year after the end of the project's implementation period

According to the available data, by the end of April 2023⁶³, the following activities were finalized:

- the works at the Cross-Border Education Centre in Debrecen are completed, and the Centre is fully functional;
- the works at the "Tarii Crisurilor" Museum in Oradea are completed; the new art and history sections set up through the project are fully operational and included in the visitor's circuits.
- Works at the Cultural House in Oradea are ongoing - the construction activity was taken over by "Gheorghe Sincai" Bihor County Library, from the initial beneficiary - Varad Cultural Journal.
- The events organized by Csokonai Theatre are also ongoing.

In terms of expected effects, the project activities aim to improve the attractiveness and utilization of intangible and tangible elements of the joint heritage. The common cross-border cultural facilities are expected to attract a large number of cultural professionals, tourists and inhabitants from the region. It can contribute to the formulation of a joint and integrated tourism destination, attracting visitors both internally and from outside the eligible area.

In terms of project modification, one of the project partners, Cultural Journal Varad, lost its legal personality in 2020, during the implementation of the project. The Journal became a separate department within the County Library "Gheorghe Sincai". The process of taking over the planned activities and the ongoing process went rather smooth and the Joint Secretariat provided to the project beneficiary all the necessary support.

Also, the project received two extensions of the implementation period, one of them being caused by the delays encountered in regards with the soft activities which could not be finalized as initially planned due to the restrictions imposed as a consequence of Covid19 pandemic outburst.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

In terms of **international strategies**, the project contributes to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) on multiple levels. The pillar of "Connecting the Danube Region" focuses on culture/tourism, transport and energy issues. The overall objective is to improve connectivity within the region and with

⁶³ Official data published by the Management Authority of the Programme, Projects results - <https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/>

the rest of Europe, in terms of infrastructures, systems and people. The common cultural facilities could contribute to sustainable growth in the border area through developing cultural tourism and related infrastructure/services as well as intercultural dialogue. The main objective of the Priority Area 3 of the EUSDR is „to promote culture, tourism and people to people contacts”. The EduCultCentre project is in line with several actions within this priority: it can complement and reinforce their positive impacts by increasing the intensity of cross-border cultural cooperation in order to protect/promote common heritage. It aims to ensure the sustainable, long-term networking of cultural organisations and promotes tourism through historical and cultural events aimed at both the local population and tourists. The project is linked tangentially to another priority area of the EUSDR (PA7) that aims "to develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)" by designing new training materials and methodologies, organizing international conferences or publishing books and a cultural archive.

The project is in line with relevant **strategies elaborated at national, regional, county and city level**, as it follows:

A. National level strategies from Hungary:

Debrecen's Integrated Urban Development Strategy has 2 relevant objectives aiming to improve the conditions for tourism and to develop cultural infrastructure and services. In Debrecen's Cultural Strategy, the effective preservation/use of cultural heritage and strengthening the cultural knowledge transfer are important issues. The Strategic Program of Hajdú-Bihar County includes 2 objectives relevant to the project:

- Competitive economy: heritage-based tourism is important mainly in destinations of international importance such as Debrecen;
- Development of public services and infrastructure: development of the cultural institutional system and the protection of local/ethnic cultural heritage mitigates the extent of outmigration.

The National Info Communication Strategy focuses, among others, on electronic public services including ones related to cultural heritage (e.g. digitization of (in)tangible cultural values). In addition, the document emphasizes the importance of cultural cooperation. Protection and economic use of cultural heritage is also an important topic in The National Development And Territorial Development Concept.

B. National level strategies from Romania:

Developing culture, heritage-based tourism and preserving artistic diversity – also across the borders – are in line with Bihor County Strategy and Oradea's Cultural Strategy, being important objectives of the County. The National Cultural And Heritage Strategy aims at complex development of the cultural and creative sector as an important pillar of sustainable development. The list of indicators includes i.e., number of buildings with a cultural function, number of participants of cultural trainings or degree of knowledge about national and cross-border cultural heritage. The project, through its activities and expected results, is contributing to the achievement of these objectives.

In terms of **complementary projects**, the application form mentions the following previous experiences of the partners:

- The Municipality of Debrecen participated in a joint project (CoolTourA) with the Municipality of Salonta to create a common tourism package. The general objective was the development of tourism for better socio-economic cohesion in the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar region. The specific objectives of the initiative were: a) sustainable development of cultural/historical values; b) joint tourism development by producing common cultural/touristic products; c) enhancing cross-border links by signing a tourist agreement.
- The municipality also implemented various cultural and tourism projects to improve the attractiveness of both the city and the whole region, such as: modernizing the Museum Déri to present the cultural heritage of the region, establishing the AGORA Science Centre as an important new tourist attraction, renewing the cultural and community function of the Nagyerdő. Common cross-border cultural activities coordinated by Csokonai Theatre are in line with the recent national and international activities of the partners involved (e.g. DESZKA Festival, TransMission festival, guest performances, hosting foreign actors, directors, etc.).
- Romanian partners have also been involved in various cultural projects (e.g. HUROMUZEUM in cooperation with the Déri Museum in Debrecen).

The document review and the analysis of the data collected through interviews highlighted two examples of synergies created among several investments implemented in the same area and by the same

institutions. At the moment when the application has been drafted, the Romanian partner Tarii Crisurilor Museum was planning to implement different developments financed by the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020 (e.g. equipment and exhibition furniture, exterior garden arrangement, interior amphitheater building works and features). This initiative has been materialized and the institution has implemented rather in parallel:

- RO-HU 446 *“Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage (EduCultCentre)”* project through which the floors 2 and 3 of the museum building has been completed rehabilitated and
- the project *“Capital repairs and interior design of the new headquarters - Museum of the Country of Crişurilor Oradea - site development works and special museum design”*, financed under the Regional Operation Programme of Romania, through which the first floor of the building was rehabilitated and the courtyard redeveloped.

The project created synergies also with another intervention financed also through Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary programme, RO-HU 445 - *Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cultural incubator for performing arts*, implemented also through the partnership established between Debrecen Municipality and Csokonai Theatre. The Lead partner of the project considers that the two RO-HU projects should be considered as a single investment due to their contribution to the same overall objective, namely promotion, increased access to and utilization of common cultural heritage.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The project is in the implementation phase. As the last progress report states, the target groups foreseen for the project's activities have not been reached yet. Thus, the information regarding the results and especially impact of the project is rather limited. The current analysis is focused more on the status of implementation, encountered difficulties and the plausibility of reaching the expected results, as initially planned.

As per the logic of the project, the higher number of tourists attached by the new cultural center is expected to lead to the increase of visitor nights and thus contributes indirectly to strengthening the area's tourist industry. Protecting, creating and disseminating cultural heritage and cultural innovations are also important from the perspective of sustainable development and growth. Thus, the establishment of commonly used cultural spaces is expected to contribute to the achievement of the **programme result indicator** for the IP 6/c, **the planned cultural programmes increase the tourist overnight stays in the border area** both during the implementation of common cultural programmes and events and after the project closure. Nevertheless, **the application form does not mention the level of contribution, nor how and when this contribution will be measured.**

The EduCultCentre project is expected to have **several positive effects**, as such:

- **More effective protection, use and promotion of common cultural heritage among the general public;**
- **Improved attractiveness of the RO-HU border area through investing in the cultural field;**
- **Strengthened cross-border cooperation** between cultural institutions involving artists and cultural professionals;
- Improved conditions for **advanced studies in culture in the area;**
- **Mutual acquaintance and understanding of the cultural heritage in RO and HU;**
- **A higher level of employment through generating job opportunities** in the creative industries.

According to the available data, by the end of April 2023⁶⁴, the following activities were finalized:

- the works at the Cross-Border Education Centre in Debrecen are completed, and the Centre is fully functional;
- the works at the "Tarii Crisurilor" Museum in Oradea are completed; the new art and history sections set up through the project are fully operational and included in the visitor's circuits.
- Works at the Cultural House in Oradea are ongoing - the construction activity was taken over by "Gheorghe Sincai" Bihor County Library, from the initial beneficiary - Varad Cultural Journal.
- The events organized by Csokonai Theatre are also ongoing.

⁶⁴ Official data published by the Management Authority of the Programme, Projects results - <https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/>

The expected effects of the project justified the funding and implementation of the joint initiative of Debrecen, Csokonai Theatre, Tarii Crisurilor Museum and Varad Cultural Journal. The project aims to directly contribute to the relevant programme output indicator (increase in the expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage). Thus, the **output project indicator** is *CO09 Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions* and the set target is at least **25,056 additional visitors** in the new and renewed institutions in the year following project completion, as it follows:

- Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen – 15.870 new visitors;
- Developed building of the Tarii Crisurilor Museum – 7.376 new visitors;
- Developed building of the Cultural Centre – 1.810 new visitors.

Nevertheless, based on the latest progress report of the project (covering the implementation period up to January 2023), the target groups reached so far are at 0% level.

While the project addressed in an appropriate manner the following 3 key problems in the area of protection and promotion of common cultural heritage:

- the lack of specialized institutions in the Romanian-Hungarian border region that could perform the task of systemized protection, research and use of common cultural;
- the poor development of infrastructural and institutional background of artistic creation, training courses, master classes and practical learning opportunities in the borderland;
- the partially random and non-formalized cooperation between cultural organizations in the border area;

with the budget at disposal and the planned activities, the project cannot generate the very high level expected impact in the eligible area of the programme during its implementation or even after short a period of time after the project closure. The expected change, regarding the development of infrastructural and institutional background of artistic creation can be ensured only in time and if the results of the project RO-HU 446 **are maintained and multiplied through the continuation of activities and further investments**. Nevertheless, the project has a significant potential of generating an important impact among cultural formal and non-formal entities / groups in Bihor County and Hajdu-Bihar County. Important positive effects can already be seen in terms of access to culture and specialized infrastructure for artists, cultural experts and managers and cultural entities and cooperation through cultural events or activities between Romania and Hungary in the eligible area of the programme. Notable in this regard were:

- Access of theater clubs from small municipalities, isolated communities from both sides of the border to the experts and facilities of the Csokonai Theatre and of the newly established Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen;
- And as a result, increased cooperation among cultural institutions from both sides of the border due to the implemented activities planned within the project, which leads to the continuation of joint cultural activities;
- Also, the Tării Crişurilor Museum, after the rehabilitation works funded through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme and the Regional Operational Programme 2014 - 2020 were finalized, became a good practice example in the region and started to attract more and more visits not only from the general public, but also from peer institutions from Romania and Hungary who want to learn from the experience of the museum.

Nevertheless, in terms of increased cooperation among peer institutions that should have been facilitated through the project, less common activities between projects partners from Romania and Hungary could be observed, than common activities organized by the partner Csokonai Theatre from Debrecen, Hungary, with theater groups, art groups and other cultural entities from Romania. The data collected from the project beneficiaries showed that the project, through the planned activities and also the newly established infrastructure and purchased equipment facilitated the development of durable (based on common future planned activities) collaborations among peer entities from both countries, outside of the project partnership. This was less observed in regards with the cooperation between Municipality of Debrecen and City Council of Bihor in the area of cultural heritage protection and promotion, beside the joint implementation of project's activities.

It is also important to mention tha, the representatives of project partners, especially of the Journal / County Library and of the museum, emphasized that such an investment could not have been made without the financing available through the programme. National budget is not enough for implementing a similar

project and other available external financing were not supporting the types of activities conducted by them under the framework of the project. Thus, the programme brought clear added value in regards with the development of the cultural sector in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar Counties.

The total value of the projects contracted under the specific objective 1.2 is approximately 40.325.000 Euro, out of which 27.800.000 Euro from ERDF. The value of the project RO-HU is 10.172.732 Euro, representing 25% of the total allocation. The data collected shows that the expected impact of the project should be significant due to extensive infrastructure works that have been financed and also to the magnitude of the soft component of the project. Nevertheless, the current status of implementation allows rather limited conclusion related to already achieved effects. As the programme result indicator to which the project should contribute is "*Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area*", the Covid 19 pandemic had an important contribution to the decrease of tourism intensity and may have affected significantly the sector and the potential of the programme to achieve its specific objective. Also, the effects of the investments made through the project are expected to become more visible on a medium term.

Moreover, as presented in the above section complementarity with other projects is also key in building together positive effects for the artist, cultural organization and general public in terms of increased access to cultural events and cultural infrastructure as means to facilitate learning and development of cultural activities.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

All partners apply the legislation in regards with equal opportunities for men and women, nondiscrimination and accessibility. All rehabilitated buildings offer access to disabled people, through special toilets, guidelines on the walls, notes in Braille, elevators and escalators.

Also, the building from Debrecen and the building from Oradea included energy efficiency solutions.

The beneficiaries mentioned that the investment is durable based on its good design and that the achievements of the project automatically lead to better protection of cultural heritage, thus they facilitate its sustainable use.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors

In terms of internal positive factors, the data collected through interviews showed that the partnership was well constructed. The involved partners were key institutions being able to promote the results of the investments made through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary programme and to reach the target groups of the project. The Csokonai Theatre – Debrecen and the Țării Crișurilor Museum have long standing collaboration with school units, universities and art groups, thus the activities of the project become visible among target groups, with whom further common activities were planned using the infrastructure build by the project. None the less, the perspective of partners regarding the common effects of the project were rather less obvious, each partner being focused on the benefits of the project for their institutions and their traditional target groups, partners.

Also, the collected data shows that the collaboration between project partners is very good, no problems being encountered in this regard during the implementation period. Moreover, also the collaboration with programme authorities have facilitated the progress of the project. The representatives of project beneficiaries emphasized that they received all the support that they needed so far and that the flexibility of programme management regarding the implementation period and the postponements of the planned activities during the pandemic were key for the success of the project.

Negative factors

One of the most important negative external factors that affected the implementation of the project and could have also affected its results was the Covid19 pandemic, which led to significant delays regarding the development of soft activities. This was mainly due to the character of the project, which included a consistent component consisting in face to face activities addressed to target groups, such as: trainings, art camps and conferences. In total 35 common events were planned. Nevertheless, the support provided by programme authorities through allowing the beneficiaries to postpone these activities and extend the implementation period of the project, helped the project to successfully mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. The soft activities were resumed at a pace that allows their completion by the end of the project. Moreover, the Țării Crișurilor Museum faced another bottleneck due to the outburst of the Covid19 pandemic. While the service contracts were signed in early 2020, when their implementation should have

started, the museum suspended and terminated several employment contracts of the personnel, due to its reduced activity. This led to a gap in available human resource in the institution.

While the acquisition process was not considered a bottleneck by the Hungarian partners, the Țarii Crisurior Museum encountered several difficulties in regards with the acquisition of construction services. The Municipality of Debrecen emphasized that they expected a complex procedure due to the big budget allocated and the fact that the contract was not only for construction, but also for purchasing equipment. The tender lasted for 7 months, but the beneficiary mentioned that the procedure could not have been quicker, due to law requirements. On the other hand, the Romanian partner mentioned that the public tender lasted very long and that the procedure is not very well regulated due to the fact that it makes beneficiaries be very cautious on the details they give in the terms of reference in order to avoid suspicions regarding the correctness of the procedure. The beneficiary also considers that in general the specification should be clearer, because otherwise the quality of the received services often decreases under the standards.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

No significant indirect or unexpected effects of the project were identified during the analysis. This is mainly due to the implementation status of the project.

10. Sustainability of project results

The main tangible outputs, namely the infrastructure elements developed in the project, were designed to be maintained in a sustainable way. The proper operation and maintenance of these facilities (the Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen, the Țarii Crisurilor Museum and the Cultural Centre in Oradea), as the application form mentions, will be ensured by the responsible project partners. The application form also mentions that the long-term sustainability of the results is underpinned by the fact that interventions are planned on **real estates owned or maintained by the partners** (or the owner of the real estate granted the rights of use and the rights of disposal or the rights of administration to the applicant organization for at least 5 years after the estimated month of the project's financial closure).

Municipality of Debrecen, Țarii Crisurilor Museum and The County Library (both institutions being subordinated to the County Council of Bihor) will ensure the financial resources for the maintenance of the buildings and the equipment. The cultural facilities are aimed to provide a wide range of cultural events/services both for cultural professionals and the general public, thus their sustainability should be ensured also through the charged fees.

Also, all institutions have the necessary internal expertise as to ensure the continuation of cultural, training, knowledge share and cultural promotion activities. The cultural programmes are expected to be planned according to the prevailing needs/expectations of the target groups.

The partners mention that the effects of the project in terms of protection and promotion of common cultural tangible and intangible heritage will be ensured by the structure of the project, which is designed as to:

- improve the conditions for cross-border cultural cooperation and capacity building;
- involve a selected mix of different types of cultural institutions from Romania and Hungary;
- mobilize and facilitate networking among and within main target groups;
- institutionalize the cross-border protection, promotion and creation of common cultural and historical heritage;
- be able to operate new or renewed cultural institutions even after the maintenance period.

The project brings added value due to the fact that the cultural institutions are dedicated not only to their host cities or counties but to all relevant RO and HU organizations and professionals from every field of culture.

The transferability of outputs (e.g. jointly developed training materials and methodologies) and results is of utmost importance in relation with project's success. As the application form mentions, all partners have an extensive network of cooperating institutions both at national and international level. The partners plan to use these networks as to disseminate the lessons learned from the project to other organizations facing similar challenges.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions regarding the achievements, effects of the project and the influence factors that affected the implementation and potential of generating an impact in the addressed area are:

- While the project faced significant delays due to the outburst of Covid19 pandemic and the impossibility to conduct soft activity according to the initial planning, the current progress shows significant potential for the successful closure of the project. Several effects have already become visible. The impact of the project is expected to increase only on medium-term. And this is due to the complexity of developing an ecosystem meant to foster promotion and use of common cultural heritage, around the institutions that have increased their capacity through investments that were made.
- Nevertheless, in regards with the effects of the projects that are already visible, the analysis identified the following:
 - Access of theater clubs from small municipalities, rather isolated communities from both sides of the border to the experts and facilities of the Csokonai Theatre and of the newly established Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Debrecen;
 - And as a result, increased cooperation among cultural institutions from both sides of the border due to the implemented activities planned within the project, which leads to the continuation of joint cultural activities;
 - Also, the Tăriei Crişurilor Museum, after the rehabilitation works funded through the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme and the Regional Operational Programme 2014 - 2020 were finalized, became a good practice example in the region and started to attract more and more visits not only from the general public, but also from peer institutions from Romania and Hungary who want to learn from the experience of the museum.
- These effects constitute good premises for the investments made to generate a significant impact in the region, especially for the two involved counties, in the area of cultural heritage promotion.
- The project is good practice example in terms of creating synergies with other investments, financed from various sources and conducted in parallel. Complementarity is key in the context of the project RO-HU 446 and in regards with its potential impact. The project created and will further create synergies with another intervention financed also through Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary programme, *RO-HU 445 - Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cultural incubator for performing arts* and with another investment made by the Tăriei Crişurilor Muzeum through the Regional Operation Programme 2014 – 2020 from Romania, namely the projects “Capital repairs and interior design of the new headquarters - Museum of the Country of Crişurilor Oradea - site development works and special museum design”. The development of the two key institutions involved in the project should be viewed from the perspective of a common result of more than one investment.
- The project represents 25% in financial terms of total investments made by the Interreg V-A Romania Programme in the area of sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage and, based on the findings presented in the report, it has the potential of bringing significant important positive changes in regards with the development of cultural sector in both sides of the border. But it is important to emphasize that the continuation of cross-border initiatives is of utmost importance for generating and maintaining the expected impact of the project.
- It is also important to mention that the representatives of project partners, especially of the Journal / County Library and of the museum, emphasized that such an investment could not have been made without the financing available through the programme. National budget is not enough for implementing a similar project and other available external financing were not supporting the types of activities conducted by them under the framework of the project. Thus, the programme brought clear added value in regards with the development of the cultural sector in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar Counties.
- The effects of Covid19 pandemic on the tourism sector in general may have constituted an important influence factor regarding the successful implementation of the project and also on its impact at regional level. The expected result of the project related to the increase of the overnight stays in the addressed area has been endangered by this contextual factor. Nevertheless, as the context become again favorable and the effects of the pandemic diminished, the project resumed its activities at an accelerated pace, which offers good premises for its successful conclusion.
- In the case of Romanian partners, the public tender specific procedures remain a bottleneck which is difficult to be overcome by the beneficiaries. The process usually takes very long and delays in the implementation of the project are generated and the involved institutions do not know how to

avoid them. The flexibility of programme authorities in this regard contributes to a successful implementation of the financed interventions, even if the planned outputs and results are generated later than expected.

Specific Objective 2.1 - Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure

Case Report

RO-HU-444 - ConCom TEN-T; Connecting communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in the Romanian – Hungarian border area

1. General data on the project

Title	ConCom TEN-T; Connecting communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in the Romanian – Hungarian border area
Code	RO-HU 444
Priority axis	Priority axis 2: Improving sustainable cross-border mobility and removing bottlenecks (Cooperating on cross-border accessibility)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific objective 2.1: Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure Investment priority 7/b: Improving regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes
Lead Beneficiary	Arad County (Romania)
Partners	Békés County Foundation for Enterprise Development (Hungary) – project partner 2 Curtici Town (Romania) – project partner 3
Target Group / Groups ⁶⁵	General public (160,513 people)
Covered geographical area	Cross-border area Romania-Hungary – Arad and Békés Counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 36 months (July 01, 2019 – June 30, 2022) Number of amendments: 2 After the first extension: 48 months (July 01, 2019 – June 30, 2023) Final: 54 months (July 01, 2019 – December 31, 2023) Reason of extension: The reason for the first extension was that the authorization procedure of plans was longer than previously estimated. The reason for the second extension was that the construction and authorization procedures were delayed, and the Hungarian partner will not be able to finish the 21 planned studies
Budget allocated/contracted	13,836,221.00 EUR, out of which ERDF 11,760,787.85 EUR (the project is under implementation)
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 9,615,398.09 EUR out of which 8,173,088.27 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 9,420,099.52 EUR out of which 8,007,084.48 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Under implementation
Type of project (regular/strategic)	Strategic project

2. Methods used for the case study

⁶⁵ According to Application Form

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Website: https://interreg-rohu.eu/ <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Project manager, Ms. Alisa-Elena Cojocaru, County Council Arad (Romania), LB Project partners representatives, Mr. Zsolt Szász, Békés County Foundation for Enterprise Development (Hungary), PP

3. Short presentation of project context

The main obstacle in the context of the mobility of the population in the cross-border area is outdated infrastructure – or even the lack of it –, stunting the development of settlements, which otherwise have great potential for mutual cooperation in the enlarged EU. A great opportunity in the Romanian-Hungarian border area is the presence of the TEN-T routes, part of the 4th European corridor, the A1 motorway, the E68 road, and the main East-West railway, as well as the perspective of transforming the Gyula-Kecskemét road into a motorway. They are attracting a lot of traffic and are a potential source of development for the towns located in their vicinity. It is of interest for the two counties' partners in the project to provide easy access to this infrastructure for as many inhabitants as possible.

The main partners of the project are Arad County, Békés County Foundation for Enterprise Development (BMVA), and Curtici Town. It is the partners' common understanding that a smart road network in the border area will tackle all the identified issues. Efforts have been made by both counties, jointly and separately, in maintaining, upgrading, and constructing roads that connect all the communities, the network being largely configured. The partners involved in the project envision the development of the area as a whole, with economies increasing at similar rates and living standards reaching similar levels for the population on both the Hungarian and Romanian sides. This concept might be hindered by the presence of the border, with the limited number of crossing points, and by lack of transport infrastructure, which prevents not only continuous contact between populations but also impedes the possibility of growing some scale economy among the communities. Gaining access to important destinations, either health-related, work-related, or for leisure, is equally important for every person, and the destination may happen to be on the other side of the border. The road infrastructure between communities and objectives of interest such as industrial areas, airports, hospitals, commercial centers, and others, should be seen as a continuous network and our neighboring counties, Arad and Bekes, are interested in developing a road network that corresponds to this description.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project is to “**connect communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in Arad and Békés counties, in the meantime tackling the challenges posed by increased traffic**”. The partnership between Arad County, BMVA, and Curtici Town was created to rise to the challenges of the fragmentation caused by the border and the old and missing road infrastructure. They are tackled by the partners jointly for the purpose of creating a continuous road system, covering the border area as a network, providing easy access for their communities to the TEN-T roads, and encouraging mobility and changes across the border.

For enhanced mobility of population and freight, the project proposed an overall objective to connect communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in Arad and Bekes counties, in the meantime tackling the challenges posed by increased traffic. To this purpose, Arad County, BMVA, and Curtici Town agreed to cooperate in order to:

- provide a direct, shorter connection between the border checkpoints from Nădlac/Nagylak, Turnu/Battonya, Variașu Mic/Dombegyhaz, Grăniceri/Elek and Vărșand/Gyula, as an alternative to national roads DN7 and DN 79, thus improving the traffic flow on the congested national roads and relieving the overcrowded border checkpoint from Nădlac/Nagylak
- connect secondary and tertiary nodes (poles of local development) to the TEN-T infrastructure
- enhance local economies of the two counties by making available a modern road network for the passenger and freight traffic
- use to the full the road network between the two counties, financed under the Hungary – Romania Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 (connection roads Nădlac – Csanadpalota, Arad-Variașu Mic – Dombegyhaz, Sânmartin-Grăniceri – Elek; the two new cross-border points

from Variașu Mic/Dombegyhaz and Grăniceri/Elek have the highest traffic among the newly opened cross-border points, created in the framework of HURO 2007-2013 Programme)

- encourage workforce exchange between Romania and Hungary

Specific objectives:

- Connecting communities on both sides of the border in a comprehensive road network: construction and upgrading of 12,186 km of roads, providing direct access to the TEN-T infrastructure.
 - o Construction works will be carried out on 12,144 km of new roads, on the following sections: Curtici beltway – 7,296 km DJ792 Socodor (Székudvar)– Nădab (Nadab) – 4,848 km
- Connecting communities on both sides of the border: a comprehensive road network through the modernization of 20,21 km of roads, providing direct access to the TEN-T infrastructure.
 - o Modernization works will be carried out on 20,06 km of road, on the following sections: DJ 709B Curtici (Kürtös)– Macea (Mácsa)– Sânmartin (Szentmárton) – 8,6 km DJ709B Sânmartin (Szentmárton) – Socodor (Székudvar) – 11,46 km
- Elaboration of studies regarding the traffic in the border area: studies for modernization and construction of roads, as well as a traffic study and an impact assessment study will be prepared.
 - o Studies for modernization and construction of roads will be prepared for the following communities: Battonya, Bekes, Elek, Bekescsaba, Csorvas, Fuzesgyarmat, Gyomaendrod, Kondoros, Korosladany, Medgyeshaza, Mezőbereny, Mezőhegyes, Mezőkovácshaza, Oroshaza, Sarkad, Szarvas, Szeghalom, Totkomlos, Ujkigyos, Veszto. A traffic study and an impact assessment study will be prepared.

The total budget of the project is 13,836,221.00 Euros. The project is built on the partnership of 3 institutions, as follows: Arad County – lead beneficiary (with a budget of 8.687.397 Euros), Bekes County Foundation for Enterprise Development (BMVA, with a budget of 987.520 Euros), Debrecen Transport Company (DKV, with a budget of 4.161.304 Euros).

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
improving cross-border accessibility through connecting tertiary nodes to the TEN-T infrastructure in Arad and Bekes Counties	<p>Connecting communities on both sides of the border in a comprehensive road network through the construction and upgrading of 12,186 km of roads, providing direct access to the TEN-T infrastructure</p> <p>Connecting communities on both sides of the border in a comprehensive road network through the modernization of 20,21 km of roads, providing direct access to the TEN-T infrastructure</p> <p>Elaboration of studies regarding the traffic in the border area</p>	- see the list below	<p>Output indicators:</p> <p>CO13 Roads: Total length of newly built roads</p> <p>CO14 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads</p>	Result indicator - R 7/b Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T

The main results expected to be achieved:

- the tertiary node Curtici town directly connected to the national road DN79 – part of the comprehensive TEN-T network, by the modernized DJ 709B Curtici–Macea–Sânmartin section (8.6 km long) and Sânmartin– Socodor section (11.46 km long). (Arad County) (has been completed)
- the tertiary node Curtici town directly connected to the national road DN79 – part of the comprehensive TEN-T network, by the newly constructed South-North beltway for Curtici Town (7.296 km long). (Curtici Town) (is completed)
- direct access between Chişineu Criş – DN 79 – Vârşand border checkpoint and to the industrial zone from Nădab, by the newly built DJ792 Socodor – Nădab section - ring road for the Chişineu Criş town (4.848 km long). The total value of the investment 2.01 million euros. (Arad County) (is ongoing, in advanced stage of completion)
- 48 technical plans for improvement of the roads connecting 20 settlements from Békés County to the TEN-T infrastructure developed including approvals and agreements for the following tertiary nodes located in Békés County: Battonya, Bekes, Elek, Bekescsaba, Csorvas, Fuzesgyarmat, Gyomaendrod, Kondoros, Korosladany, Medgyesegyhaza, Mezobereny, Mezohegyes, Mezo-kovacs-haza, Oroshaza, Sarkad, Szarvas, Szeghalom, Totkomlos, Ujkigyos, Veszto. 21 strategic studies (Impact assessment and Traffic) identifying the best solutions to complete the TEN-T network in Békés County developed to enhance regional mobility by connecting tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure. (BMVA, under implementation) (is ongoing)

Soft activities implemented:

- 3 public events/press conferences
- Information materials (press releases, 1000 flyers, 21 temporary/ permanent billboards), promotional materials
- Digital activities, including dedicated pages on beneficiaries' websites.

According to the interview (project is not closed) all outputs expected were generated by the end of the implementation period. The values reached for the output indicator by the end of the implementation period were the following:

Output indicator	Contribution to the programme output indicator	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value	% of the target
CO13 Roads: Total length of newly built roads	Technical documentation for improved connection of 20 tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure in Bekes county	0.00	Under implementation	0 %
	Newly constructed road DJ 792 Socodor-Nadab	4.84	Under implementation	
	South-North Motorway Bypass, City of Curtici	7.30	finished	no data
CO14 Roads: Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	Modernized road DJ 709B Curtici-Sanmartin	8.60	finished	no data
	Modernized road DJ 709B Sanmartin - Socodor	11.46	finished	no data

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, until this time (according to the reports) the targets were not reached⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ according to the last report of the project

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
General public (On the Romanian side, the target group is represented by the population from the localities along the modernized/constructed roads. On the Hungarian side, the target group is represented by the population from the localities for which will be elaborated studies.)	160.513	0	0 %

Relation between the aim of the project and the specific objective

The transport development under implementation has contributed to the achievement of the objectives set. The newly constructed South-North beltway for Curtici Town has created a direct, shorter connection between the border checkpoints. The development of the direct connections to the national road DN79 and the modernisation of DJ 709B Curtici–Macea–Sânmartin and the Sânmartin– Socodor section improve the connections of secondary and tertiary nodes to the TEN-T infrastructure. The newly built direct access between Chişineu Criş – DN 79 – Vărşand border checkpoint and to the industrial zone from Nădab has created the opportunity to a direct, shorter connection between the border checkpoints. Both of these infrastructural developments contribute to the enhancement of the local economies of the two counties by making available a modern road network for passenger and freight traffic.

The technical plans for the improvement of the roads on the Hungarian side also contribute to the development of connection secondary and tertiary nodes. These preparation works for modernization and construction of roads have prepared future construction works.

The development of the road infrastructure has an indirect impact to encourage workforce exchange between Romania and Hungary.

The infrastructural developments of the project have contributed to the improvement of cross-border accessibility. The main results of the project focusing on secondary and tertiary nodes and taking steps to develop the connection to the TEN-T infrastructure. Thanks to that the project fits to the related specific objective (S07/B).

Presentation of modifications

The modifications concerned the implementation deadline, the project design, activities, budget, partners and the indicators have not been modified. Reason for extension:

- The reason for the first extension was that the authorization procedure of plans was longer than previously estimated.
- The reason for the second extension was that the construction and authorization procedures delayed, and the Hungarian partner will not be able to finish the 21 planned studies

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies/policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region as a whole identifies the problems related to transportation, that are relevant for the entire Danube region but are of particular relevance on the Ro-Hu border stating that the roads and railways, especially regarding cross-border connections, are often not efficient or simply missing, stunting the development of settlements with great potential for mutual cooperation in the enlarged EU.

The present project is in line with the Action Plan accompanying the “EU Strategy for the Danube Region”, specifically:

- Action (1) - *"To complete the TEN-T priority projects (railway and road) that cross the Danube Region, overcoming difficulties and blockages including environmental, economic, and political, especially in cross-border sections"*. The project contributes to the efficiency of the TEN-T basic road infrastructure, eliminating the blockage at the Nădlac customs point, providing an alternative route to DN 79 as access to the Vârșand/Gyula customs for localities along the border.
- Action (5) - *"Improving regional/local cross-border infrastructure and access to rural areas"*. The project connects communities to the TEN-T infrastructure with upgraded, modernized and safe roads.
- Action (6) - *"Further development of nodal planning for multimodality"*. The project integrates the multimodal rail/road terminal at Curtici into a road network that allows quick and safe access to the terminal from both Romanian and Hungarian towns.

The project will contribute to the **Europe 2020 Strategy** objectives. One of the main objectives of the project is to encourage workforce exchange between Romania and Hungary and to enhance local economies of the two counties. Thanks to that the planned infrastructural developments and background material should help to raise the employment rate of the population aged 20–64.

The project is coherent with Priority Axis 3, **"Enhancing accessibility and mobility" of the Strategy for the Development of the Western Region**, which focuses on investment priorities, as well as the improvement of connectivity of the communities in the region with the main European transport corridors and reducing travel time, with better safety and quality of transport (priorities 3.2 and 3.3.). The Strategy also acknowledges that inadequate transport networks prevent small and medium towns as well as villages from developing and highlights the challenges posed by higher traffic and improper conditions to the safety of drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. It also stresses the need to capitalize on existing multimodal terminals.

The project also contributes to **"Arad County Development Strategy for the Period 2014-2020"**, more specifically to the strategic objective of **"Improving the quality of living"**. Under this objective, priority axis 2.1.2 highlights the importance of the development and modernization of the transport infrastructure. The development of the transport infrastructure is necessary for the creation of a friendly business environment for investors and the attraction of an active population. This implies the existence of roads that facilitate the connection between the localities and allows the transit of the county in conditions similar to Europe, with a high degree of security, towards the national and European destinations. One of the measures proposed for the accomplishment of Priority Axis 2.1.2 is **"Rehabilitation and/or modernization of county roads and support for the modernization of communal roads."**

The project also adds to the **"Bekes County Development Strategy for the Period 2014 – 2020"**. The main objective of the Strategy in this domain is the development of local roads, the construction of new roads where necessary, and connecting them to TEN-T network. According to **"Curtici Town Local Development Strategy for 2016 – 2020"**, one of the main projects to be realized in this period is the construction of a beltway for the city. The project also fits into several national programs on the Hungarian side (e.g., **Békés county investment strategy, road development objectives**), where there were already preliminary development ideas.

Synergies

As far as recognizing synergies, the project continues carrying out the road network designed by other projects realized with funding from **Hungary – Romania Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013** and is consistent with their general objectives. The two already existing projects together with the present project generate a higher impact and contribute to a common objective:

- **"Building cross-border connecting road Elek - Grăniceri HURO_AF/0802/002"**, which modernized sections DJ 709J Sânmartin – Grăniceri (12,921 km) and DJ 709J Dorobanți – Macea (2,952km) on the Romanian side and built 3.7 km of road on the Hungarian side, from Elek to the state border
- **"Building cross-border connecting road Dombegyhaz - Variașu Mic HURO_AF/0802/003"**, which modernized the sections DJ 709C Arad – Variașu Mic (11,246 km) and DJ 709J Variașu Mic – Iratoșu on the Romanian side and built a 8,2 km of road on the Hungarian side, from Dombegyhaz to the state border.

Together with sections of roads rehabilitated with Arad County Council funding, the projects connected the localities along it to Arad, a secondary node, and created a traffic distribution route towards the alternative custom points from Variaș/Dombegyhaz and Grăniceri/Elek. The roads proposed by the current project

integrate in the network two towns (tertiary nodes) Curtici and Chişineu Criş and the smaller, rural localities, linking DN79 to the previously created traffic distribution route and expanding it towards Vârşand/Gyula custom point.

In 2019 this project had a previous project with the same name (**ROHU-329** - Connecting communities to the TEN-T infrastructure in the Romanian - Hungarian border area, ConComTEN-T). This project focuses on the preparational works (elaboration of the technical plans, the necessary feasibility studies, as well as obtaining the needed building permits)

6. Project results and impact to the date

As for the latest project progress report (28.02.2023.), most activities are proceeding according to work plan, while some are completed. Others, like the 'Multifunctional vehicle for road maintenance' Activity I4.5, the 'Surveillance camera system' Activity I4.6 and Activity C.2 under the 'Communication' WP have not been started. The last one of these (Activity C.2) has a deadline of June 2023 (the project is expected to be extended until the end of 2023).

According to the interviews the following measures have been finalized:

- For activities implemented by the Lead Beneficiary - both sections of the road that were planned to be modernized were finished and the works for the road sector planned to be constructed, DJ792 Socodor (Székudvar)– Nădab (Nadab), is still in progress;
- The BMVA partner is currently working on the 21 studies that were planned to be developed and they will finish this activity by the end of the year 2023;
- Curticy Municipality has finished the Curtici beltway and it will be put into use once the other road sections are completed.

Through the implementation of this project, the proposed indicators will be achieved. The modernized/constructed roads, as well as those that will be realized based on the studies carried out by this project, will connect the localities to the TEN-T network and will contribute to the achievement of the Program result indicator: the increase of the population served by the modernized infrastructure.

Most important results of the project

The project is considered strategic in the area of the western border of the country, ensuring the increase in the efficiency of the TEN-T infrastructure along with the accessibility of alternative border points and the decongestion of Nădlac border point, by creating routes to connect communities to the TEN-T roads, by integrating the multimodal terminal from Curtici in a network of roads that would make it accessible to both Romanian and Hungarian economic agents. Most important results:

- It will also facilitate mobility to jobs and, implicitly, increase the quality of life of the inhabitants by improving the local economies of the two counties.
- The modernization and expansion of transport routes are strategic objectives of the two states involved in this project. Through this approach, the members of the partnership aim to facilitate the sustainable development of the area.
- The cooperation between counterpart institutions from Romania and Hungary become an important part of its activity in the past years.
- The project RO-HU 444 was/is one of the instruments through which the common plans can be implemented and the collaboration can be continued and even strengthened.
- The plans implemented under the project will provide a basis for future developments, which will help to connect to the TEN-T network.
- The project will also contribute to promoting cross-border cooperation, improving cross-border contacts between actors, and laying the foundations for cooperation.

Main impacts of the project

- The modernization of the section DJ709B Curtici–Macea–Sânmartin will ensure the connection of the city of Curtici (tertiary node and pole of local development) and the border crossing point on the railway with the neighbouring towns in the cross-border area. It will also ensure the continuity

of the parallel county road route with the Romanian-Hungarian border and the connection to the border crossing points from Turnu and Vărşand.

- By modernizing the section DJ709B Sânmartin – Socodor, the connection between the cities of Curtici and Chişinău Criş, secondary nodes and important regional development centres, will be ensured, and represents an alternative route for DN 79, the Arad – Oradea national road which is very congested.
- The DJ792 Socodor-Nădab section provides access from DN 79 to the Vărşand crossing point and the industrial area of Nădab.
- The Curtici City bypass belt around the city on the eastern side, allowing heavy traffic to be regulated.
- The 48 studies and plans for 18 tertiary node localities identify the best solutions for the development of local roads. The studies will cover roads connecting communities to the TEN-T infrastructure, railways, and high-accident roads.

The contribution of the project to the SO of the programme

The project will meet the indicators it has committed to. The construction work of 12,144 km of new roads (Curtici beltway, Socodor (Székudvar)– Nădab (Nadab)) and the modernisation of 20,06 km of road (Curtici – Macea – Sânmartin, Sânmartin – Socodor) helps the related towns to have direct access to the TEN-T infrastructure. The studies for modernization and construction of roads also help the access to the TEN-T infrastructure, but it has an indirect impact also.

The developments under implementation are mainly focused on tertiary road sections, as a result of which the achievement of the comprehensive road network objectives is not clear.

Physical implementation has only taken place on the Romanian side, thanks to that the project impacts are not balanced on both sides of the border. Although the plans on the Hungarian side represent a significant step towards the development of infrastructure, the real impact can only be expected in the long term, after implementation.

Cross border cooperation

The participants of the project submitted the application based on their existing cooperation and professional experience. During the implementation of the project, there was close cooperation between the stakeholders. The meetings moved to online platforms thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced face-to-face interactions. The interviews showed that cross-border cooperation was a positive experience for the participants.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Horizontal principles based on the application form

In regards to the **sustainable development (environment) horizontal theme**, the project partners have agreed to use modern methods and technologies, with low impact on the environment. The project aims to improve road infrastructure and diminish the impact of traffic on the environment by reducing pollution, noise, and gas emissions. The created infrastructure will offer a less polluting alternative by supporting public transportation. It will also present better accessibility, increased mobility and safety, and reduced fuel consumption. Compliance with European legislation requires that no tar or toxic materials shall be used, and debris and rubble shall be transported to special sites. Compliance with environmental protection legislation shall be given during earthworks. The works specifications will require technologies with low materials and power consumption, quality materials that reduce waste, modern equipment with low fuel consumption, or using alternative fuels. The stripped pavement will be used as filling on site or on other works. The use of local materials will be recommended. The partners also agreed to monitor the works' impact on the environment. After the completion of the project, damaged areas will be restored, green spaces will be created. The project has a positive effect on sustainable development horizontally.

In the case of the **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the partners recognize that equal opportunities and non-discrimination are principles of a democratic society, enacted by the legislation of both Romania and Hungary. The project guarantees equal opportunities to those involved in the

preparation, implementation, and operation phase of the project. All people involved in the implementation will be chosen based on their abilities and training. No member of the staff, contractors, service providers or the general public will be discriminated against based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social status, beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic non-infectious disease, HIV infection, apurtenance to a disadvantaged category or any other criteria.

In regards to the **equality between men and women horizontal principle**, the project team is committed to its promotion. The principle is reflected in the composition of the project team, which includes both men and women, who are employed based on competence and paid equally for similar jobs. This approach is recommended with the contractors and service providers, as well as in the use of the results of the project, concerning the general population.

Horizontal principles based on the interviews

Equality of opportunity

The principle is reflected in the composition of the project team where men and women are hired solely on the basis of competence and are paid equally for similar jobs. The results of the project are equally addressed to men and women and will be used by the population regardless of gender.

Non-discrimination and equal treatment

The principle of equal opportunities was applied in project management, procurement, and all project activities. All persons involved in the implementation of the project were chosen solely on the basis of their skills and training. The interviewee emphasized that no member of staff, contractors or service providers or the general public has been discriminated against.

The public procurement process complied with the legislation: the same requirements and criteria were applied to all economic operators, so that any of them, without discrimination, could participate in the auction and have equal chances to become contractors.

Non-discrimination is also promoted by sending press releases to the mass media so that all project beneficiaries have access to information without discrimination.

Accessibility

During the implementation stage of the project, it was considered that all physical obstacles should be removed/improved, and special access spaces were provided in order to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, thus fulfilling the provisions of the legislation in force.

Sustainable development and environmental protection

Improving road infrastructure reduces the impact of traffic on the environment by reducing pollution, noise and gas emissions. The infrastructure created will provide public transport companies with better accessibility, increased mobility and safety, and reduced fuel consumption. The belt for Curtici and the Socodor-Nadab section will protect Curtici and Chişinău-Criş from pollution and intense damage caused by traffic.

Compliance with environmental protection legislation has been ensured during the works and will continue to be ensured by the end of the project.

The materials used meet the requirements of European legislation, and the remains and debris are transported to special places.

After the works are completed, areas damaged by storage or use of heavy machinery and transport will be restored. For roads along populated areas, curtains of trees and shrubs will be planted by the Lead Beneficiary. Also, in this regard, the partner Municipality of Curtici is currently working on a budget revision request in order to reallocate the budget savings, made during the implementation of their activities, for planting curtains of trees along the beltway constructed around Curtici City.

During the Hungarian planning works all environmental aspects have been respected. The environmental authority is an integral part of the permitting process.

8. Main factors influencing project results

The main positive factors that help the implementation of the project:

- There is a harmony between the objectives of the calls to the applicant's needs, which made it possible to submit the application.
- The institutional capacity of the beneficiary has made possible the successful implementation of the project
- The beneficiaries' experience in the field and the experience in implementing EU-funded projects was also a significant advantage and positively influenced the implementation of the project.
- The very good cooperation between project partners, which are the most adequate institutions that could implement such an investment, facilitated the success of the investment.
- The communication channels established by the project created the basis for good cooperation between the partners.
- The support of the Széchenyi Programme Office contributed to the implementation and smooth administration of the project
- The change in the euro exchange rate had a positive impact, so the budget increased in forint

The interviewee mentioned that the following elements affected in a negative manner the implementation of the project:

- Frequent changes of personnel in the project team, of skills and responsibilities during implementation determined by personnel fluctuations at the beneficiary level;
- Overloading with tasks of the people in the project team;
- Delays during public procurement procedures (requested clarifications on award documentation, appeals, etc.), this being the main reason for which the Hungarian partners could not finish their activities as initially planned;
- Non-compliance by contractors with deadlines and execution schedules;
- Legislative and standard changes during the implementation of the project;
- Bad weather, which delayed significantly the activity of the Lead Beneficiary in regards to the construction of the road sector Socodor-Nădab, which is still in progress;
- The implementation was significantly hampered and delayed by the bureaucratic Hungarian permission system. In many cases, the opinions of the authorities responsible for the roads significantly hinder the progress of the planning process;
- Structural changes between ministries and governmental decisions in Hungary initially supported the project, but now they are also an obstacle (funding constraints delay expected implementation);
- Accounting for the project is a heavy administrative burden, and there are some questions about the interpretation of the law.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

During the project implementation, they did not encounter important problems due to this situation. Meetings and discussions were online, but this was easily overcome (municipalities and consortium partners). The measures taken by the program authorities to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were effective.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

During the interviews, the following indirect effects were identified:

- The development has improved accessibility on the Romanian side for the municipalities concerned.

- The implemented south-north motorway bypass has contributed to the reduction of traffic within the city of Curtici, protecting the town from the increased traffic flow. The project helped Curtici to moderate the negative externalities of road traffic within the city (reducing pollution, noise and gas emissions.)
- The plans and traffic studies on the Hungarian side will help solve 10 years old infrastructural problems that the smaller municipalities concerned would not have been able to solve on their own.
- The planned road improvements will greatly assist municipalities in moving forward during the procurement and implementation.
- The project has helped to create a cooperative, collaborative and supportive environment between the BMVA, local authorities and planners.

Unexpected effects of the project were not identified.

10. Sustainability of project results

Main aspects of the sustainability of the project results

- The project outputs and results will have a lasting effect beyond the project duration.
- This project is focused on the modernization/upgrade and construction of road infrastructure. In general, the long-time maintenance of the road network is ensured. In this case, the maintenance and the operation are important issues.
- The County Council (RO) and Curtici Town will be owned by the local authorities. They have the responsibility to build, modernize and maintain these roads. The financial sustainability will be achieved by the fact that the county/town budget includes the sums required to cover the cost of maintenance and operation of the said roads on a yearly basis.
- The revenue and expenditure budget of the Arad County Council includes every year the amounts necessary to cover the costs of the maintenance and operation of the roads under its ownership. This will ensure the long-term maintenance of the road network.
- On the Hungarian side, the sustainability of the project would be ensured by the implementation of the planned improvements. The long-term perspective of the studies realized by the BMVA also contributes to sustainability.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

Aspects of the call and the programme authorities:

- The monitoring officers from BRECO were very helpful and supported the team in various situations and cases.
- Communication was very good and there was understanding and support every time it was needed, especially when contract revisions were needed.
- The content of the Applicant's Guide is very well prepared, it is accessible. Interested institutions or actors can find all the necessary explanations to be able to submit the funding application and also, as to implement a successful project.
- Also, the staff responsible for the implementation of the program are very kind and support the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries both in the project preparation stage and in the implementation stage.
- All requests for implementation period extensions were approved and addendums to the contract were signed. This process went smoothly.
- On the other hand, due to the fact that RO-HU project is a strategic investment, the application process was divided into two steps, the concept note and the full application. This approach extended too much the period from the conception of the project design to the signing of the contract and initiation of the public procurement procedure. The interviewee considers that the concept note assumes a high level of maturity of the project, thus the second phase becomes partially redundant.

- The Széchenyi Programme Office plays a role in accounting. Accounting is a significant administrative burden for the beneficiary. Overall, the cooperation was good.

The most important lessons for the beneficiaries are the following:

- The years of collaboration with Békés County have led to the definition of common objectives, including the development of road and health infrastructure, improving over time the ability to work together. This type of collaboration will be further used for developing and implementing future common investments.
- The interviewee also mentioned that a good practice example may be using the suspensive clause, which implies a preliminary agreement concluded between the parties until the financing is obtained, thus the contract with the Managing Authority is signed. In this way, the beneficiary can overcome the delays caused by the application process and selection of the project and also the public tender procedure, both taking place at the same time.
- The permit and procurement process were more complex than anticipated (administrative burden, request for quotes and justification of market prices)
- The administrative burden of the project clearance is more complicated than the beneficiary originally planned.
- Joint project implementation is an opportunity for less experienced partners, such as the city of Curtici, to transfer know-how from other partners and create the basis for them to request and implement further cross-border projects.

Visibility of the project

- A number of dissemination activities helped to raise the visibility of the project.
- During the realization of the project the following communication activities were used: public events, publications, promotional materials, and digital activities.
- On the Hungarian side, the municipalities involved in the planning were involved.
- In the future, 3 more professional events are planned to further promote the project.

Recommendations for future calls

- Financial incentives can help increase the popularity of the application (100% grant, ERDF 50% pre-financing).
- In addition, it would be important to promote and motivate online communication.
- Within INTERREG, it would be desirable to include calls for proposals for more informal/soft elements (such as the preservation of traditions, the organisation of events) and for smaller improvements (renovation of buildings), in order to focus not only on infrastructure.
- Reducing administrative burdens and accounting difficulties would also help to attract more people to projects.
- Another motivating factor could be for future applicants if the usefulness of the program was emphasized. The valuing of the result obtained from the implementation of a project and the satisfaction could highlight for the beneficiaries that they have managed to do something useful for the community.

Specific Objective 2.2 - Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport

Case Report

RO-HU-390 – TRANSBORDER Improving the public transport service at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles

1. General data on project

Title	TRANSBORDER; Improving the public transport service at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles
Code	RO-HU 390
Priority axis	Priority axis 2: Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove bottlenecks (Cooperating on accessibility)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific objective 2.2: Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport Investment priority 7/c: Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links, and airport infrastructure in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility
Lead Beneficiary	Oradea Local Public Transport Company (Romania)
Partners	Transregio Intercommunity Development Association (Romania) – project partner 2 Debrecen Transport Company (Hungary) – project partner 3
Target Group / Groups ⁶⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) local public authority b) regional public authority c) national public authority d) sectoral agency e) infrastructure and (public) service provider f) interest groups, including NGOs g) education/training center and school h) enterprise, excluding SME i) SME j) international organization under international law k) general public <p>(more than 500,000 people)</p>
Covered geographical area	Oradea and Debrecen urban poles and their catchment area
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 35 months (February 01, 2019 – December 31, 2021) The project was extended once for 11 months. The main reason behind the extension was the Covid19 pandemic.
Budget allocated/contracted	2,930,600.00 EUR out of which ERDF 2,491,010.00 EUR
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 2,626,631.92 EUR out of which 2,232,637.02 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 2,610,605.16 EUR out of which 2,219,014.27 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Finalized

⁶⁷ According to Application Form

Type of project (Regular/ strategic)	Regular project
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2. Methods used for the case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Website: http://www.trans-border.eu/ <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Project manager: Mr. Barna Ciprian, Public Transport Company Oradea (Romania), LB Project partners representatives: Mr. Zoltán Szabó, Public Transport Company Debrecen (DKV) (Hungary)

3. Short presentation of project context

The main problems and needs that impact the overall public transport network at the level of Oradea and Debrecen urban poles and their catchment area are related to the lack of a sustainable mobility-based approach at the local, regional and national level which integrates the transport mode in the territorial development policy, the increasing of the motorization rate in both cities and their metropolitan areas (60% of the residents' transport is made by car), the fact that the public transport is rather perceived as a social burden than a mix of tools (economic, spatial, connectivity) to support the sustainable urban development, the continuous decreasing of the Public Transport share in the overall modal split, the existence of disparities in providing the PT service (in terms of current operating fleet, timetables, the access to intelligent transport systems-Automatic Vehicle location, e-ticketing, real time information and route planner), the increased life average of bus fleets that operate on the public transport network and as well to the lack of general attractiveness of the public transport service which hampers the functioning of a real multimodal transport system.

As a result, urban congestion is increasing whilst the air quality is deteriorating both in Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles. The toxicity and the environmental impact of the main air pollutants (Greenhouse gases (GHG), Carbon monoxide (CO), Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC), Nitrogen oxides (NOx), Total suspended particulate (TSP), Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and Ammonia (NH₃)), in addition to the production of acid rain, impact on the ozone layer, contribution to global warming, also affects the health of people in these areas.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project is **“to improve the quality of the public transport service in the cross-border area represented by the Oradea and Debrecen urban poles”**. The partnership between Oradea Local Public Transport Company, Transregio Intercommunity Development Association, and Debrecen Transport Company was created to increase the role of Public Transport in supporting the emergence of a multimodal transport network and removing the bottlenecks on the main urban and metropolitan transport corridors with cross-border impact.

TRANSBORDER project aims at improving the quality of the public transport service in the cross-border area represented by the Oradea and Debrecen urban poles. In this respect, the specific objectives are focused on:

- Improving the analysis and planning framework regarding the modernizing of the Public Transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles
- and as well on modernizing the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles

Specific objectives:

- Improving the analysis and planning framework regarding the modernizing of the Public Transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles

- Modernizing the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles

The total budget of the project is 2.930.600 Euros. The project is built on the partnership of 3 institutions, as follows: Oradea Local Public Transport Company (OTL) – lead beneficiary (with a budget of 1.942.900Euros), Transregio Intercommunity Development Association (TRANSREGIO, with a budget of 49.700 Euros), Debrecen Transport Company (DKV, with a budget of 938.000 Euros).

General Objective of the project	Specific Objectives of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
Improving the quality of the public transport service in the cross-border area represented by the Oradea and Debrecen urban poles	<p>Improving the analysis and planning framework regarding the modernizing of the Public Transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles</p> <p>Modernizing the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles</p>	- see the list under the table	Output indicator - 7/c 1 Number of cross-border public transport services developed/improved	Result indicator: R 7/c Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border

The main estimated results that translate into evidence the current needs and objectives for Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles through the TRANSBORDER project are represented by the following:

- Purchasing of 7 new buses with a reduced level of CO2 emissions (6 Euro 6 buses and 1 hybrid bus to be used by Oradea Local Public Transport Company (OTL) on 7 transport lines (OTL)
- Procuring of 2 midi-buses and 2 suburban Euro 6 buses to be used by Debrecen Transport Company on 4 transport lines; (DKV)
- Developing 1 Automatic Vehicle Location and passengers' information system at the level of the city of Oradea; (OTL)
- Modernizing 3 public transport stops in the city of Debrecen through the procurement of real-time information panels and automatic tickets vending machines; (DKV)
- Developing 1 cross-border public transport route planner (mobile application) by the Transregio partner; (TRANSREGIO)
- Elaborating 1 Passengers Traffic Flow Study on the public transport network and setting up 1 Origin-Destination Survey at the level of the city of Oradea; (OTL)
- Elaborating 1 Public Transport Development Plan at the level of the public transport network operated by OTL; (OTL)
- Elaborating 1 Technical Study for improving the e-ticketing system for Debrecen public transport network; (DKV)
- Organizing 2 European Mobility Week events in Oradea and Debrecen. (OTL and DKV)

Based on the fact that the majority of the population, congestion, pollution, economic performance, and services concentrate in the bigger cities, such as Oradea and Debrecen, the developing and improving the public transport services at the level of these urban areas through TRANSBORDER project is a necessity that could contribute to accelerating the modernizing process of the mass transit services, to the emergence of a multimodal network, to the shifting of the imbalances in the modal split, to reducing the GHG emissions

and to ensuring of a sustainable mobility approach that will impact more than 500.000 inhabitants and as well to improving/developing at least 15 public transport services at the level of this cross-border area.

The project's final report shows that all expected outputs were generated by the end of the implementation period. The values reached for the output indicator by the end of the implementation period were the following:

Output indicator	Contribution to the program output indicator	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value	% of the target
7/c 1 Number of cross-border public transport services developed/improved	Traffic Flow Study on the public transport network managed by Transregio, 2. Origin-Destination Survey at the level of the City of Oradea 3. Public Transport Development Plan at the level of Oradea public transport network	2 pieces	16	106,7%
	Technical Study for improving the e-ticketing system through the development of a ticket validation system to be installed on the vehicles and the prototype design for Debrecen public transport network	1 piece		
	6 new Euro 6 buses and 1 hybrid bus were procured and launched in operation on 7 bus lines at the level of the public transport network operated by Oradea local public Transport Company (Oradea, Sinmartin, Bors and Biharkeresztes).	8 pieces		
	2 new midi-buses and 2 new suburban Euro 6 buses were procured and launched in operation on 4 bus lines	4 pieces		

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, all targets were reached, some being even surpassed⁶⁸.

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
local public authority	20	20	100%
regional public authority	2	2	100%
national public authority	2	2	100%
sectoral agency	4	4	100%
infrastructure and (public) service provider	4	4	100%
interest groups including NGOs	10	20	200%
education/training center and school	30	30	100%
enterprise, excluding SME	30	30	100%

⁶⁸ according to the final report of the project

SME	3 000	6 000	200%
International organisation under international law	3	3	100%
General public	500 000	510 000	102%

Relation between the aim of the project and the specific objective

The objectives of the project and planned activities contribute to the specific objectives in the following ways:

Improving the analysis and planning framework regarding the modernizing of the Public Transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles (specific objective)

Through this specific objective, TRANSBORDER project aims at developing the appropriate tools that will improve the analysis and planning framework regarding the modernizing of the Public Transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles. The main estimated results that translate into evidence of this objective through a joint project approach are represented by:

- The elaboration of a Passengers Traffic Flow Study on the public transport network and the setting up of an Origin-Destination Survey at the level of the City of Oradea
- The elaboration of a Technical Study for improving the e-ticketing system through the development of a ticket validation system to be installed on the vehicles and the prototype design for the Debrecen public transport network
- The elaboration of a Public Transport Development Plan at the level of the public transport network operated by OTL (including recommendations for introducing new bus routes, modifying the current routes, or renouncing some of the existing bus lines in accordance with the spatial development, proposals for updating the timetables and proposals for improving the overall services)
- Improving the awareness level of citizens regarding the importance of sustainable transportation modes (the organizing of the European Mobility Week campaign in all the represented localities in the project).

This specific objective will enable the development/improvement of 2 public transport services.

Modernizing the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles (specific objective)

This objective represents the translation into practice of the general objective and will consist of modernizing the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles through the following estimated activities:

- Procuring of 10 new buses with a reduced level of CO2 emissions (6 Euro 6 buses to be used by Oradea Local Public Transport Company on 6 bus lines and the procuring of 2 midi-buses and 2 suburban Euro 6 buses to be used by Debrecen Transport Company on 4 bus lines),
- Targeted investments in modernizing and mainstreaming the Intelligent Transport Systems at the level of the most important public transport networks concentrated in this cross-border area:
 - setting up the Automatic Vehicle Location system and passengers' information at the level of the City of Oradea
 - developing a cross-border public transport route planner
 - modernizing 3 public transport stations in the City of Debrecen through the procurement of real-time information panels, and automatic ticket vending machines.

This specific objective will enable the development/improvement of 13 public transport services.

Presentation of modifications

The project was extended once for 11 months. The main reason behind the extension was the e Covid19 pandemic.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies/policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

On a global level, this project connects to 6 out of the 17 objectives from the “**2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**”.

On a European level, the project is coherent with several strategies/policies:

- “**Europe 2020 Strategy**”,
- White Paper on European Transport (COM 144/2011),
- European Strategy for low emission mobility (COM 501/2016),
- Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 – which emphasizes the need to further strengthen public transport and contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from road transport,
- as well as the “**EU Strategy for the Danube Region**”

Thank to that the project takes steps toward the modernization of the public transport services at the level of Oradea and Debrecen the project contributes to the attainment of the reduction of greenhouse gas emission target of the **Europe 2020 Strategy**. The strategic document aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels or by 30% if the conditions are right, increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 20%, and achieve a 20% increase in energy efficiency - 20-20-20 target. The project through the quality development of the public transport system, helps to increase the share of people using public transport and thereby reducing emissions of pollutants. The project all reached results that contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In line with the **EUSDR** – which encourages that each priority area has to be considered with other policy fields and emphasizes the role of integrated approaches – the project aims to set up a new development model of cooperation and correlation of urban public transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles.

This project is in accordance with all the three Priority areas of the first pillar of the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region** through sectorial and horizontal dimensions such as the elaboration of studies and plans in order to improve the PT service, the procuring of new buses with a low level of CO2 emissions, the developing of intelligent transport systems and the promotion of tourism.

TRANSBORDER also capitalizes and creates synergies with the “**CIVITAS initiative**” – dedicated to cleaner, better transport services of Europe, the “**EIP on Smart Cities and Communities**” and many other initiatives, plans, and projects launched by various EU bodies.

On a national level, the project also adds to the "Partnership Agreement 2014-2020" and the "**Unified Transport Development Strategy**" (Egységes Közlekedésfejlesztési Stratégia, EKFS), as well as the "**Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan of the City of Debrecen**" in Hungary, and the "**Partnership Agreement 2014-2020**", "**Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy**", "**Romania's Strategy regarding the climate changes 2013-2030**", and on the regional and local level, the "**Integrated Urban Development Strategy of the City of Oradea**", "**Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**", "**Regional Operational Programme in Romania**".

Synergies

Oradea and Debrecen have made other investments related to the modernization or improvement of local public transport:

- In 2009 the public transport route between Oradea and Hajdu-Bihar County was established. Nevertheless, for the fleet of vehicles that pass this route, the investments made through the project RO-HU 390 constituted the first modernization action.
- The traffic flow and the technical studies become very important in the management of traffic flows that have been disturbed due to other major infrastructure works financed through other EU programs, such as the Regional Operational Programme 2014 – 2020.
- The public transport fleet in Oradea has improved significantly since 2015 – 2016. In the last few years, 30 new tramps, 11 Euro 6 busses (punched through RO-HU 390) and other 15 hybrid buses were purchased through the Regional Operational Programme, buses being included in the traffic

flow for over a year and a half now. Also, the terms of reference for the acquisition of other 40 electric buses have been finalized and the public tender will be launched in the following period.

- Oradea Municipality received financing from the National Recovery and Resilience Program for other 20 new trams.
 - More recently, chapter 10 of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan also encourages significant investments in the area of public transportation. These financing opportunities were and are very useful for Bihor, Timiș, and Cluj Counties.
 - The Public Transport Company Oradea has also received financing under the Horizon EU program, the Programme of Cross Border Cooperation South East Europe, and participated in various EU-funded projects as partners also stakeholders or target groups.
 - The Lead Beneficiary along with the Metropolitan Area of Oradea (where the manager of the project is also an employee) has developed other 2 projects for the modernization of the public transport in the area, through the renewal of another part of the vehicle's fleet and the extension of the current routes for public transportation.
-
- Debrecen has also made other significant investments in the public transportation system from the city and also for the routes linking Debrecen with the border with Romania.
 - The replacement of the bus fleet of DVK Zrt. is in progress, with 39 solo Mercedes-Benz Conecto buses in service until 2024. At the same time as the new, modern vehicles are being put into service, the old buses will be withdrawn.
 - Under the Regional Operational Programmes, the Debrecen Intermodal Passenger Transport Centre is being set up, which will see the expansive development of the railway station area.
 - The Green Bus Programme was launched in Debrecen in 2020, with the Hungarian government providing funding for the purchase of 12 electric buses and the greening of 50 bus shelters.

In summary, there is a strong synergy developed among the public investments in Oradea and Debrecen made for improving the transport infrastructure and the public transport system.

6. Project results and impact to the date

Most important results of the project

All project-specific goals have been fully achieved. The project results, as per the project progress report of the 9th period were as follows:

1. elaboration of a Passengers Traffic flow Study on the public transport network,
2. a Public Transport Development Plan and an Origin-Destination Survey at the level of the City of Oradea,
3. a Study for improving the planning and organizing the timetables of the tramway network in Oradea,
4. a Technical Study for improving the e-ticketing system through the development of a ticket validation system – a prototype design – for the Debrecen public transport network,
5. a Public Transport Development Plan at the level of the PT network operated by OTL,
6. the development of a cross-border public transport route planner,
7. the improvement of the awareness of citizens concerning sustainable transportation modes by organizing the European Mobility Week campaign in both Oradea and Debrecen,
8. the procurement of 11 new buses,
9. the modernization and mainstreaming of ITS by modernizing the Automatic Vehicle Location System and passenger information in the City of Oradea and modernizing 3 public transport stations in the City of Debrecen.

Results 1-7 are connected to specific objective (1), which enables the development/improvement of 4 public transport services, while the other two results are connected to specific objective (2), enabling the development/improvement of 13 public transport services. Both specific objectives have been achieved.

The project managed to generate more outputs than planned, due to the savings made from the vehicles (buses) purchased. An addendum to the contract was signed through which a part of the project budget

was reallocated for a study for the optimization of public transport by tramps in Oradea. Thus, in the same budget, the targets were surpassed, and the beneficiaries conducted more activities than initially planned and obtained an additional output.

As for the set output indicators, all target groups have been reached, in some cases (interest groups including NGOs, SMEs, the general public), the program exceeded its initial target. For the number of public transport services reached (development/improvement), the target was at least 15, which was attained by the project partners. The project also enables the development/improvement of 17 public transport services.

The most important results of the project, from the personal and organizational perspective

- The project is considered to be, by the Lead Beneficiary, a public policy instrument mainly due to its research and analysis component on the current status of the public transport system in Oradea, existing needs in terms of the quality of the public transport service provided to citizens, traffic flows and ways to develop this sector in Oradea, surroundings and for the connection routes with Biharkeresztes City, located in Hajdu-Bihar County. This is considered to be the most important added value of the programme funds directed into this investment.
- The project meant a concrete improvement of the quality of public transportation service, through the modernization of the public transport fleet and the digital systems put in place for passengers (real-time information boards, the application from Transregio webpage - digital application that gives the possibility to locate the vehicles on the map and estimate arrival time and the online tickets service).
- the Passengers Traffic Flow Study on the public transport network or Oradea is an important source of data and evidence for further planning traffic flows in the city, at its outskirts, and on the routes to the border. To this study, the beneficiary added the component for public transport by tram in Oradea.
- With the purchase of 4 own buses in Debrecen (the tram and the trolleybus were owned by DKV), DKV already has its own buses.
- Another major achievement is the creation of "smart stops", which have a double function (sales + information), because before there were only a few ticket vending machines in Debrecen.
- In addition, it is important to bring the validator project to a high level, which only lacks the financial resources to be fully implemented, and the technical preparation could be done.

Main impacts of the project

- The project increased the quality of the public transport in Oradea, in its surroundings, and for the route that passes the border and links Bihor County, from Romania, with Hajdu-Bihar County, from Hungary, through modernized vehicles, access to real-time location of the items from the fleet of cars of Oradea Public Local Company, access to e-ticket service for the passengers.
- The Automatic Vehicle Location system and passengers' information panels help passengers to better plan their schedule and along with the e-ticket system implemented as a pilot project in Oradea, improve the access of citizens to public transportation.
- DKV's own bus purchases have helped to reduce the company's external costs, while the new buses have replaced older vehicles with a higher environmental footprint.
- The development of smart stops has contributed to the improvement of service quality in Debrecen, enabling the dynamic provision of travel information to the traveling public, thus creating a more predictable public transport.
- The European Mobility Week campaigns in Oradea and Debrecen helped to include raising awareness at the level of citizens regarding the importance of contributing to sustainable development.
- Through its attained objectives and results (in particular, the procurement of new buses) TRANSBORDER project contributed to the developing and improving of environmentally friendly (including low noise) and low-carbon transport systems at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles, therefore, impacting all relevant target groups: citizens, tourists, companies.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected significantly public transport and the effects of the investments made through the project RO-HU 390 were difficult to be observed immediately after the closure of the project.
- But it should be noted that this change can be observed only on the long term and if complementary actions are taken by the public authorities.

The contribution of the project to the SO of the program

In addition to the physical implementation (bus purchase, bus stop renewal), the project also supported a number of preparatory studies. The Passengers Traffic Flow Study (Oradea), the Public Transport Development Plan (OTL), and the Technical Study for improving e-ticketing (Debrecen) are analysis and planning framework, which main aim is to improve the public transport networks at the level of Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles

The improvements implemented in both Debrecen and Oradea will contribute to the modernization of urban public transport. Due to the urban significance of both municipalities, the developments will improve public transport services not only in the cities but also in the entire urban area.

Cross border cooperation

Debrecen and Oradea have a long history of cooperation, the two cities are twin towns. This is why the joint application builds on existing cooperation. During the implementation of the project, there was a close cooperation between the project partners. The meetings moved to online platforms thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced face-to-face interactions. The interviews showed that cross border cooperation was a positive experience for the participants.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Horizontal principles based on the application form

In regards to the **sustainable development (environment) horizontal theme**, the project contributes to the attaining of the overall dimensions of the sustainable development concept: environmental, economic, and social. The modernizing of the mass transit services from Oradea and Debrecen cross-border urban poles will contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions and other pollutants which are generated by the public transport fleet of both operators, the reduction of the number of cars in the streets and therefore of the CO2 emissions, a decrease in the consumption level of fuel, the promotion of new technologies. These practices will allow the avoidance of various travels that increase the environmental footprint and they will contribute to the improvement of air quality.

In the case of the **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the partners recognize that the social dimension of the project needs to be taken into account. The results of the current project will improve the access of the overall users (residents, commuters, and tourists) to employment and skills, services and finances including the low-income or marginalized groups situated in peripheral areas. As a consequence, accessibility will be secured as a fundamental right for all citizens.

In regards to the **equality between men and women horizontal principle**, gender equality is paid special attention to by the project teams as half of the members are represented by women. As for the objectives and results of the project, these will make no difference with respect to gender or any other form of discrimination, as the proposed investments in order to improve the public transport services are oriented toward the overall citizens. They will make no difference based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation and will contribute to the improvement of opportunities and accessibility, both for women and men.

Horizontal principles based on the interviews

- In regards to the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment and accessibility, the newly purchased vehicles were included in all public transport routes.
- There is no discrimination in terms of accessibility for citizens located in certain areas.
- Public transport constitutes an important element for the attenuation of territorial segregation for citizens with different levels of income or social status.
- The punched buses are equipped with ramps and designated places for disabled people. Low-floor vehicles have been procured and a space for wheelchair users has been provided, as well as a barrier-free area for blind and partially sighted people to navigate. They respect all standards included in the national legislation (both in Romania and Hungary) in regard to accessibility.
- Reducing emissions was one of the main objectives: buses with the best available emission values were selected at the time of purchase.

8. Main factors influencing project results

The main positive factors that help the implementation of the project:

- The cooperation among partners was really positive. The activities, the responsibilities of each partner, and the timeline were very clearly set from the beginning of the project and all partners followed them.
- The visible increase of awareness regarding the importance of a high-quality public transportation system for a developing city and also for the development of the cross-border area, at the level of the decision-makers facilitates investments made in this field in Bihar County, among which project RO-HU 390.
- The weakening of the forint exchange rate contributed to the implementation of the project, as the additional revenue from the currency exchange offset the increase in prices.
- The extension of the deadline allowed the project investments to go ahead despite supplier problems.

The interviewee mentioned that the following elements affected in a negative manner the implementation of the project:

- The negative effects of Covid 19 directly affected the entire public transportation system, the mobility of citizens, and increased the preference for individual transport means.
- The delay in the agreement between the Romanian and Hungarian governments has made it difficult to get the project off the ground.
- The period between the application and the contract signing was very long
- For non-public procurement, the collection of 3 quotations was a major difficulty

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the interviews, the Programme Authorities have acted effectively in mitigating the effects of the Covid19 pandemic on the implementation of the projects. The project officer provided the necessary support to the beneficiaries. The project has been extended by 11 months in order to be able to produce the planned outputs by the end of the project. This delay was caused by the public acquisition process and the delays related to the production of purchased vehicles, being also linked with the negative effects of the pandemic that could be observed in every branch of economic activity.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some meetings were conducted online and field visits were postponed when the restrictions imposed it. The possibility of an online meeting was accepted by the Managing Authority.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

No indirect or unexpected effects were identified.

The interviewee mentioned that investments in the public transport system in Bihor County and in the cross-border area have been significantly accelerated in the past years. This is not an indirect effect of the project RO-HU 390, but the project certainly contributed to this change of paradigm/perspective,

facilitating the prioritization of the public transport system at the local and regional level by its very visible results.

10. Sustainability of project results

The project will contribute to the development and improvement of an environmentally friendly and low-carbon transport system. The collaboration will enable the convergence toward the planning and setting up of a sustainable public transport system, therefore improving the transit and quality of life of citizens and tourists. The elaboration of studies and development plans, and the modernizing of public transport bus fleets will secure further institutional cooperation in the future. The planned investments in the modernizing of the public transport services will be continued by the local authorities (Local Councils of Oradea, Bors, Sinmartin, and Debrecen), therefore ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project's objectives and results.

Some of the improvements that have been made (purchase of buses) can be considered sustainable in the long term. Except for the soft programme elements of the project, the results of each of the project elements will go beyond the 5-year project maintenance period and will contribute to the long-term improvement of public transport in two cross-border urban poles.

The preparatory studies and analyses carried out will provide a medium- to long-term basis and support for the development directions and main priorities of public transport in Oradea and Debrecen. Thanks to the studies and pilot projects, a number of the city's development objectives have become feasible, subject to funding.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

Aspects of the programme authorities:

- At the start of the project, the responsibilities of the project support side (Infopoint, Széchenyi Project Office) were not clear, but this was soon resolved.
- There were a few misunderstandings and shortcomings (size of logos) in the design elements, the communication of which was not completely clear at the beginning of the project, but these were also quickly resolved.
- Project participants always received adequate support from the project support side throughout the implementation.
- The applicants are planning to continue the application or submit a new one, their experience has been positive.

The most important lessons for the beneficiaries are the following:

- The public policy message of the project is really important. If the sustainable public transport addressed by the project is on the agenda of the policymakers or if its importance is generally recognized the intervention can have a greater effect.
- In more administrative terms, using the suspensive clause for avoiding delays, caused by the project selection period and the public acquisition procedure in itself, can be considered a good practice example.
- An important experience was the difficulties in public procurement, in particular for three tenders for below-threshold purchases.

Visibility of the project

- The project and the source of financing are well known in Oradea. The programme and its results are also visible in the mass media and social media.
- The local community was mainly involved in the mobility week. It was then that high visibility could be achieved.

- On the Hungarian side, project communication was mainly limited to the means expected by the programme (INTERREG website, stickers on buses, events). More publicity could be provided by expanding this.

Recommendations for future calls

- The project and the source of financing is well known, the programme in general, and the information regarding the financed areas and the calls for proposals are very accessible. The stakeholders know all the available programmes that provide non-refundable funds for investments in the area. Therefore, further communication in this direction is not necessary.
- The best way to attract new applicants is through direct communication with potential beneficiaries, and key stakeholders in the area, via email.
- The potential future applicants and stakeholders should receive personalized invitations about information and dissemination events. Personalized emails would be useful for information regarding the available funds, the addressed sectors and requirements that need to be met by the applicants and further, by the beneficiaries.
- It would be useful if the Managing Authority would have a centralized database with relevant stakeholders (public institutions, municipalities, and NGOs) in the area covered by the programme. (In order to communicate directly)
- Financial incentives can help increase the popularity of the application (100% grant without own resources).
- Implementation with higher costs (such as the extension of the pilot project implemented under the project) cannot be financed under this resource. This could be extended to a wider range of applicants.

Specific Objective 3.1 - Increased employment within the eligible area

Case Report

ROHU-380 - Adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment

1. General data on project

Title	Adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment
Code	ROHU-380
Priority axis	Priority axis 3: Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area
Lead Beneficiary	Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Values of Banat and Crişana "Excelsior"
Partners	Koros-Maros Foundation for Rural Development and Eco-agriculture
Target Group / Groups ⁶⁹	a) General public, b) Local public authority, c) Regional public authority, d) Sectoral agency, e) Interest groups including NGOs, f) Higher education and research, g) Education/training centre and school, h) Enterprise, excluding SME, i) SME
Covered geographical area	Arad and Békés counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 30 months (01.03.2019 – 31.04.2021) After extension, if the case: 53 months (01.03.2019 – 31.07.2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	2.987.502,00 Euro, out of which ERDF 2.539.376,70 Euro
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 2.076.529,44 EUR out of which 1.765.049,89 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 1.963.737,38 EUR out of which 1.669.176,64 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	IN IMPLEMENTATION
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports <i>e-MS Table on Project Living Tables – Exported At: 31.12.2022</i> <i>e-MS Table on Financial Data – Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
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⁶⁹ According to Application Form

Interviews	<p>Project manager, Mihai S. Pascu, representative of the Lead Partner, Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Values of Banat and Crişana "Excelsior"</p> <p>Project partner, Zsolt Raki, representative of the Koros-Maros Foundation for Rural Development and Eco-agriculture</p> <p>Representatives of target groups, György Kajári, member of the target group from Békés</p>
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3. Short presentation of project context

The “*Adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment*” project has the objective to tackle the problem of adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment among the most vulnerable categories of the population. According to the Application Form of the project, the project, which represents a cross-border cooperation initiative between Excelsior and Koros-Maros, aims to contribute to improving the occupancy level of workforce in Arad and Békés counties. The project comes in the context in which the two implementing partners have carried out multiple projects together that targeted the cross-border area. The project addresses the challenges in the region faced by the unemployed, persons in search for job and socially marginalized persons in accessing jobs in sectors that are new and in high demand.

According to the Application Form, the latest European semester country reports indicated that both countries are facing difficulties in providing the working aged persons the qualifications in new and demanded sectors of economy. Romania has an especially high rate in inactivity and the share of young people neither in education, employment nor training (NEET). While in Hungary the agricultural sector is very well represented in economy, in Romania, jobs were lost in agriculture as there is low demand for low skilled employees. Urban-rural disparities are holding back economic and social development in both countries. The project proposed to help people with no access to adult education be better prepared for the demands of the labour market and integrate in new sectors of economy.

According to the interviews carried out with the representatives of Excelsior, the Lead Partner, and the Koros-Maros Foundation, there is a major lack of adult’s long life training facilities in the fields of healthy life and sustainable living environment in the Arad and Békés counties. The existence of such facilities could contribute to the reintegration of persons in search of job and socially marginalized persons in the local communities. In the opinion of target group member, with which the evaluators hold an interview, there was a need of more-skilled workers at the community level. The target group member considered the project as useful for the community, due to the opportunity for people to switch professions, if they feel the need for a change.

The following table presents the unemployment rate in the two counties in the 2019-2022 period. As it can be seen, the unemployment rate is low in Arad, as it stands at 0,8%, while the unemployment rate in Békés is much more significant, at 6,5%.

County	2019	2020	2021	2022
Arad	0,9%	1,6%	1%	0,8%
Békés	5,6%	5,8%	6,4%	6,5%

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The objective and the main activities of the project tackles the problem of adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment to the most vulnerable categories of population. The approach of the project was to effectively integrate infrastructure development with soft specific activities implementation, for their sustainable use and performance during the sustainability period and beyond. According to the Application Form, the project aimed to provide vocational training courses and organize job fairs in new and demanded sectors of economy, with specific considerations to the sustainability of the environment. The project was designed to be addressed to the following vulnerable categories: young people (aged 15-24), women and to the rural population in both counties. The project envisaged the construction of two facilities that work together in the cross-border area, the “*Verba Docent*” Adult Education Centre in Arad and the Social Centre in Gyulai, which act as long-term investments to offer continuous possibilities to intervene with more education and labour occupation activities.

A location near the municipality of Arad was selected for the construction of the "Verba Docent" Adult Education Centre, in order to ease the access of interested participants. Concerning Békés, the facility was built in Gyulai. The centres are to be used for the organization of trainings, exchanges and promotion of local manufacturers. These activities aim at contributing to a higher occupancy level of the workforce in the two communities and to improving cross-border cooperation between the two partners. The following figure presents the logic of intervention of the RO-HU project 380.

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
To contribute to sustainable cross-border cooperation between Excelsior and Koros-Maros in order to increase the occupancy level of workforce in Arad and Békés counties.	Increasing the occupancy level of workforce in Arad and Bekes counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the construction of the "Verba Docent" Adult Education Centre in Arad and Social Centre in Gyulai organizing adult education courses especially for the unemployed, persons in search of job and socially marginalized persons, organizing general and specific job fairs that target the health, agriculture and tourism sectors, organizing conferences and carrying out communication activities, developing and promoting a joint Romanian-Hungarian brand for local products of the Crişul Alb/Feher-Koros River valley, study trips to Arad and Békés. 	<p>Output indicator: 8/b 1 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher skills of the participants to the project activities - More adult continuous learning opportunities in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment for the most vulnerable categories of population - Higher knowledge of the labour market opportunities in the eligible area - Strengthening cross-border cooperation between actors 	<p>Result indicator: R 8/b Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher employment rate in the Arad and Bekes counties

In terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of work packages:

- **management** – where the responsible partner was the Association for the Promotion of Natural and Cultural Values of Banat and Crişana "Excelsior";
- **investments** – where the construction of the centres were carried out;
- **implementation** – which included the following activities implemented by both partners
 - o the construction of the "Verba Docent" Adult Education Centre in Arad and Social Centre in Gyulai
 - o organizing adult education courses especially for the unemployed, persons in search of job and socially marginalized persons,
 - o organizing general and specific job fairs that target the health, agriculture and tourism sectors,
 - o organizing conferences and carrying out communication activities,
 - o developing and promoting a joint Romanian-Hungarian brand for local products of the Crişul Alb/Feher-Koros River valley,
 - o study trips to Arad and Békés.
- **communication** – the Lead Partner was responsible for the following activities: a) organizing start-up conference in Arad, b) realizing publications, c) organizing a project results presentation conference in Arad - during a job fair, and so is not described as a separate and d) communication event. The Project Partner was responsible for the following communication activities: a) organizing start-up conference in Gyulai, b) realizing promotional materials, c) organizing an interim project results presentation conference in Gyulai - during a job fair, and so is not described as a separate communication event and d) organizing a project results presentation conference in Gyulai.

The project was prolonged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the project involved training courses that were/are conducted face-to-face, they had to be delayed for a later stage of project implementation, after a number of the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. The study visits between trainees from the two counties had to be delayed as well, due to restrictions in travelling between countries.

The programme output indicator to which the project is contributing is **8/b 1 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training**, with a target of 960 participants. The current value of the output indicator is 957 participants, representing 99,69% of the total target. During the interview with the representative of Excelsior, it was mentioned that the value of the output indicator will slightly exceed the 960 participants target. The following table presents the output indicator set for the RO-HU 390 project:

Job fair	Value achieved	Target
8/b 1 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	957	960

Vocational trainings courses were organized on the both sides of the border. The courses varied in the knowledge and skills that were taught, with most having a sustainable living component. The Romanian side provided trainings in old aged caretaking, social entrepreneurship, ecological agriculture, sport-event organizer, sport discipline and ICT skills. The vocational training courses that were organized in Romania contribute to the value of the indicator with 366 participants. A total number of 432 participants were registered to the courses organized in Romania, however 366 of them managed to complete the course and were granted a diploma, representing an 84,66% success rate. The Hungarian side provided courses in operating forklifts, farming, operating specific agriculture and dairy machinery, brewery, English courses, Romanian courses and ICT skills. The total number of registered participants to the vocational training courses in Hungary was 251, however with 218 participants managing to complete the respective courses, representing a success rate of 86,85%. The following table presents the courses organized by the Excelsior organization:

Vocational training courses	Total participants	Diplomas granted	% of Diplomas granted
Social Entrepreneurship 1	26	23	88,46%
Social Entrepreneurship 2	28	26	92,86%
Ecological Agriculturalist 1	27	27	100,00%
Ecological Agriculturalist 2	25	23	92,00%
Old aged caretaker 1	27	24	88,89%
Old aged caretaker 2	28	19	67,86%
Mixed ecological farms operator 1	21	19	90,48%
Mixed ecological farms operator 2	20	14	70,00%
Personal development councillor 1	26	26	100,00%
Personal development councillor 2	28	25	89,29%
Sport event organizer 1	22	21	95,45%
Sport event organizer 2	23	21	91,30%
Sports instructor 1	17	12	70,59%
Sports instructor 2	26	23	88,46%
Sports instructor 3	17		0,00%
ICT skills 1	25	25	100,00%
ICT skills 2	23	20	86,96%
ICT skills 3	23	18	78,26%
Grand Total	432	366	84,72%

The following table presents the courses organized by the Koros-Moros Foundation:

Vocational training courses	Total participants	Diplomas granted	% of Diplomas granted
Agricultural mechanic	15	9	60,00%
Agriculturalist	21	20	95,24%

Vocational training courses	Total participants	Diplomas granted	% of Diplomas granted
Animal farmer	11	11	100,00%
Brewer	13	11	84,62%
English	16	13	81,25%
Entrepreneurial skills	21	21	100,00%
Food sales	10		0,00%
Fork lift operator 1	15	15	100,00%
Fork lift operator 2	19	19	100,00%
Garden worker	8	8	100,00%
Informatic skills ECDL	33	30	90,91%
Milking machine operator	8	8	100,00%
Romanian language 1	16	15	93,75%
Romanian language 2	15	15	100,00%
Tractor driver	16	9	56,25%
Vegies and fruits proc.	14	14	100,00%
Grand Total	251	218	86,85%

As can be seen in the tables from above, a number of vocational training courses were focused on agriculture, which represents the main economic sector in the rural area, one of the target areas of the project. The context of the project recognized that agriculture sector and rural areas are in a need of better skilled workers in the region. As well, the vocational training courses provided respect the commitment of the project in ensuring a strong sustainable life component to the teaching.

Another type of activity that contributed to the value of the output indicator are the job fairs. According to the project period report 11.1 (30/06/2022), the total number of participants to the job fairs were 373 target group members. The following job fairs were organized:

Job fair	Location	Participants
Job Fair Agromalim 2021	Arad	149
Job Fair Békéscsaba	Békés	54
Job Fair Gyulai	Békés	63
Job Fair Mezőkovácsháza	Békés	56
Job Fair Sarkad	Békés	51
Grand Total		373

Furthermore, the implementing partners managed to build the two training centres in Arad and Gyulai and carried out the acquisitions of the necessary equipment. The implementing partners developed a joint cross-border brand and used it for promoting at least 10 local products from the Crişul Alb/Feher Koros river valley, which deepen the cross-border cooperation between stakeholders from the eligible area.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

According to the Application Form and to the information collected in the interviews with both partners, the project is coherent with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, specifically with the following Priority Axis: **07 – Knowledge society, PA 08 – Competitiveness of enterprises and PA 09 – People and skills.**

However, when the main objective and main implementation activities of the project were analysed in comparison with the objective and actions mentioned in the latest Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, it was found that the project indeed contributes to PA 09, yet it has no contribution to PA 07 and PA 08.

As mentioned above, the main objective of the project was to contribute to the improvement of the cross-border cooperation between Excelsior and Koros-Maros in order to increase the occupancy level of workforce in Arad and Békés counties. In order to achieve this objective, the main implementation activities that were carried out were the construction of adult education centres in both counties, organizing training courses, organizing general and specific job fairs, organizing conferences, developing and promoting a joint Romanian-Hungarian brand for local products and study trips between Arad and Békés.

According to the EU Danube Strategy, the actions of the PA 07, that were revised in 2020, includes the following:

- **ACTION 1:** To promote coordination of national, regional and EU funds to stimulate excellence in R&I, in research areas specific for Danube Region
- **ACTION 2:** To promote participation of Danube countries in EU R&I Programmes, in particular in Horizon Europe
- **ACTION 3:** To strengthen cooperation among universities, research organizations and SMEs in the Danube Region
- **ACTION 4:** To increase awareness and visibility of science and innovation in the Danube Region
- **ACTION 5:** To support exchange of information and experience sharing for the purpose of preparation of future strategic R&I documents applicable in the new programming period
- **ACTION 6:** To promote horizontal cooperation in science and technology across all PAs and other MRS

Comparing the objective and implementation activities of the project with the main targets of PA 07, it can be concluded that the project does not contribute to PA 07. The actions of the Priority Axis are focused on encouraging and coordinating interventions and investments in research and innovation and on achieving coordination between various stakeholders, such as universities, research organizations and SMEs. Meanwhile, the RO-HU 380 project is focused in the area of increasing employment and skills through vocational training and jobs fairs. Thus, the project does contribute to PA 07.

Concerning PA 08, the following actions are included:

- **ACTION 1:** To foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge between SMEs, academia, the public sector and civil society in areas of competence in the Danube Region
- **ACTION 2:** Establishment of an Innovative Digital Ecosystem in the Danube Region in order to support SMEs when tackling the challenges of a digitalised world
- **ACTION 3:** Improvement of framework conditions, support programs and capacity building of stakeholders, to enhance the collaboration between cluster initiatives and regional innovation strategies, with an accent on rural areas
- **ACTION 4:** To improve business support to strengthen the innovative and digital capacities of female-led-SMEs
- **ACTION 5:** Enhance the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the Danube Region SMEs

By looking at the actions included in the PA 08, it can be concluded that the project does not contribute to the respective Priority Axis neither. The actions included in PA 08 are focused on establishing the conditions, framework and cooperation between relevant stakeholders (universities, research institutes and companies) to share and transfer knowledge. As mentioned earlier, the RO-HU 380 project tackles the challenges of increasing employment and skills of workers through vocational training and jobs fairs and it does not include any activities on knowledge transfer between universities, research institutes and companies.

Lastly, PA 09 includes the following actions:

- **ACTION 1:** Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies
- **ACTION 2:** Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work
- **ACTION 3:** Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market
- **ACTION 4:** Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All
- **ACTION 5:** Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems
- **ACTION 6:** Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences
- **ACTION 7:** Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility
- **ACTION 8:** Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development

PA 09 is focused on contributing to a higher employment rate, especially through (1) tackling youth and long-term unemployment, (2) educational outcomes, skills and competences, (3) higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems and (4) inclusive education and training. The project contributes to multiple actions and objectives established for the Priority Axis. Due to its focus on increasing employment and skills through vocational training and job fairs, the project directly contributes to PA 09.

Limited complementarity or synergy between the RO-HU 380 project and past projects implemented by the implementing partners can be identified, based on the information collected from the application form and from the interviews. For Excelsior, the project represents the first one specialized on employment. Excelsior has an experience in the field of nature conservation, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development of local communities. According to the information gathered from the interview, the Lead Partner decided to apply for funding in the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary due to the lack of funding opportunities from the Ministry of Environment. The project RO-HU 380 represents one of the few projects implemented by Excelsior in the field of continuous adult education.

Regarding Koros-Maros Foundation, the partner in this project, the organization has more experience in carrying out vocational trainings than Excelsior. The Koros-Maros Foundation conducted trainings for disabled people (project financed through Hungarian programmes) in the Békés county. As well, the partner implemented a project (financed through another programme) that provided vocational training in gardening techniques with low greenhouse emissions. The Koros-Maros Foundations planned to continue to organize vocational trainings in gardening methods that produce low amounts of greenhouse emissions, however it did not identify a source of funding until Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary 2014-2020.

The two past projects in vocational trainings in Békés implemented by the Koros-Maros Foundation are complementary with the RO-HU project because the target group (people with disability in the first instance) and the topic taught (low greenhouse gardening skills in the second instance) differ from the ones established for RO-HU 380. The projects can be considered as complementary with the RO-HU 380 project, however no synergy can be identified.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The project is contributing to the programme result indicator **R 8/b Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population**. As the project is still in implementation, the result indicator cannot be yet quantified.

The RO-HU 380 project has a limited contribution to the *Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area*, as the budget of the project represents just 4,75% of the total amount that was contracted on this specific objective. However, the project managed to fulfil its target on participants to joint local employment initiatives and joint training.

The project had the objective to tackle the problem of adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment and to increase the occupancy rate of the most vulnerable categories of population. The logic of intervention of the project envisaged that by providing vocational training courses to people from the vulnerable population will contribute to a higher employment rate. The project achieved its output programme indicator, by ensuring 957 participants to joint local employment initiatives and joint training. Although the project managed to achieve its target (and according to the interview with both Excelsior and Koros Moros Foundation, it will slightly exceed its target), **it is difficult to assess the net effect of the vocational training courses and job fairs on the employment rate in the two counties, as the participation to an employment initiative does not guarantee employment from 6 months since the benefit was granted.**

The unemployment rate in Arad is very low (stands at 0,8% in 2022) while the rate is higher in Békés (stands at 6,5% in 2022). In Arad, despite the low employment, the project activities contribute to the betterment of skills of the target group, therefore facilitating the chances of finding another job. With regards to Békés, where the employment rate is much higher than Arad, the total number of beneficiaries of employment initiatives (vocational training and job fairs) stands at 442 participants.

The analysis of the distribution of the budget on project working packages provides further insights on the impact of the project on increasing the employment rate. As shown in the table from below, the largest part of the budget was allocated to the construction and the acquisition of the equipment for the two centres in Arad and Gyulai. The following table presents the budget spending per working package:

Working Package	Declared amount EUR	Percentage
Communication	26.063,13 EUR	0,88%
Development and implementation of the "Verba Docent" Adult Education Centre Arad	1.409.342,37 EUR	47,63%
Development and implementation of the Social Center Gyulai	664.543,48 EUR	22,46%
Management	313.844,10 EUR	10,61%
Preparation	14.000,00 EUR	0,47%
T1 Implementation LP	235.531,94 EUR	7,96%
T2 Implementation PP2	295.430,84 EUR	9,98%
Grand Total	2.958.755,86 EUR	100,00%

The budget spending analysis shows that 47,63% of the budget was spent for the development and implementation of the "Verba Docent" Adult Education Centre in Arad and 22,46% of the budget was spent on the development and implementation of the Social Centre in Gyulai. Thus, a total of 70,09% of the budget was spent on the construction of the two centres. The spending includes the documentation for construction of the buildings, the construction works, the equipment, tools and machinery for the vocational trainings and taxes. The cost related solely to the construction works of the two centres (without services and equipment) represent 1.609.935,19 EUR, representing 54,41% of the total budget.

The vocational trainings and job fairs were included in the packages T1 Implementation LP (for the Romanian side) and in T2 Implementation PP2 (for the Hungarian side). As it can be seen in the table from above, the budget spending for T1 Implementation LP was 7,96% while for T2 Implementation PP2 was 9,98%. The total overall amount spent on this type of working package was 17,95% of the total budget.

It was argued in the interview with Excelsior that the logic of intervention of *Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area* was focused too much on hard investments. The Lead Partner argued that for employment interventions, the financing of more soft projects with smaller budgets that are focused on providing vocational trainings and job fairs is more efficient in reaching a higher number of target group members in the eligible area. More soft projects that are smaller in budget can reach to more final beneficiaries from the target groups to be provided with vocational training courses and jobs fairs. The Lead Partner mentioned that in the 2007-2013 period, the employment interventions financed the soft projects of a higher number of beneficiaries than in the 2014-2020 period. As a consequence of the budget allocation, given the logic of intervention, the representative of Excelsior argued that biggest achievement of the project was the construction of the training centres.

The representative of Koros-Maros Foundation mentioned in the interview that the construction of the centres is the biggest achievement as well. The representative further argued that another impact of the project were the trainings offered to 218 people from the target group, the strengthening of the collaboration with Excelsior and becoming more present as a stakeholder in adult continuous learning in the Békés county.

Regarding the content of the vocational training courses, according to the interview with a target group member, trainings were effective in providing the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise a profession, as well as written certification. The target group member believes that the programme helped the trainees with changing workplaces or finding a job if they did not have any in the recent past. From his personal perspective, the most important result of the project was that he could find a job within the field of brewery in Gyulai. He did not get a job at the same brewery where the trainings were held, but in the other brewery in town, and has been working there ever since. From the perspective of the community, he believes that the main benefit of the project is that it provided employment for several teachers in the training program, and it provided extra opportunities for the people who attended these trainings.

Thus, although in the case of Arad the unemployment rate is low, standing at 0,8%, the training courses had contributed to developing the skills of workers that are interested in switching jobs, and provided certification for it. According to the interviews with the partners, the vocational training courses were long in hours taught. The theoretical part of the courses represented 1/3 of the total number of hours necessary

for each type of course. Two thirds of the hours number was represented by practice hours. Thus, the courses contributed to increasing the skills and knowledge of the final beneficiaries.

Given that the RO-HU project's budget represents 4,75% of the total amount that was contracted on this specific objective, that 17,95% of the total budget was dedicated to soft activities and that the implementing partners managed to reach 957 target group members with vocational training and job fairs, **it can be considered that the project has a partial contribution to increasing the employment rate in the Arad and Békés counties.** However, it is important to mention that receiving the benefits does not lead to employment. **The development of the centres has as well an impact on the employment rate in the two counties, as it will serve long term as a place where continuous adult education learning can take place. On the short-term, the impact on employment of the two centres can be considered limited.**

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Sustainable development is a strong component of the RO-HU 380 project, considering the Lead Partner's experience in natural conservation and protection of the environment. As showed in the tables from above, both partners included vocational training courses in ecological agriculture, mixed ecological agriculture methods, social entrepreneurship, sporting disciplines, sport event organization etc. In Romania, 57,10% of the total trainees of the vocational training courses participated to courses that were focussed on sustainable development. The materials used in the trainings were recyclable and the use of paper was limited, while the promotion materials are to be kept to be used in the sustainability period.

Concerning **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the project partners did not implement affirmative measures concerning race, sex, age, religion or any other discriminatory criteria. According to the interview with both partners, in the selection of the management and implementation teams of both partners, the staff was selected according to professional experience and personal abilities, regardless of race, sex, age, religion or any other discriminatory criteria.

Regarding **equality between man and women**, the partners did target vulnerable women that were victims of domestic violence to receive vocational training. The course of old-age caretaking was especially tailored for this target group and it was considered by the Lead Partner as a great success. According to the interview with both partners, in the selection of the management and implementation teams of both partners, the staff was selected according to professional experience and personal abilities, regardless of gender.

8. Main factors influencing project results

In the interview with both partners, a number of mechanisms that facilitated or hampered the implementation of the project were identified. The main issue that hampered the implementation of the project was on the Romanian side, regarding the construction works of the centre in Arad. The Lead Partner encountered difficulties in working with the construction market that caused delays regarding the respective work package. The services that were received from the contracted architects, engineers and construction firms were of low quality and were provided with delays. The Lead Partner was in constant discussion with the architects, engineers and construction firms in order to ensure that purchased services and works are of good quality. As well, due to the increase in price of the construction materials and war in Ukraine, there were discussions and negotiations regarding the price for the construction works of the centre. The Lead Partner mentioned in the interview that a list of construction companies that have a good track record in providing high-quality services and works should be made by the Managing Authority, in order to avoid construction companies that deliver services and works with delays and of low quality.

The Romanian side encountered difficulties in carrying out the vocational training courses, due to issues in authorizing the courses and issuing the diplomas for the trainees by County Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (AJPIS). According to the Lead Partner, only one person from AJPIS is responsible with the authorization of vocational training courses for the whole county of Arad. Due to understaffing of AJPIS, the authorization of courses and issuing of diplomas was a lengthy process, and the Lead Partner could not reach out to AJPIS for urgent matters, as the single person responsible for vocational training courses did not have enough time to assist the Lead Partner.

Furthermore, Excelsior encountered difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, that caused delays in the organization of vocational training courses. Excelsior had to wait for periods when the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in order to organize the courses in face-to-face format. Some courses, that did not require face-to-face interaction, were moved to online. However, the Managing Authority supported the

Lead Partner in facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by approving delays in the schedule of project activities.

On the Hungarian side, the Koros-Maros Foundation did not encounter issues in the construction works for the centre in Gyulai. According to the interview with the representative of Koros-Maros Foundation, there weren't any issues with the quality of services and works provided by the architect, engineer and construction firm. As well, despite the issues of higher prices for construction materials and the effects of the war in Ukraine, the budget allocated for the development of the centre was not affected. The representative of the Koros-Maros Foundation argued in the interview that he was in constant communication with the construction firm and negotiated a price for the works that did not exceed the budget, despite the increases in prices on the market.

The representative of the Koros-Maros Foundation mentioned the exchange rates between euro, forint and ron as an economic factor that facilitated the implementation of the project. The forint was devaluated in comparison with the euro, which facilitated the spending of the budget, as more resources were available. Another factor that supported the implementation of the project mentioned by the Hungarian side in the interview is the pre-payment system of funds, especially for organizations that lack the financial resources to get involved in projects that involve hard investments. Besides delays, the COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the implementation of the project. The partner delivered vocational training courses and job fairs in time, by waiting for periods when COVID-19 restrictions were partially lifted. As in the case of the Lead Partner, the Koros-Maros Foundation appreciated the support given from the Managing Authority during the pandemic, especially the measure of approving delays in the schedule of implementation of the project activities.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

Few unexpected and indirect effects were generated by the project. Both partners mentioned just one spill-over effect that is linked with the project, the use of the two centres by the communities from the two counties in organizing local events. Although the centres were built with the scope to accommodate vocational trainings courses and other types of employment innovative, the centres hosted social and cultural events.

10. Sustainability of project results

According to the Application Form, the approach of the project was to effectively integrate infrastructure development with soft specific activities implementation, for ensuring the use and performance during sustainability period and beyond. The centres, equipment, tools and materials achieved through the project, will remain at the disposal of the partners after the end of the project. Project partners committed in the Application Form to preserve cooperation with the project participant organizations, including National Employment Agency in Arad (AJOFM) and local public administrations, at least for the sustainability period. The created infrastructure is to be supported by the project partners, from own resources, represented by membership fees, donations, and incomes from other types of activities: consultancy for environmental impact assessment etc.

As mentioned above, both beneficiaries consider that the construction of the centres as the biggest achievement of the project. The analysis of the budget spending shows that 70,09% was dedicated to the development of the two centres in Arad and Gyulai. Both beneficiaries consider the centres as the results that will be the most sustainable. The representatives of both organizations will support the expenditure related to the maintenance of the two centres, as committed in the Application Form. The centres will continue to host vocational training courses on fields which were covered in the project, due to the purchased equipment. However, the development of the centres to accommodate other types of vocational training courses will require additional funding, that could be accessed through other programmes.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

One lesson learned during the implementation of this project concerns the logic of intervention of the *Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area*. A large share of the activities that were eligible were focused around the development of the two centres in Arad and Gyulai. As mentioned above, 70,09% of the budget was spent on the construction and acquisition of equipment while 54,41% of the budget was spent specifically on the construction works of the two centres. Only 17,95% of the budget was spent on working packages that provided vocational training courses and job fairs to the target groups. The Lead Partner argued during the interview that a more efficient approach to activate the target group in the eligible area would be to finance more soft projects with smaller budgets, that could reach more final

beneficiaries. The RO-HU 380 project reached 366 target group members in Romania and 218 target group members in Hungary through training courses, while 373 target group members were reached through the job fairs. Therefore, one lesson learned from this project is that in order to reach a higher number of target group members, the eligible amounts to be granted to beneficiaries should be smaller and focused on soft activities, in order to finance more beneficiaries.

One disadvantage of this approach could represent the sustainability of the results obtained through soft activities. The Application Form and the information collected in the interviews with both partners identified the centres as the most sustainable result of the project, due to its nature as a hard investment. Both partners mentioned in the interview that they will continue the trainings by using the two centres and the equipment acquired. The partners will cover the expenses related to the maintenance of the centres.

In conclusion, the project RO-HU 380 achieved its targets with regards to the output programme indicator *8/b 1 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training*. It is too early to assess the achievement of the result indicator *R 8/b Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population*, as the project is still in implementation. However, the contribution of this project to the result indicator is considered to be limited, due to the strong focus of the project on hard investment. A total of 70,09% of the budget was spent on the construction of the two centres. The spending included the documentation for construction of the buildings, the construction works, the equipment, tools and machinery for the vocational trainings and taxes. The cost related solely to the construction works of the two centres represent 54,41% of the total budget of the project.

This focus of hard activities is not specific to the RO-HU 380 project alone, it was one of the eligible activities established by the Logic of Intervention. Although two training facilities, that will have long-term effects, were built, the budget dedicated to soft activities such as vocational training courses and job fairs was only 17,95% of the total budget. A total number of 366 trainees in Romania and 218 trainees in Hungary benefited from vocational training courses, while 373 target group members participated to job fairs on both sides of the border. According to the interviewed target group member, the courses were effective in providing the trainees with relevant knowledge and skills. The Application Form and the information collected in the interviews indicate that the content of courses was solid, as the vocational training courses were long in hours taught. The theoretical part of the courses represented 1/3 of the total number of hours necessary for each type of course. Two thirds of the hours number was represented by practice hours.

Given that the RO-HU project's budget represents 4,75% of the total amount that was contracted on this specific objective, that 17,95% of the total budget was dedicated to soft activities and that the implementing partners managed to reach 957 target group members with vocational training and job fairs, it can be considered that the project has a partial contribution to increasing the employment rate in the Arad and Békés counties. However, it is important to mention that receiving the benefits does not lead to employment. The development of the centres has as well an impact on the employment rate in the two counties, as it will serve long term as a place where continuous adult education learning can take place. On the short-term, the impact on employment of the two centres can be considered limited.

The "*Adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment*" project had the objective to tackle the problem of adult education in the field of healthy life and sustainable living environment to the most vulnerable categories of population. The application form recognized the need for high-skilled jobs in agriculture, especially in Romania, which lost jobs in this sector as the demand for low-skilled workers is low. Both Romania and Hungary are facing disparities between the urban and rural environments, and are in need of workers qualified in new and increasing sectors of the economy, while considering a sustainable living environment. The project was aimed to address especially to the vulnerable categories: young people (aged 15-24), women and to the rural population in both countries. Judging by the training courses that were offered, it can be considered that the project achieved in providing a proper response to the context in the Arad and Békés area. As it was mentioned above, the vocational training included a strong component in sustainable living and healthy life, at the skills taught were in ecological agriculture, social entrepreneurship and sport disciplines. A number of vocational training courses were focused on providing higher skills in agriculture, which represents the main economic sector in the rural area. As well, the partners did target vulnerable women that were victims of domestic violence, by tailoring the course of old-age caretaking especially this target group.

The main issue that hampered the implementation of the project was on the Romanian side, regarding the construction works of the centre in Arad. The Lead Partner encountered difficulties in working with the construction market. The increase in price of the construction materials and war in Ukraine affected as well the construction works in Arad. Excelsior encountered difficulties in carrying out the vocational training

courses, due to issues in authorizing the courses and issuing the diplomas for the trainees by AJPIS, due to the understaffing of the local administration body. Excelsior encountered further difficulties with the COVID-19 pandemic, that caused delays in the organization of vocational training courses. On the Hungarian side, the Koros-Moros Foundation did not encounter issues in the construction works for the centre in Gyulai. According to the interview with the representative of Koros-Moros Foundation, there weren't issues with the quality of services and works provided by the architect, engineer and construction firm.

The representative of the Koros-Moros Foundation mentioned the exchange rates between euro, forint and ron as an economic factor that facilitated the implementation of the project. The forint was devaluated in comparison with the euro, which facilitated the spending of the budget as more resources were available. Another factor that supported the implementation of the project mentioned by the Hungarian side in the interview is the pre-payment system of funds, especially for organizations that lack the financial resources to get involved in projects that involve hard investments. Besides delays, the COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the implementation of the project. The partner delivered vocational training courses and job fairs in time, by waiting for periods when COVID-19 restrictions were partially lifted. As in the case of the Lead Partner, the Koros-Moros Foundation appreciated the support given from the Managing Authority during the pandemic, especially the measure of approving delays in the schedule of implementation of the project activities.

The **main recommendation** of the case study is providing more focus to soft activities in employment. The financing of more soft projects with smaller budgets that are focused on providing vocational trainings and job fairs is more efficient in reaching a higher number of target group members in the eligible area. More soft projects that are smaller in budget can reach to more final beneficiaries from the target groups to be provided with vocational training courses and jobs fairs. The Lead Partner mentioned that in the 2007-2013 period, the employment interventions financed the soft projects of a higher number of beneficiaries than in the 2014-2020 period. As a consequence of the budget allocation, given the logic of intervention, the representative of Excelsior argued that biggest achievement of the project was the construction of the training centres.

Case Report

ROHU-395 - Cooperation between Nyírbátor and Carei for improving employment and promoting development based on endogenous potential

1. General data on project

Title	Cooperation between Nyírbátor and Carei for improving employment and promoting development based on endogenous potential
Code	ROHU-395
Priority axis	PA3 - Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area
Lead Beneficiary	Local Government of Nyírbátor
Partners	Municipality of Carei
Target Group / Groups ⁷⁰	h) The working age population i) National public authority j) Interest groups including NGOs k) Education/training centre and school l) Enterprise, excluding SME m) SME n) Business support organisation o) General public

⁷⁰ According to Application Form

	p) Sectoral agency
Covered geographical area	Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 24 months (01.02.2020 – 31.03.2023) After extension, if the case: 38 months (01.02.2020 – 31.12.2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	2.895.495,00 Euro, out of which ERDF 2.461.170,75 Euro
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 753.326,69 Euro out of which 640.327,59 Euro ERDF Total reported to JS: 753.326,69 Euro out of which 640.327,59 Euro ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	In implementation
Type of project (regular/ strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Information Fiche <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Enikő Fülöp, project manager, Local Government of Nyírbátor Diana Bochiş, coordinator second partner, Municipality of Carei

3. Short presentation of project context

The project *Cooperation between Nyírbátor and Carei for improving employment and promoting development based on endogenous potential (CO-LABOUR)* aims to enhance the employment and the local economic growth in the cross-border region of Nyírbátor and Carei through

- improving the conditions for vocational trainings
- promoting local products and services,
- implementing a set of activities to balance the supply and demand side of labour as well as to enhance the cross-border mobility of the workforce.

According to the application of the project, the share of the active population within the eligible area of the programme, including Nyírbátor and Carei, is lower than the average of EU28+4. The lack of skilled labour poses an obstacle to the further growth and it is even a serious threat to day-to-day operation of companies. The economic growth in recent years even more stressed this problem, and it can be the obstacle for further growth in both countries. The RO-HU Programme identified the share of the active population as one of the biggest challenges in the region.

In Nyírbátor, the high ratio of unskilled disadvantaged people is around 20% of the population who do not meet the employers' needs and are not able integrate into the primary labour market. Structural unemployment is a common phenomenon of the partner cities: parallel to the labour shortage, there is a relatively high number of unemployed people (in total almost 1,000 people according to the latest data of the labour market authorities).

At the moment of the preparation of the cross-border workforce mobility is still on a low level between Romania and Hungary compared to the Western European cross-border areas, not only due to Schengen borders or of inadequate transport links but also due to administrative differences. In addition, a kind of mental barrier exists preventing people to seek job in the other country even in cases when it would be rational.

The main common challenges that were identified in the application form are as follows:

- unsuitable conditions for organizing trainings and for promoting local products and services,
- labour shortages in defined branches,
- low level of cross-border workforce mobility,
- acute employment problems of socially deprived people.

Nyírbátor and Carei are located close to each other and are linked through various ties, however, they could not form a common labour market and economic area. Both cities share similar problems in employment: lack of skilled labour in several sectors combined with relatively low activity rate and high long-term unemployment, etc. Manufacturing industries, food processing industry, machine industry, light industries, building industry and tourism can be identified as preliminary priority sectors that extremely suffer from the inadequate quantity and quality of workforce on both side of the border region.

The cross-border workforce mobility is still low between Romania and Hungary, not only hindered by the obvious language gap, undeveloped transport infrastructure (especially of that for commuting), the delay in Romania's accession to Schengen area but also impeded by the lack of information and services that would assist and encourage jobseekers from both side of the border to find job in the other country. As well, in the cross-border region, vocational trainings have low prestige among the population, thus, the enrolment rates are decreasing. The facilitation of the establishment of joint labour market seems to be a much more fruitful approach (especially on long term) than to improve separately the labour markets and maintain the gaps and fragmentation that currently exist.

According to the data from the National Institutes of Statistics from Romania and Hungary, the unemployment rate in the 2019-2022 period is the following:

County	2019	2020	2021	2022
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	8,0%	8,8%	9,2%	8,4%
Satu Mare	1,5%	2,2%	1,9%	2,0%

As shown in the table from above, the issue of unemployment is more prominent in the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, then in Satu Mare. Although unemployment has increased in both counties, in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg with 0,4 percentage points and in Satu Mare with 0,5 percentage points, the unemployment rate is the latter is much lower, standing at 2,0%.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The overall objective of the project is to increase the employment in the common cross-border region of Nyírbátor and Carei by creating favourable conditions for a balanced labour market and for improved competitiveness of the local businesses on the long term. The specific objectives of the project are presented in the following table:

Specific objective	Description
Balancing supply and demand in the common labour market of Nyírbátor and Carei	This objective had the aim to enhance the employment and on establishing a joint cross-border labour market. According to the application, based on the detailed examination of the needs of employers, the project has the aim to contribute to the creation of the conditions for meet their demand in the middle and long term. The project aimed to contribute as well to the better utilization of the workforce and active population that is available in the region, despite the shrinking of the total population.
Strengthening competitiveness of local enterprises based on the endogenous potential and assets	This objective aimed to strengthen the competitiveness of local enterprises, by enhancing the awareness and visibility of high-quality local products and services. The new and renewed centres are supposed to serve the promotion of products and services offered by local businesses as well. The availability of a more skilled workforce would also contribute to higher competitiveness of local enterprises. With skilled employers, the businesses will be able to operate more efficiently and to meet better the market expectations.

Increasing cross-border mobility of workforce	The objective aimed to bridge the institutional, mental and information gaps that currently hinders the higher mobility of workforce in the region by complex networking and capacity building activities. CO-LABOUR project aimed to assist the process in several ways, for instance by establishing common labour market database or organizing common job fairs and cross-border labour market forum.
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The project has the aim to create favourable conditions for vocational trainings (professional, skills development and/or upskilling) and for the promotion of local product and services in the region. It aims to contribute to the development of a common cross-border labour market by various joint activities targeting all labour market actors. The CO-LABOUR project employs an integrated approach to reach the maximal added-value, by including physical investments and the organization of common trainings, labour market forums, job fairs, conferences, which can be the foundation of the common cross-border labour market in the Nyírbátor-Carei region.

The project targets unemployed people and jobseekers who are already employed but seeking to change their job more adequate to their qualification. As well, the project aimed to bring together relevant institutions, by establishing an institutional network on 2 levels:

- by matching the employment and training institutions in order to provide workforce for the employers based on their previously examined needs to balance the demand and supply;
- by connecting the different institutions from both side of the border to share the knowledge, transfer experiences and handle the common challenges on the labour market and in the economy together.

According to Application Form, the project partners begun with the elaboration of a joint development strategy and action plan to identify the cross-border challenges, potentials and needs as well as to find a shared approach and common solutions. The activities based on the joint strategy were the following:

- **Creating the conditions for trainings and for local product and services**, which aim to achieve better conditions to make possible the effective and efficient organization of demand-driven trainings and increase awareness and attractiveness of local products and services from the region of Nyírbátor and Carei. The project envisioned three investments will be executed to create better conditions for trainings and promotion: one training centre and one centre for local products and services in Nyírbátor and one training and exhibition centre in Carei.
- **Joint activities to increase employment**, based on the joint strategy and action plan. Both partners implement their activities in close collaboration to achieve the project objectives:
 - common labour market forums will foster the cross-border cooperation and networking among the relevant stakeholders;
 - common job fairs and the common online labour market database will contribute to better match the demands and the supply;
 - and to enhance the cross-border mobility of workforce;
 - demand-driven trainings for unemployed/disadvantaged people will provide workforce with the desirable skills;
 - mentor program will support the disadvantaged people when starting work in a new workplace.
- **Communication and dissemination activities**, with a two-fold target: to ensure the project and programme visibility in the wider public of the border region and beyond, and to support the dissemination of outputs and results to the highest possible extent. According to the interview with the coordinator of activities of the Carei partner, the project used the following planned communication tools (based on a communication and dissemination plan): project image guidelines; common album about local products and services of the Nyírbátor-Carei region; public events, promotional materials, and digital activities.
- **Project management**, which was carried on by a joint cross-border team made up from personnel of the project partners and external experts.

The activities of the project were foreseen to contribute directly or indirectly to reaching the programme output indicator **C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training**. According to the Application Form, 966 people will participate in joint local employment initiatives and trainings from both side of the border. The type of

related events and activities will be various: trainings, job fairs, forums, mentor program, conferences, etc. According to the interviews with both partners, the target value of 966 participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings will be fulfilled.

The following figure presents the logic of intervention of the project:

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
The overall objective of the project is to increase the employment in the common cross-border region of Nyírbátor and Carei by creating favourable conditions for a balanced labour market and for improved competitiveness of the local businesses on the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing supply and demand in the common labour market of Nyírbátor and Carei Strengthening competitiveness of local enterprises based on the endogenous potential and assets Increasing cross-border mobility of workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a Training Centre in Nyírbátor Development of Centre for local products and services in Nyírbátor Development of a Training and exhibition centre in Carei Developing the integrated development strategy and action plan Common Labour Market Forum Common Job Fairs Common Online Labour Market Database Vocational training Promotion of local products and services 	<p>Output indicator: C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> joint development strategy and action plan as a base for the common implementation; three buildings to be developed in order to accommodate trainings and promotion events of local products and services; increasing the skills among the workforce to satisfy the employers' needs; reduced structural unemployment through demand-driven trainings focussed on unemployed and disadvantaged people (social inclusion); reduced imbalances of the labour market in the region of Nyírbátor and Carei; organizing joint job fairs, labour market forums and a database of the employees and employers to enhance cross-border networking and workforce mobility; improved environment for local business environment; improved cooperation between relevant labour market and economic stakeholders in Nyírbátor and Carei. 	<p>Result indicator: R 8/b programme result indicator Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher employment rate in the Nyírbátor and Carei in the long term

The project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the interview with the project manager, the reason why the project partners requested the extension of the duration of the project was mainly due to effects that they could not foresee. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that their calculations about the implementation had to be changed, and their objectives were more difficult to achieve. The project was about to end on the 31.03.2023, but because there were delays on the behalf of Carei, they requested the project to last until 31.12.2023.

With regards to the activities that were implemented, there are three work package implemented under the CO-LABOUR project. There are two work packages focused on **Joint activities to increase employment** (soft activities) and on work package focussed on **Creating the conditions for trainings and for local product and services** (hard activities).

Within work package **T1 Common implementation activities of Nyírbátor**, coordinated by the Local Government of Nyírbátor, managed to complete the task of developing the integrated development strategy and action plan (T1.1.1), that was necessary for the implementation of the project. According to the interviews, as of March 2023, the partner organized two *Common Labour Market Forum* (T1.2.1). The scope

of this activity was to create opportunities for institutional networking to discuss common challenges, to define goals and to identify interventions necessary for achieving these goals jointly. The partner managed to organize two *Common Job Fairs* (T1.2.2), which have the aim to connect employees and employers in the cross-border area. This activity was delayed due to COVID-19, as the partner was supposed to organize a fair in the 4th period of the project and in the 6th period of the project.

The partners managed to set up a *Common Online Labour Market Database* (T1.2.3), which acts as a 'job bank' of employers, to give information for jobseekers about living and working in Nyírbátor and Carei. The data base will monitor labour market processes in Nyírbátor and Carei, by providing insights on number of unemployed/employed/newly recruited people, number of enterprises in different branches. Furthermore, the *training program for unemployed/disadvantaged people* (T1.2.4) was not started by March 2023, however the partner is currently carrying out the *Mentor Program for Disadvantaged People* (T1.2.5) according to schedule. Lastly, the partner is conducting according to the schedule the *Internal thematic experts* (T1.2.6), through which proper implementation of the thematic activities ensure proper implementation of the thematic activities.

Concerning work package **T2 Common implementation activities of Carei**, coordinated by the Municipality of Carei, the partner managed to complete *the Strategy on labour market development in Carei based on socio-economic research* (T2.1.1). The strategy, based on detailed labour market analysis, details the common vision as well as the overall and specific objectives, in synergy with the objectives of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme. As in the case of the T1 work package, the partner conducted the two *Common Labour Market Forum* (T2.2.1), the two *Common Job Fairs* (T1.2.2), established a *Common Online Labour Market Database* (T2.2.3). The partner did not start the *Training program for unemployed people* (T2.2.4). Furthermore, the development of a *Common album about local products and services* (T2.2.5) did not yet start, an activity meant to promote the local products and services, as there were delays in the development of the centre in Carei.

The work package **I1 Building of a training centre and a centre for local products and services in Nyírbátor (state-aid under GBER)** foresees infrastructure works in Nyírbátor, coordinated by the Hungarian partner. According to the interview with the project manager, the works for the *Training Centre in Nyírbátor* (I1.1.1) have been finalized, as well as the technical commissioning of the building. The training centre is located in the industrial area of Nyírbátor to serve the needs of local businesses, on site of the existing business incubator. The partner developed the *Centre for local products and services* (I1.1.2), located in the tourist area of Nyírbátor, with technical commissioning of the buildings being carried out. The centre will act to address the needs of local business that actually producing and offering them as well as of local inhabitants and tourists who can be the potential future consumer of them.

Lastly, the work package **I2 Establishment of a training and exhibition centre in Carei (state-aid under GBER)** foresees the development of a *Training and exhibition centre in Carei* (I2.1.1), which will act as a ground for vocational trainings to be carried out and for local products and services to be promoted. According to the interview with the representative of the project partner, the building has been finalized, after a long delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project contributes to multiple strategies, at European, Romanian and Hungarian level. The CO-LABOUR project clearly and directly contributes to fulfil the Europe 2020 employment target, to ensure a 75% employment rate. The CO-LABOUR project is coherent with *Priority Area 09 People and skills* of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which includes the following actions:

- **ACTION 1:** Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies
- **ACTION 2:** Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work
- **ACTION 3:** Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market
- **ACTION 4:** Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All
- **ACTION 5:** Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems
- **ACTION 6:** Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences
- **ACTION 7:** Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility
- **ACTION 8:** Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development

PA 09 is focused on contributing to a higher employment rate, especially through (1) tackling youth and long-term unemployment, (2) educational outcomes, skills and competences, (3) higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems and (4) inclusive education and training. The

project contributes to multiple actions and objectives established for the Priority Area. Due to its focus on increasing employment and skills through vocational training and strengthening cooperation in labour market policies, the project directly contributes to PA 09.

The project contributes to National Development and Territorial Development Concept of Hungary, to the objective “value creating and employment providing economic development”. The project contributes to the Territorial Development Strategic Program of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, to two thematic strategic objectives: “Proactive county” and “Qualified county”. As well, on the Hungarian side, the project contributes to Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County’s Employment Strategy (2017-2021).

Regarding Romania, the project contributes to the National Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania (2030), as it aims to develop human capital and increase competitiveness by linking education and life-long learning to the labour market. The project contributes to Romania’s National Strategy for Competitiveness (2014-2020), to the directions that are linked with employment and local economy development.

By increasing the accessibility of jobs, the project is in line with the National Employment Strategy 2014-2020, which aims to boost efforts to reach the 2020 target set by Romania (70% employment rate). The project also responds to the Priority 1 of Regional Development Strategy for the North-West Region 2014-2020, by contributing to strengthening institutional cooperation, to creating a proactive business environment and to increasing employment in the region.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The activities are meant to contribute to the fulfilment of the **R 8/b programme result indicator Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population**. In the Application Form was mentioned that some results will have a more direct contribution to the result indicator (e.g. job fairs, vocational trainings) while other activities will have a long term positive effect on raising the employment rate (e.g. improving the conditions for vocational trainings, workforce database, etc.).

The total budget of the CO-LABOUR project is 2.895.495,00 EUR, representing 4,61% of the total amount that was contracted under *Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area*. As mentioned above, the objective of the project is to increase the employment in the common cross-border region of Nyírbátor and Carei by creating favourable conditions for a balanced labour market and for improved competitiveness of the local businesses on the long term.

The analysis of documents and the interviews that were conducted show that the project had a mixed approach in tackling employment in the two cities, by increasing the skills of workers and by helping the local business in promoting the products. Besides the vocational trainings, that are meant to match skills of the workers to the present demands of the labour market, the partners included soft activities to support the visibility of the local products and services. Two of the three buildings that were developed, namely *Centre for local products and services in Nyírbátor* and *Training and exhibition centre in Carei*, have a strong focus on the promotion of local products and service.

The manager believes that the most important achievement of the project materialized in two fronts: in the extension of the Local Entrepreneurial Incubator House, and in the building of the centre for local products and services. The construction of the Centre for Local Products and Services, and the launch of its sales are all about helping local small producers and will continue to do so in the future. The centre has been and will be designed to help and support local small and medium-sized enterprises. These results will remain and will serve the purposes originally planned. The Local Entrepreneurial Incubator House has been used for providing trainings and mentorship programmes to the workforce, and will continue to do so in the future.

Regarding the centre built in Romania, it will have two functions. Firstly, the centre will continue to accommodate vocational training courses, provided by the municipality and other organizations. The courses to be organized will be selected in accordance with the current demand of the market. Secondly, the centre will function as an information point where the local products and services will be promoted. The centre will employ modern digital tools, such as holograms and video mapping, in order to ensure the visibility of the local products and services.

According to the interview with the project manager, the most important impact of the project was achieved through joint activities between the partners to increase employment, such as job fairs, labour market forums and related publications. The job fairs were able to reach young people from the area, who were about to enter the labour market. The organizers managed to show a wide range of the labour market

in the area for them, including the other side of the border. Besides raising the building for the latter, the project also prompted the Local Government of Nyírbátor to look for local craftsman on both sides of the border. This has led to the creation of an information system unprecedented in the county. The manager highlighted the successes achieved in relation with jobseekers with a disadvantaged background. They started a mentor programme, which aims to help people to find jobs, who have uncertainties about the process of writing a CV and attending to job interviews. With the help of the two mentors in the programme, some people already found jobs, and this positive effect will probably increase when the training programme starts as well. The resources needed for sustainability will be provided by the Local Government of Nyírbátor. The mentoring programme has been developed under the current programme, and the partners will continue it and develop it in the after the end of the project. The sustainability of the mentoring programme is being considered, either through funding from another project or through self-financing. Mentoring of the unemployed with disadvantaged background is considered important by the partners, as it offers a solution that is currently lacking in the national regulatory system and institutional infrastructure.

The representative of the second partner believes that the project will improve the quality of the workforce through training courses and ultimately, the chances of the potential employees to find a job. This result is possible because both partners are willing to adapt and tailor the vocational trainings and mentorship programmes to the present demands of the labour market. Both partner will continue to provide trainings in the centres that were built in the project, with the same principle of adapting to the demands of the labour markets. The second partner considers the involvement of the local municipality of Carei in addressing the challenges of the labour market as an important result in itself, as in Romania there are other institutions that fulfil this function.

The budget spending analysis shows that a total of 85,32% of the budget was spent on the development of the three centres in Nyírbátor and Carei. In detail, 68,79% of the budget was spent on the construction works and equipment acquisition for the Training Centre and Centre for Local Products and Services in Nyírbátor and 16,52% was spent on the development of the Training and Exhibition Centre in Carei. The spending includes the documentation for construction of the buildings, the construction works, the equipment, tools and machinery for the vocational trainings and taxes. The following table presents the budget allocated per budget line:

Work package	Declared amount EUR	Percentage
T1 Common implementation activities of Nyírbátor	91.446,71	7,34%
T2 Common implementation activities of Carei	19.343,70	1,55%
I1 Investments of Nyírbátor (state-aid under GBER)	856.610,69	68,79%
I2 Investments of Carei (state-aid under GBER)	205.712,52	16,52%
Communication	19.572,01	1,57%
Management	49.250,51	3,96%
Preparation	3.230,00	0,26%
Grand Total	3.827.977,82	100,00%

The work packages that included the implementation of soft activities, such as labour market forums, job fairs, strategies, labour market database, vocational trainings, promotion of local produces etc., spent just 8,9% of the budget. However, as soft activities are still to be implemented, the share of the work packages focussed in soft activities is expected to increase. In detail, for the implementation of the work package *T1 Common implementation activities of Nyírbátor*, the partners spent 7,34% of the total spending, while for the implementation of the *T2 Common implementation activities of Carei*, the partners spent 1,55% of the total spending.

Therefore, **the project is likely to contribute to the employment rate in the two cities on the long term.** The main output that contributes to this effect represents the development of the centres in the two cities. The interview and the budget analysis show that the development of the centres with new buildings and equipment represented the main focus of the project. As there is a constant need for qualified work in both sides of the border, the centres can play a pivotal role to prepare workers with the necessary skills that are required on the labour market. As well, the centres can play an important role in helping and supporting local small and medium-sized enterprises from the eligible area, thus, creating demand for new workers to be hired. A second output that contributes to the project's impact on employment represents

the activities on increasing the employment rate in the eligible area. The mentorship programmes proved effective in directing workers to employers that were in need for new workforce, while the trainings take into account the current need of the employers. Both programmes are planned to be continued after the end of the project, thus, contributing to increasing employment in the long-term.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Sustainable development (environment). According to the application form, the project committed to purchasing products that comply with the energy efficiency requirements set out in Annex III of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) for products subject to public procurement. As well, a commitment was made that during the reconstruction, cost-optimal levels of energy performance will be proved according to Directive 2010/31/EU. The partners undertook to put great emphasis on environmental sustainability at project level, as they

- prefer online solutions against paper-based tools to operate resource efficiency,
- print documents, only if they are absolutely necessary to their activities (double-sided/black and white printing), -intent to use recycled papers,
- organise events in a way that does not produce much waste (e.g. not using plastic cups, preferring green modes of transport),
- use green public procurement, where applicable.

According to the interview with the project manager, environmental considerations were taken into account in the design of the buildings. The building will have solar panels and they are already equipped with heat pump.

Equal opportunity and non-discrimination. According to the interview with the project manager, the training of unemployed people was partly aimed at providing a fair opportunity for disadvantaged people in the area through increasing their capacity, thus promoting the horizontal principle of equal opportunities. Even though the Local Government did not emphasize verbally, that they strive to provide equal treatment to everyone involved with the project, they have put into practice the principles of non-discrimination, open to all who want to work with them, regardless of race, gender, religion, or denomination.

Equality between men and women. Regarding equality between men and women, the project partners did not implement affirmative measures concerning gender. According to the interview with both partners, in the selection of the management and implementation teams of both partners, the staff was selected according to professional experience and personal abilities, regardless of gender.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors

On the Hungarian side, the project managers identified two legal factors that have positively affected the project. First, the loosening of the regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary was a supportive legal factor in the achievement of the project results. Second, the reorganization of the vocational training system in Hungary, by being placed under the coordination of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology, benefited the project. Due to the reorganization, vocational training have become much more responsive to all kinds of demands from municipalities and employers. On the Romanian side, no legal factors that supported or hampered the implementation and/or achievements of the project were identified.

According to the interviews, the circumstances surrounding the application (e.g., the moment of calls launching, the selection criteria, application and appraisal process, contracting process) allowed the project to be successfully implemented. For this project, there was no problem around deadlines, with each step following the next in a relatively dynamic progression.

The support received from the programme authorities in relation to the pandemic was considered sufficient by the Local Government. Their questions were always answered, and they were in contact through several communication channels. Another economic factor was the increase in energy prices, which motivated the Local Government to reschedule the training programmes.

The project manager highlighted the importance of effective communication during the preparation of the project. The actors that will be relied upon for the implementation of the project must be consulted, and during the implementation consultation is still needed on an ongoing basis. The partners consulted

employers on average every three months to align the content of their training and mentoring programme with labour market needs.

In the opinion of the representative of the second partner, the multicultural nature of the Carei municipality, where an equal number of ethnic Romanians and Hungarians live, is a factor that contributed to the success of the project. There was not a language barrier between the two partners, as both sides could communicate in Hungarian fluently.

Negative factors

As mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic was a hampering factor, affecting soft and hard project elements as well. In addition to hindering face-to-face meetings and programmes, the pandemic also had an impact on construction costs. The project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the interview with the project manager, the reason why the project partners requested the extension of the duration of the project was mainly due to effects that they could not foresee. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that their calculations about the implementation had to be changed, and their objectives were more difficult to achieve. The project was about to end on the 31.03.2023, but because there were delays on the behalf of Carei, they requested the project to last until 31.12.2023. The Local Government of Nyírbátor is currently dealing with the technical commissioning of the buildings raised during the project.

The change in legislation regarding the vocational training system not only supported the project, but also hampered it. During the preparation phase, when they set the indicator targets for this section in headcount, they did not take account of the change of national legislation. This change of legislation in Hungary led to a condition, where unemployed people who receive training through job centres and employment services also receive some allowance from the organization. When the project had been prepared, there was no such system, therefore only the cost of training is counted in the budget, without any consideration of allowance for the people applying for training through the Local Government of Nyírbátor. This situation makes it challenging to recruit enough people to the training programme, because the national system already raised a financial demand amongst jobseekers, but the Local Government cannot provide allowance, either from its own resources or from project funds. Nevertheless, according to the interviewee, this challenge probably will not hinder to reach the indicator goals about the training programme.

The increase in the prices for the construction material have severely hampered the construction works of the centre in Carei. In the initial budget for the construction of the centre, the second partner foresaw an amount of 600.000 EUR. The contract that was signed with the construction company for the works ended up amounting to 750.000 EUR, thus with 150.000 EUR more than the initial budget. The second partner needed time to identify own sources of financing in order to proceed with this activity.

Moreover, since the project already needed to request more time to be able to close the whole project because of the delay caused by the COVID-10 pandemic and the issues in developing the centre in Carei, the partners decided to change the scheduling of trainings for unemployed people from the eligible area, timing it after the heating season. Therefore, the partners could cut expenses from the occurring energy prices, avoiding the effect of the energy prize crisis, which could not have been calculated into the costs during the project preparations.

The Romanian partner identified the absence of the payment request instrument in the Interreg programme as a negative factor. The partners always need to have funds available for the coverage of expenses in the project, with reimbursement occurring several months since the payments. The amounts spent in the projects are large, as there were hard investments included in the intervention. Meanwhile, ERDF funded Operational Programmes employ the payment request instrument, through which invoices are submitted to the programme authorities and payment occurs when the funds are transferred from the authorities.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The project manager mentioned two indirect effects of the project. Besides providing a platform for already active craftsmen in the area, the creation of the local products shop has motivated inactive residents to get back into crafting. Fire enamelling had a long tradition in Nyírbátor, but the older craftsmen who are familiar with the technique have been doing it less and less. The news of the local product shop motivated them to start creating again, and they began to nurture a new generation of people, who are familiar with the technique. The manager also mentioned that the news of training for the unemployed people motivated

an international company to move one of its production phases to Nyírbátor, with the intention to hire the people who attended to the training programme.

The development of the Local Entrepreneurial Incubator House has led to an unexpected economic effect. As the building has been developed with new offices and workshops, this development has inspired other private investors in the city to create similar facilities as an investment.

10. Sustainability of project results

According to the application form, the sustainability of the project will be ensured through several elements that will serve the economic and employment growth of the region, well after the project closure and the obligatory period for sustaining. The sustainability will be ensured by:

- improving the conditions for cross-border institutional cooperation of organizations supporting employment and training from Nyírbátor and Carei
- the intangible results can be incorporated into the day-to-day operation of the organizations involved;
- selecting socially deprived people as one of the main target groups and elaborating mechanisms to ensure their long-term labour market integration (special training and mentoring program);
- regular updating the common online labour database which will give assistance for jobseekers thus supporting the cross-border mobility in the long term;

According to the interviews and the Application Form, the sustainability of the newly established facilities is underpinned by the fact that interventions are planned on real estates owned by the partners, and they will ensure the financial resources for maintenance of the buildings and equipment. Sustainability is a fundamental development principle of the partners: they implement only self-sustaining or almost self-sustaining investments. According to the interviews, partners will continue the mentoring programme and further develop it in the after the end of the project. The sustainability of the mentoring programme is being considered, either through funding from another project or through self-financing. Mentoring of the unemployed with disadvantaged background is considered important by the partners, as it offers a solution that is currently lacking in the national regulatory system and institutional infrastructure.

Common database and the training facilities are good example for this type of interventions as employers themselves will experience the tangible advantages and benefits of using them:

- the online labour market database can function as a job bank to help the employers to find the most suitable workforce
- training sites can be flexibly used for practical trainings matching the actual needs of the employers.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

According to the project manager of CO-LABOUR, the most important lesson learned in the project is the importance of effective communication as the most important lessons learned from the project. The manager concluded, that during the preparation of the project, those who will be relied upon for the implementation of the project must be consulted, and during the implementation consultation is still needed on an ongoing basis. They consulted employers on average every three months to align the content of their training and mentoring programme with labour market needs. Her other advice was, that there is no need to be afraid to get started. In her experience, even when they faced great challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they always found a way to solve the problems.

The project aimed to address the challenges of employment in the two cities by employing a mixed approach. Besides providing vocational training to match workers' skills with the labour market demands, the project also incorporated activities to raise the awareness of local products and services. Two key buildings, namely the Centre for Local Products and Services in Nyírbátor and the Training and Exhibition Centre in Carei, have a strong focus on promoting local goods and services.

The partners identified the development of the centres as the major achievement of the project: *Local Entrepreneurial Incubator House*, the *Centre for Local Products and Services in Nyírbátor* and the *Training and exhibition centre* in Carei. Joint activities conducted as part of the project, such as job fairs, labour market forums, and publications, had a significant impact on increasing employment. The job fairs attracted young individuals entering the labour market and provided them with an overview of employment opportunities in the area, including across the border. The project also encouraged the Local Government of Nyírbátor to seek local craftsmen from both sides of the border, resulting in the creation of an

unprecedented information system. The manager emphasized the success achieved in assisting jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds through mentorship programs, which aided them in finding jobs. The mentoring program will continue and be further developed after the project ends, with sustainability being ensured through funding from other projects or self-financing.

The second partner believes that the project will enhance workforce quality through tailored training courses, thereby improving the chances of potential employees finding jobs. Both partners are committed to adapting vocational training and mentorship programs to meet the current labour market demands. The involvement of the local municipality of Carei in addressing labour market challenges is considered a valuable outcome, particularly in a context where other institutions fulfil similar functions in Romania.

The budget analysis indicates that 85.32% of the total budget was allocated to developing the three centres in Nyírbátor and Carei. Specifically, 68.79% was spent on construction and equipment for the Training Centre and Centre for Local Products and Services in Nyírbátor, while 16.52% was allocated to the Training and Exhibition Centre in Carei. The work packages that included the implementation of soft activities, such as labour market forums, job fairs, strategies, labour market database, vocational trainings, promotion of local produces etc., spent just 8,9% of the budget.

The following positive factors supported the implementation of the project:

- Loosening of regulations on border crossing between Romania and Hungary supported the project.
- Reorganization of the vocational training system in Hungary improved responsiveness to demands.
- Smooth application process and timely progression of project steps.
- Sufficient support from program authorities during the pandemic.
- Multicultural nature of the Carei municipality facilitated communication between partners.

The following negative factors hampered the implementation of the project:

- COVID-19 pandemic caused delays and impacted face-to-face meetings and construction costs.
- Change in legislation regarding vocational training affected the project's indicator targets and recruitment challenges.
- Increase in construction material prices hampered the construction of the centre in Carei.
- Absence of a payment request instrument in the Interreg program led to financial challenges for partners.

Overall, the project faced challenges due to the pandemic, legislative changes, and financial constraints. However, positive factors such as border regulations, vocational training reorganization, and effective communication contributed to its success.

The sustainability of the newly established facilities is underpinned by the fact that interventions are planned on real estates owned by the partners, and they will ensure the financial resources for maintenance of the buildings and equipment. According to the interviews, partners will continue the mentoring programme and further develop it in the after the end of the project. The sustainability of the mentoring programme is being considered, either through funding from another project or through self-financing. Mentoring of the unemployed with disadvantaged background is considered important by the partners, as it offers a solution that is currently lacking in the national regulatory system and institutional infrastructure.

The newly established facilities have a strong foundation for sustainability. The partners have planned interventions on real estate owned by them and will ensure the financial resources necessary for the maintenance of the buildings and equipment. The mentoring program, which supports unemployed individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds, will continue and be further developed even after the project ends. The partners are exploring funding options from other projects or self-financing to ensure the sustainability of the mentoring program. The partners believe that mentoring fills a crucial gap in the national regulatory system and institutional infrastructure.

Two indirect effects of the project were identified in the case study. Firstly, the establishment of a local products shop has not only provided a platform for existing craftsmen in the area but has also inspired inactive residents to re-engage in crafting. This has revitalized the tradition of fire enamelling in Nyírbátor, with older craftsmen passing on their knowledge to a new generation. Secondly, the announcement of training opportunities for unemployed individuals motivated an international company to relocate one of its production phases to Nyírbátor, with the intention of hiring participants from the training program.

Furthermore, the development of the Local Entrepreneurial Incubator House has had an unexpected economic impact. The creation of new offices and workshops in the building has inspired private investors in the city to invest in similar facilities, leading to additional economic development.

The main recommendation of the case study represents the implementation of the payment request instrument in the Interreg programme. The payment request instrument can facilitate the cash-flow in the project and would help tremendously organizations that lack financial resources. Currently, the partners always need to have funds available for the coverage of expenses in the project, with reimbursement occurring several months since the payments. The amounts spent in the projects are large, as there were hard investments included in the intervention. Meanwhile, ERDF funded Operational Programmes employ the payment request instrument, through which invoices are submitted to the programme authorities and payment occurs when the funds are transferred from the authorities.

Case Report

ROHU-452 - Joint Employment-Driven Initiative

1. General data on project

Title	Joint Employment-Driven Initiative
Code	ROHU-452
Priority axis	Priority axis 3: Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area
Lead Beneficiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Szeged Centre of Vocational Training
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timis Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture DKMT Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregional Development Agency – Nonprofit Public Benefit Limited Szeged Center of Vocational Training Timiș County Council Roman Catholic Diocese of Szeged-Csanád Homokhát Eurointegration Regional Development Agency
Target Group / Groups ⁷¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> j) unemployed persons, k) persons in search of job, l) socially marginalized persons, m) involved staff, n) involved local stakeholders, local and regional public authorities, o) private organizations, p) participants to projects events and activities, q) local and county communities
Covered geographical area	Csongrád-Csanád county Timiș county
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 33 months (01.02.2020 – 31.10.2022) After extension, if the case: 43 months (01.02.2020 – 31.08.2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	6.531.618,00 Euro, out of which ERDF 5.551.875,3 Euro

⁷¹ According to Application Form

Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 1.610.397,57 EUR out of which 1.368.837,8 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 1.595.237,13 EUR out of which 1.355.951,41 EUR ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Under implementation
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Information Fiche <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Project manager, Peter Varga, Szeged Centre of Vocational Training Project partners representatives, Cristina Bădulescu, Timiş Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture Representatives of target groups, Deputy Technical Director Kis Zoltán and Deputy Director-General Mitykó Csaba, Déri Miksa Technical Institute of Technology

3. Short presentation of project context

According to the Application Form of the RO-HU 452 project (JEDI), lack of skilled labour represents a challenge for SMEs, big companies and multinational companies in the Csongrád-Csanád and Timiş county. The jobseekers lack professional, technical and practical skills and experiences that are in demand from the companies and the vocational training courses have a low prestige and lost its attractiveness in the eyes of the younger generations. Due to the lack of skilled employees, many companies remain with vacant positions for long periods of time. According to the interview with the project manager and the representative of the Timiş Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (CCIAT), the lack of skilled labour was caused by the fall of vocational secondary schools in both Hungary and Romania.

The economic growth in the recent years in both Romania and Hungary highlighted this problem even more, with companies being in need for more skilled workers in order to match the demand on the market. The JEDI project aimed to bring all relevant actors in the eligible area, organizations supporting employment, enterprises and training institutions, in order to provide a proper response to this challenge. JEDI developed the following framework for joint cooperation to alleviate the issue:

- identifying and examining the problems together;
- revealing the real reasons behind them;
- preparing and implementing an action plan for managing the situation.

The construction, catering and food processing industries were identified in the Joint Employment Strategy as preliminary priority sectors that suffer extremely from a lack of skilled labour in the region. The cross-border workforce mobility is still on a low level between Romania and Hungary – compared to the Western European borders – not only because of the lack of physical infrastructure and adequate transport connections but also due to institutional and administrative issues. Moreover, a mental barrier exists in this field (as a consequence of hard borders), preventing people from seeking a job in the other country even in cases when that would be a sound decision. The Application Form recognized that the cross-border workforce mobility is still low between Romania and Hungary, hindered not only by the obvious language gap, the underdeveloped transport infrastructure (especially for public commuting) and the delay in Romania's accession to the Schengen Area, but also by the lack of information and institutional support/services that would assist and encourage jobseekers from both sides of the border to find a job in the other country.

According to the interviews with the project manager and the representative of CCIAT, there are challenges at the level of both counties regarding the quality of the vocational secondary schools. On both sides of the border, due to systemic changes in the educational systems, the vocational secondary schools did not adapt to new realities of the market and are lacking funding in order to procure equipment that is necessary for increasing the practical knowledge of the students.

The Application Form further mentions that the counties on the two sides of the Romanian and Hungarian border share similar problems in employment (e.g. a low activity rate, long-term unemployment, high unemployment rate in remote rural areas and a lack of a skilled workforce in several sectors). According to the data from the National Institutes of Statistics from Romania and Hungary, the unemployment rate in the 2019-2022 period is the following:

County	2019	2020	2021	2022
Csongrád-Csanád	2,2%	3,2%	2,9%	2,0%
Timiș	0,6%	0,9%	0,5%	0,6%

The unemployment rates in both counties are low, with the rate standing at 2,0% in Csongrád-Csanád county and 0,6% in Timiș. There aren't high oscillations in the unemployment rate in neither counties.

In the interview with both the project manager and the representative of CCIAT, it was highlighted that the JEDI project is not focused only the unemployed, as the project was developed and implemented with the scope of improving the quality of work for the entire workforce in the region. According to the interviewees, the project aims to obtain an impact on the quality of employment in the region on the long-term. As mentioned above, the project aimed to tackle the challenges in the cross-border region regarding vocational training and mobility.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The overall objective of the project was to enhance the employment in the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border region by creating favourable conditions for a balanced labour market in the long term. To achieve the objective in the targeted area, the project aimed to contributing to several factors: (a) the conditions and offer of vocational trainings; (b) the number, skills and experiences of employees; (c) the number and quality of jobs; and (d) a willingness to and opportunities for mobility across the border. The overall objective of the JEDI project is in line with the programme priority's PA3: Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment) – Specific Objective (SO8/b Increased employment within the eligible area).

The JEDI project was created to contribute to the fulfilment of this specific objective by improving the conditions of vocational trainings and implementing a set of activities to foster the balance of labour market supply and demand and enhance the mobility of the workforce in the targeted cross-border area. According to the interviews with the project manager and the representative of the CCIAT, the JEDI project is focussed on boosting employment on the short-term, by achieving a cross-border market balance through work force mobility. The long-term aspects of the project represent the improvement of the conditions for vocational training in the region and the strengthening of the cross-border cooperation between labour market institutions.

The following figure presents the logic of intervention of the JEDI project:

General Objective of the project	Specific Objective of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
To enhance the employment in the Romania-Hungary cross-border region by setting up favourable conditions for a balanced labour market in the long term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border labour market balance Improved conditions and offer of vocational trainings Better connectivity of labour market institutions and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings Mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training 	<p>Output indicator: C044 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cross-border regional strategy focusing on the lack of skilled labourers Improved conditions for vocational trainings in the region by developing training sites for the sectors where the lack of labour force is the most pressing Strongly cooperating actors and a network of 	<p>Result indicator: R 8/b programme result indicator Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher employment rate in the Csongrád-Csanád and Timișoara counties in the long term

			relevant institutions in the field of employment and training of the cross-border area - The creation of an Info Point in Szeged, on the premises of the DKMT, that will collect information about all relevant aspects of the labour market in Romania and Hungary and disseminate it - Enhanced cross-border mobility of the workforce	
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The following table presents the division of the *CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training* per output number defined in the working packages:

Programme output indicators	Project output indicator targets	Measurement Unit	Project main output quantification (target)	Project main output number	Project main output (title)
CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	2 685.00	Number	715.00	T1.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			1 100.00	T2.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			200.00	T3.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			20.00	T4.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			350.00	T5.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			140.00	T6.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			40.00	T7.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			50.00	T8.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings
			70.00	T9.1.1	Participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings

In terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of work packages:

- **Management** – the working package is coordinated by the lead partner Szeged Centre of Vocational Training. Management was provided by setting up a joint team consisting of staff members from most of the partners – every partner has the required experience, financial strength and HR capacity to contribute.
- **Implementation I1 SZSZC Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings** – The subject of the WP is equipping different facilities for vocational education operated by the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training.
- **Implementation I2 SZCSE Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings** – The subject of the WP is the reconstruction and enlargement of the Arpád Fejedelem Catholic Secondary Grammar School and Vocational School.

- **Implementation I3 HE Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings** – The subject of the WP is establishing and equipping training sites in Mórahalom.
- **Implementation I4 CJT Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings** – The subject of the WP is the building and endowment of the Community Centre for Permanent Learning Timis.
- **Implementation T5 CCIAT Mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area** – Bringing together jobseekers, SMEs and relevant actors of the field to work together in harmony to create a unified cross-border labour market fabric that can be easily navigated.
- **Implementation T6 DKMT Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training** – Bringing together jobseekers, SMEs and relevant actors of the field to work together in harmony to create a unified cross-border labour market fabric that can be easily navigated.
- **Implementation T7 SZCSE Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training** – Bringing together jobseekers, SMEs and relevant actors of the field to work together in harmony to create a unified cross-border labour market fabric that can be easily navigated.
- **Implementation T8 HE Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training** – Bringing together jobseekers, SMEs and relevant actors of the field to work together in harmony to create a unified cross-border labour market fabric that can be easily navigated.
- **Implementation T9 CCIAT Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training** – Bringing together jobseekers, SMEs and relevant actors of the field to work together in harmony to create a unified cross-border labour market fabric that can be easily navigated.
- **Communication** – Promoting the advantages and benefits of a joint labour market and CB workforce mobility: both the professional stakeholders and the general public have to be aware of the positive aspects and prospects derived from the creation of CB employment. As well, raising the awareness of vocational training opportunities and labour market services: having up-to-date information and a real picture about the available education and service offers are crucial factors for the mobility of the employers, students and jobseekers.

The activities of the project were foreseen to contribute directly or indirectly to reaching the programme output indicator **CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training**. The type of labour initiatives that contribute to the value of the indicator are: job fairs, workshops, surveys, study tours, study visits, seminars, conferences, consultations, orientation events, etc. According to the planned activities, the target value of 2,685 participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint trainings were to be achieved by the project.

According to the information collected in the interview with the project manager, from the Lead Partner, there are still activities in implementation in the project. At the moment of interview, the project manager mentioned that three construction works and acquisition of equipment were finalized. In Szeged, the facilities of the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training were equipped and the kitchen of the Arpád Fejedelem Catholic Secondary Grammar School and Vocational School was enlarged and equipped. In Mórahalom, a vocational training site for catering training and agricultural training were build and new equipment was purchased. The construction of the facility in Timiş was delayed, because, according to the interview with the project manager, there were challenges regarding the procurement and price of the construction materials. The County Council of Timiş had to allocate additional funds from their own resources in order to finalize the construction and acquisition of equipment for the facility.

The activities of the project were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors that are explained in detail in section 10.

Main factors influencing project results

Due to the delays that were inflicted by external factors, many activities were delayed and few outputs have been produced to date. As mentioned above, the JEDI project contributes to the *CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training*. The total value of the project for the respective project is 0, due to the implementation issues encountered by the project partners.

The modernization with equipment at the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training (SZSZC) aimed to improve the quality of the following training courses: dressmaker, welder, electrician, central heating mechanic, industrial mechanic, locksmith, mechatronician, water and sewage treatment technician, electrotechnical technician, carpenter, bricklayer, chemical technician, rubber producer and processor, CNC operator, milling machine operator, automation technician, mechatronics technician, technical informatician, CAD-CAM informatician and automotive electronics technician. All equipment foreseen in the plan was acquired.

Concerning the Roman Catholic Diocese of Szeged-Csanád (SZCSE), the partner intended to enlarge and transform the existing kitchen of the school in order to create a school kitchen training site. The part is currently acquiring the necessary equipment to prepare the new kitchen to provide the town with a new vocational training facility. At the same time, the public catering system of the town is intended to improve.

In Mórahalom, the construction works of a new vocational training site for catering training and the acquisitions of equipment for an agricultural training site were finalized. The new vocational training site is intended to offer catering services as well.

A community centre is currently under construction in Timiș, in the city of Timisoara, with the location in the Industrial and Technological Park (PITT). The construction encountered severe delays, due to the increases in the price of the construction materials. The COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the construction works, the delays are linked solely to the high prices of the construction materials. The newly established building is defined as an institute of community public interest to implement policies of lifelong learning at the community level. The functional design of the Centre envisaged the creation of spaces for all age groups: children, youth, adults and seniors.

In the interview with the project manager, when asked which are the most important outputs of the project, the interviewee mentioned that many companies and workers were informed about the opportunities across the borders, due to the information activities that were carried out. Another important output that was mentioned by the project manager is the constructions work and modernization with equipment of four facilities, which will provide to the students with the opportunity to increase the application of the knowledge learned in the courses.

According to the latest project report, the orientation events, consultations and student exchanges are proceeding according to the plan. The implementation of these activities are being coordinated by the Lead Partner. According to the latest Progress Report, the orientation events are the biggest draw for the general public to participate in the project. The partnership plans to organize 3 such events in the remaining period of implementation of the project, focusing on pre-defined professions, especially on the construction industry. The orientation events are coordinated by the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training.

According to the information from the interview and from latest Progress Report, workshops were carried out for students who are finishing their studies to introduce them to their work opportunities and conditions (legal issues, taxation, etc.), and two camps in Hungary for Romanian students were organized. The camps had the objective to offer the opportunity for Romanian students to get acquainted with the opportunities offered by practical training and the labour market in some professions in Hungary.

The activities implemented by the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregional Development Agency (DKMT) are all behind schedule. This partner has to develop five case studies on (1) the best practices in similar cross-border regions from Europe on how to address the challenges of how to conduct vocational trainings and how to tackle the mentality of „low prestige” of vocational trainings; (2) the lack of skilled workers in the regions; (3) low cross-border mobility; (4) insufficient network between stakeholders from Romania and Hungary. This activity is behind schedule, however it will be finalized before the end date of the project. A second activity that is implemented by the DKMT are study tours to the cross-border regions that were selected for the case studies. As the case studies are not yet finalized, it will be a challenge for the beneficiary to organize the study tours on time, given that the project is due to end on 30th of August 2023. As of 31st of December 2022, the seminars did not start yet.

The same partner is behind schedule on conducting a survey in the region. The survey aims to get replies from 150 companies, from Csongrád-Csanád, Timiș and Arad (despite not being targeted by other activity), 50 replies per county. After the survey is carried out, a situation analysis is planned to be conducted. This activity is under risk as well, given that the survey was not yet concluded and the limited time to finalize the remaining activities. Lastly, the DKMT has to develop a cross-border regional strategy, which is behind schedule. The DKMT managed to establish an InfoPoint in Hungary, its location being in Szeged. The DKMT did not start its information activities yet.

The activities implemented by Homokhát Eurointegration Regional Development Agency (HE) are currently proceeding as planned. The partner managed to print and distribute brochures and the employment fairs are being organized at the moment. The online labour market database and website are currently being developed, in which the information gathered through the project will be stored.

The Timiș Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (CCIAT) is behind schedule in organizing an information activity in which the final cross-border region (which is coordinated by DKMT) must be

presented. As the strategy is not yet finalized, this activity coordinated by CCIAT cannot be yet carried out. As well, the partner is behind schedule with organizing joint workshops in Timișoara and in Arad. However, CCIAT is on schedule with organizing the informational events and employment fairs on the Romanian side of the border.

Roman Catholic Diocese of Szeged-Csanád, together CCIAT, organize study tours between Romania and Hungary, in which representatives of employees and teachers at secondary school go visiting the other countries to learn more about the vocational training system and education system. As well, CCIAT together with HE is organizing professional conferences in Romania and Hungary regarding the topics addressed by the JEDI project. The 2-day events are serving as best practice presentation opportunities and support the establishment of professional connections between the different stakeholders, beside promoting the project and the Interreg ROHU programme's goals.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The JEDI project is coherent with *Priority Area 09 People and skills* of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which includes the following actions:

- **ACTION 1:** Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies
- **ACTION 2:** Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work
- **ACTION 3:** Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market
- **ACTION 4:** Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All
- **ACTION 5:** Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems
- **ACTION 6:** Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences
- **ACTION 7:** Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility
- **ACTION 8:** Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development

PA 09 is focused on contributing to a higher employment rate, especially through (1) tackling youth and long-term unemployment, (2) educational outcomes, skills and competences, (3) higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems and (4) inclusive education and training. The project contributes to multiple actions and objectives established for the Priority Area. Due to its focus on increasing employment and skills through vocational training and strengthening cooperation in labour market policies, the project directly contributes to PA 09.

The JEDI project is coherent as well with *Priority Area 10 Institutional capacity & cooperation*, which includes the following actions:

- **ACTION 1:** To improve institutional capacities in order to provide high-quality public services
- **ACTION 2:** To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions
- **ACTION 3:** To review bottlenecks relating to the low absorption rate of EU funds and Invest EU
- **ACTION 4:** To support better coordination of funding
- **ACTION 5:** To test and support innovative funding solutions (for local actors and civil society)
- **ACTION 6:** To foster cooperation built on mutual trust between state and non-state actors to enhance well-being for the inhabitants of the Danube Region
- **ACTION 7:** To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region
- **ACTION 8:** To enhance capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development

PA 10 is focused on strengthening institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance and on increasing involvement of civil society and local actors for effective policy-making and implementation. The JEDI project contributing to a limited extent to PA 10, by addressing the need of increasing cooperation between stakeholders in the regional labour market,

Although the Application Form of the project mentions that it contributes to *PA 07 Knowledge society* and *PA 08 Competitiveness of enterprises*, the evaluators found no link between the specific objectives of the project and the *Actions* included in the respective Priority Areas. The actions of the PA 07 are focused on encouraging and coordinating interventions and investments in research and innovation and on achieving coordination between various stakeholders, such as universities, research organizations and SMEs. Meanwhile, the JEDI project is focused in the area of increasing employment and skills through vocational training and jobs fairs. Thus, the project does contribute to PA 07.

The actions included in PA 08 are focused on establishing the conditions, framework and cooperation between relevant stakeholders (universities, research institutes and companies) to share and transfer knowledge. As mentioned earlier, the JEDI project tackles the challenges of increasing employment and skills of workers through vocational training and cooperation of stakeholders in the labour market and it does not include any activities on knowledge transfer between universities, research institutes and companies. Therefore, the project does contribute to PA 08.

According to the Application Form, the project contributes to the objectives of the *Employment Strategy of Csongrád County 2017-2021*, namely 1. *Activation of the workforce and providing chances* and 2. *Collaboration and coordination*. The JEDI project contributes to the *Integrated Development Strategy of Csongrád County 2014-2020*, to the following Specific Objectives:

- SO T.1. Establishment of the Szeged-Hódmezővásárhely-Makó-Arad-Timisoara-Subotica city node network
- SO S.4. Fostering the leading industries of the county by enhancing vertical and horizontal cooperation and by economic and business development based on local outbreak points
- H.1. Increasing durable and value-creating employment and enhancing the social and institutional conditions for all activities that directly or indirectly enhance the employment in the region
- H.2. Capitalizing the benefits of the tripartite border location by exploiting the potentials of some different aspects of the cross-border labour market

The objectives of the JEDI project are in line with the provisions of the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Timiș 2015-2020/2023, namely Priority Axis 3 Education and Human Resources, 3.4. Labour Force Measures, 3.4.2. Implementation of educational programmes, trainings and continuous learning in accordance with the European Qualification Framework. The activities are in accordance with A3.5 – Training and Employment Strategies and Plans of the Same Strategies and A3.5.2. – Elaboration of the strategies and politics dedicated to initial and continuous training.

The project also corresponds with the Regional Development Plan 2014-2020 (P4.2. – Increasing Employment in the Region) in which the following actions are mentioned: Organizing job fairs and job clubs for unemployed/inactive persons, jobseekers and people from vulnerable groups; Providing qualification/re-qualification programmes for increasing and diversifying professional skills and correlating the programmes with the labour market demands.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The activities are meant to contribute to the fulfilment of the **R 8/b programme result indicator Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population**. In the Application Form was mentioned that some results will have a more direct contribution to the result indicator (e.g. job fairs, direct assistance for jobseekers, students' orientation events, etc.) while other activities will have a long term positive effect on raising the employment rate (e.g. improving the conditions for vocational trainings in the much-needed skills and professions).

The total budget of the JEDI project is 6.531.618,00 EUR, representing 10,39% of the total amount that was contracted under *Specific Objective 8/b Increased employment within the eligible area*.

The general objective of the project is to enhance the employment in the Romania-Hungary cross-border region by setting up favourable conditions for a balanced labour market in the long term. To achieve this general objective, the project partners established the following specific objectives:

- Cross-border labour market balance
- Improved conditions and offer of vocational trainings
- Better connectivity of labour market institutions and stakeholders

In the interview with the project manager and the representative of CCIAT, the result of the project that was identified as being the most important was the development of the centres through construction works (building new bodies) and procurement of equipment (to be used especially during classes for practice of theory). In both interviews it was mentioned that the centres have long-term value, where students can increase their skills in knowledge for jobs from the main sectors of cross-border local economy. The centres

can play a pivotal role for adults to change their status from unqualified worker to qualified worker. The presence of a higher number of qualified employees can lead to higher earnings at the level of the population and to satisfying the demand of the market for certain type of workers. The centres provide to the students both the necessary theoretical knowledge and the opportunity to practice.

In the interview with the representatives of the target group, from the Déri Miksa Technical Institute of Technology, it was identified that the project's most important result is the procurement of equipment. The Institute was able because of the project to modernize its current equipment. Therefore, the students at the institute have the opportunity to learn to use the latest technological equipment in robotics.

A second important result of the project that was identified were the activities that facilitated networking among stakeholders from the labour market institutions. According to the interviewees, this result is contributing as well to enhancing employment and quality of employment in the long term, due to the exchange of good practices and information between institutions from both sides of the border and to the higher rate of mobility across the border. The result contributes to strengthening the relationship between stakeholders from the labour market, by presenting the opportunities, challenges, needs and possible areas of collaboration on both sides of the border. The stakeholders that were and are involved in networking activities are companies, recruitment agents, educational institutions, etc. The networking activities are to contribute on the long-term to a stronger cooperation between these institutions on addressing common challenges in both Romania and Hungary.

A third important result of the project was to inform the workforce from both counties about the opportunities to work on the other side of the border.

The analysis of the distribution of the budget on project working packages provides further insights on the impact of the project. As shown in the table from below, the largest part of the budget was allocated to the construction and the acquisition of the equipment for the centres in Szeged, Mórahalom and Timișoara. The following table presents the budget spending per working package:

Work package	Declared amount EUR	Percentage
I1SZSZC - Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings	560.988,48	14,65%
I2SZCSE - Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings	13.779,50	0,36%
I3HE - Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings	1.845.629,73	48,21%
I4CJT - Creating state of the art conditions for vocational trainings	661.449,30	17,28%
T2DKMT - Mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area	99.451,28	2,60%
T3HE - Mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area	5.909,34	0,15%
T5CCIAI - Mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area	72.434,22	1,89%
T7SZCSE - Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training	32.112,53	0,84%
T9CCIAI - Joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training	12.500,99	0,33%
Communication	45.506,14	1,19%
Management	478.216,31	12,49%
Grand Total	3.827.977,82	100,00%

The budget spending analysis shows that a total of 80,51% of the budget was spent on the acquisition of equipment for the centres and on the construction works. In detail, 14,65% of the budget was spent on procuring the equipment for the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training, 0,36% was spent on modernizing the kitchen of the Arpád Fejedelem Catholic Secondary Grammar School and Vocational School, 48,21% was used for the construction work of the new catering site and improving the agricultural site in Mórahalom and 17,28% of the budget was allocated for the construction work and procurement of equipment for the new community centre in Timișoara. The spending includes the documentation for construction of the buildings, the construction works, the equipment, tools and machinery for the vocational trainings and taxes. The following table presents the budget allocated per budget line:

Budget Line	Declared amount EUR	Percentage
Equipment	1.632.089,67	42,64%
External expertise and services	204.369,42	5,34%

Infrastructure and works	1.394.914,69	36,44%
Office and administration	77.745,65	2,03%
Staff costs	518.307,51	13,54%
Travel and accommodation	550,88	0,01%
Grand Total	3.827.977,82	100,00%

The table from above shows that the largest share of the budget, 42,64%, was spent on the procurement of equipment for all centres that were targeted by the project. The second largest share of the budget, 36,44%, was used for the construction works in Mórahalom and Timișoara. Staff costs represents 13,54% of the budget, while external expertise and services and office and administration represent 5,34%, respectively 2,03% of the total expenditure.

The work packages that included the implementation of soft activities, such as orientation events, informational events, conferences, seminars or study visits spent just 5,81% of the budget. However, as soft activities are still to be implemented, the share of the work packages focused in soft activities is expected to increase. The three work packages that include *mapping, networking and joint development of the labour market of the target area* consist of 4,64% of the total spending so far, while the two work packages that include activities on *joint institutional cooperation in the field of employment and training* represent 1,17% of the total spending.

In the interview with the project manager, the subject of the discrepancy in the budget between hard and soft activities was tackled. The project manager argued that he did not believe in the need for a larger focus on soft activities. The JEDI Project foresees that in order to contribute to increasing employment in the region in the long term, better infrastructure for providing vocational training courses, especially for the sectors that were identified as priorities in the strategy.

Therefore, **the project is likely to contribute to the employment rate and the quality of employment in the region on the long term.** The main output that contributes to this effect represents the development of the centres in the four locations. The interview and the budget analysis show that the development of the centres with new buildings and equipment represented the main focus of the project. As there is a constant need for qualified work in both sides of the border, the centres can play a pivotal role to prepare workers with the necessary skills that are required on the labour market. **A second output that contributes to the project's impact on employment, however, to a lesser extent, represents the networking activities and facilitation of communication between stakeholders from the region in the labour market.** By connecting various stakeholders from the labour market, the project contributes to encouraging the stakeholders to look more for opportunities across the border.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

On sustainable development, the partners considered the best available technologies (BAT) to be employed in the construction works from the design stage of the project. According to the interviews conducted with the representatives of the partners, the construction works and the equipment respected the commitments regarding sustainability and the solutions used were sustainable.

Concerning equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle, the project partners did not implement affirmative measures concerning race, sex, age, religion or any other discriminatory criteria. According to the interview with both partners, in the selection of the management and implementation teams of both partners, the staff was selected according to professional experience and personal abilities, regardless of race, sex, age, religion or any other discriminatory criteria.

Regarding equality between man and women, the project partners did not implement affirmative measures concerning gender. According to the interview with both partners, in the selection of the management and implementation teams of both partners, the staff was selected according to professional experience and personal abilities, regardless of gender.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive

The project manager of the JEDI project argued that a positive factor that influenced the result of the project was the good relation with the Joint Secretariat (JS). The project manager mentioned in the interview that he appreciates the support given from the head of the JS in addressing implementation challenges. The project manager of JEDI considers that due the experience of the head of the secretariat in implementing

the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary, she/he gained a strong grasp on the common issues of encountered at the level of the projects and how to support the beneficiaries in addressing them. Furthermore, the project manager appreciated the support given from the MA, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The possibility of prolonging the graphic of activities and to modify the events and meeting activities from face-to-face to online are considered the decisions of the AM which had the most positive impact on the achievements of the project.

The interviewees consider that the moment of calls launching, the selection criteria, application and appraisal process, the contracting process allowed a successful implementation of your project. The project manager consider that the MA and the other programme authorities provided sufficient and adequate support for the implementation of the project.

Negative

In the opinion of the interviewees, the most important factors that hampered the achievement of project's results are the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian-Russia war that affected the price of the construction materials. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a long delay in the implementation of the graphic of activities, prolonging the length of the project from 33 to 43 months. According to the interviews, the pandemic did not affect the hard activities of the project, neither the construction works or procurement of equipment. The pandemic affected the soft activities, such as the orientation events, conferences, camps, study visits, surveys, case studies and situation analysis. Due to the restrictions that were out in place to limit the spread of the pandemic, the partners could not organize the events in their communities and there were additional difficulties in carrying out cross-border event, due to travel restrictions.

The County Council of Timiș encountered difficulties in the construction works of the community centre, due to budgetary issues. The inflation rate of the construction materials in Romania, which was exacerbated by the Russian invasion in Ukraine and by the on-going energy crisis, which resulted higher prices for the construction materials than the prices budgeted initially. This difficulty led to delays in the construction works, ensued by the lack of sufficient funding, with the works being finalized in May 2023. The partners managed to address this issue by allocating more resources from their own funds. The delay in the development of the centre resulted in other delays of soft activities, that require the centre in order to be carried out. The representative of CCIAT argued that the partners will manage to carry out the remaining soft activities in the centre until the end of the project.

The project encountered difficulties at the legislative level on the Hungarian side, as a new act concerning vocational training that regulates the type of equipment to be used in courses was passed. The partners drafted a list of equipment to be procured during the implementation of the project, that was in line with the stipulations of the old version of the law. However, a new law was passed after the list of equipment was drafted, which annulled the eligibility of a number of items from the equipment list. The partners had to update the list of equipment, which led to changes in the budget.

There were several administrative factors that affected the project. The project manager had difficulties with the exchange rates between euro, ron and forintz. The exchange rates did not affect the execution of the project's budget, however, difficulties appeared at the level of budget reporting to the programme authorities. As well, the project manager argued that the documentation of the project was burdensome. The modification request regarding prolongations of activities, technical changes and changes in the budget were very long, as all the six partners had to include all the changes in a single document. The probability of errors appearing in this single document is much higher when all requested changes are included in it, which resulted to long periods for the approval of the entire document. Furthermore, the project manager considers that the eMS platform is not user friendly.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

Few unexpected and indirect effects were generated by the project. Both representative of the partners mentioned just one spill-over effect that is linked with the project, the use of the centres and training sites by the communities from the two counties in organizing local events. Although the centres were built with the scope to accommodate vocational trainings courses and other types of employment initiatives, the centres hosted social and cultural events.

10. Sustainability of project results

According to the interviews conducted, the project was designed to have long-lasting effects on the labour market of the targeted cross-border area by improving the conditions for vocational training courses and cross-border institutional cooperation. Both interviewees nominated the new facilities and new equipment

as the most sustainable result of the project, as the investments were made for improving the quality of employment in the long term. The Application Form mentions that the long-term involvement and assistance provided through vocational training courses will target especially the youth in the region.

The developed training sites will serve vocational trainings well after the project's end and the obligatory period for sustaining the results, as the sites will be institutionalized at the organizations of the project partners. As well, the established collaborations will be built into the day-to-day working processes and/or annual work plans of the partners and the involved target group organizations. As a dedicated and specific institution, the Info Point in Szeged will continue to operate, included in the budget plan of the DKMT.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The single lesson learned at the level of the partners are the use of online instruments for communication and management. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the partners did not meet face to face to discuss the progress of the project, and resorted to online conferences. The partners continue to use the online instruments.

The JEDI project was developed to improve the conditions of vocational trainings and implementing a set of activities to foster the balance of labour market supply and demand and enhance the mobility of the workforce in the targeted cross-border area. The JEDI project is focused on boosting employment on the short-term, by achieving a cross-border market balance through work force mobility. The long-term aspects of the project represent the improvement of the conditions for vocational training in the region and the strengthening of the cross-border cooperation between labour market institutions.

The activities of the project were foreseen to contribute directly or indirectly to reaching the programme output indicator CO44 Labour Market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training. The activities of the project were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors that are explained in detail in section 10. Main factors influencing project results. Due to the delays that were inflicted by external factors, many activities were delayed and few outputs have been produced to date. The total value of the project for the respective project is 0, due to the implementation issues encountered by the project partners. The project contributes directly to the result indicator R 8/b programme result indicator Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population.

There are still activities in implementation in the project, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are a number of activities that are still under implementation or behind schedule. For example, activities implemented by the DKMT are behind schedule, such as case studies on good practices from cross-border areas, a survey on companies from Csongrád-Csanád, Timiș and Arad counties and a situation analysis. Concerning the activities that are ongoing, the partners are conducting study visits for teachers from secondary schools and vocational schools, information events, orientations events and camps. The project partners managed to establish InfoPoints on both sides of the border.

At the moment of interview, the project manager mentioned that three construction works and acquisition of equipment were finalized. In Szeged, the facilities of the Szeged Centre of Vocational Training were equipped and the kitchen of the Arpád Fejedelem Catholic Secondary Grammar School and Vocational School was enlarged and equipped. In Mórahalom, a vocational training site for catering training and agricultural training were build and new equipment was purchased. The construction of the facility in Timiș was delayed, because, according to the interview with the project manager, there were challenges regarding the procurement and price of the construction materials. The County Council of Timiș had to allocate additional funds from their own resources in order to finalize the construction and acquisition of equipment for the facility.

The interviews revealed that the most important result of the project is the development of the centres through construction works (building new bodies) and procurement of equipment (to be used especially during classes for practice of theory). In both interviews it was mentioned that the centres have long-term value, where students can increase their skills in knowledge for jobs from the main sectors of cross-border local economy. The presence of a higher number of qualified employees can lead to higher earnings at the level of the population and to satisfying the demand of the market for certain type of workers.

A second important result of the project that was identified as important are the activities that facilitated networking among stakeholders from the labour market institutions. According to the interviewees, this

result is contributing as well to enhancing employment and quality of employment in the long term, due to the exchange of good practices and information between institutions from both sides of the border and to the higher rate of mobility across the border. The result contributes to strengthening the relationship between stakeholders from the labour market, by presenting the opportunities, challenges, needs and possible areas of collaboration on both sides of the border.

The budget spending analysis shows that a total of 80,51% of the budget was spent on the acquisition of equipment for the centres and on the construction works. The work packages that included the implementation of soft activities, such as orientation events, informational events, conferences, seminars or study visits spent just 5,81% of the budget. However, as soft activities are still to be implemented, the share of the work packages focused in soft activities is expected to increase.

Therefore, the project is likely to contribute to the employment rate and the quality of employment in the region on the long term. The main output that contributes to this effect represents the development of the centres in the four locations. The interview and the budget analysis show that the development of the centres with new buildings and equipment represented the main focus of the project. As there is a constant need for qualified work in both sides of the border, the centres can play a pivotal role to prepare workers with the necessary skills that are required on the labour market. A second output that contributes to the project's impact on employment, however, to a lesser extent, represents the networking activities and facilitation of communication between stakeholders from the region in the labour market. By connecting various stakeholders from the labour market, the project contributes to encouraging the stakeholders to look more for opportunities across the border.

Specific Objective 4.1 - Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area

Case Report

RO-HU-357 - Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion

1. General data on project

Title	Cooperation for high standards of healthcare in the prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion
Code	RO-HU 357
Priority axis	Priority axis 4: Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 4.1: Improved preventive and curative medical services within the eligible area. Investment Priority 9/a – Investments in medical infrastructure
Lead Beneficiary	County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea (RO)
Partners	Local Government of Hajduboszormeny City (HU) – project partner 2 Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital Berettyóújfalu (HU)– project partner 3
Target Group ⁷²	d) General public (664,898 people – population of Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar counties)
Covered geographical area	Cross-border area Romania-Hungary – Counties: Bihor and Hajdú Bihar Counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 38 months (November 01, 2019– December 31, 2022)
Budget allocated/contracted	3.000.000 EUR, of which ERDF 2.550.000 EUR
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total reported to FLC: 442.294,06 EUR out of which 375.949,89 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 442.293,74 EUR out of which 375.949,62 EUR ERDF
Status (under implementation / finalized) ⁷³	Finalized
Type of project (Standard/strategic)	Standard

⁷² According to Application Form

⁷³ At the moment when the CS Report was drafted

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Project Information Fiche Project Website: https://rohu357.spitaljudetean-oradea.ro/despre-proiect/E-MS-Table-Transparency-requirements - Exported At: 30.04.2023
Interviews	Lead Partner - County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea (RO) Beneficiary medical staff within County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea (RO) Partner 2 - Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital Berettyóújfalu (HU)

3. Short presentation of project context

The healthcare system in the Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Euroregion faces several challenges, as identified in the needs analysis presented in the application form. These challenges include outdated and inefficient medical equipment, a lack of awareness among the population regarding disease prevention and early detection, and a continuous need for professional development and training of the medical staff. Furthermore, the public healthcare system has been affected by medical staff leaving for better-paying jobs, resulting in imbalances in the level of healthcare services and limited access to quality care, particularly for marginalized groups.

According to medical personnel interviewed, the current activity of medical diagnosis faces several challenges, including a significant error rate, the risk of staff contamination, and high turnaround times, particularly in emergency cases. Blood samples expire within two hours, necessitating repeated harvesting, and valuable human resources are occupied with manual activities. Additionally, there is a lack of public awareness regarding their right to free medical tests and diagnosis, especially for disadvantaged groups. Patients do not have tools to manage their own healthcare, and smaller medical centers, such as the one in Hajdúböszörmény, lack the basic necessary equipment. These issues hinder the provision of timely and effective healthcare services, emphasizing the need for improved diagnostic capabilities and patient management tools.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, at the municipality level, the Municipality of Oradea, with a population of 196,367 people, has a total of six hospitals, four of which are public and two private. The largest public hospital in the area is the Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital, which employs a total of 1,400 medical assistants, 1,200 resident doctors, and 450 highly qualified doctors. The hospital's activities are spread across seven locations and encompass 63 departments and compartments, offering over 48 specializations and 12 laboratories. With a total of 1,865 beds, the hospital plays a significant role as a healthcare provider in the region.

In order to address these challenges, the project ROHU-357 is of significant relevance in its efforts to enhance the quality and efficiency of healthcare services, bringing benefits to both healthcare providers and patients in terms of improved overall healthcare delivery.

This project is relevant for several reasons, as it addresses the following challenges:

Improvement of medical diagnostic quality: By modernizing the clinical analysis laboratory and introducing advanced equipment and technology, the project aims to enhance the precision and reliability of medical diagnoses. This can lead to faster and more accurate identification of patients' conditions, facilitating prompt and appropriate treatment.

Reduction of medical errors: automating the process of sample collection and analysis, the project aims to reduce the risk of human errors and ensure a higher degree of accuracy and consistency in the obtained results.

Automating the collection and analysis of medical samples can reduce waiting times and increase the efficiency of medical activities. This frees up valuable human resources that can be directed towards other critical tasks, such as direct patient care or result interpretation.

Equality in access to medical services: Standardizing equipment and processes across medical laboratories can ensure a similar level of quality and accuracy in diagnostics across all healthcare facilities. This is crucial to ensure that patients, especially those from disadvantaged groups, have equal opportunities to receive accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatments.

From a cross-border cooperation (CBC) perspective, it is evident that the project's goals cannot be efficiently achieved solely through national, regional, or local efforts. In summary, the need for cross-border collaboration in the project is justified by several reasons. Firstly, it aims **to improve the regional health impact** by ensuring access to quality healthcare services across neighbouring counties, irrespective of social status or residence. Secondly, the territorial proximity of cross-border communities necessitates the **development of joint protocols** for seamless patient care and information exchange. Lastly, a harmonized approach to **awareness** raising is crucial to educate patients uniformly about disease prevention and early identification methods. By addressing these factors through cross-border collaboration, the project can effectively enhance healthcare outcomes in Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar Euro region.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project was "**to improve preventive, early diagnostic and curative healthcare services** for the entire population of Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar counties". In order to achieve this objective, **38 health units out of a total of 86 in both counties were equipped with modernized equipment (31 in the Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital, 4 in the "Gróf Tisza István" Hospital in Berettyóújfalu and 3 in the Center Medical of Hajdúböszörmény)**, with the aim to improve preventive, early detection and curative healthcare services. The partnership was created to address and resolve pertinent priority public health issues in the counties of Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar, so partners were chosen to cover professional competencies in the area. The Romanian partner is the most experienced healthcare service provider in the region, with the most numerous and experienced medical staff in the Bihor county. Outside of Debrecen, the two Hungarian partners rely on the most experienced medical personnel in the county to provide healthcare services to 46.445 people in Hajd-Bihar.⁷⁴

Specific objectives:

- Eliminating bottlenecks in healthcare activity by purchasing and installing modern medical equipment (new diagnostic, screening and healing equipment to ensure prevention, early identification and effective treatment of diseases).
- Preventing and diagnosing diseases with high frequency in the eligible area, with special attention to disadvantaged groups (it includes: people with disabilities, the elderly, people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, people from rural communities without access to quality medical services, people with chronic diseases).
- Strengthening the project partner's institutional capacity.

The main activities and outputs were:

- Purchase and installation of necessary medical equipment for the Medical Analysis Laboratory of the County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea,
- 31 health departments benefited from modern medical equipment at the Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital (Intensive Therapy Unit, Endocrinology, Cardiology, BMF Surgery, General Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Thoracic Surgery, Ophthalmology, ENT, Interventional Cardiology, Cardiovascular Surgery, Surgery vascular, Diabetology, Nephrology, Neonatology - premature, , Dermatology, Gastroenterology, Hemodialysis, Internal medicine, Neonatology, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Obstetrics, Orthopedics, Outpatient, Emergency care unit, Urology,)
- In Hungary, 7 health departments benefited from modern medical equipment, including: 4 at the "Gróf Tisza István" Hospital in Berettyóújfalu (Laboratory, Emergency Unit, Gynecology and Pharmacy) and 3 at the Medical Center in Hajdúböszörmény; (Rehabilitative Treatments – Cardiology and Musculoskeletal, Pulmonology and Primary Dental Care).
- At least 2,500 patients from the targeted area, will benefit annually from disease prevention and early diagnosis due to the interactive;
- Organizing activities to improve access to health infrastructure for disadvantaged groups. At least 1100 people from disadvantaged groups and countries were informed regarding the healthcare services they could benefit from;

⁷⁴ Application Form

- Organizing the exchange of know-how and capacity-building activities.: 60 physicians and medical assistants from Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital (PP2) and Hajdúböszörmény (PP3) will participate to study visits at County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea and 9 medical staff representing all partners from the project will also participate to international medical conferences;
- Actions to improve access to the health infrastructure of disadvantaged groups, know-how exchange with project partners and capacity-building activities.

More detailed, in terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of workplaces:

- **preparation:** involves collecting the required information and documents, outlining individual and collective activities, and submitting the funding application through the e-Ms system. The costs associated with project preparation include the development of the Application Form. For this first stage County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea was responsible;
- **management:** for this stage, all project partners were involved. A joint team of eight members from all partners was formed. Their roles and responsibilities, as well as procedures for day-to-day management and coordination, partnership communication, reporting and evaluation, and risk quality management, will be clearly defined. However, it is not specified whether the management will be outsourced or not;
- **implementation:** purchase and installation of necessary medical equipment, Promotional actions for health screening and providing information to prevent and diagnose diseases with high frequency in the eligible area, media campaign aimed at informing the disadvantaged groups about the health-care services they could benefit from, exchange of know-how and capacity building activities;
- **communication:** drafting and distributing promotional materials such as 50 posters, 500 flyers, 100 printed notebooks, and 1,000 printed pens., publishing press releases release in a local newspaper at the beginning and end of the project to present its activities, results, and funding sources, organize the press conference.

Based on the perspectives expressed during the interviews, all project objectives and indicator targets have been successfully achieved due to the implementation of a well-structured management system at the hospital level, effective collaboration between the administrative system and the laboratory supply system, as well as the involvement of an external consulting team. These factors have contributed to the overall success of the project in meeting its goals and achieving the desired outcomes.

5. Complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project is coherent with Priority Area 9, **"To invest in people and skills"** of EU Strategy for the **Danube Region** which focuses on improving educational outcomes and skills in the region, including employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, active citizenship, and well-being. The County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea has attributes in education, and the acquisition of new medical equipment will enhance the quality and efficiency of medical education and contribute to the relevant skills and competencies of medical students. This is in line with Priority Area 10, **"To step up institutional capacity and cooperation,"** that aims to increase the absorption rate of EU funds in the Danube Region. The project helped increase the absorption rate of EU funds in the region. Based on the information provided, it seems that there are no specific planned or realized activities mentioned regarding the involvement of students in the development of competencies within the proposed project. However, it's worth noting that the acquisition of new medical equipment by the County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea can indirectly contribute to improved educational outcomes and relevant skills and competences of medical students. Synergies were observed between the ROHU-357 project and other healthcare projects and developments, aimed at raising standards and improving the quality of healthcare in the region.

All project objectives are in line with the **National Health Strategy 2014–2020 (Romania)** : GO *"Improving the efficiency of the health system by accelerating the use of modern information and communication technology"*, including S.O 6.2. *"Increasing access to health services through the use of telemedicine services"*, and GO *"Development of health infrastructure at national, regional and local level in order to reduce inequity in access to health services including O.S. 7.2. "Improving the infrastructure of health services offered on an outpatient basis through community medical assistance, family medicine and the specialized outpatient clinic"*.

As per documents reviewed, the project contributes directly to the objectives identified both in “**Hungarian National Health Care Strategy 2014-2020**” and in the “**Strategy for Hajdú-Bihar County's Development 2014-2020**”, namely: the infrastructural improvement of the health care system (through purchase of new medical equipment) and the reduction of inequalities in medical services (through soft activities). Because the project includes the acquisition of medical equipment and the partners deal with emergency cases also, the project contributes to the “**Sustainable Development Strategy of Bihor County for 2014-2020**” whose objective is “improving and modernizing the medical infrastructure and setting up and developing first aid centres”. The project also contributes directly to the “**Local Development Strategy of Oradea Municipality 2015-2020**” which aims at improving local health facilities, prevention activities and medical staff.

The present project contributed to and completed the activities carried within the framework of previous and present EU projects:

- **The County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea:**

- Bihor County's Health Care Contribution, Acronym BIHARMED, HURO/0802/082 - 2 mil. Euro, which led to increasing the quality and quantity of emergency medical services in addition to the major international traffic lanes located in the perimeter of Hajdu-Bihar and Bihor counties, increasing the cooperation relations for imaging and surgical interventions.

- “BHB Operation Departments - High common standards in surgery in the euro-region”, HURO 1101 – 2 million Euro - which led to the rehabilitation of the operating rooms at County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea, the purchase of medical equipment for the University of Debrecen and signing of common protocols in the field of surgery between the two partners

- **Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital Berettyóújfalu:**

- TIOP-2.2.6-12/1B-2013-0038 - The project led to an increased level of healthcare through the development of the inpatient and outpatient departments of Count Gróf Tisza Hospital through the modernization of medical equipment.

This project financed the automation of 50% of the laboratory, which is located in a spacious hall. The remaining 50% of funding for the provision of microbiology analyses came from the hospital's own funds and the Local Council of the Municipality of Bihor.

The interviewees also emphasized the importance of complementarity in terms of exchanging experiences in the implementation of new laboratory equipment. They highlighted that the project provided an opportunity for the professional staff to share their experiences and knowledge regarding the utilization of modern equipment in the laboratory setting. This exchange of experiences facilitated learning from best practices and enabled the project to incorporate effective strategies for utilizing the new equipment in their healthcare system

6. Project results and impact to date:

The Programme Output Indicators relevant for this project are *9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services*” with a target of 711.343 persons, which was reached as mentioned above. For *„9/a 2 Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment”*, the target was 38 health-care departments, which was reached by the project partners. As per MA monitoring data, confirmed by the interviews carried out, the final achievements of the project were the following:

- 1) A total of 38 health-care departments were endowed with modern equipment, enhancing the access of the population from both sides of the border to improved medical services.
- 2) Early identification and effective treatment of diseases in the Bihor - Hajdu-Bihar euro region in order to ensure prevention. Patients have access to an appropriate level of healthcare services all across the two neighbouring counties, regardless of their social status, financial situation or residence.
- 3) Improved competences for the medical staff of these 3 hospitals as a result of exchanges of experience and participation to international medical events.
- 4) The territorial proximity of cross-border communities also implies a regular incidence of patients that are in need of healthcare across the border and joint protocols were elaborated within the cooperation project to ensure good transfer and use of patient information and medical history.

According to the viewpoints expressed during the interviews, the Clinical Analysis Laboratory in Bihor County Hospital underwent modernization through the implementation of automated systems for transporting and processing samples. As a result, the time it took for samples to reach the laboratory decreased by 86% and the response time decreased by 80%, with emergency samples being delivered within 35-40 minutes of collection. The manual work of laboratory staff was also reduced, along with the probability and danger of sample and personnel contamination. Additionally, the project allowed for the acquisition of a monitoring system that tracks the transport of samples from all external points.

As mentioned by the interviewees, the effectiveness of the project was demonstrated by the significant increase in workload and the successful handling of the increased sample processing volumes through automation. The project's implementation resulted in a remarkable 150%-200% increase in the number of processed samples, while simultaneously reducing the probability of error in the test results. Additionally, the average hospitalization time and costs per test were reduced. The introduction of modern and advanced equipment enabled the laboratory to handle the increased workload efficiently and effectively.

According to the perspective expressed by the Hungarian partners in the interview the project's participation has not only led to the acquisition of new equipment but has also contributed to the professional growth of the hospital staff. The successful implementation of the hospital development and the procurement of equipment are considered the most significant achievements. As a result, the average age of equipment in the hospital has been reduced to less than ten years, which is considered highly favourable compared to the average conditions in Hungarian hospitals. This has led to an improvement in the quality of healthcare services, with a strong emphasis on equal opportunities. The exchange of knowledge and expertise among the participating institutions is regarded as the most important impact of the project, as it has the potential to foster further development. The positive experiences and collaboration may serve as motivation for future collaborative efforts.

From a CBC perspective, the project aimed to collaborate in order to share and transfer knowledge, experiences and good practices between them, for the common benefit of both regions involved. Moreover, the evidence collected indicates that the Hungarian partners were invited to Romania, to learn more about the activity of the laboratory in Oradea and to benefit from a direct exchange of experience. The previous online workshop was an opportunity to present and discuss the project, highlighting the benefits brought by the new equipment and emphasizing the need for a physical format for more effective communication and interaction.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

In regards with the **sustainable development (environment)** the project partners have incorporated sustainable development principles throughout the project cycle, including balanced resource use and logistics, and promoting public awareness. The project aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding energy and non-energy sources, and replacing old medical equipment with energy-efficient models. Centralizing public medical analysis will minimize consumable use and energy consumption, contributing to sustainable development. The equipment purchased through the project will comply with the energy efficiency requirements set out in Annex III of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) for products subject to public procurement. The best practice model: Centralizing public medical analysis will ensure the lowest possible use of consumables and lower energy consumption needed to generate medical results.

In regards with **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle**, the project was committed to respecting the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in all aspects, including the selection of management team members and providers of external services. The project includes actions to improve access to health infrastructure for disadvantaged groups and provides free medical testing for 50 social cases. Public hospitals will be the main recipient of disadvantaged groups, providing healthcare services to all incoming patients regardless of their income level, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other similar criterion.

Within the project, the County Clinical Emergency Hospital Oradea implemented actions to improve the access of disadvantaged groups to the health infrastructure. As part of these efforts, they provided 50 free medical tests specifically for social cases.

Based on interviews carried out the project successfully implemented and promoted horizontal principles. Given the high proportion of disadvantaged groups in the Berettyóújfalu service area, special attention was

dedicated to improving their situation. To enhance accessibility, a media campaign was launched to raise awareness about the hospital's activities. An interactive website was developed, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities. This platform allowed individuals to contact doctors by email, eliminating the need for personal visits to the hospital for health-related inquiries. The institution had its own strategy for equal opportunities and appointed an equality officer. Furthermore, physical accessibility was prioritized during renovation works, and considerations were made to accommodate the needs of hearing and visually impaired individuals. In the case of **equality between man and women**, the application form also states that the project is committed to transparency, equality between men and women, non-discrimination, national integrity, and sustainable development during its design and implementation. The project management staff would include both men and women, and an "Equal Opportunities Action Plan" would be developed during the first meeting to consider the different starting positions of target groups based on gender, as well as intended and unintended impacts on those groups. The plan would also consider equality between men and women through the inclusion of gender mainstreaming provisions, including flexible arrangements for female employees and information about these provisions in job opportunity advertisements.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Based on data collected from interviews conducted, it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant obstacle to the project. The planned exchanges of know-how, which were originally intended to take place in person, could not be carried out as planned. Instead, they had to be conducted online. This shift in the mode of communication and knowledge exchange was necessary to adapt to the restrictions and safety measures imposed during the pandemic. This change in format was necessary to comply with health and safety guidelines and restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

One of the identified hampering factors was the nature of the public procurement process. A specific example was shared, highlighting a scenario where a public procurement tender, which had progressed through the process, was ultimately deemed invalid during the final payment request. This unexpected turn of events had a detrimental impact on the overall success of the public procurement. What made this situation even more surprising was the presence of two other valid tenders for the same product. Despite their eligibility, the procurement process was still adversely affected, underscoring the challenges posed by the intricacies of the public procurement system.

This shift to virtual platforms allowed for continued collaboration and knowledge sharing among project partners. The Grof Tisza Istvan Hospital Berettyóújfalu actively participated in online conferences and press conferences, facilitating a valuable exchange of information. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the project managed to adapt and leverage technology to ensure the continuity of knowledge exchange activities. Furthermore, the project provided an opportunity for three hospital employees to attend international conferences related to the identified areas of improvement, namely the central laboratory, emergency department, gynecology, and pharmacy.

Another factor that affected the implementation on the Hungarian side was the significant change in the forint-euro exchange rate between the planned closing date and the aforementioned assessment date. This change had an impact on the project as it allowed the hospital to proceed with additional equipment purchases using the original budget. The fluctuation in the exchange rate created an opportunity for the hospital to acquire more equipment than initially planned, thereby enhancing the project's outcomes and capabilities.

According to the interviews, the success of the project was attributed to the hospital's management system, which was applied throughout the hospital and allowed for collaboration between the administrative system, supply system, and laboratory. An external consulting team was contracted to implement the project, and inherent problems were solved in an optimal time with no factors preventing success.

The INTERREG VA Romania-Hungary Programme 2014-2020 was successful in ensuring its visibility through various communication channels. The program made sure to mediate the benefits of the project through local press and radio stations. This approach helped in raising awareness and educating the local community about the significance of the project. Additionally, the program disseminated informative materials that detailed the benefits of the project, including the modernization of the Clinical Analysis Laboratory in Bihor County Hospital, the automation of the analysis collection process, and the reduction in hospitalization time and costs. These materials were made available to the public through various channels such as brochures, posters, and the project's website.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

Based on data collected from interviews conducted, the automation of laboratory processes in Oradea had several unforeseen and indirect effects on the laboratory staff. While the project aimed to streamline operations and improve efficiency, it presented a new challenge for the staff members, requiring ongoing professionalization to adapt to the changes brought about by automation. Unfortunately, not all members of the laboratory staff were able to successfully adjust to the new processes, which ultimately led to an unexpected downsizing of approximately 20% to 30% of the workforce. This downsizing can be seen as an unintended consequence of the project, as it was not initially anticipated that some staff members would struggle with the transition to the automated system. In response to the downsizing, the hospital management facilitated the transfer of some affected staff members to other departments within the hospital. This transfer allowed individuals who found it difficult to adjust to the new processes to seek alternative roles that better aligned with their skills and preferences. The need for these internal transfers can be seen as another indirect effect of the project, which necessitated the reassignment of personnel to maintain the overall functioning of the hospital.

10. Sustainability of project results

According to the application form, the institutions have financial capacity/stability for more than 5 years after its implementation, and support from local and central governments. Collaboration protocols would cover more than 5 years, ensuring a high level of quality of the medical act, and the specialization of human resources will guarantee continuous transfer of knowledge. The partners would take measures to ensure the necessary staff, allocate financial resources, maintain equipment, and continue professional collaboration.

According to the information provided in the interviews, the purchased equipment for the laboratory automation project is of the latest generation and has a long warranty period, which ensures its reliability and durability. However, to maintain the optimal performance of the equipment, it is necessary to periodically calibrate and perform maintenance checks. For this purpose, many of the equipments are on loan contracts, which ensure that they receive regular maintenance, repairs, and software updates from the suppliers. This not only extends the life of the equipment but also helps to avoid any unexpected downtime or malfunctions. Calibration of the equipment is a crucial process in maintaining the accuracy of the laboratory results. It involves comparing the measurement values of the equipment with known standards to ensure that the readings are within an acceptable range. Periodic calibration is required to maintain the quality system and to ensure the reliability of the results produced by the laboratory.

Although the laboratory's operations are not significantly affected by major issues, it is necessary to order consumables on a monthly basis. Monthly procurement can be revised and optimized in a sustainable approach to minimize waste and reduce environmental impact.

Following information collected from the Hungarian partners the decision to place the city hospitals under the jurisdiction of the county hospitals, with the Hospital of Berettyóújfalu being placed under the University of Debrecen Hospital, indicates a restructuring of the healthcare system. While the details may still be vague, it suggests a centralized approach to improve coordination and resource allocation. The hospital in Debrecen will have to take over the maintenance of the project's results. The hospital equipment purchased has been selected on the basis of a prior needs assessment, ensuring that they will be used to their full potential in a longer term as well.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The main lessons learned identified in the case of this project are:

- Establishing a clear and comprehensive plan before implementing any changes is crucial. This ensures that all necessary steps are identified and taken, and potential issues are addressed proactively. A well-planned approach sets the foundation for successful project implementation.
- Collaboration among all stakeholders and their alignment, working towards common goals, and possibility to identify and address potential issues collectively. It fosters teamwork and enhances the chances of project success.
- Sharing successful projects and experiences can inspire and motivate others, encouraging them to pursue similar initiatives. It creates a positive impact and helps spread knowledge and best practices.

The main conclusions and recommendations that can be formulated at case level are:

The project reached its objectives and contributes to improve preventive, early diagnostic and curative healthcare services for the entire population of Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar counties.

The alignment between the project and local, national, and European strategies has played a crucial role in facilitating the effectiveness of the project. The project's objectives and activities are in line with the priorities and goals set at various levels, ensuring that it addresses relevant healthcare needs and contributes to broader healthcare strategies. Furthermore, the previous collaboration between the two institutions and their capacity, both in general and in managing EU funds, have had a positive impact on the project's outcomes.

The “hard” activities, such as the acquisition of a complete automation system for the Laboratory of Medical Analysis and the provision of medical equipment for project partners, are essential for improving disease diagnosis and treatment. These technological investments facilitate early diagnosis and lay the foundation for effective therapeutic interventions. On the other hand, “soft” activities, such as promotional health screenings, provision of information for the prevention and diagnosis of high-frequency diseases, and improving access for disadvantaged groups to healthcare infrastructure, contribute to increasing community awareness and engagement in disease prevention and treatment.

However, despite the significant contribution of “hard” and “soft” activities to improving healthcare standards, it is apparent that the element of cooperation between institutions and the professionals involved is less emphasized and sustainable.

Moreover, the project has had a greater impact on the medical staff in Emergency County Hospital from the **Emergency County Hospital in Oradea, as the majority of the modern medical equipment was allocated to the departments within the Emergency County Hospital in Oradea (31 out of 38 departments)**. The remaining seven departments were distributed among the other two hospitals in Hungary (Gróf Tisza István Hospital in Berettyóújfalu and the Medical Center in Hajdúböszörmény).

(Recommendation 1) To promote closer collaboration between medical teams from both regions and improve healthcare standards, it is recommended to continue and strengthen study visits to medical institutions, actively participate in international medical conferences to enhance knowledge and professional skills, organize joint training sessions and workshops to share expertise and find common solutions, and create an online collaboration platform for sharing relevant information and resources. These measures will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, promote a deeper understanding of the specific needs and challenges of each party, and contribute to the improvement of healthcare standards in the cross-border area. To ensure a fair distribution of project activities among partners, it is crucial to ensure that each partner receives an equitable share of responsibilities and tasks. This can be achieved by considering the expertise, resources, and capacities of each partner and allocating tasks.

The public procurement process presents significant challenges due to its complex and legally intricate nature, which can hinder the success of procurement initiatives. **(Recommendation 2)** To overcome these obstacles, it is recommended to conduct a thorough analysis of the procurement regulations, seek legal expertise to navigate its complexities, establish a clear and transparent procurement process, maintain proper documentation, and regularly monitoring and review the process for effectiveness.

While the programme and project have been effective in promoting the existing financing opportunities and activities implemented with INTERREG V support, **(Recommendation 3)** more efforts should be invested in disseminating good practices, successful projects such as this, to inform citizens of results booked with EU/CBC resources. At the same time, **(Recommendation 4)** a stronger connection between the operational (project) and strategic levels should be ensured, as the former influence the quality of the medical activity and its results from the perspective of the population's health, managed by the Public Health Department at county level. This, stronger, connection, would better orient and, possibly, sustain, the results of the projects in terms of reach and health of vulnerable categories.

Bibliography:

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2. Application Form
3. Project Progress Report

Case Report

RO-HU 396 - Team-Cardio-Prevent Cross-border cooperation in the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in Bekes-Timis counties

General data on project

Title	Team-Cardio-Prevent Cross-border cooperation in the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in Bekes-Timis counties
Code	RO-HU 396
Priority axis	Priority axis 4: Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 4.1: Improved preventive and curative medical services within the eligible area. Investment Priority 9/a – Investments in medical infrastructure
Lead Beneficiary	Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara (RO)
Partners	Békés County Central Hospital (HU) – project partner 2
Target Group ⁷⁵	e) General public – Timis – 698,201 persons, Bekes – 342,438 persons residing in each county according to official data f) Infrastructure and (public) service provider - 2 medical institutions - Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara and Békés County Central Hospital g) Other - A total of 40 medical specialists benefit the project: 20 from the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara, 20 from Békés County Central Hospital.
Covered geographical area	Timiș County (RO) and Békés County
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	36 months (1st of January 2019 – 31 of December 2021)
Budget allocated/contracted	€ 2,707,466.44 out of which ERDF € 2,301,346.47
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total reported to FLC: 2.590.692,57 EUR out of which 2.202.088,58 EUR ERDF Total reported to JS: 2.417.980,31 EUR out of which 1.980.080,13 EUR ERDF
Status (under implementation / finalized) ⁷⁶	Finalized
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Project Information Fiche
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⁷⁵ According to Application Form

⁷⁶ At the moment when the CS Report was drafted

	Project Website: https://interreg-rohu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ROHU-396-EN.pdf <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Lead Partner: Project manager, Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara. The representative of the Directorate of Public Health Timis. Chief Medical Director of Békés County Central Hospital.

3. Short presentation of the project context

The needs analysis presented in the application form indicates that the project RO-HU 396 proposed measures to address cardiovascular disease risk factors from **both a patient and a medical perspective**. From a medical perspective, there were only a few hospitals in Romania that offer cardiac **interventional**⁷⁷ procedures, which was a concern given the country population size. In Romania, out of the 473 public hospitals, **only 6 had facilities** for cardiac interventional procedures when the project was developed. In total, there were 20 public and private centers that included facilities for cardiac interventional procedures and 13 for cardiac surgery for a population of approximately 20 million persons. The medical infrastructure hasn't evolved significantly since the project was designed. The Timiș County Public Health Directorate's Activity Report for 2021⁷⁸ indicates that 36 health units are functioning in the Timiș County (out of which 15 of public owned and the remaining 21 private).

According to the National Institute of Statistics, at municipality level (in Municipality of Timișoara, with a resident population of 250,849 people), in the same year, 7 public hospitals (and 6 private hospitals) are providing medical services, one of them being the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara (SCMUT). Among the 25 clinical departments of SCMUT, Cardiology Clinical Department offered continuous hospitalization or day time health service providing 60 beds for patients (7 for intensive care) in 11 rooms. At the same time, Békés County Central Hospital (BMKK), was and remains, to this date, the most important public medical institutions in the Bekes county. The Cardiology Unit, established in 2013, has provided care for nearly 1,500 patients annually.

From a **patient** perspective, in Hungary, in 2016, cardiovascular diseases were responsible for almost 50% of all deaths.⁷⁹ The same is valid for the Timis country. **In this context, the project aimed to respond to a common Timis-Bekes challenge in an integrated, innovative and inclusive manner.** Although both partners had worked on improving cardiovascular and peripheral vascular disease treatment in the past, this project intended to take an innovative approach by integrating efforts and ensuring more visible improvements in healthcare services.

The interviews conducted confirmed that in Bekes and Timis counties, cardiovascular diseases continue to stand as the primary cause of mortality, both at a national and regional level. The need to ensure access to early diagnosis and adequate treatment of these diseases was underlined by all interviewees, including the representative of the Department of Public Health (DPH) Timis, who yearly assesses the health status of the population in the country. **Thus, the project was, in general, relevant when approved and continues to be relevant to this date.**

Based on the project application form, from a **CBC** perspective, the project proposed awareness forums, information brochures, and workshops for medical staff, as well as knowledge transfer. Joint workshops and a medical council allow for efficient and effective diagnosis and treatment, particularly in special or difficult cases.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

Project ROHU-396 aims **to improve the health-care infrastructure** for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases at 2 health-care institutions in the Timis-Bekes area and **improve the access of the population in the Timis-Bekes area to information** regarding health and to **quality medical services** for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases. **The general objective is to ensure the access of the population of the Timiș-Bekes area to modern medical equipment and a more innovative approach to medical assistance.**

⁷⁷ For more details, see [Cardiac Interventional Procedure - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics](#).

⁷⁸ Source: https://www.dsptimis.ro/data_files/raportari/337/document-337.pdf?1679058953

⁷⁹ Application Form ROHU-396

Specific objectives:

- **Improving health-care infrastructure** for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases at 2 health-care institutions in the Timis-Bekes area.
Important outputs for SO1: - 25 medical equipment for the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases purchased and installed in 3 health care departments of the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara - 3 medical equipment for the prevention and therapy of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases purchased and installed in 3 health care departments of the Békés County Central Hospital
- **Improving access** of the population in the Timis-Bekes area to information regarding health and to quality medical services for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases.
In order to achieve this specific objective, the two project partners organized 4 workshops for medical staff from the two counties, and performed promotional actions on prevention of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular disease

The main activities and outputs were:

- Purchasing and installing 25 modern medical equipment for the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in 3 health care departments of the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara.
- Restructuring the Angiography room at the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara.
- Purchasing and installing 3 modern medical equipment for the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in 3 health care departments of Békés County Central Hospital;
- Organizing 4 joint workshops for medical staff (30 participants/ workshop) **in order to improve their competences in screening, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases;**
- Organizing a joint medical council in order to discuss 20 cases of cardiovascular/peripheral vascular diseases
- Elaborating **2 new medical protocols** by the joint medical council established within the project, that incorporate innovative and complex screening, diagnosis and treatment procedures in cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases;
- Organizing 4 awareness forums in Timisoara and Gyula, for more than 200 representatives, on lifestyle and the risk of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases;
- Organizing more than **3000 cardio examinations, free of charge**, for both counties population using the existing equipment and the equipment bought within the project;
- Elaborating and distributing 2 brochures (one for RO population and one the HU), made by medical experts, (5000 copies) that provide information on the role of food and physical exercise in the prevention of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases.

More detailed, in terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 5 types of activities:

- **preparation:** Both partners (Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara and Békés County Central Hospital) actively collaborated in preparing the project's activities and work packages, and the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara was responsible for collecting and integrating all proposed actions. The Lead Partner contracted external expertise for the project's preparation. The external subcontractor prepared the project's application and ensured the proper uploading of information in the Electronic Monitoring System (e-MS).

- **management:** Both partners ensured an efficient project management which lead to establish clear procedures for reporting and evaluation, both in the area of finance and project content. Project management includes regular contact between the project partners (at least 12 project meetings) and ensures transfer of expertise across the partnership.

- **investments (and works):** where 2 main activities were carried out: purchase equipment that modernized 3 health care departments of the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara and purchase and installation of medical equipment for the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases for The Békés County Central Hospital. At Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara, where more than 40.000 patients are treated every year, the project

enabled the following three health care departments to be modernized: the Radiology and Medical Imaging Laboratory, the Internal Medicine Department, The Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care.

- **implementation:** which included: Joint workshops on cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases for medical staff, promotional actions for health screening and providing information to prevent and diagnose cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in Timiș and Békés counties, Knowledge transfer on cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases.

- **communication:** drafting and distributing promotional materials via tools of communication (project website, press releases, press articles (advertorials), flyers and different promotional materials). The program was promoted through mass media, social media, informative materials. There were physical meetings with patients in Timișoara and Gyula, they attended the presentations. At the project level, a communication expert was also contracted (Romanian-Hungarian translation)

According to the viewpoints expressed during the interviews, all project objectives and targets of the indicators were successfully achieved, due to a well-designed plan and realistically set aims. All project partners worked efficiently and made efforts to achieve the set goals. Effective resource management also contributed to the success of the project.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The strategic objectives of the project are in line with the 3rd specific area of the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region** "Increasing prosperity in the Danube region". The partnership between Ro and Hu institutions facilitates the administrative cooperation of communities living in the border regions This is in line with PA10 "To step up institutional capacity and cooperation" and to the IV objective of EUSDR, "Strengthening the Danube Region". Also, cooperation through knowledge transfer and workshops (trainings) contributes to PA7 To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies".

All project objectives are in line with the **National Health Strategy 2014–2020 (Romania)** and **National Plan for the Control of Cardiovascular Diseases:** "*Decreasing the growth rate of morbidity and mortality by noncommunicable diseases*", including SO3.1. "*Increasing the effectiveness and role of health promotion*". All project results are in line with Hungarian National Health Strategy priorities to improve medical services. The main objective of the project is also in line with the two of the development objectives of the Timis County Strategy 2015-2020/(2023) "Improving the health degree for population" and "Improvement of endowment with equipment and improvement of the specific infrastructure to ensure the quality of medical services and information and to increase the population's access to them, including from geographically disadvantaged areas".

As per interviews carried out, the project contributed to the Europe 2020 strategy by providing knowledge transfer on cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases and building on previous initiatives of modernising and harmonising the existing telemedicine system,.

As per documents reviewed, the project ensures synergies with projects previously or currently in implementation, as follows: in a previous project, the Lead Partner (Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timisoara) had developed the Health Research Network, in which research activities on cancer in the perinatal period are currently unfolding. Therefore, the Lead Partner developed a solid infrastructure for prevention, diagnostic and treatment for the cancer diseases, and tackled cancer disease as being the second cause of death in Romania. The Project Partner has implemented a project and created a photovoltaic systems on the buildings of the Békés County Central Hospital. This system is used for current hospital activities and as well as for activities in future projects. Both partners are using a telemedicine system (software) purchased through past project. The system helps and facilitates the knowledge transfer on cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases between the two partners.

Timișoara Municipal Clinical Hospital benefits from 2 Operational Programme Human Capital projects (Cancer Screening, Screening of prenatal conditions), and one project within Operational Programme for Large Infrastructure (POIM). The collaboration of the project partners favored the implementation and obtaining the results.

In terms of complementarity, the interviewees highlighted the importance of professional experience exchange, as an overall goal, which should be present in any international or national programmes

regarding the healthcare system. In his opinion, this would be the way to create programmes which contribute to each other's successes and can inspire each other by sharing good practices. Knowledge of the results in other countries can be important in assessing where improvements are needed in one's own country.

6. Project results and impact to date

The Programme Output Indicators relevant for this project are „9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services” and „9/a 2 Number of health-care departments affected by modernized equipment”. Through the project ROHU – 396, a number of 1,040,639 persons are benefiting from improved health care services (i.e., the population of the two counties) and 6 health-care departments are more efficient using modernized equipment purchased through the project. Moreover, both hospitals serve patients outside the counties, too, thus it can be stated that the effects of the projects go beyond the territories covered as per project application.

As per MA monitoring data, confirmed by the interviews carried out, the final achievements of the project were the following:

1) Improved health-care infrastructure for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in 2 health-care institutions from Timis and Bekes county; 3 health-care departments with modernized equipment within Békés County Central Hospital and 3 health-care departments with modernized equipment within Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital from Timisoara;

By end of the project 3 health-care departments in the Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timișoara were modernized by the purchase and installation of an angiograph, one Magnetom Magnetic Resonance system software, three ultrasound systems, four blood pressure monitors and four electrocardiogram monitors, seven medical beds, four electrocardiographs and two portable defibrillators. **Also, the hospital has set up a department of interventional cardiology.** The Békés County Central Hospital purchased a digital subtraction angiography system for the Invasive Cardiology Department Gyula, as well as an ultrasound diagnostic device for each of the Cardiology outpatient care departments from Békéscsaba and Gyula.

2) Improved know-how of the 40-medical staff of Bekes and Timis counties in screening, diagnosis, and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases.

3) Increased awareness on lifestyle and the risk of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases (through the 5,000 copies of brochures disseminated in Bekes and Timis county and through awareness forums organized for more than 200 persons).

4) Improved access of the population in the Timis-Bekes area to information regarding health and quality medical services for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases.

All interviews carried out underlined the importance of the **screening activity**. Screening was highly beneficial as it allowed the early detection of different heart diseases (e.g., hypertension), and, consequently, the recommendation of appropriate therapeutic methods. This prevention activity was prioritised, and, as mentioned above, 1,500 consultations were carried out both by Timișoara Municipal Clinical Hospital (where screening services for cardiovascular diseases, as well as interdisciplinary consultations, were provided to the population in rural areas through organized medical caravans) and Békés Hospital in order to prevent cases of death caused by heart diseases that could have been treated and/or cured. Based on National Statistics Office in Romania, in Timis County the % of deaths caused by heart diseases decreased from 48% in 2019 (3.748) to 45% in 2021 (4.568 the latest data available), and this positive trend is continued by the project. In Hungary, the interviewees stressed that more people had started to come for preventive screening.

This positive effect would not have been possible **without the equipment purchased**, that had a beneficial impact on medical care by enabling effective diagnosis and treatment for patients throughout the counties and beyond. The new equipment also helped to detect cardiovascular diseases in addition to surgical pathology in some pre-operative cases. As a result, there was an increase in the number of patients seeking angiography at the Cardiology and Internal Medicine Clinics, with a monthly average of 40 patients. As indicated in interviews, the only screening angiographer in Timișoara county is in the Timișoara Municipal

Clinical Hospital, and in the light of this fact, the evaluation finds that the project and the programme, in extenso, has an important added value at county level.

Similarly, in Hungary, the medical equipment purchased improved the quality of care provided. The Békés County Central Hospital already had a DSH unit before the project, but it was not sufficient for efficient patient care. The doctors had to deal with urgent cases in addition to planned examinations, and if urgent cases occurred, the registered appointments had to be postponed. As urgent cases accounted for about half of all cases, with the purchase of the second device, this issue no longer occurs. In addition to this benefit, the device is an important diagnostic tool not only for the cardiovascular system, but also for peripheral blood vessels, and its benefits have been demonstrated in these areas. With the equipment purchased in the project, important progress has been made in both prevention and treatment. The efficiency of treatment has increased not only in quality but also in quantity.

From a CBC perspective, the project aimed to create a network of improved preventive and curative healthcare services across the area of the project and to strengthen collaboration between 2 medical institutions involved. The professional cooperation between hospitals and hospital departments is perceived especially by the Hungarian partner as one of the most important results of the project, as it is important, for the professions and professionals involved to work together in dealing with this group of diseases, in order to progress more smoothly in the interest of patient care. The collaboration between 2 medical institutions involved, already in place when the project was designed, was improved as a result of the activities carried out together (as presented before, cases discussed and protocols developed together). The project offered both sides the opportunity to agree on professional guidelines for the prevention, treatment and care of the related diseases. Furthermore, cooperation through workshops has contributed to the development of the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies. Moreover, evidence collected indicates that Romanian patients were referred to Hungary for treatment and/or they made use of the health services in the neighbouring county, thus cross-border cooperation is strengthened from a patient perspective, too.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

In regards with the **sustainable development (environment)**, the partnership has purchased high-quality equipment to provide excellent medical care to the population in Timis-Bekes area while minimizing negative impacts on the environment. They used video conferencing, emails, and phone calls to a large extent (also in the context created by COVID-19 – see below). The telemedicine system developed in previous projects facilitated communication and consultation regarding the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases between the medical staff of the 2 hospitals, reducing, at the same time, the negative impact on the environment such as CO2 emissions caused by transport between hospitals.

In regards with **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle** the project was committed to ensuring that all individuals in the eligible area would equal access to quality healthcare without any form of discrimination or bias. This includes individuals of different races, nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions, social categories, beliefs, sexes, sexual orientations, ages, disabilities, chronic non-contagious diseases, HIV infection, and those who are part of disadvantaged categories. Based on interviews carried out medical services in the modernized departments are delivered in a non-discriminatory manner. More importantly, the 3000 screening consultations carried out in more remote areas had as target group more vulnerable categories of populations, with limited access to medical care, in normal circumstances. Due to the project, the Békés County Central Hospital paid more attention to the unequal access to screening for different social groups. Therefore, in the future, health screening buses will be sent to the more isolated settlements, and the Hospital aims to be in close cooperation with the municipalities, in order to inform the population about possibility of health screening (based on interviews carried out).

The principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination also took part in the formation of the members of the project implementation team, all members being selected based on their medical expertise and experience in the screening, prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. All project team members received "equal pay for equal work".

In regards with **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principle** the application form also states that the project aimed to uphold gender equality, which is a fundamental value of the European Union. The distribution of medical staff participating in the workshops in Timiş and Bekes counties was balanced in order to ensure gender equality. The project's awareness forums were to promote equal opportunities and

access to medical treatment for men and women living in the Timiș-Bekes area. However, although the project intended to contribute towards achieving the target of 75% participation of both men and women by the year 2020, limited specific measures were implemented in this regards, though (further than equitable access of both genders to projects activities/events).

8. Main factors influencing project results

Based on data collected from interviews carried out, it was found that during the project, the partners had a successful collaboration with their colleagues from the Joint Secretariat and First Level Control. The Timiș Joint Secretariat verified the progress reports, and the technical reports were sent to the First Level Control, and all reports were validated on time. The launch of the project calls happened at an appropriate time, and the programme authorities provided adequate support. Additionally, the project partners were invited to attend events organized by the Joint Secretariat. Overall, the cooperation and coordination with the relevant authorities were seamless and instrumental in facilitating the advancement of the project. At the same time, another factor that facilitated the successful implementation of the project was the collaboration between the project partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an important hampering factor to the project. During this timeframe, the Timișoara Municipal Clinical Hospital became a Covid support clinic, thus the activities (i.e., vascular screening) were stopped and it was necessary to request an extension of the project and activities were moved to on-line modes (when possible). Overall, the interviewees consider the effectivity of the measures taken by programme authorities in relation with the COVID-19 pandemic as satisfactory. The JTS and IPs were very helpful and flexible, and they were able to complete the necessary administrative procedures and arrange the necessary contract amendments. They also appreciated the possibility of electronic signature.

Another factor affecting the implementation of the project was the difference in public procurement legislation between the two participating countries; these made it challenging to keep the components of the project in sync. Procurement delays have been a problem due to economic instability. The forint exchange rate has weakened significantly against the euro, so there is a substantial difference between the advance received and the final financial settlement for the project. The solution to this challenge would be for the MA or the state to establish a standard procedure to compensate for major losses caused by fluctuating currency exchanges, so that applicants/beneficiaries do not have to take on the uncertainty and responsibility of the additional amounts needed because of factors outside of their control.

To implement the project, the appropriate project management needed to be set up. A difficulty for the partners involved was the obligation to hire as employees, all the members of the management team. While there is a project team in the Hospital, including also participants from different departments who help to write and implement a project, the challenge was to ensure the needed personnel in a sustainable manner (if they hire someone full time and then at a later stage there is not enough work to be done on international projects, that person needs to be fired). More flexibility from the MA in this respect would be appreciated.

The fact that all documents, including/especially the application form, need to be drafted in English is still considered a barrier, to a certain extent, particularly where attention is paid by the programme authorities to less important details possibly not fully explained or clearly explained in a non-native language.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The project "Cross-border cooperation in the prevention and complex treatment of cardiovascular and peripheral vascular diseases in Bekes-Timis counties" had a positive impact on the medical community. The Cardiology and Internal Medicine Clinic at the Timișoara Municipal Clinical Hospital has gained more prestige, while long-term collaboration among medical personnel has been established. As a result, the project was recognized at the Healthcare Awards 2020 and awarded the title of "Medical Team of the Year".

At the same time, the partnership between Romanian and Hungarian medical institutions facilitated the administrative cooperation also between communities living in border regions.

10. Sustainability of project results

The outcomes and achievements of the project have a lasting impact beyond its conclusion, as the project partners have committed to ensuring the financial and operational sustainability of the project for at least five years after its financial closure. The medical equipment purchased through the project is currently

utilized for the treatment of patients (after the project ended), as it is an essential part of the medical institutions supported.

The results obtained in terms of improved access to more diverse and quality medical services for persons more aware of health risks is the main driver behind the commitment of partners to sustain them. A facilitating factor in this regard is the experience of the partners in purchasing medicines and equipment that is maintained from the hospital's own budget. Another factor related to the sustainability are the reports submitted to the Joint Secretariat and monitoring visits carried out to ensure that the equipment is used properly.

The project aimed to carry out, by December 2025, at least 4,000 angio-coronarographies, peripheral angiography including carotid, 7,750 ultrasounds, 3,300 TA/EKGs, and 3,000 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRIs) using the newly acquired endowment. Based on evidence collected there are no major risks to having the targets reached, e.g. 40 angio-coronarographies are carried out only in Timis, every month (if the same is carried out in Hungary, 4 years are needed for the target to be reached, more precisely 2021-2025).

However, in order to ensure the sustainability of the project's results (in terms of positive effects on the population's health), the problem needs to be addressed in the long term, involving a wide range of participants and mobilising the population. As per evidence collected, fifty percent of the population in general does not attend screenings, although personal invitations are sent to the demographic groups concerned. More and continuous efforts should therefore be made to inform the population about the importance of health screening.

As the same time, evidence collected indicates that the level of collaboration outside/after the project is relatively low. The relationship between the two participating hospitals is good, however, the consultations between the medical teams do not continue, no further cases are discussed or experience/knowledge exchanged. This entails also that the results of previous joint projects where telemedicine infrastructure was acquired are also not capitalised upon.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The main lessons learned identified in the case of this project are:

- Team collaboration was a key factor for the successful implementation of the project. At the same time, the quality and attitude of the medical professionals involved was as needed to turn the project into a success at local level;
- Identification of common and specific problems and needs in the cross-border area positively conditions the effectiveness of the project;
- Elaboration of guidelines for good medical practice at the local level is an element that can be recommended to other similar projects, too, as prevention and a healthy lifestyle are not sufficiently embedded in the mentality of the population;
- There needs to be awareness on all risks before the project is developed and started. The Cardiology Clinic operates in a building that does not belong to the Municipal Hospital, and the bureaucratic problems had to be resolved by the Directorate of the Municipal Hospital (Internal Radiology and Medical Imaging).

The main conclusions and recommendations that can be formulated at case level are:

The context of the project did not evolve significantly from the wider perspective of the change needed in terms of incidence of cardio-vascular diseases in both counties covered by the project (patient perspective), i.e., they remain the number one cause of death on both sides of the border. However, this is rather an indication of the continuous relevance of the project than of its impact, as the later cannot be reflected in available statistical data, yet (i.e., the project finalised in 2021 and the available data is from the same year).

From a medical perspective, the medical infrastructure in the two countries hasn't evolved significantly since the project was designed, although some improvements were registered. Again, this indicates the project added value as well as the programme added value in the area of health at local level. From a medical perspective, there were insufficient public hospitals in Romania that offered cardiac interventional procedures, on one side, and, on the other side, in Hungary the equipment in place was insufficient. This situation was improved by the project with positive consequences for the access of population to adequate medical services. This is particularly valid for more vulnerable categories of patients who could not access such infrastructure in private hospitals, as well as for persons in remote areas who benefited of preventive investigations via mobile services.

The project reached its objectives and did contribute to an “improved health-care infrastructure” and “an improved access of the population in the Timis-Bekes area to information regarding health and to quality medical services”. **(Recommendation 1)** More efforts are needed, though, for an effective decrease, i.e., the prevention and treatment of cardio-vascular diseases and, in this regard, sustainability monitoring is very important. While the project reached 3,000 persons in the screening programme, and approximately 500 persons benefit of treatment per year, the number of deaths causes but this category of diseases is still high (e.g., 4.568 in 2021 in the Timis county).

The alignment between the project and local, national and European strategies facilitated the project effectiveness. At the same time, the previous collaboration between the two institutions, their capacity (in general and to manage EU funds) and synergy with previous/other interventions strengthened the effects of the project, i.e., relying and using the telemedicine system (software) purchased in previous projects. Moreover, the project had a positive impact on the medical community. The Cardiology and Internal Medicine Clinic at the Timișoara Municipal Clinical Hospital has gained more prestige, while long-term collaboration among medical personnel (in the Timis County) has been established. As a result, the project was recognized at the Healthcare Awards 2020 and awarded the title of "Medical Team of the Year".

From a cross-border cooperation perspective, the project proposed and carried out important collaboration initiatives, including workshops for medical staff to transfer knowledge, creating a medical council that discussed and agreed on different medical cases and diagnosis and new medical protocols. However, it seems that this collaboration was maintained to a limited extent after the project was closed, although patients are referred or pass the border at their initiative to benefit of medical services, mainly from Romania to Hungary. **(Recommendation 2)**. Although “health” was considered as an area with less potential for enhancing cooperation across the borders, the sustainability of such activities should be better designed from the outset and monitored in the ex-post phase. From the design phase of the project, it was known that medical infrastructure is more adequate in the latter, compared to the former. Such differences might explain why the medical institutions partnering up are not located in neighbouring counties, i.e., common challenges and level are more important for a partnership than geography.

A series of key factors positively influenced the performance of the project, namely the support received from the programme authorities, the capacity of the two partners and experience in implementing EU-funded projects. On the other hand, the pandemic and different legislation as regards public procurement had an opposite effect on the smooth implementation of the project.

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5. Application Form ROHU-396

Case Report

RO-HU-449 - Integrated project for sustainable development in the mountain area of Bihor County, improvement of access and development in health care services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations

1. General data on project

Title	Integrated project for sustainable development in the mountain area of Bihor County, improvement of access and development in health care services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations (IPHEALTH)
Code	RO-HU 449
Priority axis	Priority axis 4: Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific Objective 4.1: Improved preventive and curative medical services within the eligible area.

	Investment Priority 9/a – Investments in medical infrastructure
Lead Beneficiary	Bihor County Council
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality of Salonta (Romania) • Local Government of Berettyóújfalu City • Municipality of Beiuș (Romania) • "CRIȘANA" Inspectorate for Emergency Situations of Bihor County (Romania) • Oradea University of Oradea, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy (Hungary) • Municipality of Marghita (Romania) • Salvamont County Service Salvaspeo Bihor legally represented by the Bihor Mountain Rescue Association (Romania) • Gróf Tisza István Hospital (Hungary) • Municipality of Aleșd (Romania)
Target Group ⁸⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and (public) service providers • Higher education and research institutions • General public: Approximately 700.000 people in the CB area of Bihor County (Romania) and Berettyóújfalu area (Hungary) necessitate medical care (for various reasons) in the CB area.
Covered geographical area	Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	36 months (01 August 2019 – 31 July 2023)
Budget allocated/contracted	Total EUR 9,717,383, of which ERDF EUR 7,987,250
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total reported to FLC: 816.952,92 EUR out of which 626.488,42 EUR (ERDF) Total reported to JS: 475.166,42 EUR out of which 363.926 EUR (ERDF)
Status (under implementation / finalized) ⁸¹	Under implementation
Type of project (Standard / strategic)	Strategic

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Project Information Fiche Project Website: https://iphealth.ro/descrierea-proiectului/E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 30.04.2023
Interviews	Lead Partner - Bihor County Council representative (RO) Partner 9 - Salvamont County Service Salvaspeo Bihor legally represented by the Bihor Mountain Rescue Association (RO) Partner 2 - Project Manager of Hajdú-Bihar County Government (HU)

3. Short presentation of project context

⁸⁰ According to Application Form

⁸¹ At the moment when the CS Report was drafted

The needs analysis presented in the application form for project ROHU 449 highlights several key challenges in the eligible cross-border (CB) area of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties. Firstly, both counties face a common problem of limited emergency medical services and a lack of modern telemedicine infrastructure. These deficiencies have a direct impact on the health and well-being of approximately 700,000 people residing in the CB area. The rise in tourism in Bihor County's Mountain areas, coupled with heavy road traffic, has contributed to an increasing risk of accidents requiring immediate emergency intervention.

The demand for a cross-border learning and research center arises from several challenges that the two counties face. Firstly, the uneven socio-economic development highlights the need for a collaborative approach to address the disparities and promote balanced growth. By establishing a cross-border medical learning and research center, professionals from both counties can come together to tackle the socio-economic challenges that affect the medical welfare of the population.

Secondly, the uncoordinated education systems in the two counties create difficulties in ensuring a consistent and high-quality education for medical professionals. This leads to a lack of efficient training that combines both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, resulting in deficiencies in expertise and a significant inequality in terms of medical services. Furthermore, the absence of a common platform for professional debates, workshops, and training hinders the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

Lastly, notable inequalities exist in medical services between the two counties, particularly in the fields of oncology and physical medicine and rehabilitation through balneotherapy. These disparities have led to healthcare migration, as individuals seek better care in one county over the other. Addressing these territorial challenges requires concerted efforts to bridge the gaps in medical infrastructure, education, and training, as well as standardizing medical practices to ensure equitable access to high-quality healthcare services across the eligible cross-border area.

The socio-economic development in the two counties is uneven, and there are shortcomings in education, research, and innovation systems. The lack of efficient training, which includes both theoretical and practical aspects of medicine, has serious consequences for the quality of medical services, such as deficiencies, inequality in expertise, work overload, and shortcomings in safety and security. Finally, there are significant inequalities in medical services between the two countries, leading to healthcare migration, especially in the field of oncology and physical medicine and rehabilitation by balneotherapy. The project aims to address these inequalities and promote equal access to medical services for all patients, regardless of their location or socio-economic status.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project is to enhance the medical welfare of approximately 700,000 people in the cross-border area of Bihor County (Romania) and Berettyóújfalu area (Hungary). Furthermore, the project intends to address inequalities in medical services, particularly in oncology and physical medicine and rehabilitation, to resolve the human resource deficit and reduce healthcare migration between the two countries. Overall, the project focuses on strengthening emergency care, knowledge exchange, and reducing disparities to enhance the overall medical well-being of the population in the cross-border area.

Specific objectives:

- Improving and establishing quality emergency medical services in urban and rural areas, to ensure permanent emergency medical assistance, building a telemedicine infrastructure to help locate, diagnose and treat emergency situations in the cross-border area in the shortest possible time, optimizing the overloads caused by the shortage of human resources
- Creating a cross-border learning and research center, a common space for professional debate, workshops, training, teaching and research, which is essential to keep pace with modern technologies to ensure patient safety and security.
- Balancing inequalities at the level of medical services in the cross-border area, caused by the differences between the availability and quality of oncology, recovery, and rehabilitation medical services, in order to reduce the shortage of specialized medical personnel and stop the phenomenon of migration of patients abroad.⁸²

⁸² <https://iphealth.ro/en/objective/>

The project partnership, consisting of eight partners and two associate partners, takes primary responsibility for carrying out the main activities and delivering the following outputs:

- The Bihor County Council intended to enhance medical services by constructing two emergency medical centers in the mountainous areas of Padiş and Stâna de Vale, which are managed by the Salvamont Salvaspeo Bihor County Service. Additionally, the council aims to improve medical and rescue services by providing medical search-and-rescue equipment to the I.S.U. "Crişana" Bihor partner organization for free, as they are the only structure in Bihor County with the required qualified personnel to operate such equipment.⁸³
- Berettyóújfalu City: renovation of an existing building in Berettyóújfalu and establishment in it a modern rehabilitation medical center and its equipment
- Oradea Municipality: establishing an open telemedicine system and equipping SCJUO with modern digital x-ray and ultrasound devices and a CT angio for chemoembolization; in addition, equipping the Municipal Hospital with a Spect CT for oncological and endocrine diagnosis and a modern search equipment for emergency location in the shortest possible time
- Marghita Municipality, Salonta Municipality, Alesd City, Beiuş Municipality: equipping local hospitals with modern devices digital radiography and ultrasound and the interconnection of hospitals with those in Oradea. A very new approach is the establishment of a unified system that would connect and store the patients' information from all emergency clinics in a standardised database, accessible for all medical professionals.
- Oradea University of Oradea, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy: renovation of a building (N. Jiga no. 29, Oradea) and establishment of a Center of Training for Continuing Medical Education in order to combine theory and practice by the use of patient simulators aiming to increase medical security in case of oncological and emergency situations.

Other activities:

Communication activities, by organizing:

- Start-up activities, including a project communication strategy,
- Public events (project launch / closing conference in Romania and Hungary),
- Publications and promotional materials,
- Digital activities, including the project website and video production.

More detailed, in terms of project structure, the intervention was designed around 4 types of workplaces:

- **management:** Management on the strategic level ensured by the Project Steering Committee (PSC), set up by the partners during project preparation. The PSC consists of 1 representative of each partner. Tasks of the Project Steering Committee are related to overall monitoring and evaluation, decision-making in strategic matters and crisis management. Management on the operational level is ensured by the project management team, coordinated by the project manager, internal expert of Lead Partner.

- **investment:** Bihor County Council was responsible for the purchase and the administration of the equipment, while Inspectorate for Emergency Situations Bihor was responsible for their operation, having the necessary skills, experience and expertise. Also, Mountain Rescue Service Salvamont Bihor (Associate Partner 1) was responsible for operating the patient monitor with a defibrillator. The implementation of the work package contributes to the fulfillment of SO1 - Quality medical emergency services and telemedicine infrastructure.

- **implementation:** Local Government of Berettyóújfalu City purchased and administer equipment used in physical medicine and rehabilitation, including treatment beds, electrotherapy devices, exercise equipment, balneotherapy tools, and other necessary items. Associate Partner 2, the Gróf Tisza István Hospital, was responsible for operating the equipment and providing high-quality services to patients. By implementing this work package, the project contributes to the achievement of SO3, which aims to provide balanced and high-quality services in the cross-border area.

⁸³ https://interreg-rohu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ROHU-449_EN.pdf

- **communication:** The communication activities for the project carried out by the Bihor County Council and the Local Government of Berettyóújfalu City. The communication objectives of the project include:

- Increasing the level of awareness of locals regarding the importance of investing in health care service
- Enhancing the role of cross-border cooperation in health care by promoting the project's objectives and results
- Ensuring proper visibility for the project and the Programme.

To achieve these objectives, the project uses a variety of communication tools, including news and updates on the project website, news in local and regional newspapers, good practices publication, project website, project launch, and closing conference, press conferences, press releases, promotional materials, documentary, and short videos. The target audiences for the communication activities are the local population of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar County, local and regional stakeholders involved in health care, and the general public and mass-media representatives.

Based on the viewpoints expressed during the interviews, it was found that the initial targets of the project have been achieved to a significant extent, with a proportion of 90%. However, it was noted that the process of re-evaluating the appeal of public procurement for computer tomographs is time-consuming, which can affect the pace of achieving targets. The raising of thresholds and the option of direct acquisitions were highlighted as crucial factors in meeting physical targets within the designated timeframes. This streamlined procurement process enables more efficient resource allocation, thereby contributing to the overall success of the project. Additionally, it was mentioned that new indicators are currently being developed, indicating a continued focus on monitoring and evaluation. Technical training was emphasized as essential to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of the project's solution, with reference to the implementation of good practices in Satu Mare as potential models. The importance of considering the specific requirements and nuances of the project was emphasized. Overall, it was acknowledged that targets were set realistically, reflecting a practical approach to project planning and implementation.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project is coherent with **PA 7 Knowledge Society of EU Strategy for the Danube Region**, target no. 1 Develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies, by equipping newly constructed cross-border medical center for continuous training of practical skills in the health field with specialized equipment within the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of the University of Oradea.

The present project is in line with the **National Health Care Strategy 2014-2020 (Romania)** through objectives: the improvement of emergency medical services by integrated system, the establishment of unified health infrastructure, by integrating defibrillators connected to the telemedicine infrastructure at two newly built first aid points in the mountain area of Bihor County, specifically in Stăna de Vale.

The present project is in line with **Strategy for Bihor County's Development 2014-2020** through objective: the improvement and modernization of the health care infrastructure, the establishment of first aid centres in the CB area, the establishment of a CB telemedicine infrastructure. The project contributes to the strategies by establishing a CB telemedicine infrastructure, a CB learning and research centre and improving EM services by modern and interconnected equipment and professionals. By implementing the inter-hospital telemedicine system with related components, as well as the PACS System will be used by the project partners through their installation, operation and operation within the hospitals under the administration of the UATs, as follows: A.T Mun. Beiuș for the Beiuș Hospital; U.A.T Mun. Marghita for the Municipal Hospital "Dr. Pop Mircea"; U.A.T Orasul Alesd for the Alesd City Hospital; U.A.T Salonta Municipality for the Salonta Municipal Hospital; UAT Mun. Oradea for the Oradea Emergency County Clinical Hospital and the Municipal Clinical Hospital "Dr. Gavril Curteanu Oradea"; UAT Bihor County - Salvamont Salvaseo Bihor County Service

The present project is in line with **Strategy for Hajdú-Bihar County's Development 2014-2020** through objective: the infrastructural improvement of the health care system, and the reduction of inequalities in medical services. The project contributes to the strategy by establishing a CB telemedicine infrastructure and balancing the inequalities in terms of medical services. By modernizing through the project the physical medicine and rehabilitation departments of the Gróf Tisza István Hospital fully equipped and functional, with treatment beds, low-frequency electrotherapy devices, laser showers, combined electrotherapy /

vacuum / ultrasound devices, extension device , laser therapy device, indoor exercise equipment, devices and equipment used in balneotherapy, EKG, defibrillator, occupational therapy devices and instruments

The application form mentions the following project implemented by Lead partner being in synergy with ROHU 449 project:

-HURO/1001/095/2.4.2 - Joint institution building, coordination and training – telemedicine and e-health infrastructure and protocol elaboration

HURO/0802/082_AF - Development of infrastructure for common health and risk prevention - Increase the health-service potential of the two counties on the border by dealing with the resources rationally and by specialisation and knowledge exchange.

-HEALTH SEC REF 2 (APL #2) – Supply and installation of an emergency telemedicine system in Mures, Covasna, Brasov, Sibiu , Alba, Harghita, Bistrita-Nasaud counties, project carried out by the Ministry of Public Health

-HURO/1101/051/2.4.1 Study on the medical services and infrastructure demands in Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion - BHB Operation Departments – High Common Standards in surgery in the euro-region, BHB_OR, Sectorial and Comparative Study and Telemedicine System.

The synergies between the ROHU-449 project and the projects undertaken by the Hajdú-Bihar County Local Government:

- The modernization of the local pediatrics cabinet - ÉAOP-4.1.1
- The modernization of general health care services - GP cabinet - TOP-4.1.1
- Tools and equipment development in Gróf Tisza István Kórház - TIOP-2.2.6-12/1B

Furthermore, the ROHU-449 project's complementarity with the INTERREG ROHU-357 project, where Gróf Tisza István Hospital is a project partner, indicates a coordinated effort to address healthcare challenges in the region. This collaboration allows for knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and the implementation of more comprehensive solutions, ultimately benefiting the healthcare system in Berettyóújfalu and the surrounding areas.

Within the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme the County Public Service Salvamont Salvaspeo Bihor establish a training center for mountain rescuers that contribute to the improvement of emergency situations. Through PNRR, The Bihor County Council accessed a European funding of over 30 million lei for the rehabilitation of the Nucet psychiatric hospital.

The medical sector at the county level is experiencing a significant impact, particularly regarding the provision of disinfection and protection materials due to the COVID-19 situation. In Oradea Municipality, efforts are being made to address this impact through the implementation of a project under the **POIM** (Programme for the Implementation of the National Strategic Plan) framework. The project focuses on the procurement and distribution of disinfection and protection materials, aiming to ensure an adequate supply for the municipality. The Bihor County Council accessed funding through the **Regional Operational Program 2014-2020** for the following projects:

- Extension of the ambulatory B of the Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital
- Equipping the Outpatient Department of the "Dr. Pop Mircea" Marghita Municipal Hospital
- Increasing the energy performance of the Oradea County Emergency Clinical Hospital , Increasing the energy performance of the Salonta Municipal Hospital
- Improving the technical and functional parameters of the external section of Pneumology TB, in order to increase the energy efficiency of the Alesd City Hospital
- Equipping the Outpatient Department of the "Dr. Pop Mircea" Marghita Municipal Hospital).

6. Project results and impact to date:

The Programme Output Indicators are „9/a 1 Population having access to improved health services” and „9/a 2 Number of healthcare departments affected by modernized equipment”. Through project ROHU – 396, a number of 700,000 persons are benefiting from improved healthcare services and 9 healthcare departments are more efficient using modernized equipment purchased through the project.

As per MA monitoring data, the final achievements of the project were the following:

- 1) Localization of injured patients and the intervention of medical professionals in a shortened period is ensured, through the use of the specialized search and rescue equipment purchased within the project.
- 2) The quality of the emergency health care services in Bihor and its surrounding is improved, through the modern emergency screening equipment already purchased and put into operation through the project.
- 3) A larger number of the population has better access to health care services, thus better mental and physical health of the target cross-border population is ensured.
- 4) Medical training was provided in the area addressed by the project, in the majority of medical disciplines, focusing however on emergency medicine and oncology, with the help of the medical simulators already purchased within the project.

According to interviews, the Emergency Situations Inspectorate (ISU) and Salvamont Bihor collaborated to address gaps in intervention coordination by creating an integrated system. As part of this effort, the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations of Bihor County "CRISANA" was equipped with drones, enabling faster accident location.

The main results according to the project fiche:

- Bihor County Council: 2 new first aid points built in the mountain area of Bihor county (in Stâna de Vale and Padiş). Both buildings equipped with specific rescue equipment: transport vehicle, ATV, stretcher, bags thermal protectors, first aid kits for intervention, mountain rescue kits, defibrillator connected to the telemedicine infrastructure. Improved emergency medical and rescue services in the county. Bihor and emergency services equipped with modern search and rescue equipment: ground vehicle and unmanned aerial vehicle with real-time transmission, thermal / infrared video camera, automatic external defibrillator, lighting systems and sets individual search and rescue for safety and protection.
- University of Oradea - Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy newly built, expanded and cross-border medical training center equipped, with 8 modules equipped for the learning process: anatomy, medicine general, surgery, ultrasound, pharmacy, dental medicine, emergency medicine, endoscopy.
- City of Berettyóújfalu - the physical medicine and rehabilitation wards of the Gróf Tisza István Hospital fully equipped and functional, with treatment beds, chairs for doctors, low frequency electrotherapy devices, laser showers, combined electrotherapy/vacuum/ultrasound devices, extension device, laser therapy device, indoor exercise equipment, balneotherapy devices and equipment, EKG, defibrillator, occupational therapy devices and instruments .
- Oradea Municipality improved emergency medical assistance services in Oradea with modern emergency screening equipment (ambulance equipped for medical interventions, video laryngoscope with LCD screen and data storage, digital radiology machines, CT device, hospital beds for patients in the intensive care unit) creation of a telemedicine infrastructure (a system with a data center, telemedicine sets and all county hospitals connected to the Clinical Hospital).
- The Municipality of Oradea improved preventive and curative oncology services in the Oradea County Emergency Hospital, using a SPECT CT and an ANGIO CT in diagnosis and treatment of oncological conditions.
- Marghita Municipality (Romania), Salonta Municipality (Romania), Aleşd City (Romania), Beiuş Municipality (Romania: improved quality for emergency and diagnostic healthcare services in cities and surroundings, using equipment of digital radiography and ultrasound connected to the County Emergency Hospital in real-time.

Based on the interview findings, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the healthcare project. The first medical equipment required for the training of healthcare professionals has been purchased and is being utilized effectively at the Cross-border medical training center. Furthermore, the construction works for the two mountain rescue centers in Stâna de Vale and Padiş have been completed, with additional works for the heating system currently ongoing. The medical equipment planned for equipping the hospitals in Bihor County has also been contracted and is either already in operation or awaiting final approval before being put into operation. Notably, the ambulance for medical intervention and the video laryngoscope with LCD screen have been delivered and installed. Lastly, the purchase and operationalization of an emergency search and rescue vehicle is a significant accomplishment, as the vehicle is currently being utilized by the Emergency Search and Rescue Unit within the "CRIŞANA" Inspectorate for Emergency Situations of Bihor County. These findings suggest that the healthcare project is on track and making good progress towards achieving its objectives.

In the Berettyóújfalu area, a significant outcome of the project is the acquisition of equipment for the Gróf Tisza István Hospital. This equipment will be installed in a designated area within the Berettyóújfalu baths complex. The development of the baths is being funded through a combination of national and ROHU (Romania-Hungary) funds. One of the notable impacts of the project is that individuals from both sides of the border will have access to the hospital's treatment and rehabilitation services.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

In regard to the **sustainable development (environment) horizontal theme**, the project application form mentions that the project includes plans to renovate the learning center building and construct two first aid points with a focus on incorporating modern, energy-efficient heating and lighting systems. A selective waste collection system is also implemented to promote recycling and reduce waste. The project management team utilized digital communication methods such as email, Skype, and Messenger to minimize paper usage and upload and archive necessary documents in the cloud. The project also aims to establish an open telemedicine system to allow doctors to communicate digitally, minimizing travel and reducing road traffic and CO2 emissions. According to the interview the 2 medical centers in Padiș and Stâna de Vale were equipped with heat pump heating in both buildings, efficient electric generators, photovoltaic panels for water heating.

In regard to **equal opportunity and non-discrimination principles**, the project application form mentions that the project aims to benefit all target groups without discrimination. Informational materials were bilingual or in English to facilitate communication between the project team, locals, the Hungarian minority in Romania, and the Romanian minority in Hungary. The buildings are designed to provide accessibility for people with disabilities, including features such as ramps, elevators, and braille writing. The project website also provides screen reading for the blind and visually impaired. The project also seeks to address inequalities in medical services by providing fair and quality medical treatment not only in county capitals but also in smaller cities and rural areas.

In the case of **equality between men and women**, the application form also states that the target groups benefit from the project results and activities without any discrimination based on religious belief, racial group, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Furthermore, Lead Partner has confirmed that the staff involved in the project implementation adheres to this principle of equality. It is emphasized that responsibilities are distributed uniformly, without any form of discrimination. This commitment ensures that all team members have equal opportunities and contributions in the project, fostering a fair and inclusive working environment.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Based on the interviews conducted, it is evident that the project has made outstanding progress towards its initial targets, achieving a success rate of 90%. However, the public procurement of computed tomographs can be a complex and time-consuming process that may require re-evaluation and appeals.

Based on the interviews conducted, raising thresholds, and utilizing direct acquisitions is crucial to achieving the project's physical targets within the designated timeframes. Streamlining the procurement process can lead to a more effective allocation of resources and ultimately contribute to the success of the project. Although new indicators are presently being developed, technical training is fundamental in ensuring the project's solution is technically sustainable and efficient. While exemplary practices from other projects, such as the one in Satu Mare, can provide valuable insights, it is critical to customize the approach to the specific needs of this project. Overall, the project's targets were set realistically, and the project is making impressive progress toward achieving them.

The lead partner affirms that Covid-19 has not affected the implementation of the project. However, quick decisions have been made in response to directives from the central level of the program. On the other hand, the Hungarian side identifies the COVID-19 pandemic as the most significant obstacle, which has resulted in a slowdown of the implementation process. Nevertheless, considering the nature of the project, the pandemic did not pose fundamental challenges. One indirect effect of the pandemic was the overall increase in prices, which caused complications but ultimately did not alter the project's outcome.

Although the pandemic did slow down the implementation process, it did not fundamentally hinder the project's progress. Effective actions taken by the programme authorities, such as the adoption of electronic document management and the promotion of e-signatures, facilitated efficient communication and streamlined processes. The positive experience with the BRECO indicates effective coordination and

support throughout the project. This further contributed to the smooth implementation and successful outcomes. Additionally, the favorable circumstances surrounding the application and contracting process, including well-timed calls, clear selection criteria, and efficient appraisal and contracting processes, created an enabling environment for the project's success.

The support provided by the Hungarian Government through the Széchenyi Programme Office was crucial for the successful implementation of the project. With the Hungarian state contributing ten percent of the budget, and the advance payment received by the Local Government of Berettyóújfalu, liquidity problems were prevented, ensuring smooth progress.

The RO-HU 449 Strategic Project received an additional 4 million in funding, of which 3 million is ERDF - executing a purchase with a suspensive clause.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The distribution of telecommunications equipment to other mountain rescue centers in the area and the establishment of long-term collaboration between medical personnel are examples of indirect effects.

The Hungarian partners of the project have emphasized that an indirect effect of the project is the establishment of valuable contacts with institutions and individuals. These connections provide a basis for future planning and collaboration, highlighting the sustainability of the project. The ability to build on these established contacts is crucial for long-term success.

However, it is acknowledged that the primary focus of the project is on equipment procurement, which may make it challenging to prioritize horizontal principles. The tangible aspect of procuring equipment may overshadow the intangible elements of cooperation, knowledge exchange, and regional development.

According to the interview conducted an indirect effect of the intervention was the beginning of the cooperation between the rapid intervention bodies, especially the Mountain Gendarmerie from Hungary and the Salvamont Service (Salvamont) from Romania. Through collaborative efforts and the sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise, rapid response agencies have been able to improve their emergency response capabilities. This cooperation has resulted in improved coordination during rescue operations, better communication between teams and a more efficient approach to critical incident management in mountainous regions.

10. Sustainability of project results

The equipment and infrastructure purchased in the project have been operated and used after the project's closure, and the project partners ensure their financial and operational sustainability for at least five years. The project has a long-term impact on the population of the eligible cross-border area by providing a solution for the human resource deficit, combating healthcare migration, and contributing to quality medical training. The project has improved the medical welfare of the population by utilizing modern technology, which allows for shorter diagnostic and intervention times, ultimately resulting in a lower mortality rate. According to the interview feedback, external funds are necessary for equipment maintenance if the level of socioeconomic development is insufficient.

The project's objective aligns with the broader challenge of enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare systems, not only in the cross-border area but also across the European Union. By establishing a harmonized, synchronized, and integrated level of medical services, the project aims to complement previous and future initiatives. The open telemedicine system in Bihor County and Berettyóújfalu can be connected to existing systems implemented by the Ministry of Public Health, which were financed by the World Bank. Furthermore, interconnected audio-video conference and data equipment will be installed in 40 town and municipal hospitals across seven counties, both on the Hungarian and Romanian sides of the border.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The main lessons learned identified in the case of this project are:

- According to the interview findings, the use of eMS (Electronic Monitoring System) is considered an effective practice, as it offers a practical and user-friendly platform for managing EU-funded projects. In contrast to SMIS (Single Electronic Data Interchange Area), which is often associated with complex procedures and technical difficulties, eMS is simpler to use and has a more intuitive interface. Overall, eMS can streamline project management, reduce administrative burden, and improve overall project efficiency.
- Debureaucratization is also an important lesson learned from previous programs. One of the main criticisms of EU-funded programs has been the excessive bureaucracy and administrative burden that applicants and beneficiaries have to deal with. Simplifying the procedures and reducing the administrative burden can help make the program more accessible and attractive to a wider range of applicants, especially small and medium-sized organizations.
- Future interventions can maximize the impact of a smaller budget by prioritizing the most impactful activities, ensuring efficient resource utilization, seeking strategic partnerships and collaborations, promoting processes to optimize project outcomes. But the experience following this project proves that with a smaller budget, the same impact cannot be achieved.
- In line with the interview responses, it was suggested that representatives from civil society, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), could play a greater role in the area of potential beneficiaries. Specifically, the interviewees recommended that NGOs should have wider access to this area and be more involved in its activities. According to these interviewees, NGOs could provide valuable input by creating indicators that showcase perspectives that differ from those of public administration. These findings indicate that further consideration should be given to increasing the involvement of civil society and NGOs in this area to foster a more inclusive and diverse approach.
- The ability of partners to respond effectively in difficult situations is essential (challenges generated by COVID-19).
- To increase the visibility of the project, the INTERREG logo was prominently displayed in various forums, they were used to create awareness of the programme. In addition, already purchased equipment has been adorned with program stickers.
- In terms of motivating potential applicants, the most compelling inspiration lies in successful projects. Those who have successfully completed a project are more inclined to apply again, setting a positive example for others. Encouraging and supporting applications are consistently emphasized at county meetings, targeting individuals and local authorities.

The main conclusions and recommendations that can be formulated at case level are:

Based on the collected data and information, the Hungarian side mentioned the procurement and equipping within the beneficiary medical centers (Gróf Tisza István Hospital) as a key challenge to the project implementation. On the other hand, the Romanian side placed more emphasis on equipping emergency medical centers in mountainous areas, although the project also benefited six other hospitals in Bihor County (Beius Hospital, Municipal Hospital "Dr. Pop Mircea", Alesd Town Hospital, Salonta Municipal Hospital, Emergency County Clinical Hospital Oradea, and Municipal Clinical Hospital "Dr. Gavril Curteanu Oradea").

From a medical perspective, the healthcare infrastructure in the mountainous region of both countries has not undergone substantial development since the initiation of the project, despite some recorded improvements. From a medical standpoint, the recipient counties of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar had limited emergency medical services and underdeveloped telemedicine infrastructure prior to the project. These challenges had a direct impact on the population's access to adequate medical care. However, the project has made positive progress in addressing these issues. The investments made in emergency medical services of Bihor County's Mountain areas have resulted in an increase in tourist visits and extended periods for mountain-specific activities. Nonetheless, the project has played a significant role in improving the situation, enhancing emergency medical services, and establishing a modern telemedicine infrastructure, ultimately benefiting the overall health and well-being of the population in the eligible cross-border area.

The project's objectives and activities align with the priorities and goals set at various levels, ensuring that it effectively addresses relevant healthcare needs and contributes to broader healthcare strategies. The project successfully achieves its objectives through the following activities: improving emergency medical

services in Bihor County, establishing a Learning Center for Continuing Medical Education, and modernizing the emergency and oncology departments.

A comparative analysis of the activity reports of the Salvamont - Salvaspeo Bihor County Service before the implementation of the project (2018) and the most recently published activity report (2022) reveals notable advancements in the capacity to transport victims of mountain accidents. These improvements can be attributed to the successful acquisition of new equipment specifically designed to facilitate access to challenging and remote areas within the mountainous terrain. Additionally, the establishment of new first aid centers in the mountain region has played a significant role in enhancing the service's capabilities.

The implementation of these interventions has resulted in a tangible enhancement of the service's ability to provide prompt assistance and support during mountain rescue operations. The newly acquired equipment and the availability of strategically located first aid centers have collectively contributed to a more efficient and effective response to mountain accidents. These positive outcomes demonstrate the project's positive impact on the medical infrastructure within the mountainous region and highlight the importance of such interventions in ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals engaging in mountain-related activities.

Taking into consideration that the strategic project ROHU-449 is currently under implementation, is important to note that while the visible elements of cooperation may not be apparent, the project does demonstrate collaboration within the domains of medical education (Centre for Continuing Medical Education) and emergency medical services. However, to enhance the cooperation aspect of the project, it is recommended to actively promote and foster cross-border collaboration among relevant stakeholders. In Bihor County, the partners laid the foundations of a unified system only at the county level, without being connected to a standardized database accessible to Hungarian doctors. At least the exchange of expertise would be beneficial in this case.

(Recommendation 1) It is strongly recommended to prioritize the establishment and fostering of collaborative partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, healthcare institutions, and search and rescue organizations, to ensure a coordinated and integrated response to mountain accidents. This includes sharing best practices, exchanging resources, and establishing clear communication channels.

(Recommendation 2) To maximize potential beneficiary engagement, it is crucial to encourage the active participation of civil society representatives and NGOs in the design, implementation, and evaluation phases of the CBC programme. Additionally, public institutions should actively collaborate with NGOs to identify local needs, tailor projects accordingly, and empower NGOs to take over activities in counties where public institutions lack capacity, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and effective implementation of projects.

Within this strategic project, 2 out of 10 partners are Hungarian, and this is common in most projects of the RO-HU program within the Priority Axis - Improving health services (15 projects with a main partner from Romania and 5 from Hungary). At least for the projects selected for case studies, imbalances in the distribution of project activities are observed.

(Recommendation 3) Encouraging a more balanced distribution of project activities between Romanian and Hungarian partners, in line with needs, but with a view to foster CBC. This can be achieved by actively involving Hungarian partners in decision-making processes and assigning them substantial roles and responsibilities within the projects. Equal participation will foster a sense of ownership and promote collaboration between partners.

(Recommendation 4) An action to motivate potential applicants would be to actively showcase and promote successful projects as examples of achievement.

While different components of the project are effective and do contribute to the specific objective of PA 4 of the programme, the "strategic" nature of the programme is unclear. The project only partially addresses a key challenge in a strategic manner (e.g., emergency situations in the border area), some components having rather "a life of their own", e.g., Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy newly built and expanded, as well as the improved preventive and curative oncology services in the Oradea County Emergency Hospital.

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Specific Objective 5.1 - Improved cross-border disasters and risk management Case Report

RO-HU-11 – FORMURES – Flood risk management improvement on the Mures river in the cross-border area

1. General data on project

Title	FORMURES – Flood risk management improvement on the Mures river in the cross-border area
Code	RO-HU 11
Priority axis	Priority axis 5. Improve risk-prevention on disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)
Specific objective / Investment priority	Specific objective 5/b – Improved cross-border disaster and risk management
Lead Beneficiary	Mures Water Administration (Romania)
Partners	Lower-Tisza District Water Directorate (Hungary)
Target Group / Groups ⁸⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general public • national public authority • local public authority • NGOs • EEIG, EGTC • infrastructure and public service providers •
Covered geographical area	Mures river basin
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	01.04.2018 - 31.05.2022
Budget allocated/contracted	2,685,559.00 EUR, of which 2,282,725.15 EUR was funded by ERDF
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 2.433.105,36 EUR, out of which ERDF 2.068.139,39 EUR Total reported to JS: 2.383.831,89 EUR, out of which ERDF, 2.026.256,94 EUR
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Finalized
Type of project (regular/ strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Website: https://www.ativizig.hu/projektek/rohu/FORMURES
Interviews	Ms. Gheorghe Monica, Project Manager – Mures Water Administration Mr. Szabolcs Frank, Project Manager – Lower Tisza District Water Directorate

3. Short presentation of project context

FORMURES project was proposed by a partnership between Mures Water Administration (ABAM) and Lower Tisa Water Directorate (ATIVIZIG) in order to tackle common challenges identified in the Mures

⁸⁴ According to Application Form

River basin, in the Romanian and Hungarian cross border area. Floods are river basin wide phenomena which do not take into account administrative borders and often create problems between regions and countries. It is widely recognized that an effective flood management requires cross-border cooperation between water management authorities within the river basin. In response to the risk of floods, the present project "Flood risk management improvement on the Mures River in the cross border area" represents an engaged way to address the specific risks and to ensure disaster resilience in order to develop a disaster management system.

4 out of 5 Europeans that live in the urban areas are exposed to floods as consequences of the climate changes that are quite unpredictable according to the "Climate change consequences" article published on the European Commission's website. Due to the deterioration of the works/structures of the flood protection system, the defence capabilities in the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area are under the risk of becoming inefficient.

The main objective of the project was to elaborate flood maps in the cross-border area on river Mures. With these flood maps and simulations both Water Management Directorates are able to prepare for different kind of floods on river Mures. In addition to the flood maps, the pumping station in Makó (Hungary) were developed and in Arad (Romania) 2.345 meter of defence wall was rehabilitated.

Without the project, the elaboration of the flood maps and simulations would have been nearly impossible due to lack of financial resources. Measurements on the border area were conducted and these measurements needed several authorizations from both sides of the border.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project was to improve cross border flood risk management in Mures river basin both in Hungary and Romania. The main objective is relevant on IP 5/b "Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management system. ROHU-11 was aimed to improve cross-border cooperation in flood risk management with the help of flood maps and simulations on different types of floods along with reconstruction of defence walls in Arad and a punping system in Makó. The pumping system in Makó is on the right river bank of river Mures and the defence wall in Arad is on the left bank of the river.

General Objective of the project	Specific Objectives of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
The main objective of the project was to improve cross border flood risk management in Mures river basin both in Hungary and Romania.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting intensive cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian water management authorities across national and administrative borders in the field of joint cross-border cooperation. Reconstruction of the lock gate in the Makó pumping station and reconstruction of the flood protection wall located on the right Hungarian respectively on the left Romanian bank of the Mures River's Hungarian section. Elaborating joint flood maps that will make flood protection more effective integrating EU directives and national policies and taking into account the hydrological, ecological and socio-economic functions of the Mures River. 	- see the list below	5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	R 5/b Quality of the joint risk management

Investment in Makó, Hungary:

- Reconstruction of pressure pipe and waterside sluice of the Makó pumping station – 651,938€

Due to the problems identified it was necessary to develop the Makó pumping station which is located in the Hungarian-Romanian joint interest section. Through the project implementation the overall aims had been achieved, because the population of the targeted settlements became protected from the natural disasters.

Investment in Arad, Romania:

- Rehabilitation of the flood protection infrastructure – 1,650,378€

This activity comprises the rehabilitated of the flood protection wall and the river bank defence on the Romanian side of Mures River. The description of the main intervention works for the 2 objectives: Object 1: Rehabilitation of a guard wall within the embankment works on right bank of Mureş River Pecica – Vladimirescu area, Arad locality, L = 2,345 km, between Traian Bridge and the bridge on the highway belt. Object 2: Shore guard Mureş Rive the area of Arad locality, L = 0.225 km, downstream of Traian Bridge.

Flood maps

- Bathymetry and topographic measurements / GPS
- LIDAR or UAV measurements and elaborating Digital Terrain Model (DTM) and orthophotogram
- 2D hydrological modelling and flood maps

The modelling and developing flood maps had a huge impact on the cross-border flood and risk management. As a result of the modelling results, experts from both countries can prepare for different flood scenarios.

The final report of the project shows that all outputs expected were generated by end of the implementation period. The values reached for the output indicator by the end of the implementation period were the following:

Output indicator	Contribution to the programme output indicator	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value	% of the target
5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	Population safeguarded by rehabilitation works at Arad	159,074	333,864	103.19
	Population safeguarded by reconstruction works at Makó	136,339		
	Population safeguarded by elaborating joint flood maps	60,305		

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, all targets were reached, some being even surpassed⁸⁵.

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
general public	323,533	333,864	103.19
national public authority	2	2	100
local public authority	2	2	100
NGOs	2	2	100
EEIG, EGTC	1	1	100
infrastructure and public service provider	2	2	100
other	3	3	100

⁸⁵ according to the final report of the project

Relation between the aim of the project and the specific objective

- *Promoting intensive cooperation between Romanian and Hungarian water management authorities across national and administrative borders in the field of joint cross-border cooperation.*

The main idea regarding this specific objective was to develop the cross-border cooperation network between the Hungarian and Romanian water management authorities. With this joint project and from previous projects together both Romanian and Hungarian experts and engineers had insight on each others' organizational structure and they had an opportunity to decide who is responsible for which water and river management tasks.

- *Reconstruction of the lock gate in the Makó pumping station and reconstruction of the flood protection wall located on the right Hungarian respectively on the left Romanian bank of the Mures River's Hungarian section.*

The reconstruction of the pumping station and of the flood protection wall improved the flooding control system and the effectiveness of flood management services in this region.

- *Elaborating joint flood maps that will make flood protection more effective integrating EU directives and national policies and taking into account the hydrological, ecological and socio-economic functions of the Mures River.*

The cross-border cooperation led to a joint mapping basis, with one, with the same legend, lay-out, flood scenario's, on both sides of the border. This improved greatly the cross-border exchange of information about expected inundations and the resulting flood risks. In addition, cross-border cooperation for mapping led to sustainable cooperation for other issues concerning water management.

All specific objectives were fully achieved by the end of the project.

Presentation of modifications

The original project period was 30 months, but an extension of the contract with 20 months had to be requested due to public procurement problems.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

ROHU-11 project is coherent with the main goals set by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The project contributed to the following measures set by the Danube Region Strategy:

- to develop and adopt one single overarching floods management plan at basin level or a set of flood risk management plans coordinated at the level of international river basin to analyse and identify the best response to flood risk
- anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change through research
- to develop spatial planning and construction activities in the context of climate change and increased threats of floods

Synergies

In the following list we will present the synergies with previous projects funded by the EU:

1.RO- PHARE- 2005/017-690.01.05–Project Preparation Facility for flood damage related measures.

The specific objective of this program are: providing assistance to flood-affected communities and adopting measures against flood disasters, rehabilitating damaged infrastructure at regional and local.

Synergies with sectoral national operational programmes:

- Improving access to public utilities in the water and waste water management structures and setting service water/wastewater at a regional scale
- protection and improvement of biodiversity and natural heritage
- reducing the risk of natural disasters affecting the population

Synergies with Romanian operational programmes:

- OP Great Infrastructure – S.O.5.1. Reducing the effects and damages of the population caused by natural phenomena associated main risks exacerbated by climate change, mainly floods and coastal erosion

- The Environment OP from Romania 2007-2013: There was a project for preparing flood maps, however the activities stopped at the border area and only covered the Romanian side of the rivers. The activities conducted in this project were the baseline for ROHU-11.
- There is another project also covering flood risk management in the area. The project is developed at national level. The project aims to create a set of hazard maps and Flood Risk Management Plan (<https://inundatii.ro/en/ro-floods-s/>)

This OP financing implementation of the following measures to prevent floods:

- Development studies, methodologies, assessments, reports, manuals of good practice for the management of dams
- Modernization of monitoring and warning of severe hydro-meteorological phenomena in order to protect life and property
- Making structural protection measures against flood risk. These will include priority investments for storage/diversion of water from the flood, and regularization of the riverbeds and banks consolidation

Synergies with Hungarian Operational Programmes:

- Environment and Energy Efficiency OP: EEOP-1.3 – Adapting the effects of climate change

In this construction there were several water management projects in the programme are.

- Environment and Energy Efficiency OP: EEOP-1.4 – Adapting the effects of climate change

In this construction there were several flood preventing projects in the programme are. There was one projects implemented by ATIVIZIG (*“Increasing flood safety in the ATIVIZIG area” with the budget of 969.824.424 HUF*)

6. Project results and impact to the date

Most important results of the project

All three project specific goals have been fully achieved as we mentioned above in the previous chapters.

As a result of the project there is a better joint cross-border cooperation in the field of flood and risk management between the two water management authorities. This better cooperation means an increased efficiency in task distribution. With the simulations and flood maps there is a better understanding on the cross-border effects of implemented measures on either side of border, which reduced the potential damage in designated areas.

The reconstructed lock gate in Makó pumping station and the reconstructed flood protection wall in the Romanian section reduced the possible flood levels and the duration of floods to sustainable and manageable levels. These two investments will reduce the financial damage caused by floods on both sides of the border.

The most important results of the project, from the personal and organisational perspective

The interinstitutional collaboration between the project partners was very important in flood management perspective. These kind of cross-border collaborations are developing the trust-based relations between the two states and between the water management institutions. In the 2007-2013 programming period there was another collaboration between Mures Water Administration and ATIVIZIG.

Main impacts of the project

The main impact of the project is better flood and risk management in the Mures river basin. With the simulations and flood maps there is a better understanding on the cross-border effects of implemented measures on either side of border, which reduced the potential damage in designated areas.

The contribution of the project to the SO of the program

Cross border cooperation

The water management authorities make a list of necessary improvements and repairs in their own jurisdiction and they assign an approximate budget for these improvements and the prioritize them. The

water management authorities are checking the possible tenders in national and transnational OPs and they are trying to finance it from EU budget.

There were several joint projects between ATIVIZ and Mures Water Administration in the past. These to water management authority can lead by example for cross-border cooperation in water management. It is necessary for water directorates in border areas to cooperate with water management authorities across the border mainly because the rivers does not stop at the borders and the impacts will effects all countries.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Horizontal principles based on application form

Sustainable development

The project brought added value in the field of sustainable development. Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development, healthy ecosystems and for human survival itself. Water is also at the heart of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between the climate system, human society and the environment. ROHU-11 had no negative effects on the natural resources (Mures river basin) on which the project depends and on the broader natural environment.

Equal opportunity and non-discrimination

Both Romanian and Hungarian management teams were formed on equal opportunity, fair treatment and non-discrimination with respect to all aspects of the employment relationship, including working conditions and terms of employment discipline. Moreover, the project encouraged incorporating measures for promoting equal opportunities and preventing any discrimination, taking into account the particular needs of the various target groups at risk of any kind of discrimination.

Equality between men and women

ROHU-11 contributed to the principle of equality between men and women and prevented discrimination of any kind during the preparation, design and implementation of the project by promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. In addition to this, ROHU-11 management team ensured that women and men are equally included in key decision-making positions regarding the implementation of the present project.

8. Main factors influencing project results

The main positive factors that help the implementation of the project:

- The cooperation among partners was really positive. The activities, the responsibilities of each partner and the timeline were very clearly set from the beginning of the project and all partners followed them.
- The staff involved in the project had very good expertise in both water management authority.
- The terms of reference written in the context of the public acquisition processes were very clear and detailed and through which helped the partners to avoid complaints and delays.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

- For the elaboration of the flood maps, several flights were planned to determine the land elevations. Some of these flights were cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions. This type of activity can be conducted only in a short period of time without snow or vegetations. This means that the project team had to wait for another year to conduct these measurements.
- Soft activities, especially raising awareness activities, with target groups were also delayed.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The project provided data and evidence for a broader project financed by the World Bank for the implementation of EU Flood Directive.

10. Sustainability of project results

- The main results of the project – the flood and hazard maps – are currently used by both project partners for their future actions and plans. Moreover, they are also used to develop national strategic plans such as the Flood Risk Management Plan developed in the project financed by the World Bank.
- The findings through the modelling are very important on medium and long term also, because the main source of risk will be the same if no major investments will be done on Mures river basin.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

Aspects of the programme authorities:

- Programme authorities had been very helping along the project dealing with problems and setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and finding and applying mitigation measures.
- The collaboration with the Programme Authorities was rather good. They always answered the questions addressed to BRECO, however, in some cases the responses were sent with some delay.
- The Managing Authority had a contact person speaking Hungarian, which was a huge help for the Hungarian partner.
- BRECO as Programme Authority was stricter than the legal provisions in some cases. They were asking some documents through the process regarding the working hours of the employees in both project partners.

Most important lessons of the beneficiaries are the following:

- The applicants need to prepare for unforeseen events when preparing the project budget, because events like COVID-19 pandemic can upset the budget of constructions and investments through inflation for example.
- Being a public institution means that Lead Beneficiary needs to find resources for co-financing and need to make a strategic plan on the investment with a budget.

Visibility of the project

- The INTERREG programme is visible, mainly at the level of eligible beneficiaries, bigger institutions or for the main actors in the programme area.
- Both project partners received information periodically regarding the INTERREG programme through the national agencies.
- The project management teams made the project website, however none of the local municipalities were involved in the project which means that the information of the local population was not comprehensive.
- There was a project opening conference in Szeged and the project ending conference was in Arad.

Recommendations for future calls

- All necessary information regarding the programme and available funds were at the disposal for eligible applicants, however, the launching of the guide was made very late.
- The Programme Authorities were very strict about the implementation phase.
- Strategic projects are very important and beneficial, however the time available between the call and application deadline is way too short to prepare a well-grounded proposal which can have a greater regional impact.
- The available funds for risk and flood management in INTERREG calls are only suitable for executing small-scale investments, the major investments need to be financed through national OPs or from the national budgets.
- There is a consultation process before each programming period on INTERREG programmes with possible beneficiaries. The lead beneficiary told us that none of their proposed investment directions were taken into account so they needed to adjust their proposal and project.

Case Report

ROHU-28 – SZANAZUG-TULCA - Development of flood protection centre of Szanazug and rehabilitation of the penstock and hydro-mechanical equipment in Tulca

1. General data on project

Title	Development of flood protection centre of Szanazug and rehabilitation of the penstock and hydro-mechanical equipment in Tulca
Code	ROHU-28
Priority axis	PA5 - Improve risk-prevention and disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)
Specific objective / Investment priority	S05/b Improved cross-border disasters and risk management
Lead Beneficiary	Romanian Waters National Administration - Crisuri Water Basin Administration (ABAC)
Partners	Körös Valley District Water Directorate (KOVIZIG)
Target Group / Groups⁸⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local public authorities - sectoral agency - regional public authority - general public - SME -
Covered geographical area	Crisul Repede (Sebes-Körös) and Crisul Negru (Fekete-Körös) cross-border basin
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	01.07.2018 – 30.06.2020 (24 months originally)
Budget allocated/contracted	1,961,546.22 EUR out of which ERDF 1,667,314.28 EUR
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: 2.110.682,30 EUR, out of which ERDF 1.794.079,82 EUR Total reported to JS: 1.861.268,76 EUR, out of which ERDF 1.582.078,30 EUR
Status (finalized, under implementation)	finalized
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Project Website: http://www.kovizig.hu/06-projektek/02-europa-unios-projektek/17-szanazugi-arvizvedelmi-kozpont-fejlesztese/index.php
Interviews	Ms. Simona Gabriela Andrisca, project manager – Romanian Waters National Administration – Crisuri Water Basin Administration (Romania) Ms. Melinda Varga, head of asset management and operations department, KOVIZIG

⁸⁶ According to Application Form

3. Short presentation of project context

The investment was very useful and in line with the activity of Romanian Waters National Administration. Also, the available budget was sufficient and significant compared with the available funds that Crișuri Water Basin Administration is having access to. The overall objective of the project was included in the National Medium and Long-Term Flood Risk Management Strategy for Romania from 2010.

The activity of the beneficiary in regards with cross-border risk management is based on the Agreement between Romanian and Hungary government in regards with the management of water resources, in this case, the cross-border rivers, established in 2003. Thus, the investments made through the financing received from the INTERREG Programme are in line with the common objectives previously established, through the Hydrotechnical Agreement between the two states. The agreement applies for the following rivers: Tur, Someș, Crasna, Barcău, Ier, Crișul Repede, Crișul Negru, Crișul Alb and Mureș. Also, the Romanian-Hungarian Hydrotechnical Commission is functioning as part of this agreement and it has 4 sub-divisions:

- The subcommittee for coordination and development and collaboration,
- The subcommittee on water management and hydrometeorology,
- The water quality subcommittee,
- The flood defence subcommittee.

This bilateral agreement is periodically updated and the following institutions are responsible for its implementation:

- Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests,
- Romanian Water National Administration and Water Basin Administration,
- Ministry of Interior of Hungary,
- Ministry of Agriculture in Hungary,
- General Directorate of Water Management

The project aims are to ensure prompt actions related to emergency situations and disaster management in Crisul Repede and Crisul Negru cross-border basin, sustainable development and, as a secondary role, provide the necessary water in dry periods. The Dam at Tulca was built in 1902, which is mainly responsible for the water and flood management for the 2 Crisul rivers. This covered 65,87 percent of the budget.

On the Hungarian side of the river at Szanazug (Doboz) a Flood Protection Center was renovated which was built in 1959. This investment covered 34,13 percent of the budget.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The overall objective of the project was to increase flood protection in cross border area - increasing safety waterworks and preventing their destruction by the proposed upgrades, - creating optimal working conditions in flood defense

Joint project contributes to improving base infrastructure water management by rehabilitating the hydro technical node from Tulca, situated on Canal Colector (Sewer Channel), generate good conditions in case of flooding intervention. Construction and equipment upgrades proposed in the project will ensure an efficient, fast joint response and a good water drainage, good ecological status by eliminating suspensions, materials and float.

The other main objective was to increase the efficiency of common flood prevention with the development of infrastructure. The renewed Szanazug Flood Prevention Centre not only develop the KÖVIZIG's flood control infrastructure but contribute to the defensive Romanian and Hungarian parties for the coordinated activities that create a new base and new a platform because they are situated on border and area of common interest so increasing the efficiency of prevention occasion of disaster situations.

Specific objectives:

- Improve the water management infrastructure;
- Increasing safety in flood defense work,
- Increasing safety of the hydraulic equipment and prevent destruction

The total budget of the project was € 1,961,546.22. The budget of ABAC was € 1,291,991.86 and the budget of KOVIZIG was € 669,554.36.

General Objective of the project	Specific Objectives of the project	Inputs / Activities	Expected outputs of the project	Expected result of the project
Flood protection in the cross-border area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the water management infrastructure; - Increasing safety in flood defense work, - Increasing safety of the hydraulic equipment and prevent destruction 	see the list below	5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	R 5/b Quality of the joint risk management

List of activities in ROHU-28:

Investment in Tulca

The rehabilitation works proposed at the hydro node at Tulca were the following:

- Canal collector riverbed improvement
- Rehabilitation of existing concrete structure
- Reinforced concrete structure grid
- Replacement of hydromechanical equipment and investing in new ones through public procurement
- power supply modernization
- 1 self-cleaning grating in the dam upstream

Investment in Szanazug (Doboz)

The renovation of the Flood Protection Center is in the municipality area of Gyula. The renovation of Szanazug Flood Protection Centre requires certain harmonisation of tasks affecting the master-builder's works and the renewal of the building management and electric systems. The following works were made on the Flood Protection Center:

- Master-builder's work
- Building engineering works
- Renewing the electricity

Output indicator	Contribution to the programme output indicator	Target value of the indicator	Achieved value	% of the target
5/b 1 Population safeguarded by improved emergency response services	People safeguarded in Romania	56,280	147,870	100
	People safeguarded in Hungary	91,590		

Regarding the final beneficiaries (target groups) reached through the implemented activities, all targets were reached, some being even surpassed⁸⁷.

Target Group	Target value	Target group reached by the end of the project	% of the target value
local public authorities	30	30	100
sectoral agencies	400	400	100
regional public authorities	250	250	100
general public	146,790	146,790	100
SMEs	400	400	100

⁸⁷ according to the final report of the project

Relation between the aim of the project and the specific objective

- Improve the water management infrastructure;

The works had been done on hydraulic node Tulca. It had immediate effects on protected targets. The proposed works were placed in the river channel, land administration, are managed by the Water Basin Administration Cris. Hydrotechnical works as Tulca dam have an essential role in coordinate the water levels on Crisul Repede si Crisul Negru rivers in case oh high waters, because It allows taking water from Crisul Repede and transit it to the Crisul Negru if is necessary.

Flood Protection Centres have important roles in cases of extraordinary events (floods, extreme pollutions, special weather conditions), when preventive and protective measures must be taken, and in occurrences when immediate intervention is needed. Reports about negative developments occurring on defences are sent here and these data will be then forwarded by the local staff to the operative centre. Workers and forces from afar are accommodated at these centres. On-site protection work is coordinated, controlled and managed from these centres and all resources necessary to the prevention of hazards (labour, raw materials, machinery and equipment) are also sent here.

- Increasing safety in flood defence work,

The infrastructural works proposed in the project created opportunity to give a fast local intervention response, accordingly to joint agreement between Romania and Hungary, which is applicable since 2003 The investment planned to protect against floods, dangerous meteorological phenomena, accidents at hydro technical constructions and accidental pollutions, as well as Plans of warning & alarming the localities and objectives downstream of hydro technical constructions..

- Increasing safety of the hydraulic equipment and prevent destruction

The project created the possibility of pursuing harmonized interventions in preventing flood risks and drought and also creates the possibility of rehabilitation equipment will make it possible to operate in safety.

Presentation of modifications

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

Coherence with strategies

Coherence with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region:

- Project implementation was done in the spirit of European legislation. The project contributes to the fulfilment of the commitments assumed by our country and supports the implementation of EU initiatives in accordance with legal regulations on the protection and sustainable use of border waters such as the Water Framework-Directive (2000/60/EC) adopted by European Parliament and Council on 23 October 2000 and the bilateral Agreement between Romania and the Republic of Hungary on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of border waters adopted on September 2003.

Synergies

- This project was in connection with the project on complex development of Crisul Negru in the border area on rehabilitation of flood protection infrastructure in Crisuri hydrographical basin, successfully implemented under the Hungary-Romania Programme 2007-2013.
- The interdependence of the projects is given for the common goal pursued projects that every project aims to improve safety in case of flooding by developing infrastructure to prevent floods and to reduce the destructive consequences of floods. Also, the project was in direct relation with other current projects financed by national funds.
- This project is in connection with the currently running project in Hungary, which is designed to improve flood protection of Hármas-Körös. The dike will be built for the required height on the right bank, between the section of 61+200- 66+000 fkm. The project code is KEHOP-1.4.0-15-2016-0012.

6. Project results and impact to the date

Most important results of the project

The final report of the project was not available when the case study was made, which means the evaluators used the 10th progress report of the projects to assess the information regarding the progress.

All the projects' specific objectives were fully achieved by the 10th progress report. The interviewees said that the impact of the project can not be measured with the result indicator written in the project proposal. The target of the indicator was realistically set in the project proposal besides the main indicator of the project: "Quality of the joint risk management". In addition to this, significant results in terms of environment protection were achieved through the implementation of the project.

The most important results of the project, from the personal and organisational perspective

ABAC and KOVIZIG had significant experience in applying for INTERREG funds. ROHU-28 was the 4th project funded by INTERREG with the same partnership. The first received financing was under the framework of the previous financial period 2007-2013.

All of this partnerships' project aimed to strengthen the cross-border cooperation on flood and risk management and to implement the common national strategies.

Main impacts of the project

The main results of the project was the rehabilitation, modernization and extension of the flood management infrastructure in both countries. The population in the Crisul river basin in both countries are safeguarded better against floods by the water management and disaster management authorities.

The contribution of the project to the SO of the program

ROHU-28 project with its investments in Tulca and Szanazug helped the quality of the cross-border risk management with coopearion and knowledge sharing. The sharing of experiences and the precise delegation of responsibilities also increase the efficiency of cooperation on flood and risk management.

Cross border cooperation

The water management authorities make a list of necessary improvements and repairs in their own jurisdiction and they assign an approximate budget for these improvements and the prioritize them. The water management authorities are checking the possible tenders in national and transnational OPs and they are trying to finance it from EU budget.

As we mentioned in the previous chapters, ROHU-28 was the 4th joint project of this partnership.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

Horizontal principles based on application form

- Sustainable development (environment)

The project preserved the environment in its natural state for future generations, contributing to the sustainable development of the border. With the rehabilitation of hydraulic infrastructure that reduces the risk of flood and drought, these investments are protecting the flora and fauna.

With the implementation of the project, the following measures had been taken to contribute to sustainable development goals: Conducting green public procurement.

- Equal opportunity and non-discrimination

Romania and Hungary are among those states which have ratified the most important documents relating to the elimination of discrimination. Equal opportunity is ensured through access of citizens to information, ideas promoting the participation of target groups in decision making. At the public events and in the communication connected with the development we try to express chance-awareness both during the preparation and implementation and we do not intermediate segregation or we do not increase the existing prejudice concerning the groups.

- Equality between men and women

Promoting equal opportunities in the project contributed to social cohesion as cross-border development in the regions and nationally. Project partner KOVIZIG won the title "Family-friendly workplace" award in

2002. Working on the project and in general also, the project partner KOVIZIG issued the following measures to create family-friendly working conditions:

- KOVIZIG provides the possibility for flexible working time;
 - considers school/kindergarten/ holidays when assigning days off;
 - organizes family events for its employees;
 - provide opportunity for the employees children to work on their thesis with the help of the KOVIZIG;
 - provides part-time working opportunities for parents on maternity leave after the child is 1.5 years old, as a way to return to work.
- Increased use of sustainable procurement

For all acquisitions started as part of the project (acquiring assets, products, basic materials and services) environmental aspects will be considered and applied (green public procurement). At the programs, discussions and meetings environmental awareness will be carefully minded, e.g. invitations will be distributed mainly electronically.

- Consideration of life cycle costs of investments

It is a state duty to protect population against floods. For that reason the state maintains and operate the flood-control establishments "in times of peace" or provide for arranging the protection in flood situation to reduce or avoid possible damages. A considerable amount is spent from the state budget every year to maintain and operate the establishments of the flood-control system and protection. Considerable amounts can be saved in the state budget with every development that reduces directly or indirectly the maintaining costs of the flood-control establishments.

- Usage of green infrastructure

Given the new trends of the European Community regarding use of green infrastructure for flood protection, the project team aimed is to rehabilitating previously built infrastructure targets and for that designer propose to use environmentally friendly materials.

Horizontal principles based on the interviews

- Both project partners applied all legislative requirements regarding equal opportunities, non-discrimination, equal treatment and accessibility.
- The project management team did not received any complaints from the people working on the project regarding discrimination.
- The project through its specific objectives, directly promotes the principles of environment protection. The constructions were made directly on the riverbeds and the amount of waste passing towards Hungary was decreased.

8. Main factors influencing project results

Supporting factors:

- As we mentioned above, this was the 4th joint cooperation project of the same partnership, which means, that the project team had more than enough experience on project implementation on flood management projects.
- Good collaboration with programme authorities in both countries. The support and flexibility of the MA and JS have significantly helped the beneficiaries.
- The availability of financial resources was also a key factor for the finalization of the project.
- The availability of non-refundable funds from INTERREG shortened the necessary times for the required investments in the programme area.
- The level of public awareness regarding the importance of risk management – especially water management - is higher than it was 10 years ago. This means the focus is turning towards to this public policy area.

Obstructive factors:

- Public procurement system in both countries. The main problem encountered by the beneficiaries was the lack of clarity and interpretability of the legislation. The lead beneficiary received a 10 percent penalty form the Audit Authority for inconsistencies in public acquisition contracts. The main problem was regarding this contract, that the lead beneficiary received all the necessary approvals from the programme authorities and Managing Authority also.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Programme authorities have been very helpful in dealing with the problems caused by COVID-19 pandemic. They have supported the beneficiaries and issues several clarifications regarding this matters.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

No indirect or unexpected effects were identified.

10. Sustainability of project results

- The beneficiaries realized through the implementation of the project that ensuring the security of the works required additional financial resources which could have been included in the initial budget. This kind of expenses was not foreseen in the planning period of the project.
- The beneficiaries planning the extension and continuation of the investments in Tulca and Szanazug. The design of the project will be used further for similar investments. ROHU-28 could be a best practice.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

Aspects of the programme authorities:

- Programme authorities had been very helping along the project dealing with problems and setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and finding and applying mitigation measures.
- The Managing Authority had a contact person speaking Hungarian, which was a huge help for the Hungarian partner.

Most important lessons of the beneficiaries are the following:

- Controls made by the Audit Authority would have been very helpful for the lead beneficiary if they would have taken place before the public procurement procedures was over. In this way, the penalties could have been avoided.
- Based on the experience on the implementation of ROHU-28, the beneficiary realized that monitoring the status of the project and compared to the GANTT would be essential.

Visibility of the project:

- Only the mandatory communication tasks were carried out by the beneficiaries.
- The MA sent the necessary information via email to the main stakeholders about the available funds. In the sector of water management, the main stakeholders, specialized public institutions, local authorities were all informed on the programme and the available financing opportunities.
- For the larger public, the visibility of the project differs on the policy area. For example, a project that renovates public hospitals are more visible than the project of flood management.

Recommendations for future calls

- All necessary information regarding the programme and available funds were at the disposal for eligible applicants, however, the launching of the guide was made very late.
- The available funds for risk and flood management in INTERREG calls are only suitable for executing small-scale investments, the major investments need to be financed through national OPs or from the national budgets.
- Other types of beneficiaries, such as NGOs are avoiding these type of funds due to cash-flow problems.

Specific Objective 6.1 - Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities

Case Report

ROHU-179 - Administrative bridge between towns in the Romania - Hungary cross-border region

1. General data on project

Title	Administrative bridge between towns in the Romania - Hungary cross-border region (ABBTROHU)
Code	ROHU-179
Priority axis	PA6 - Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)
Specific objective / Investment priority	6.1 (SO11/b Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities)
Lead Beneficiary	Town of Aleșd (Romania)
Partners	PP2: Sinteiu Commune (Romania) PP3: Municipality of Marghita (Romania) PP4: Szarvas Town Self-Government (Hungary) PP5: Berettyoujfalu Town Self-Government (Hungary)
Target Group / Groups ⁸⁸	Direct target group: Local public authorities - different departments of the partner municipalities Indirect target group: The general public – all inhabitants of the partner municipalities
Covered geographical area	Main covered area: the partner municipalities Indirectly covered areas: small municipalities in Bihor County in Romania, Békés and Hajdú-Bihar counties in Hungary
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 15 months, from 01.12.2018 until 29.02.2020 No extension
Budget allocated/contracted	€ 362,500 out of which ERDF € 308,125
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: € 339.899,97 out of which € 288.914,87 ERDF Total reported to JS: €339.460,83 out of which € 288.541,59 ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Finalized
Type of project (regular/ strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports Final Implementation Report Project Information Fiche Project Website: https://www.educultcentre.hu/ro <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
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⁸⁸ According to Application Form

Interviews	<p>Project manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bogdan Pantea, the Town of Aleșd (Romania) <p>Project partners representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tusjak-Dávid Zsófia, project officer for the partner: Municipality of Szarvas (Hungary) - Liliana Mierea, project officer for the partner: Municipality of Marghita (Romania) <p>Representatives of target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicoleta Luran, Municipality Secretary of the Town of Aleșd (Romania)
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3. Short presentation of project context

The project targeted small municipalities in the border area, addressing one of the main challenges of these small municipalities: their limited administrative capacity to contribute to sustainable economic and social development.

The criteria from the TOWN - Small and Medium-Sized Towns project, implemented under the coordination of Leuven University in Belgium, within the ESPON⁸⁹ are considered as administrations of settlements with the population below 50 000 inhabitants. When applied to the settlements in Bihor, Békés and Hajdú-Bihar counties, it means that according to this classification all settlements – with the exception of Oradea, Bekescsaba and Debrecen – all municipalities are small or medium and they need additional development and cooperation initiatives to support the development of their administrative capacity, both for town development and for a modern public administration.

The project is in line with regional and county level strategies that aim at strengthening the integration of the population and economy into the informational society (the strategy of Hajdu Bihar County), the social and economic cohesion of the region by improving the access to services (including public services) (the strategy of Bekes County), to increase the quality of services, including also technologies and instruments for increasing the efficiency of public services and promoting partnerships (the Bihor County Strategy for Sustainable Development).

The project application form and interviewed promoter and partners emphasised that a fragmented region will not be able to generate sustainable growth, since the disparities will always lead to unbalanced evolution, with negative consequences on social and economic levels. Since the municipalities are the primary interface between the citizen and the public administration, having in the meantime an important role in the steering and stimulating the development of local communities, the harmonization of the level of their performances is of special importance in achieving the sustainable growth of the programme area. While the bigger municipalities on the two sides of the border have been strongly connected since the previous programming periods (even before 2007) and they have an easier access to the human and material resources needed for improving their services, the smaller municipalities have been mostly lacking these assets.

In this context, small municipalities face challenges in the process of digital transformation of the administration and the public services.

Moreover, cross-border cooperation in the border region between Romania and Hungary has assumed various forms, manifestations and degrees of intensity in the past decades. Initially, at the beginning of the 2000, the most important manifestation and form of CBC were twinning agreements signed between the local administrations on both sides of the border. Within the framework of these agreements, a series of joint actions were initiated, establishing the links between communities and organizations on both sides of the border. Their substance and breadth were rather limited. Most often they depended on scarce resources (human and material - financial) which the involved institutions had at that time. For this reason, they tended to be short-lived with nearly no sustainability, in most cases. Moreover, the smallest of the municipalities did not started their cross-border cooperation at the beginning of the 2000, but much latter.⁹⁰

The funding programs of the European Union undoubtedly are the most important instruments for stimulating cross-border cooperation in general, and particularly for establishing institutional relations at

⁸⁹ <https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2013/applied-research/town-%E2%80%93-small-andmedium-sized-towns>

⁹⁰ “Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary”, project deliverable.

the level of the small and medium municipalities. During 2007-2013 the SMMs in Bihor, Békés and Hajdú-Bihar counties implemented 56 cooperation projects within the HURO Programme. The total budget of these projects was of almost 39 million Euros, resulting in an average of nearly 700 000 Euros per project. The value of each project differed depending on the number of partners, the topic addressed, as well as the specificity of the project (with or without infrastructure component). Thus, the projects aiming at the improvement of the transport infrastructure are the most prominent. In the region, 18 such projects were implemented. Eight projects aimed at preparing the technical documentation for such investments, one project investigated the opportunity and feasibility of restoring the railway connection between Békés and Bihor county, and nine were building the infrastructure to improve mobility in the border region. Moreover, a large number of projects – nine projects – aimed at economic development and an additional number of nine projects aimed at supporting cooperation between communities. Only three projects aimed at digitizing the border region, these being oriented in particular to preparing the development of the broadband network, but also to improving the level of digital skills in the region⁹¹. However, in the period 2007-2013, the local public authorities in the partner counties engaged in cooperation sporadically. Such an approach ensured the concentration of resources and expertise, but it also contributed to diminishing the administrative effort involved in implementing these projects, having, however, a limited impact on small municipalities.

In the period 2007-2013, the Berettyóújfalu Municipality was the most active out of the partner municipalities/institutions within the ABBTROHU project. It has assumed the role of Lead Partner in 3 projects and in one of them the partner was the City Hall of Marghita. Apart from that, none of the partners involved in the implementation of ABBTROHU project participated in the HURO Programme.

In the period 2014-2020, in the RO-HU Programme, a total of 31 small and medium municipalities (15 from Bihor and 16 from Hajdú-Bihar and Békés), have been implementing 22 CBC projects with a total budget just below €17 million. The analyses data for the “Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary” and for this case study shows that small and medium municipalities still have a limited capacity of generating and implementing larger scale projects, being mostly involved in smaller projects or rarely medium-sized projects which are focusing on boosting the cooperation at local community level. The total eligible average project budget is €760 thousand per project with one or more small or medium municipalities involved and €660 thousand for a project with a small or medium municipality as a promoter/lead partner. Moreover, about half of the projects implemented by small or medium municipalities within the RO-HU Programme have total project budget of less than €100 000.

It might be due to lack of human or financial resources, due to lack of interest or incentives or lack of trustworthy partnering institution on the other side of border, to name a few possible reasons.

Therefore, the project is building on the cross-border cooperation tradition, that developed after both countries joined the EU, and identified a set of topics which are of common interest and where the cooperation was needed. These fields are:

1. the management of the local public budget,
2. the policies which promote the modern communication technologies and data management,
3. the transparency of the public administration activities and the participatory processes in decision making.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

The main objective of the project was to enhance the cross-border professional interactions among the small and medium municipalities from the border area, contributing thus to increase the level of quality of public services delivered by them. The goal was to build on good practices identified in the border area and to increase the overall quality of the local public administration activity. Thus, the project aimed at enabling the municipalities to create an environment which will stimulate the social and economic development of their communities, and ultimately will contribute to the increase in the quality of life in the border area.

Project objectives included:

- Increasing the capacity of the local public administration in delivering high-quality public services, through exchange of experiences among the partner institutions and through pilot actions.

⁹¹ Ibid.

- Strengthening the communication between public administration and communities on local level, through pilot actions focusing on strengthening the linkages between the public administrations and the local communities, through improving the communication channels among them: the websites, tools to provide digital public services and the development of the public consultation infrastructure and capabilities.
- Establishing sustainable cooperation mechanisms for improving the cross-border exchanges, including through the development of a Strategy for strengthening the cross-border cooperation among smaller municipalities from Romania and Hungary.

The pilot actions have been planned to provide the necessary background for sustaining the transfer of knowledge and good practices among the partners, contributing ultimately to the efficiency and intensity of the cross-border cooperation.

The following activities had been implemented within the project:

- Cross-border exchange of experiences for the projects partners (10 exchanges in total)
- Joint meeting of the local decision making bodies (2 meetings in Marghita and Szarvas with the participation of an estimated number of 60 local representatives from the partner institutions)
- Drafting, debating and adopting a Strategy for strengthening the cross-border cooperation among smaller municipalities from Romania and Hungary
- elaborating one Guidelines on transparency in public administration, mainly for the municipality of Szarvas, but of use for all partners
- Endowment with IT equipment and development of software for all partners:
 - purchasing IT equipment for Alesd town (11 desktops computers, 17 tablets, 7 laptops, 1 server, licenses for server and 25 users, 9 multifunctional printers, software for the local budget)
 - purchasing IT equipment for Sinteiu commune (5 desktops computers, 1 workstation, 1 laptops, office licenses, antivirus software, 1 multifunctional printers, 1 projector, projection screen, 2 servers, server licence, 1 UPS, 1 switch) and 4000 m of optic fiber
 - purchasing IT equipment for Marghita town (4 desktops, 2 printers, 20 tablets, photo camera, 10 office licenses, 10 windows licenses, 2 UPS)
 - purchasing 1 Set of audio-technical equipment for Szarvas municipality
 - purchasing IT equipment (10 laptops,) for 2 trainings organized by Szarvas municipality
- Pilot actions for each partner as follows:
 - workshops and software for the municipality of Alesd aiming at developing the capacity of Alesd municipality in planning and executing the local budget;
 - workshops to increase the usage of IT tools at the level of Sinteiu commune as well as IT and surveillance system purchased. This included: (1) developing the SMS messaging system, which is a system of sending SMS messages to the population that allows rapid interaction with the population in case of emergency situations and fast communication of important information related to the community's life; (2) configuring 1 surveillance system for increasing the security feeling of the local population; (3) creating 10 hotspots throughout Sinteiu.
 - improvement of the IT and data processing capacity of the municipality of Marghita, and the development of the website of the municipality, including by elaborating the Study on the use of IT tools as instruments for improving the data management in the local public administration and developing the software for increasing the data processing capacity.
 - increasing transparency at the municipality of Szarvas, by ensuring translation of the information on the website in Romanian and Slovakian
 - digital training activities for the general public in Szarvas
 - improving the conditions for participatory governance in the municipality of Berettyóújfalu, as well as the multilingual website, by refurbishment of the meeting room

in Berettyóújfalu City Hall and development of a trilingual website: Hungarian, Romanian and English, which will allow public consultations. Moreover, two public consultation campaigns have been organised

Each pilot action is connected with the topics identified as challenging in the analysis of the context.

The project indicator targets were fully achieved, and the indicators defined during the project design were in line with the project guidelines and the interests of all partner municipalities.

The project objectives, activities and indicator targets remained without change during the implementation of the project.

The only output indicator of the project was: 11/b1 Number of institutions directly involved in crossborder cooperation initiatives, and all five partner municipalities have been involved.

The only result indicator of the project is R11/b Intensity level of cross-border cooperation and according to the project reports and interviews the level of cooperation increased in a significant way.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project responds to:

- Priority Area 10 "To step up institutional capacity and cooperation" (Institutional Capacity and Cooperation) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region;
- Digital Agenda for Romania 2020;
- The Hungarian policy on the development of e-governance

The Town of Aleșd also implemented project ROHU-198: Open Doors for Culture and Tradition in Europe (ODCTEU) in partnership with the Town of Kaba in Hungary. The main objective of the project was to strengthen the connections between the local communities of Aleșd (RO) and Kaba (HU), by increasing the awareness about the common cultural heritage in the border region and strengthening the personal relations among the members of the two communities. This project brings into the spotlight the importance of multiculturalism and of the cultural heritage passed over through generations by folk dance performances and by encouraging the personal interaction of people through sport competitions. This project was complementary with ROHU-179 (ABBTROHU), as both projects together contributed to the capacity of the Town of Aleșd for cross-border cooperation.

The Town of Marghita also implemented project ROHU-283: Sustainable cross-border cooperation for citizens between the municipalities of Marghita and Berettyóújfalu. The two towns organised together multicultural events, promoting cultural diversity and traditions, with the participation of civil society, artists and representative associations for local culture.

In Aleșd, capitalizing on the results of the ABBTROHU project, the municipality initiated seven RRNP projects, six of them for sustainable development: green transport by building bike lines and energy efficiency of public buildings. These projects are a continuation of the RO-HU project and are an expression of the increased capacity of the municipality.

As an example of complementarity between this project and other projects, between 2019 and 2022 the municipality of Szarvas implemented the AGORA project within the framework of the Danube Transnational Programme. The leading beneficiary from Romania was the city of Cluj-Napoca. The project aimed to utilize unused areas in the city. The project was implemented as a grassroots initiative with the involvement of the city's inhabitants. Throughout the project, they have been able to draw heavily on the experience of the ROHU-179 project in terms of local decision-making processes.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The outputs of the project include:

- 5 institutions involved in cross-border cooperation (programme indicator, fully achieved)
- 10 meetings in 15 months, with additional 2 joint informal local council meetings
- 5 workshops
- the development of websites of the municipalities of Marghita, Szarvas

- the development of the cross-border joint cooperation strategy for small municipalities
- the endowment with IT equipment for the participant municipalities
- the endowment with software needed for the public services and public administration, transparency, and the public consultations in the participant municipalities
- construction of the facilities to organise public debates in Berettyóújfalu
- raised capacity of staff/public servants participating to trainings for the development of their digital competences
- organization of public consultations

The project's main results are:

- **a joint strategy** serving the improvement of cross-border cooperation, which will represent the basis of collaboration between smaller localities from Romania and Hungary;
- **IT equipment purchased** for project partners to develop their capacity in planning and executing the local budget
- **a functional SMS messaging system for Sinteu Commune**, which allow rapid interaction with the population in case of emergency situations
- **a functional surveillance system for supervising roads within the commune of Sinteu;**
- **a developed software for increasing the data processing capacity in Marghita**
- **better access to information related to community life and increased transparency for the citizens of municipality of Szarvas;**
- **improved conditions for participatory governance in the new refurbished meeting room in Berettyóújfalu City Hall.**

The project generated significant results in all five partner municipalities and reached a considerable number of citizens. All activities, including the project conferences, jointly organised community events and the websites and platforms developed during the project reached, according to the project reports, over 57 000 persons, covering almost the entire population in the partner municipalities.

The only result indicator of the project is R11/b Intensity level of cross-border cooperation and according to the project reports and interviews the level of cooperation increased in a significant way, taking into account that the project involved municipalities that:

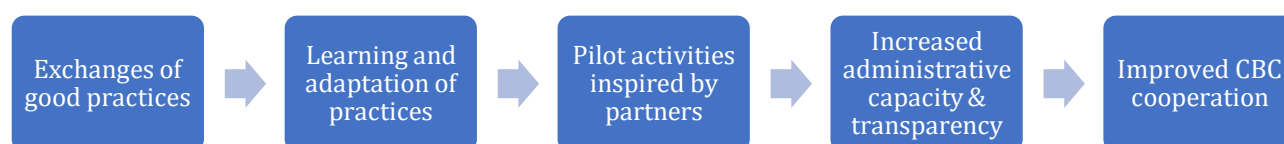
- (a) never implemented projects together and have been able to implement a project, with no major problem, with activities implemented and time and results fully achieving the objectives, by working together.
- (b) never participated to other cross-border projects and for three out of the five partners the experience of the ROHU-179 was the first CBC project linking Romanian and Hungarian municipalities.

The intense exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge supported by the project activities created professional linkages among the partner institutions. The high number and frequency of workshops and meetings (10 meetings in 15 months, with additional 2 joint informal local council meetings), generated a solid platform of communication on technical level among the participants. The cross-border cooperation mechanism proposed within the project represented step further in the transfer of best practices by initiating a learning process with the participation of all partners. The exchange of experience allowed the presentation of good practices and generated planes for new projects among partners. The learning process determined the active participation of the partners in the preparation and evaluation of the experimental part of the exchange of experience, strengthening the accumulation of knowledge both for the experimenting partner and for the partners supporting the pilot actions. Therefore, the general logic of change in the project included a five-step plan:

1. Presentation and exchange of good practices and cooperation realised
2. Learning and adapting good practices to local realities in each small municipality
3. Implementing pilot initiatives, answering to local needs

4. Increased administrative capacity and transparency and improved relation between the administration and the communities in each of the partner municipalities as a result of the pilot activities
5. Increased cooperation intensity and future projects

Figure 33. Logic of change of project ROHU 179



Source: authors presentation, based on the case study analysis

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

The project application form mentions measures to ensure the promotion of horizontal principles, including:

- Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities to all the project events and activities
- Promoting e-governance instruments as an element of sustainable development
- Other elements of promotion of sustainable development include:
 - resource substituting: substituting green materials for environmental endangered materials.
 - intensive integration: improving resource utilization efficiency through rational design methods by the considering of function and structure.
 - environment protection: reducing the environment endangering through some approach such as adoption of green material, improvement of the function and structure in equipment design.
 - green procurement
- Promoting the sustainable development in the joint strategy for cross-border cooperation
- Developing the capacity for administration capacity and public consultation is presented as a way of promoting non-discrimination in the application form
- Ensuring an equitable proportion between man and women participating to project implementation and activities
- non-discriminatory working conditions for all the members of the project team in terms of salary, job description, workload distribution, distribution of responsibilities, work schedule, keeping the same balanced gender approach

According to project reports and interviews all the planned measures have been implemented, but the project did not generate significant results concerning the horizontal approach with three important exceptions:

- **the improved cooperation between the municipalities in Romania and Hungary generated community cooperation as well, and in this context the principle of non-discrimination is better promoted;**
- **project activities – including digital literacy workshops and the translation of websites – especially in Hungary, increased accessibility to public information provided by the public administration to persons from vulnerable groups and minorities;**

- **the project generated significant progress concerning the digitalisation of the public administration in the city halls of all partners and all endowment procurements have been green.**

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors:

- Support from programme authorities, especially the Joint Secretariat that communicates very well with beneficiaries and was quick in providing feedback on reporting and approving payments.
- The programme rules and procedures have been accessible for the partner municipalities and are considered a positive factor encouraging the access to funding and the implementation of the project in good conditions.
- Support for the project implementation from local decision makers (mayors)
- The indirect effect of a personal friendship between persons involved in the project implementation and the civil servants in the partner municipalities has been a positive factor supporting the good implantation of the project activities and the achievement of results.
- At the moment of the project design, in 2016, the partner municipalities had less projects in preparation and implementation, this allowed them for the most part of the ROHU-179 implementation to focus on this project, not being overloaded with work.

No negative factors identified. Although in Romania public procurement are considered a complex process, they did not generate significant problems in project implementation.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The project developed a Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary that is useful for all Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the region, therefore it has a spill-over effect. The involved municipalities already started to plan and implement new projects based on the strategy, this representing in fact a sustainable direct effect of the project.

Moreover, the project allowed public servants and officials from the five partner municipalities to cooperate more. At national level, the communication between municipality secretaries in the three municipalities in Romania and the two municipalities in Hungary was intensified, both formally (direct project result) and informally (indirect, unplanned project result) and this allowed them to address better, due to consultation and communication, issues with no link with CBC cooperation. For example, the Romanian municipality secretaries use to exchange experiences and opinions on the organisation of public procurements or the formulation of local councils' decisions according to Romanian administrative law (indirect, unplanned project result).

As an unexpected result, the digitalization achieved during project implementation, a direct result of the project, proved to be instrumental during the COVID-19 pandemic, that started a month after the project ended. It was especially fortunate that the project supported the digitalisation of the public administration in the five partner municipalities just before the COVID-19 pandemic. This strengthens the overall resilience of the municipalities in 2020 and 2021, contributing to maintaining the trust of citizens in the local public administration.

10. Sustainability of project results

The mainly bilateral contacts from the past will be expanded and enlarged by the involvement of new partner organizations. The durability of the solutions identified and applied within the project is fully ensured, since they will be organically integrated in the administrative procedures of the partner institutions. The ownership of the equipment will stay with the partner institutions, their maintenance requiring minimal financial resources which will be ensured by each partner through its own budget. Moreover, the accumulated know-how will be integrated in the procedures of the municipalities, becoming part of the daily routine of the administrative activity.

The development of the municipalities' websites and the development of their IT capacity has been important during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project ended in the month before the pandemic broke-out in Europe, but it proved to be a good preparation for the beneficiary municipalities in ensuring the access of citizens to information during the hard time of the pandemic.

From the perspective of the sustainable development, the use of IT solutions supported the sustainable development and the partner municipalities ensued the continuous allocation of funds to provide consumable for all equipment and maintenance etc.

The practices developed and implemented during the project are still in use in the partner municipalities, thus the results of the project are sustainable. The public board meetings are well established and maintained them is in the best interest of the towns and the involvement of the population in public affairs increased in relation to certain topics. Their maintenance requires a financial contribution only in the longer term if the replacement of damaged equipment becomes necessary.

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The cooperation of small towns, such in ROHU-179 (ABBTROHU) yields valuable lessons. Here are some key lessons that can be learned from such cooperation:

1. **Strength in numbers** (to a large extent): Small towns often face similar challenges and limitations individually. By collaborating and forming a cooperative network, they can pool their expertise and this is valuable, even if they don't put together their resources, in addressing common issues effectively. This collective strength increases their capacity to tackle shared problems. The exchange of good practices is especially valuable in addressing administrative challenges through the cooperation in-country in cooperation between small towns from the same countries. Public officials from Aleșd, Marghita and Șinteu continue to communicate and offer advice to one another in dealing with the Romanian complex administrative law as a result of the project. On the other hand, development projects, such of the development of public thermal spa in the RO-HU CBC region, has been inspired by the cooperation between the municipalities in the two countries.
2. **Sharing best practices** (to a medium extent): Small towns can learn from each other's successes and failures. Through cooperation, they can share best practices, innovative ideas, and lessons learned, enabling each town to benefit from the experiences of others. This exchange of knowledge can lead to more efficient and effective approaches to various community challenges. This proved to be the case both in project management and the planning of new projects for the development of involved towns in all the five partner municipalities.
3. **Advocacy, representation and perspective for development** (to a medium extent): Small towns often face limited political influence due to their size and resources. By coming together, they can present a unified voice and advocate for their shared interests at higher levels of government. This increased collective representation enhances their ability to secure funding, support, and policy changes that benefit all participating towns. This is supported, in ROHU-179 (ABBTROHU) by the fact that the Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation between Small- and Medium-sized Municipalities in the Border Region between Romania and Hungary has been developed in the project.
4. **Enhanced community and administrative resilience** (to a medium extent): By cooperating, small towns can enhance their resilience to external shocks and crises. It was especially fortunate that the project supported the digitalisation of the public administration in the five partner municipalities just before the COVID-19 pandemic. This strengthens the overall resilience of the municipalities in 2020 and 2021, contributing to maintaining the trust of citizens in the local public administration.
5. **Social and cultural exchanges** (to a small extent): Cooperation among small towns provides opportunities for social and cultural exchanges. Joint events, festivals, and programs have been organised in the five municipalities, outside the project framework. But the existence of the project encouraged the participation of public officials and citizens from one municipality to events in the others and therefore allowed the citizens from both countries to interact, share traditions, and celebrate their collective heritage. These exchanges promote social cohesion, cultural diversity, and a sense of belonging within the region.

The focus of the activities in each municipality on pilot initiatives that answered directly to the needs and plans of each municipality (city hall, mayors and citizens) was an important feature of the project. This approach allowed for the generation of very valuable and cherished results in each municipality. However, the case study shows, as a lesson learned for the future, that a joint

pilot initiative can contribute to even better and more visible and deep cooperation, including long-term cooperation.

Case Report

ROHU-297 - A Cross-Border Open Model of A Digital Museum Database

1. General data on project

Title	A Cross-Border Open Model of A Digital Museum Database
Code	ROHU-297
Priority axis	PA6 - Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)
Specific objective / Investment priority	6.1 (S011/b Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities)
Lead Beneficiary	Jósa András Museum (Hungary)
Partners	PP2: County Museum of Satu Mare (Romania) PP3: Municipality of Csenger (Hungary) PP4: Geszteréd Aranyzablya Society (Hungary) PP5: Tasnad Town, (Romania) PP6: Vetis Comune, (Romania)
Target Group / Groups ⁹²	Direct target group: Archaeologists, historians, other experts employed by regional museums and cultural institutions – 80 Interest groups and NGOs - Local historian and folklore organisations of the settlements involved – 15 Higher education, academic and research institutions of the two counties – 2 SME - Local and regional businesses in tourism, creative industries and ICT – 80 International organisation under national Law – Professional participants of the international conference - 35 Indirect target group: The general public – Citizens and visitors of the settlements involved and their surroundings, especially culturally aware people, local residents interested in history and archaeology, students in secondary and tertiary education – 30,000
Covered geographical area	Main covered area: the municipalities of the partners: Nyíregyháza, Satu Mare, Csenger, Tasnad, Vetis, Geszteréd Indirectly covered areas: the counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare
Duration (initial and final, if amendments were signed)	Initial: 18 months, from 01.12.2018 until 31.05.2020 After extension, if the case: the project was extended to 21 months until 31.08.2020 to allow the finalization of all activities affected by the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic
Budget allocated/contracted	€ 390,775.00, out of which ERDF € 332,158.75
Budget used or Absorption Rate	Total declared to FLC: € 376,087.13 out of which € 319,673.95 ERDF Total reported to JS: € 362,959.55 out of which € 308,515.51 ERDF
Status (finalized, under implementation)	Finalized
Type of project (regular / strategic)	Regular project

2. Methods used for case study

Documents consulted	Application Form Progress Reports
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⁹² According to Application Form

	Final Implementation Report Project Information Fiche Project Website: https://www.educultcentre.hu/ro <i>E-MS Table (Transparency/ requirements) - Exported At: 31.12.2022</i>
Interviews	Project manager: - dr. Eszter Istvánovits, Chief Archaeologist of Jósza András Museum Project partners representatives: - Péter-Levente Szócs, project officer of the County Museum of Satu Mare Representatives of target groups: - Norbert Nagy, Archaeologist at the County Museum of Satu Mare

3. Short presentation of project context

The implementation context included the common challenges in both countries in the gathering of archaeological evidence, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and the provision of information to the benefit of researchers and the general public alike. Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg county in HU and Satu Mare county in RO share a significant amount of cultural assets as well as a rich historical and archaeological heritage. The Szatmar region in HU and Satu Mare county in RO face similar challenges: although there is a high level of interest for certain areas of museum activities such as archaeology, the available resources of knowledge and information are insufficient. The regions are largely unexplored and there is a lack of processed archaeological data from the area; there is no internationally available cross-border database of the sources, collections, artefacts and other museum data from that geographical territory. The project aims to fulfil this need.

Jósza András Museum decided to submit the application for the project, because they wanted to join the digitalisation trend that is taking place worldwide and the partners joint this aim.

In particular, Jósza András Museum in Nyíregyháza has a valuable collection, most of which cannot be exhibited. That is why they thought that the collection should be digitised, and the scientific research related to it should be published. They also wanted to give smaller organisations the opportunity to get involved. That is why they established the partnership with the Museum of Csenger and the Geszteréd Aranyaszablya Society. They also have been in continuous contact with the County Museum of Satu Mare for about 25 years. When the highway excavations started in the county, they came from across the border to Hungary. Since then, they have had joint projects with the County Museum of Satu Mare. Their databases were shared and used together. Satu Mare County was divided by the Trianon border, so from an archaeological point of view they work in the same area.

Therefore, two main elements of the context are relevant for the project:

1. The openness and high interest for cooperation and the tradition of cooperation in the CBC region on cultural and archaeology fields;
2. The need of all partners to align with the spirit of the times and digitalise their presence and presentation both for research and towards the public.

4. Short presentation of project objectives and activities implemented

A museum has three functions: collection, scientific research and popularisation. The project has provided the opportunity to develop these functions by enabling the creation of a digital database, the professional groundwork and the dissemination of findings during the process.

The project aimed at enhancing cultural cooperation between institutions in the Counties of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg and Satu Mare, on both sides of the Romanian-Hungarian border thus contributing to the preservation and dissemination of the shared local cultural, historical and archaeological heritage.

The main objective of the project was to implement new, digital solutions for a dual purpose: to provide access to digitized cultural heritage, especially archaeological data sources and collections, thus disseminating knowledge about the Szatmar/Satu Mare region's history and culture and to strengthen cross-border cultural and institutional cooperation.

Another common goal of the partners is the preservation and protection of historical sites. Their current cooperation programme contributes to this goal by exploring these sites and disseminating the newly acquired knowledge.

The specific objectives are:

- Developing a digital model for public collections by using solutions for museums in order to effectively use the technology of modern era, and to be competitive in both professional and tourism spheres.
- Implementing digital museums through intensified cooperation and exhibition development
- Sustained and expanded application of digital solutions developed for modern museums

The following activities have been planned:

- a. developing a digital model for public collections (research, purchase of equipments and training) for two compatible museum databases have been developed on the 2 sides of the border, linking in other selected venues of the region
- b. practical applications of digital museums:
 - microregional exploration/research
 - field research
 - workshops,
 - education
 - awareness-raising,
 - preparation of Cultural Guides,
 - monographies and brochure
 - modernised and virtual exhibitions
 - traveling exhibitions
 - papers published
- c. workshops professional events and training program incorporated into the project, creating an integrated local pool of experts and cultural managers, with a potential to sustain and expand the project results, generating even more cross-border interaction in the future.

The **project indicators** are:

1. **output:** 11/b1 Number of institutions directly involved in crossborder cooperation initiatives – with target and achievement: 6 representing the project partners.
2. **result:** R11/b Intensity level of cross-border cooperation

The project target groups include the target groups:

- b. Archaeologists, historians, other experts employed by regional museums and cultural institutions
- c. Local historian and folklore organisations of the settlements involved
- d. Local and regional businesses in tourism, creative industries and ICT
- e. Citizens and visitors of the settlements involved and their surroundings, especially culturally aware people, local, residents interested in history and archaeology, students in secondary and tertiary education.

However, except for the archaeologists, historians, other experts employed by regional museums and cultural institutions and for participants to conferences from NGOs and local authorities, there was no monitoring of the involvement of the local businesses and the number of visitors in museums in relation to project results.

5. Coherence with relevant EU and national strategies / policies and complementarity with other operations (EU or nationally funded)

The project is in line with:

- The Europe 2020 objectives on digitalisation

- The EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Priority Area 3: “to promote culture, tourism and people to people contacts”, Target 6 on “ensuring the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage and natural values by developing relevant clusters, and networks of museums, interpretation and visitors centres within the Danube Region” as well as the PA7 to develop the knowledge society, Target: “to increase the annual output of co-publications in the region by 15 % by 2020” as well as Target 7: “to enhance regional research and education co-operation to reach 20% of academic mobility within the region by 2020”
- The EU culture policy and the activities of the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)
- The Hungarian Digital Welfare and Digital Nation Development Programs
- National Info-Communication Strategy of Hungary 2014-2020. This strategy has 4 main pillars, 3 of which are directly targeted by the current project: digital infrastructure; digital competencies; and digital economy.
- The Digital Agenda for Romania 2020

The partners have collaborated in implementing successful, related transnational projects in the previous years, all funded by CBC programmes.

Projects supporting the renovation of the bigger museums involved in the project are under implementation in 2023, since 2022. On the long term this will ensure synergy with the cooperation on research and digitalisation, although at the moment of conducting the case study the project sustainability – the visibility of the project results for the large public in 2023 – is affected.

6. Project results and impact to the date

The project enhanced the level of existing cooperation as well as involved institutions and organizations that have not participated in cross- border cooperation programmes before.

The project results included:

- two compatible museum databases have been developed on the 2 sides of the border, linking in other selected venues of the region. The data have been opened for professionals, education and the general public (except for sensitive information). The databases are providing proper catalogue, digitalisation, and geographic information for various purposes.
- at least 4 physical meetings during the implementation, in the form of professional workshops, for sharing ideas and experiences by the experts from the six partners involved
- publications
- development in the presentation and attraction of cultural heritage sites and collections at all 6 partners
- new cross-border cultural tourism visits
- an integrated local pool of experts and cultural managers, with a potential to sustain and expand the project results, generating even more cross-border interaction in the future,

The interviewees considers that the indicators targets were realistic. However, at the time the indicator targets were set, they were not yet aware of the factors that would later cause difficulties in implementation and maintaining project continuity. The project was completed in August 2020, and until 2022 they had the opportunity to present the digital collection in live exhibitions. The renovation of both Jósza András Museum Mare is affecting, on the other hand, the visibility and capitalization of project results for the time being. The ethnographic department of the Sóstó Museum has completed a major renovation project, which also affected the work of the Jósza András Museum, as they are maintained by the same organization. The County Council of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg has applied for an INTERREG project to build a literary history building in the courtyard of the Museum. The Museum of Satu Mare is also undergoing renovation work. There is high hope that after renovations the synergy between projects will pay-off.

7. Promotion of horizontal principles

The project promotes the horizontal principles as follows:

- Promoting virtual visits to museums, without using transportation, as a form of sustainable cultural tourism
- Producing materials: knowledge materials and communication/dissemination materials in accessible formats
- Ensuring equal access to project results regardless of age, gender, race, religion or other factors
- Ensuring gender equality in project staffing
- Using green procurement

8. Main factors influencing project results

Positive factors:

- The experience of cooperation of the main partners: the Jóna András Museum and the County Museum of Satu Mare.
- The fact that project partners are similar institutions and people involved are like-minded.
- The interest of the population in both counties involved for visiting history and archaeological museums.
- The support of programme authorities
- The existence of outdoor archaeological sites (in Satu Mare) to be visited, which encouraged the activity of the museum and capitalization of results even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The programme bureaucracy is both a positive and negative factor in the assessment of the project partners. Although compared to other programmes, the CBC programme is considered „light”, interviewees for this case study underlined that eMS could be more simplified.

Negative factors:

The programme authorities were supportive during the process. However, after the final control phase, the Museum was fined. The Jóna András Museum staff still do not understand exactly why. From the interview conducted we see that the Museum staff still do not understand exactly why. The objection is that overpayments have been found, but the project has been invoiced in the same way as other EU projects before, where everything has been found to be in order by the auditors.

One issue in project implementation was the fact that prices in the budget, established at the moment of project application, were not updated during implementation, which created challenges.

One of the factors affecting the visibility and capitalization of project results is the fact that several museums involved in the project, as presented above, started renovation works. Although these are needed investments, the interviewees for the case studies stressed the importance of a more coordinated management of interrelated projects, because their organization found that the full implementation of the project (including the phase where they provide the sustainability of the results) they had applied for was compromised by other projects.

The pandemic had a limited negative effect on the project. The project partners applied for the extension of the project because of the COVID-19 pandemic, hoping to hold an international conference. They were finally able to organise the conference online. The actions taken by the programme authorities in relation to the pandemic were considered to be effective, with helpfulness and rapid response times being highlighted as positive aspects.

9. Unexpected and indirect effects of the project

The cooperation between the partners from the two countries helps to create a friendly atmosphere, which is a significant achievement compared to the previous conflicted relationship between the citizens of the two countries. Moreover, they can expand their network of contacts through each other.

Since the end of the project, the Jóna András Museum has a volunteer association, which is motivated to become a non-governmental organisation, so that they can participate in such projects in the future.

10. Sustainability of project results

The cooperation between these institutions is expected to be a sustainable long-term partnership where the partners will continue to share knowledge and expertise and provide professional support to one another to maintain and expand the database created, thus increasing the level of cross-border cultural cooperation both in a direct and indirect way.

The main component, the pioneering cross-border digital database containing 150 years' worth of collected data is used on a daily basis research in both countries and will be expanded constantly as new data on either side of the border becomes available and also when the need arises for further development. The established institutional structure provides a solid foundation for the smooth operation of such a database.

The virtual exhibitions can be updated regularly and feedback will be taken into account when initiating changes or updates to ensure greater visitor experience.

Due to the innovative digital technologies used in implementing the activities, our project outputs will be applicable and replicable by other cultural institutions regardless of their physical location. The database is designed to be applicable and replicable, and the fact that it is created with a cross-border compatibility may contribute to a complex, joint digital museum system with the involvement of other countries of the Carpathian basin. This goal is in line with the Digital Agenda of the European Union. The public data in the trilingual cross-border database will be available on the Internet, thus accessible for any interested individuals.

However, since the end of the project, there have been difficulties in maintaining continuity of project results. The Municipality of Nyíregyháza started to renovate the Jósza András Museum in the framework of a TOP (Terület- és Településfejlesztési Operatív Program - Operational Programme for Territorial and Urban Development) tender, which meant that the museum staff had to move out of the building. Since then, they have been placed in several separate buildings, which makes the collaboration difficult. The other Hungarian partners do not face similar difficulties, on the contrary, they managed to move forward, inspired from the project. The Geszteréd AranySzablya Society has produced a replica of a golden saber of the conquest period as a result of the project, which will be given to the Jósza András Museum. The employees of the Museum of Csenger applied for a tender with the support of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary, which provides a framework for archaeological days, which will involve local people and interested parties in excavation work.

Similar to what is happening in Nyíregyháza, the County Museum of Satu Mare is under renovation with EU funds support (the Regional Operational Programme). In this context, although the research continues to be supported by the database and the digital presence of the museum is an important and sustainable project result, the museum is not yet able to translate this result in an impact on visitors to the museum.

However, in the future, the CBC RO-HU project and the renovation projects are expected to have synergic results supporting even more accentuated development of archaeology and interest for archaeology museums in the areas/regions involved in the ROHU 297 project

11. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

The most important impact of the project is the increased cooperation between museums on both sides of the Romanian-Hungarian border beyond the traditional partnership between the Jósza András Museum and the County Museum of Satu Mare, therefore the smaller partners in the project had the most to gain from it.

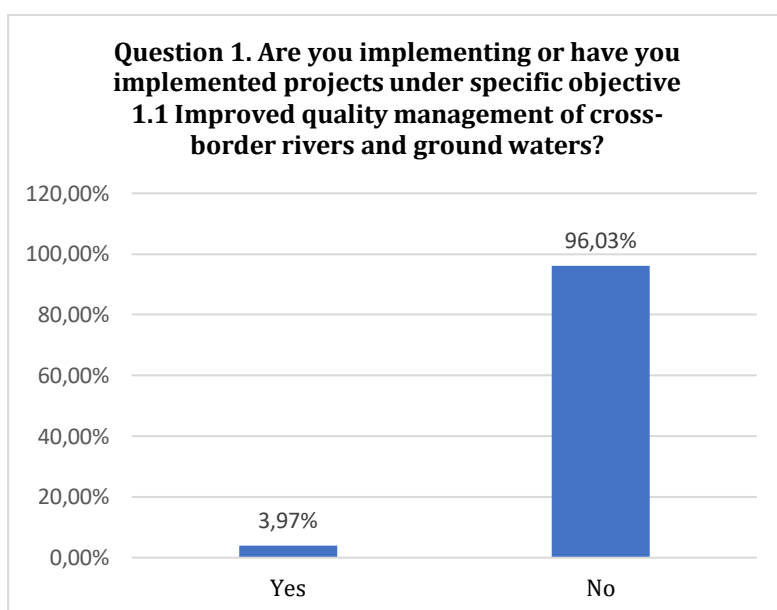
Annex 9. Detailed analysis of the data collected through surveys

Survey addressed to programme beneficiaries / partners

1. S.O 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters

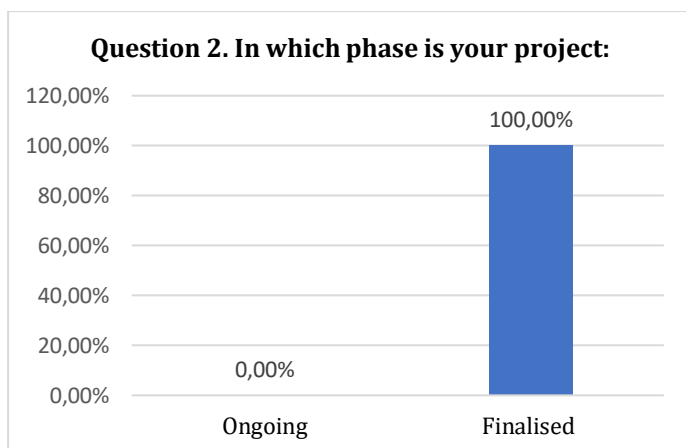
Question 1. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under specific objective 1.1 Improved quality management of transboundary rivers and groundwater?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	3,97%	5
No	96,03%	121
	Total	126



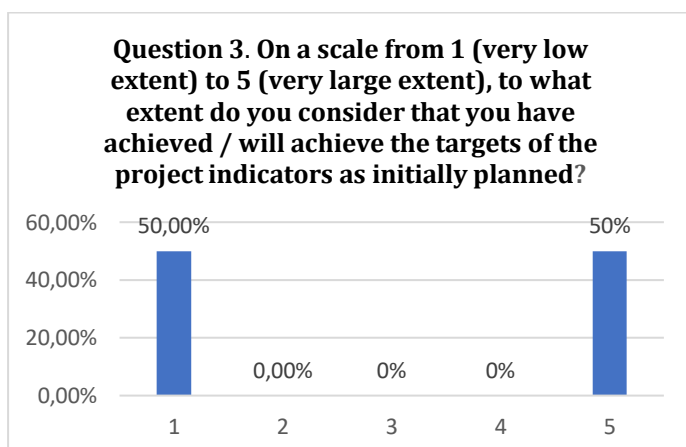
Question 2. In which phase is your project:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	0,00%	0
Finalised	100,00%	2
	Total	2



Question 3. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the targets of the project indicators as initially planned?

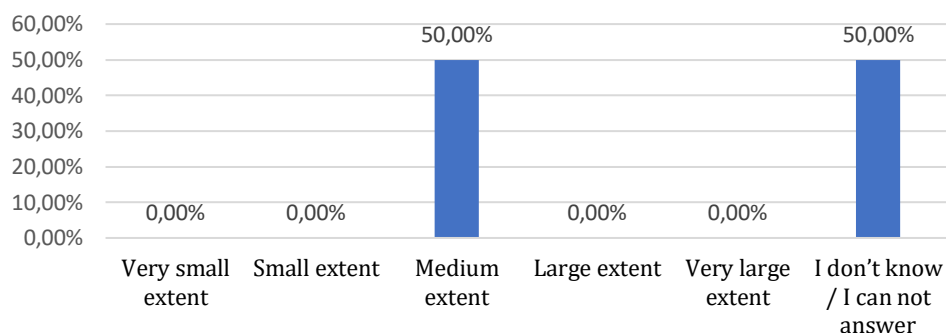
	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2



Question 4. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters, were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	50,00%	1
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	0,00%	0
I don't know / I cannot answer	50,00%	1
Total		2

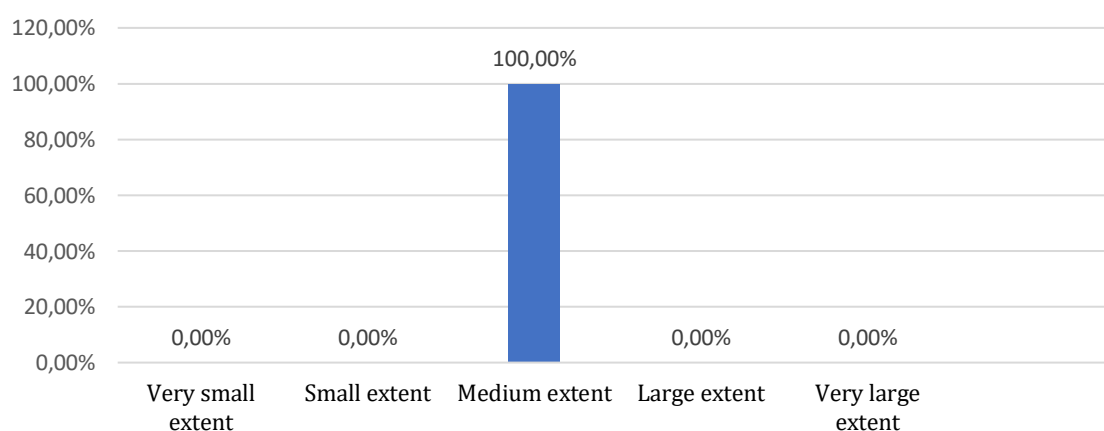
Question 4. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters, were realistically set/achievable?



Question 5. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

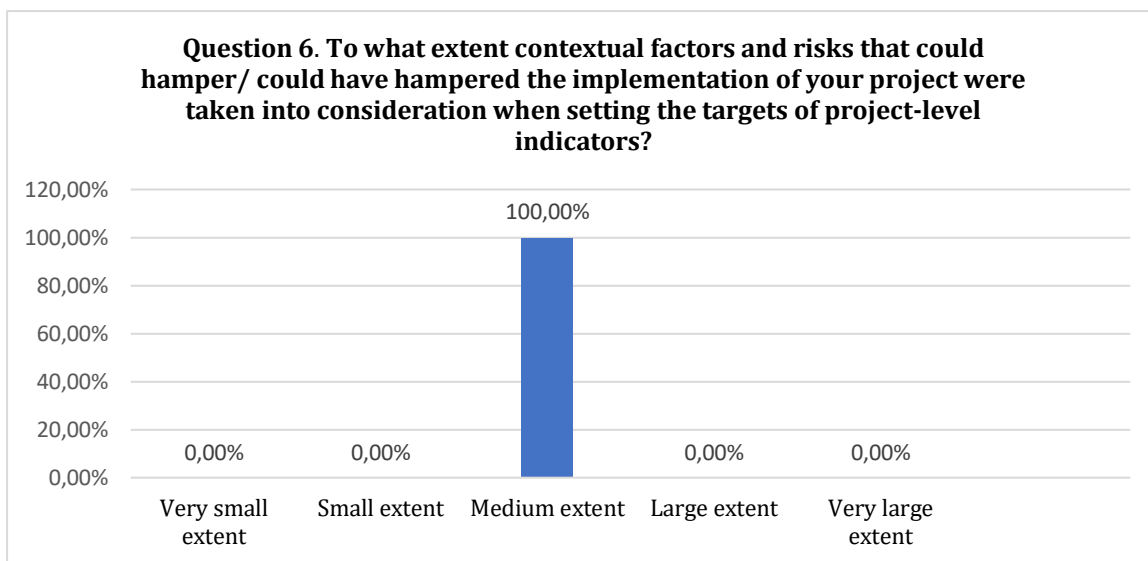
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	100,00%	2
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	0,00%	0
Total		2

Question 5. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?



Question 6. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper/ could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets of project-level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	100,00%	2
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	2

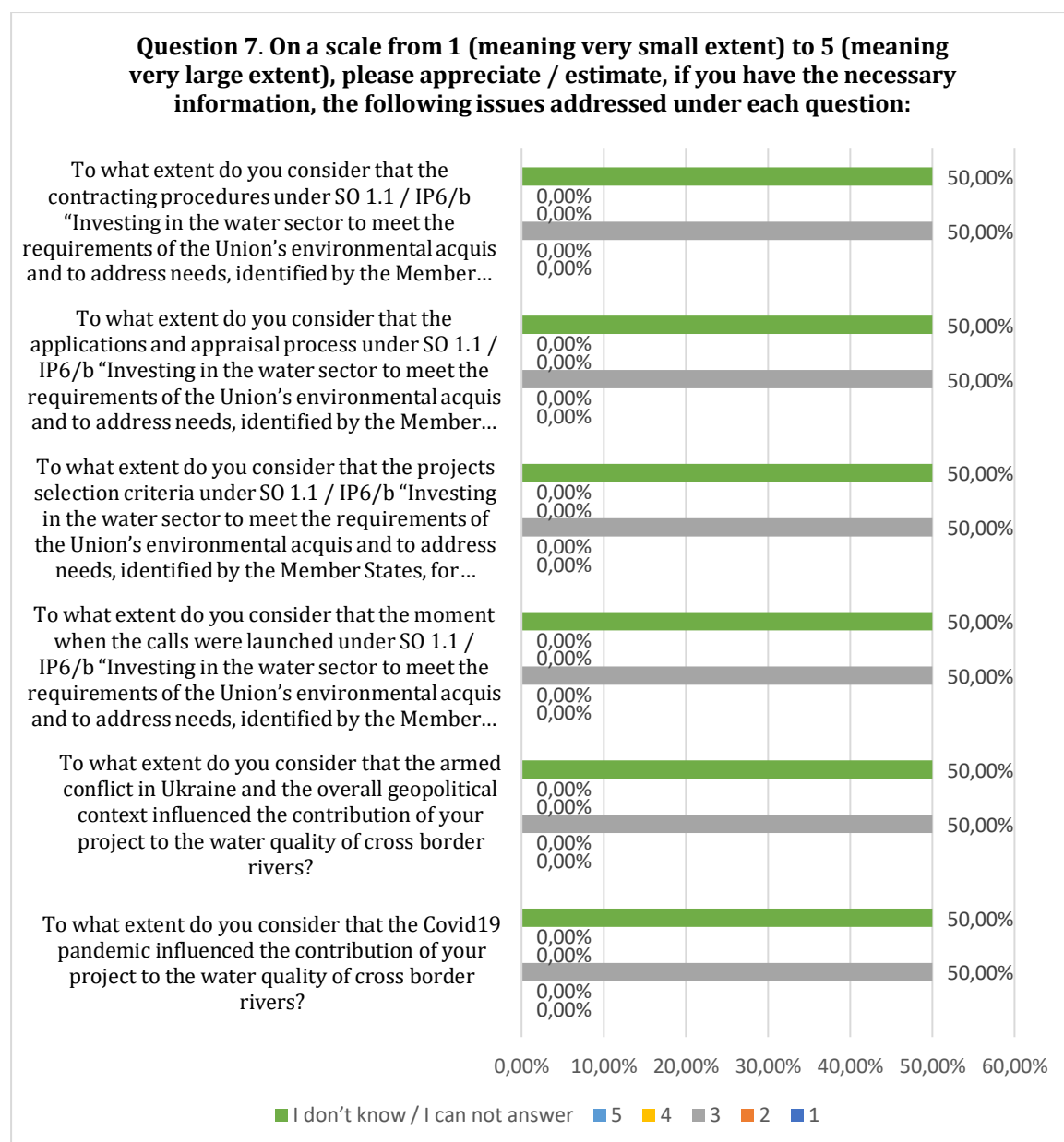


Question 7. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the water quality of cross border rivers?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

water quality of cross border rivers?													
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO 1.1 / IP6/b “Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union’s environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 1.1 / IP6/b “Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union’s environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 1.1 / IP6/b “Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union’s environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 1.1 / IP6/b “Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union’s environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

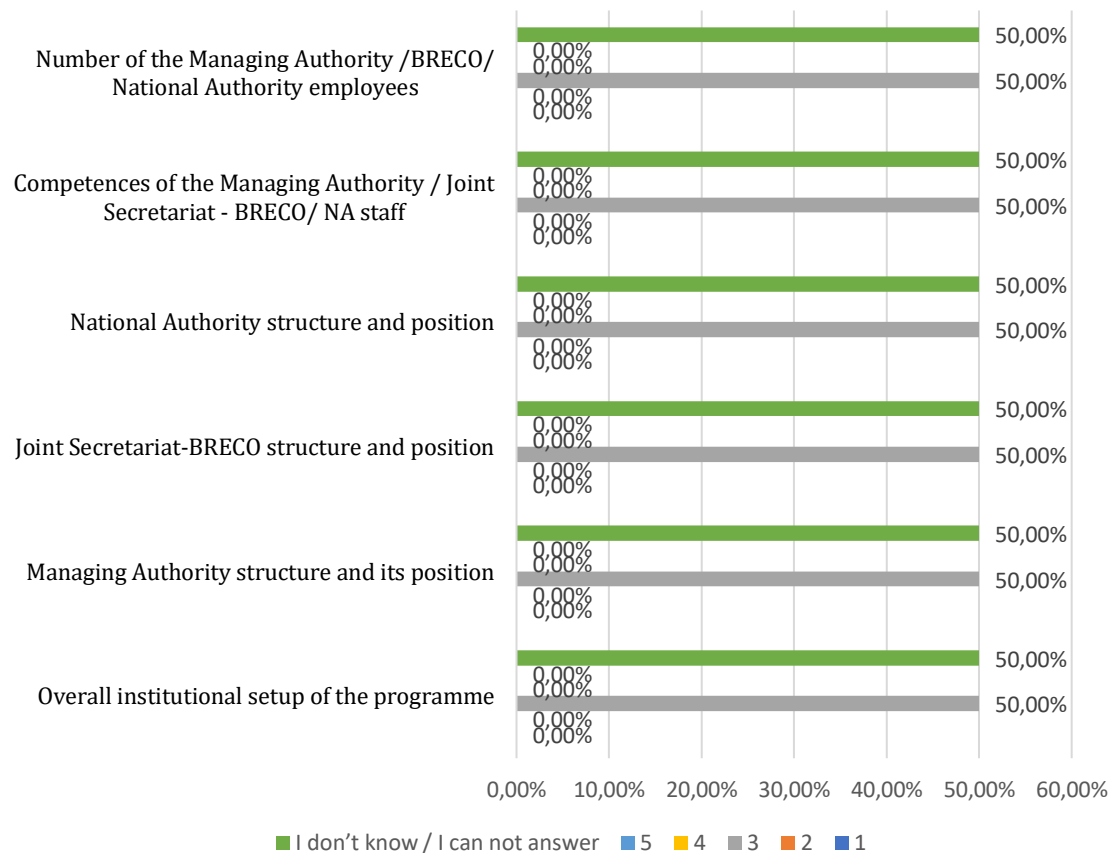


Question 8. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced the impact on cross-border river and groundwater management?

Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Managing Authority	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

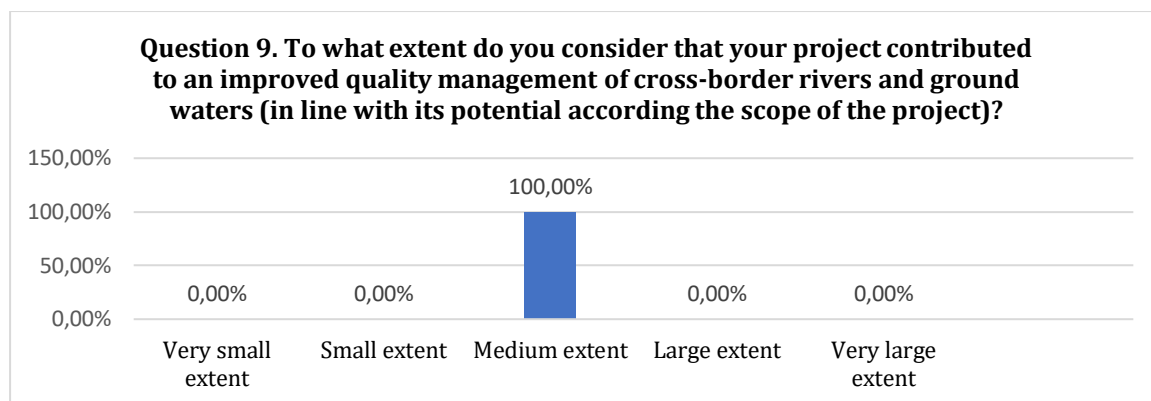
structure and its position													
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
National Authority structure and position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

Question 8. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced the impact on transboundary river and groundwater management?



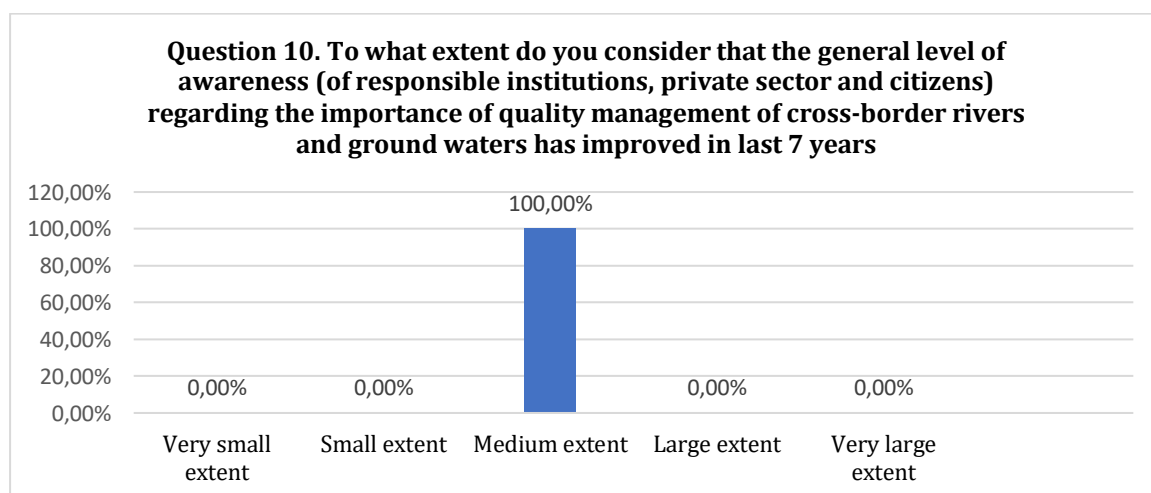
Question 9. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to an improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters (in line with its potential according the scope of the project)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	100,00%	2
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	2



Question 10. To what extent do you consider that the general level of awareness (of responsible institutions, private sector and citizens) regarding the importance of quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters has improved in last 7 years?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	100,00%	2
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	2

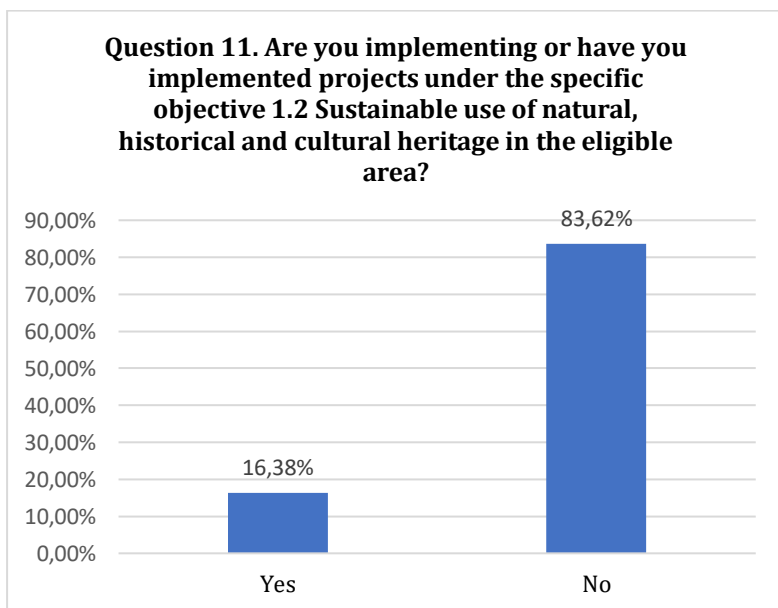


2. S.O 1.2: Sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage within eligible area

Question 11. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under the specific objective 1.2 Sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage in the eligible area?

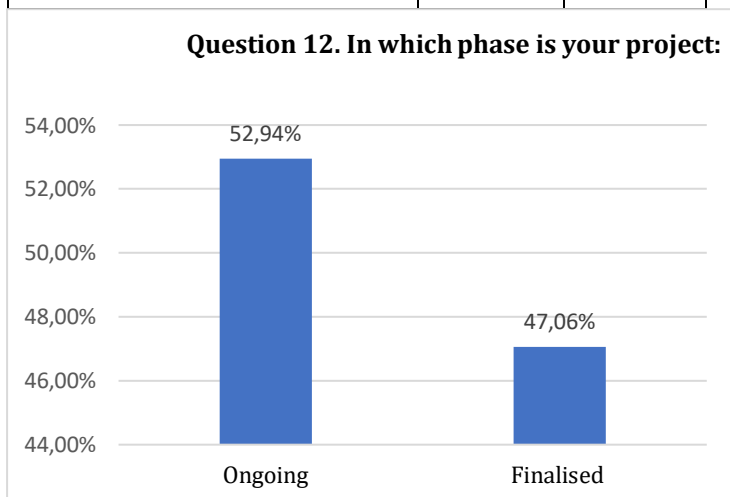
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
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Yes	16,38%	19
No	83,62%	97



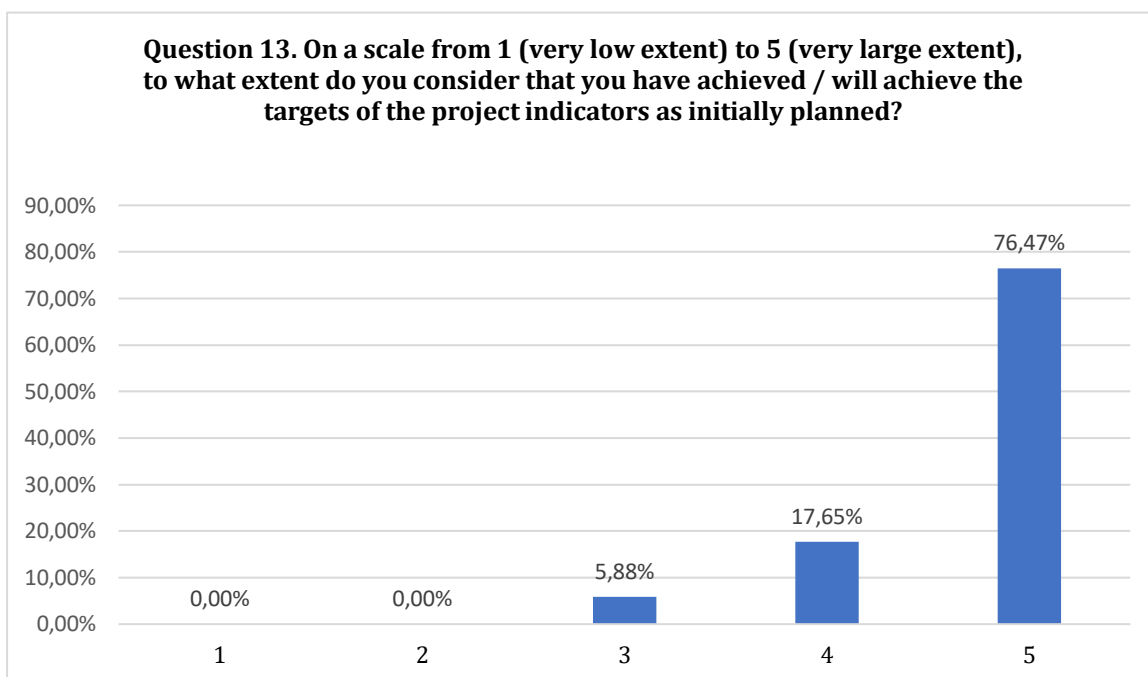
Question 12. In which phase is your project:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	52,94%	9
Finalised	47,06%	8
	Total	17



Question 13. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the targets of the project indicators as initially planned?

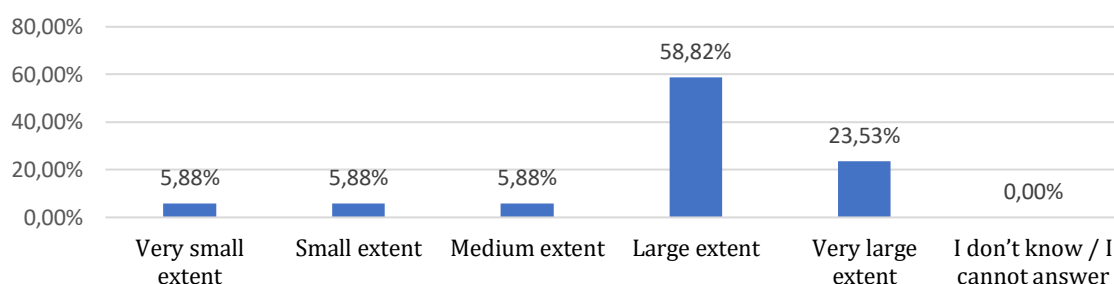
	1		2		3		4		5		Total	Weighted Average
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5,88%	1	17,65%	3	76,47%	13	17	4,7



Question 14. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 1.2 Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	5,88%	1
Small extent	5,88%	1
Medium extent	5,88%	1
Large extent	58,82%	10
Very large extent	23,53%	4
I don't know / I cannot answer	0,00%	0
Total		17

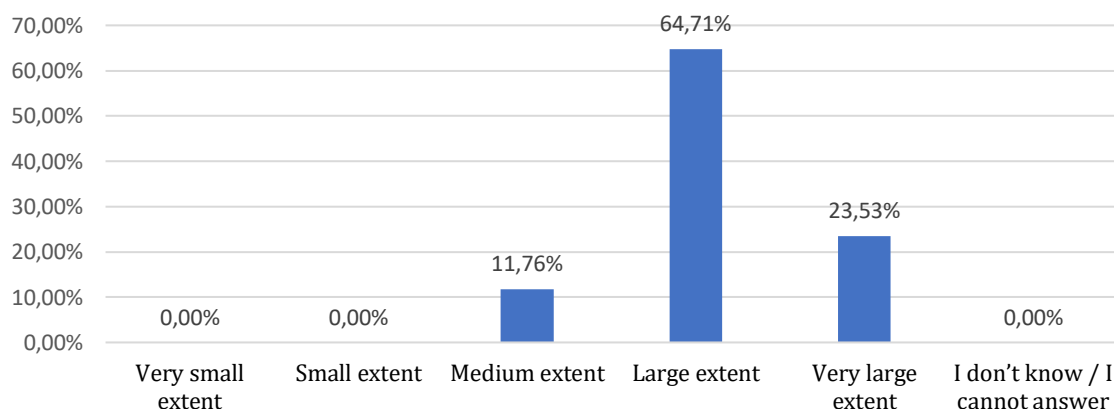
Question 14. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 1.2 Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area were realistically set/achievable?



Question 15. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	11,76%	2
Large extent	64,71%	11
Very large extent	23,53%	4
	Total	17

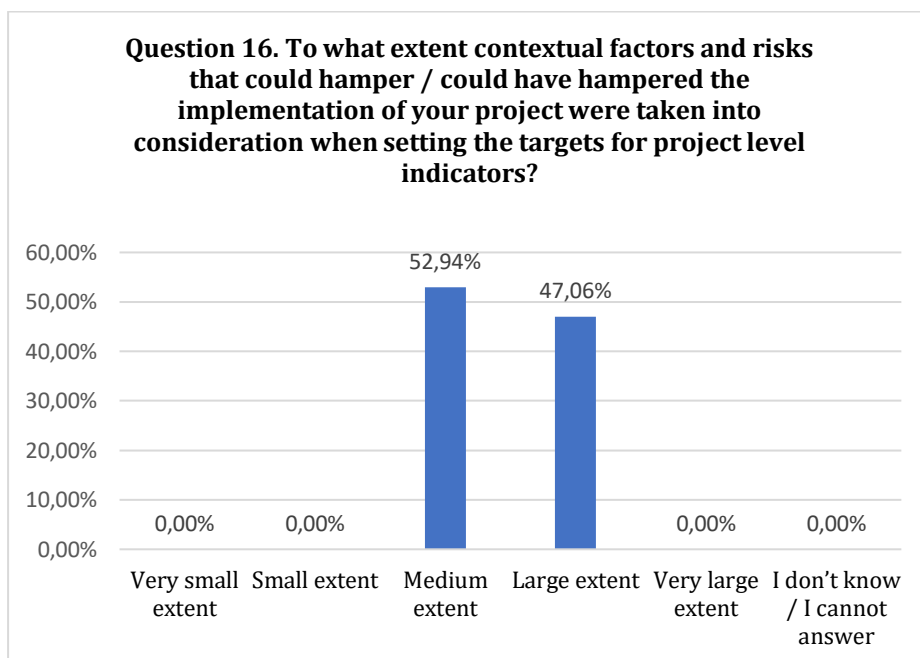
Question 15. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?



Question 16. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0

Medium extent	52,94%	9
Large extent	47,06%	8
Very large extent	0,00%	0
Total		17



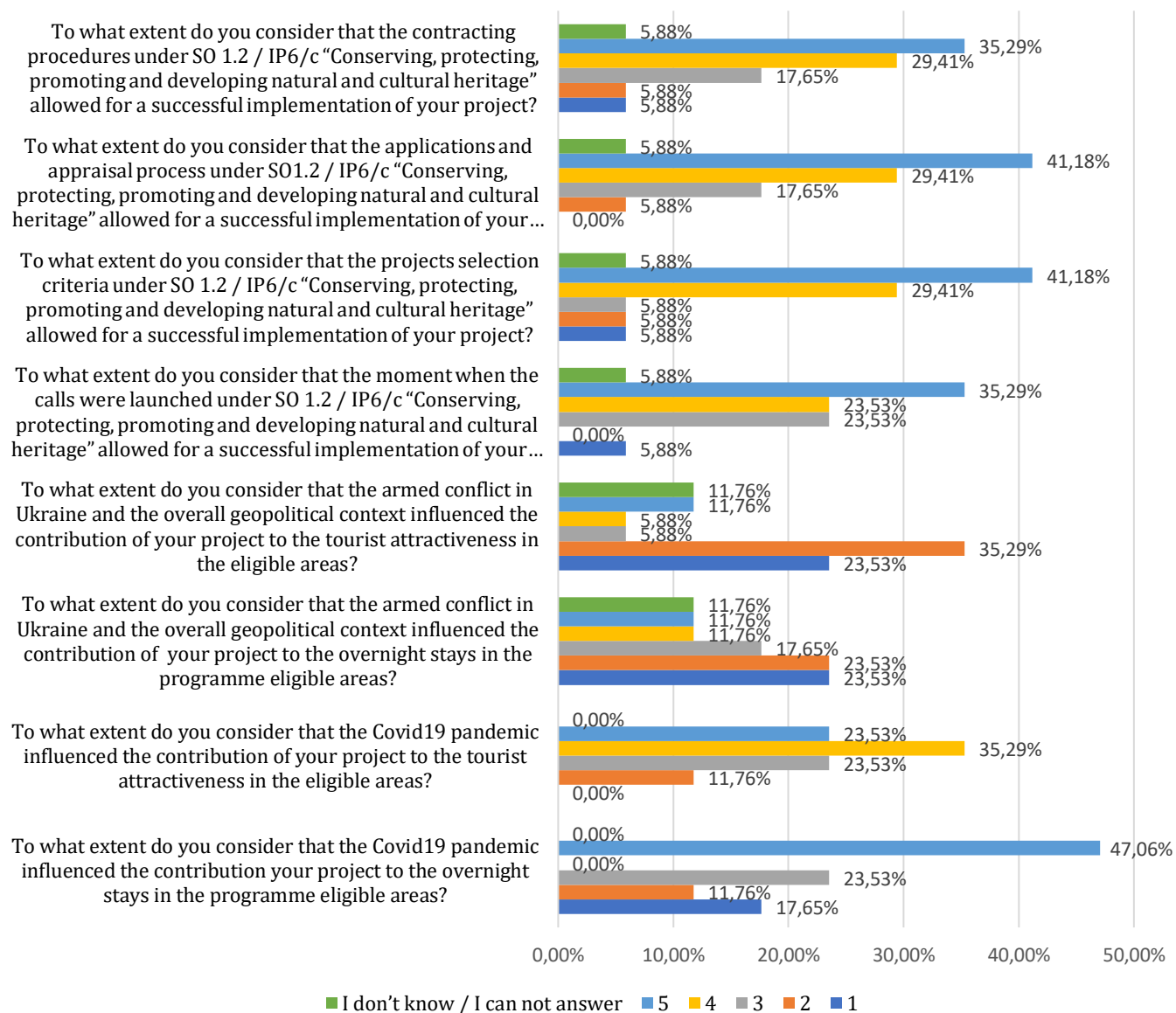
Question 17. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution your project to the overnight stays in the programme eligible areas?	17,65%	3	11,76%	2	23,53%	4	0,00%	0	47,06%	8	0,00%	0	17
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the tourist	0,00%	0	11,76%	2	23,53%	4	35,29%	6	23,53%	4	0,00%	0	17

attractiveness in the eligible areas?													
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the overnight stays in the programme eligible areas?	23,53%	4	23,53%	4	17,65%	3	11,76%	2	11,76%	2	11,76%	2	17
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the tourist attractiveness in the eligible areas?	23,53%	4	35,29%	6	5,88%	1	5,88%	1	11,76%	2	11,76%	2	17
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO 1.2 / IP6/c "Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	5,88%	1	0,00%	0	23,53%	4	23,53%	4	35,29%	6	5,88%	1	17
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 1.2 / IP6/c "Conserving, protecting, promoting and	5,88%	1	5,88%	1	5,88%	1	29,41%	5	41,18%	7	5,88%	1	17

developing natural and cultural heritage” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO1.2 / IP6/c “Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	5,88%	1	17,65%	3	29,41%	5	41,18%	7	5,88%	1	17
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 1.2 / IP6/c “Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	5,88%	1	5,88%	1	17,65%	3	29,41%	5	35,29%	6	5,88%	1	17

Question 17. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

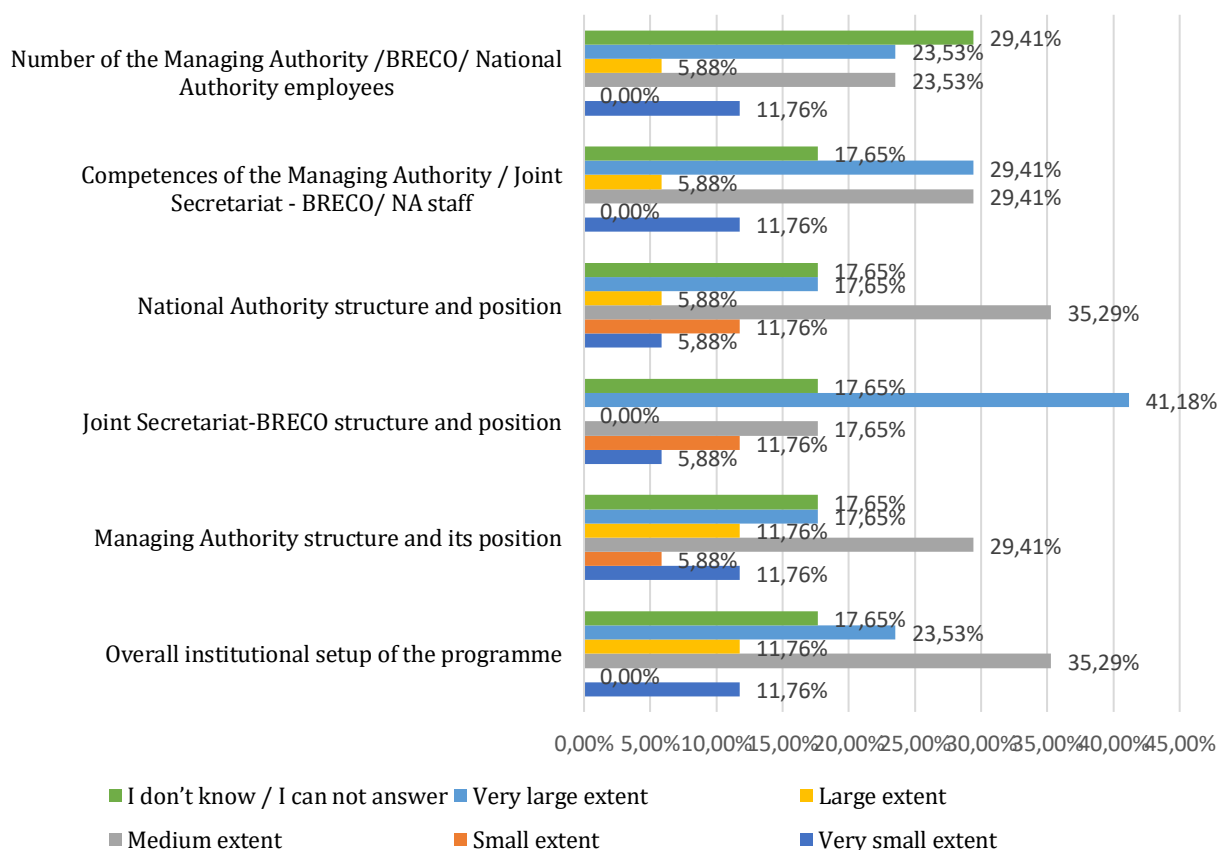


Question 18. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think that each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on overnight stays and tourism attractiveness in eligible areas?

Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I can not answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	11,76%	2	0,00%	0	35,29%	6	11,76%	2	23,53%	4	17,65%	3	17

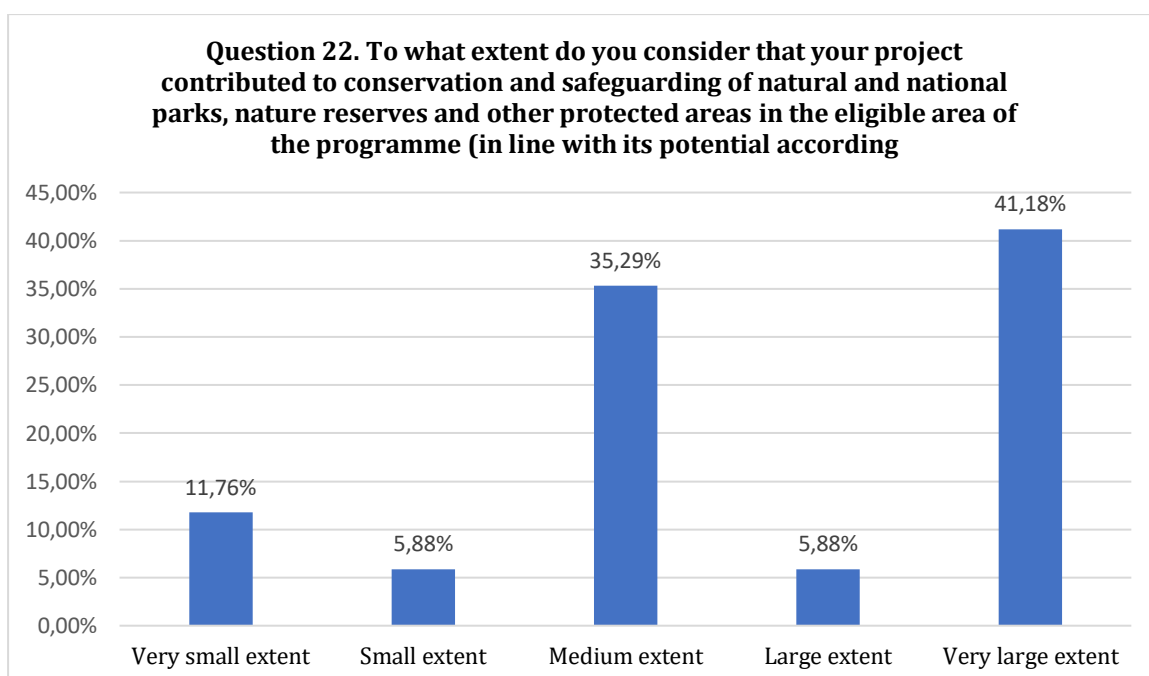
Managing Authority structure and its position	11,76%	2	5,88%	1	29,41%	5	11,76%	2	17,65%	3	17,65%	3	17
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	5,88%	1	11,76%	2	17,65%	3	0,00%	0	41,18%	7	17,65%	3	17
National Authority structure and position	5,88%	1	11,76%	2	35,29%	6	5,88%	1	17,65%	3	17,65%	3	17
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	11,76%	2	0,00%	0	29,41%	5	5,88%	1	29,41%	5	17,65%	3	17
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	11,76%	2	0,00%	0	23,53%	4	5,88%	1	23,53%	4	29,41%	5	17

Question 18. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think that each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on overnight stays and tourism attractiveness in eligible areas?



Question 22. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to conservation and safeguarding of natural and national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas in the eligible area of the programme (in line with its potential according the scope of the project)?

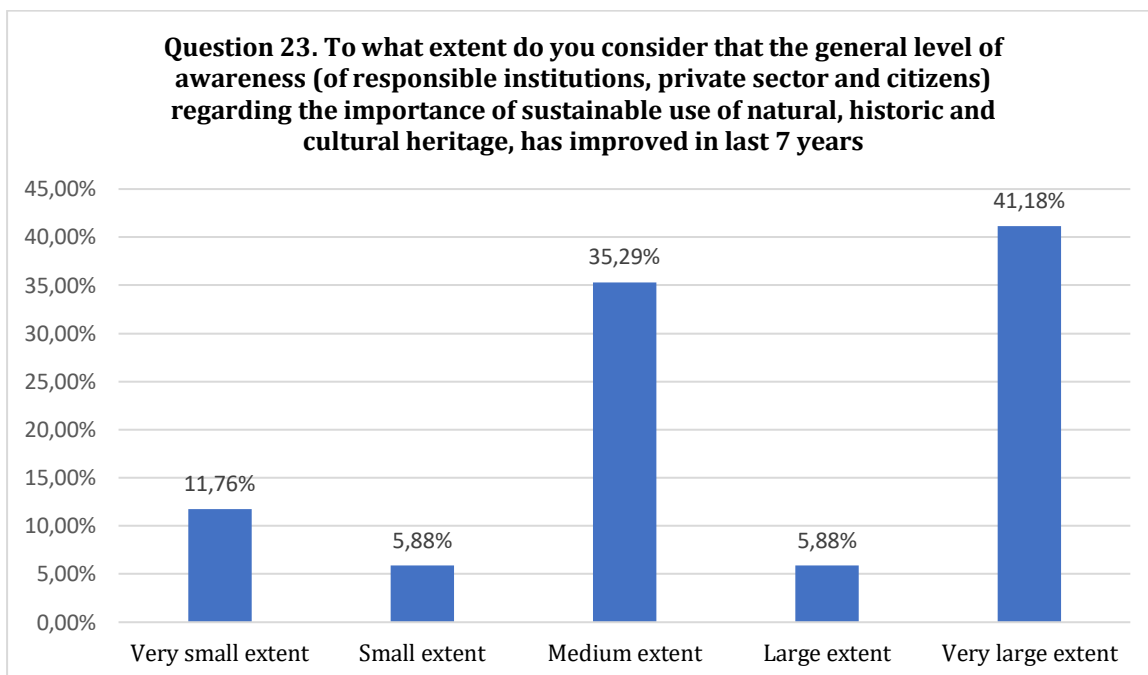
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,76%	2
Small extent	5,88%	1
Medium extent	35,29%	6
Large extent	5,88%	1
Very large extent	41,18%	7
	Total	17



Question 23. To what extent do you consider that the general level of awareness (of responsible institutions, private sector and citizens) regarding the importance of sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage, has improved in last 7 years?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,76%	2
Small extent	11,76%	2
Medium extent	35,29%	6
Large extent	41,18%	7
Very large extent	0,00%	0

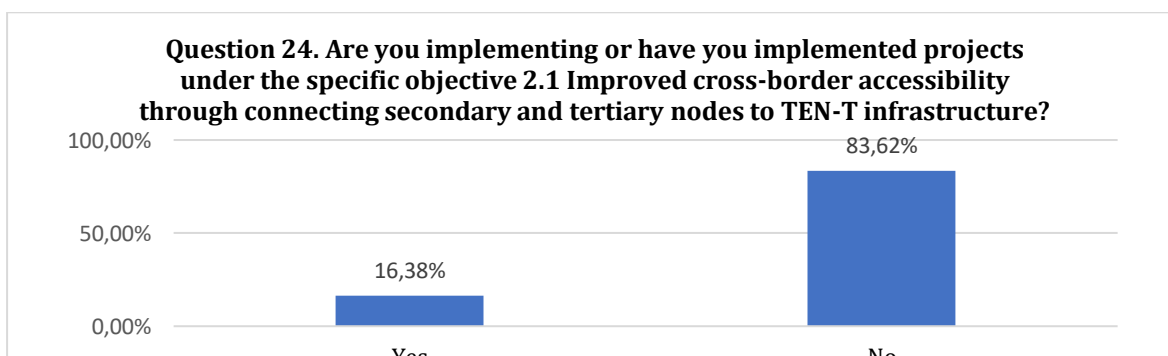
	Total	17
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3. S.O 2.1: Improved cross-border accessibility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to RTT infrastructure (TEN-T)

Question 24. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under the specific objective 2.1 Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure?

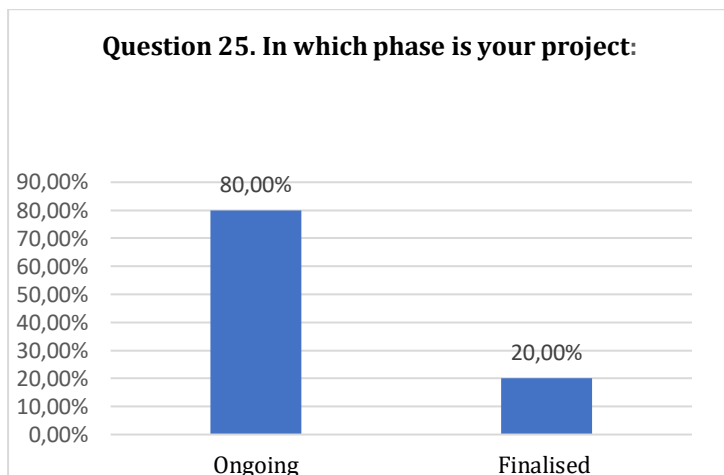
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	7,07%	7
No	92,93%	92
	Total	99



Question 25. In which phase is your project:

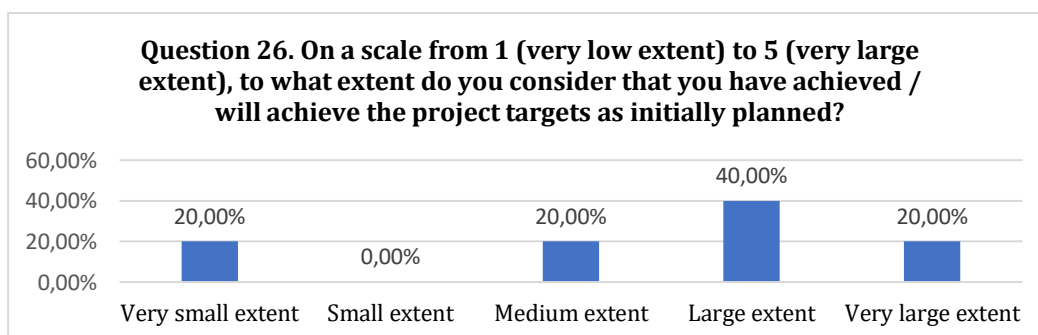
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
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Ongoing	80,00%	4
Finalised	20,00%	1
	Total	5



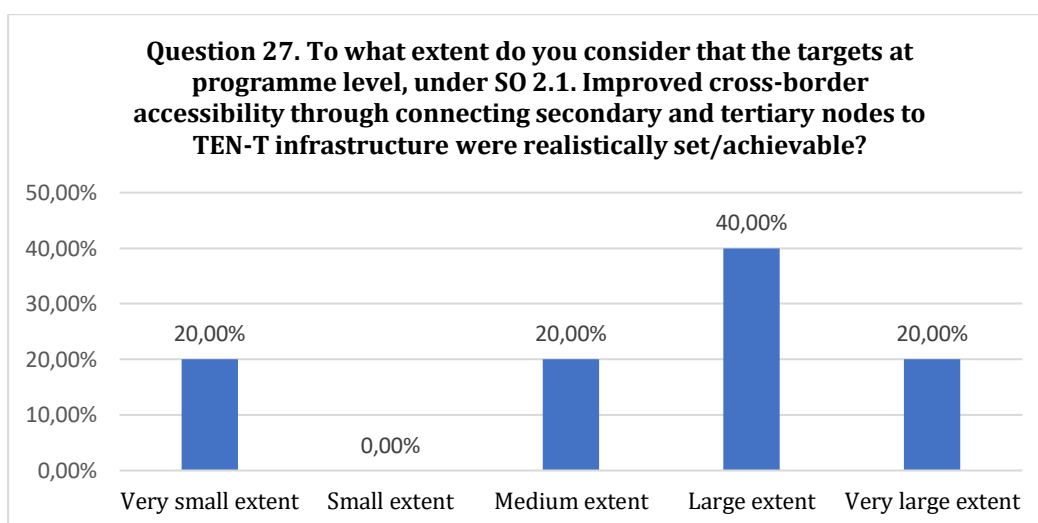
Question 26. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	20,00%	1
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	20,00%	1
I don't know / I can not answer	0,00%	0
	Total	5



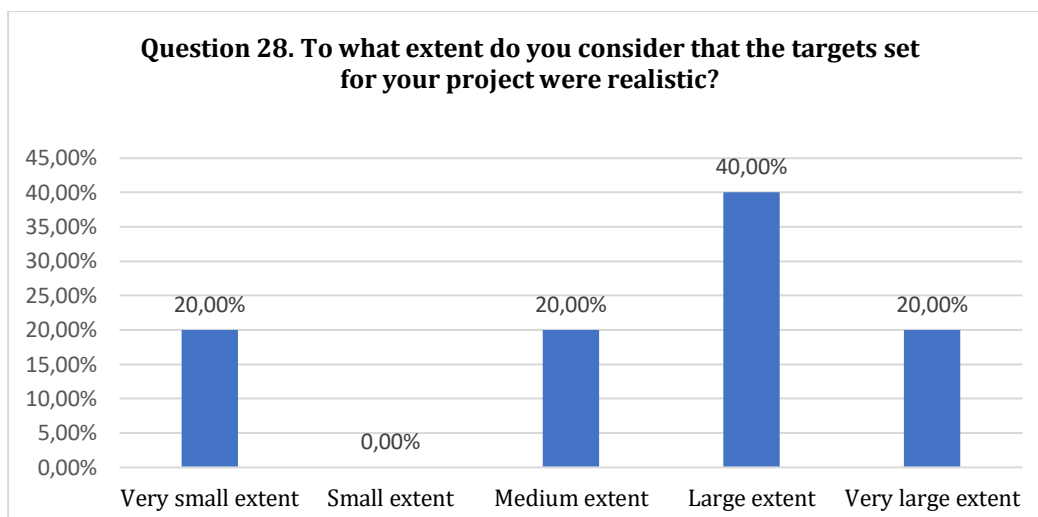
Question 27. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 2.1. Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	20,00%	1
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	20,00%	1
I don't know / I can not answer	0,00%	0
	Total	5



Question 28. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	20,00%	1
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	20,00%	1
	Total	5

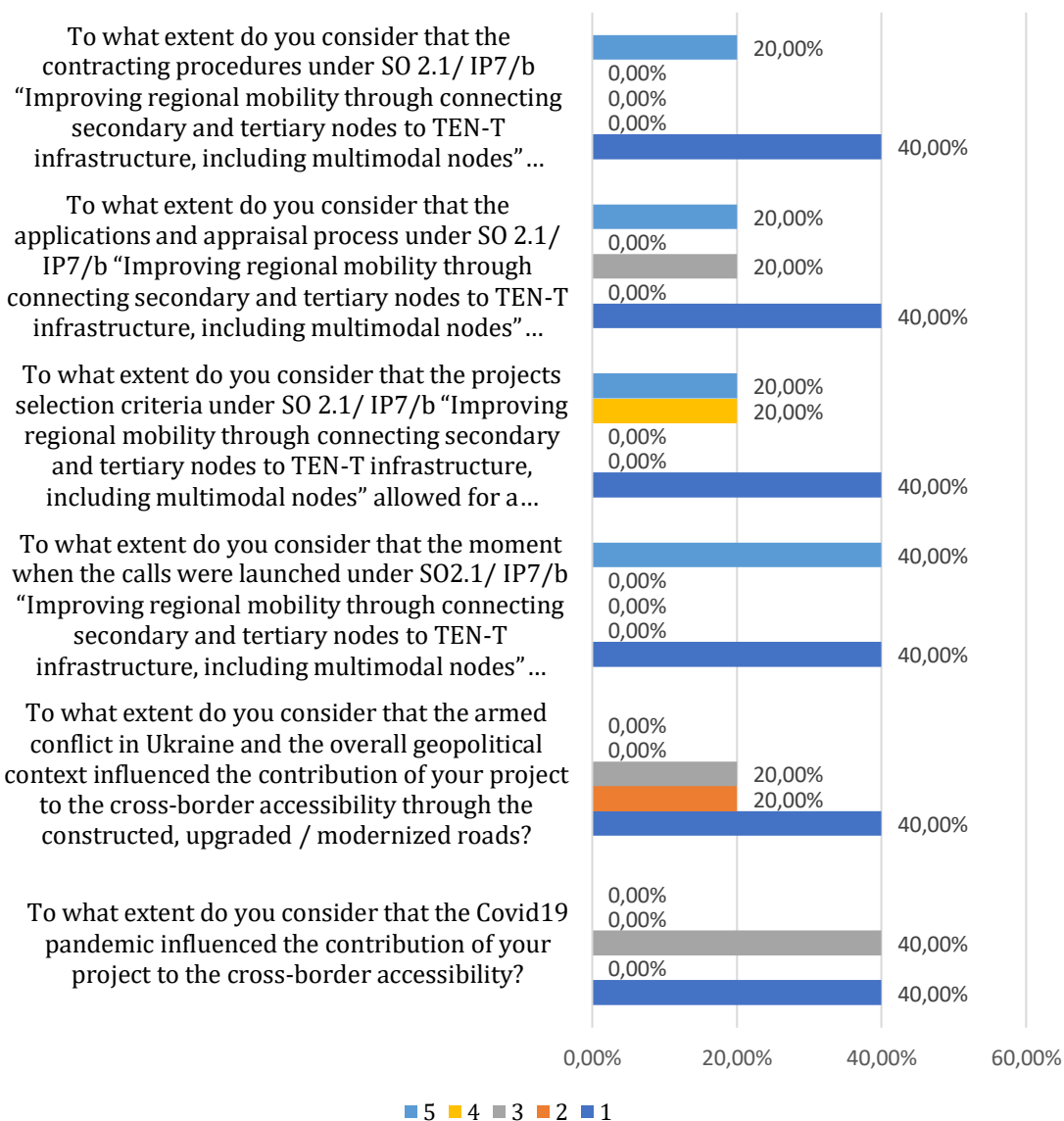


Question 29. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I can not answer	Total	
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the cross-border accessibility?	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded / modernized roads?	40,00%	2	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO2.1/ IP7/b “Improving regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	20,00%	1	5

nodes" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 2.1/ IP7/b "Improving regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	5
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 2.1/ IP7/b "Improving regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	5
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 2.1/ IP7/b "Improving regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	5

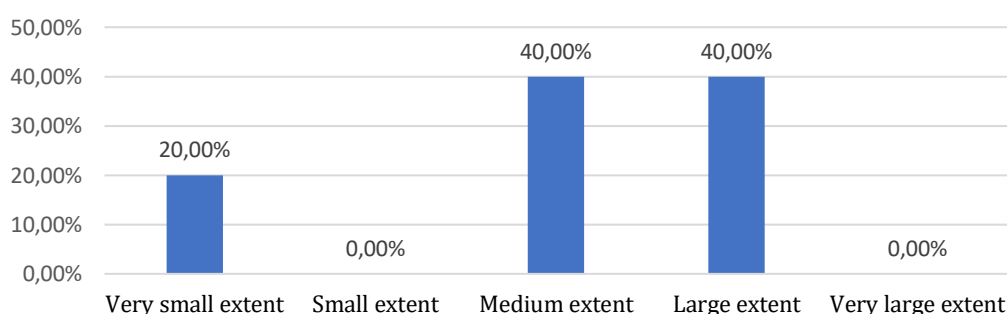
Question 29. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



Question 30. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	40,00%	2
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	5

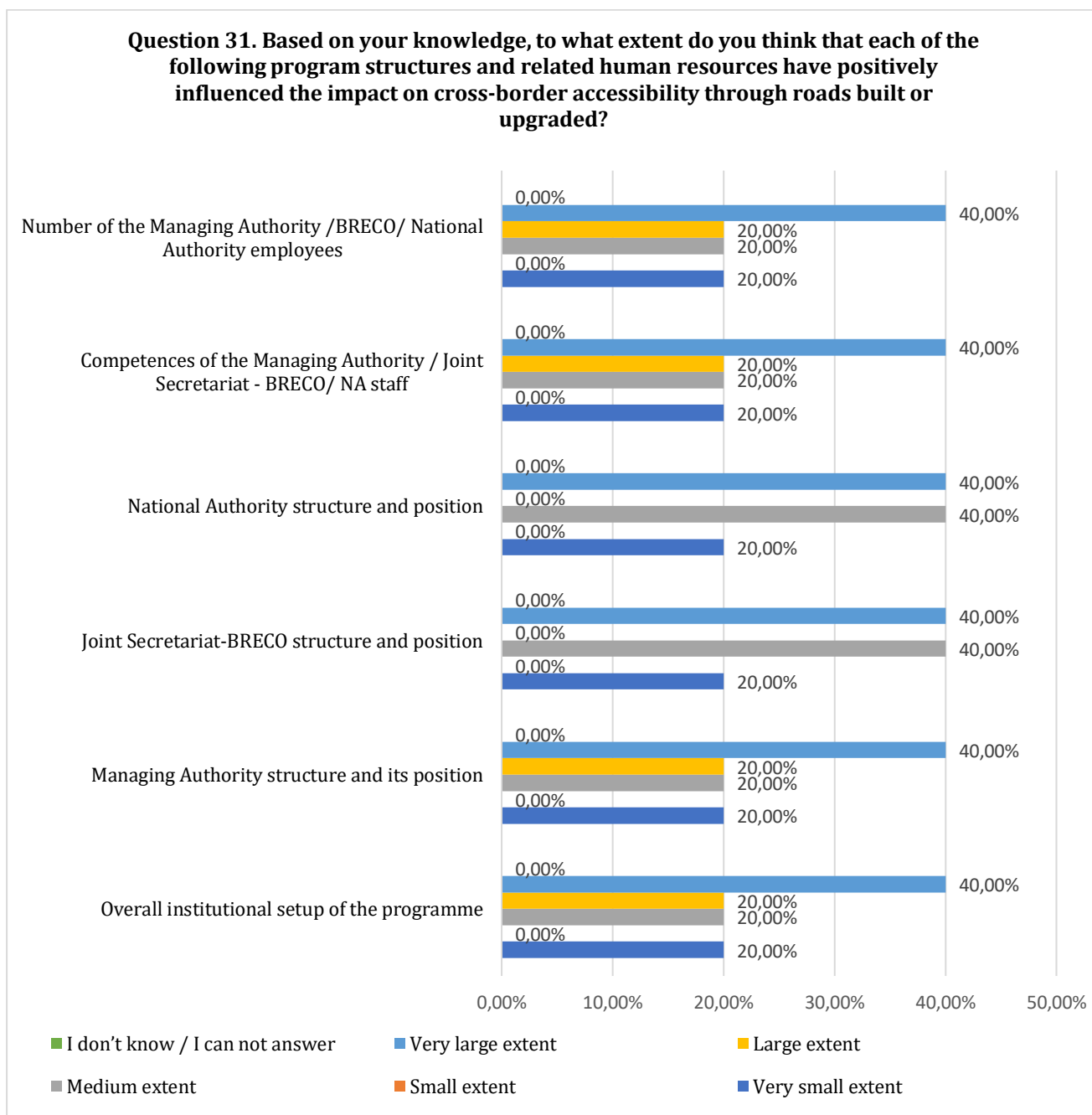
Question 30. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?



Question 31. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think that each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced the impact on cross-border accessibility through roads built or upgraded under funded projects?

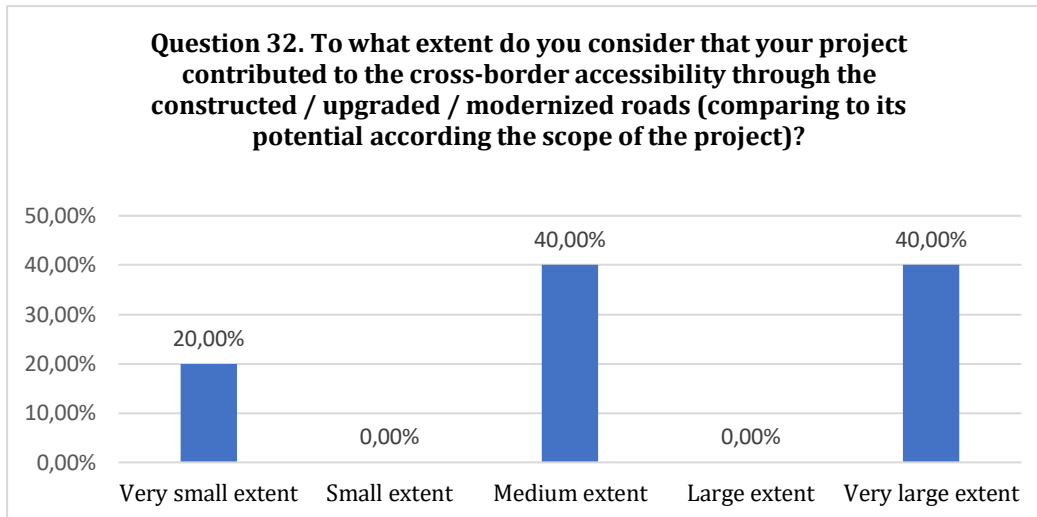
Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I can not answer	
Overall institutional setup of the programme	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0
Managing Authority structure and its position	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0
National Authority structure and position	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0

Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0
Total: 5												



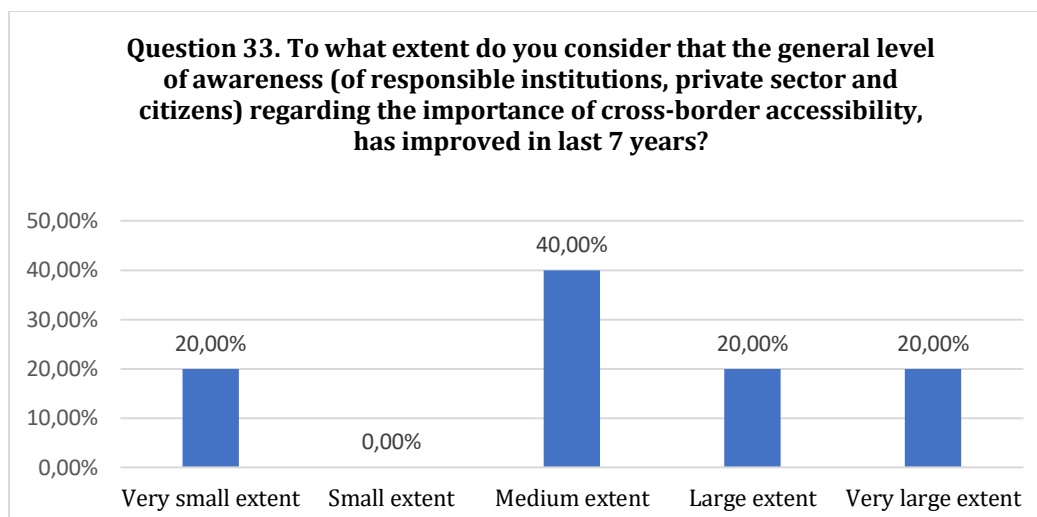
Question 32. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to the cross-border accessibility through the constructed / upgraded / modernized roads (comparing to its potential according the scope of the project)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	40,00%	2
Large extent	0,00%	0
Very large extent	40,00%	2
	Total	5



Question 33. To what extent do you consider that the general level of awareness (of responsible institutions, private sector and citizens) regarding the importance of cross-border accessibility, has improved in last 7 years?

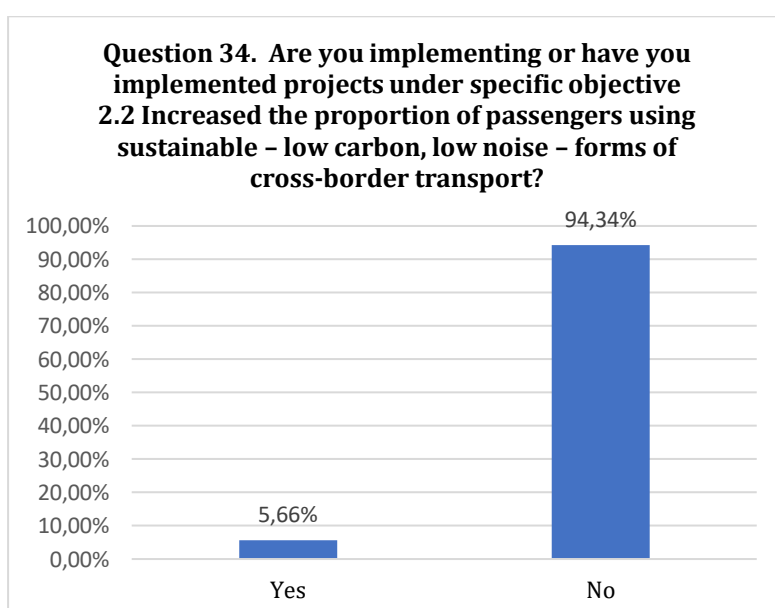
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	40,00%	2
Large extent	20,00%	1
Very large extent	20,00%	1
	Total	5



4. S.O 2.2 Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport

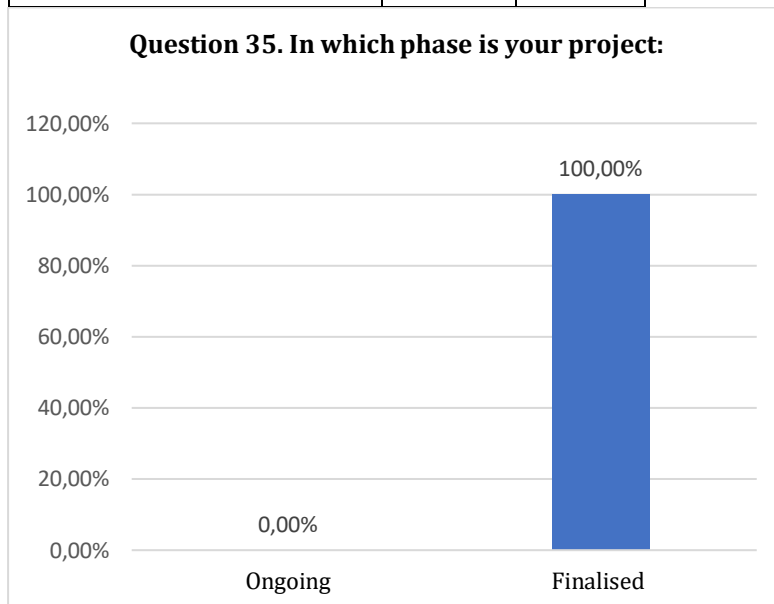
Question 34. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under specific objective 2.2 Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	5,66%	5
No	94,34%	95
	Total	100



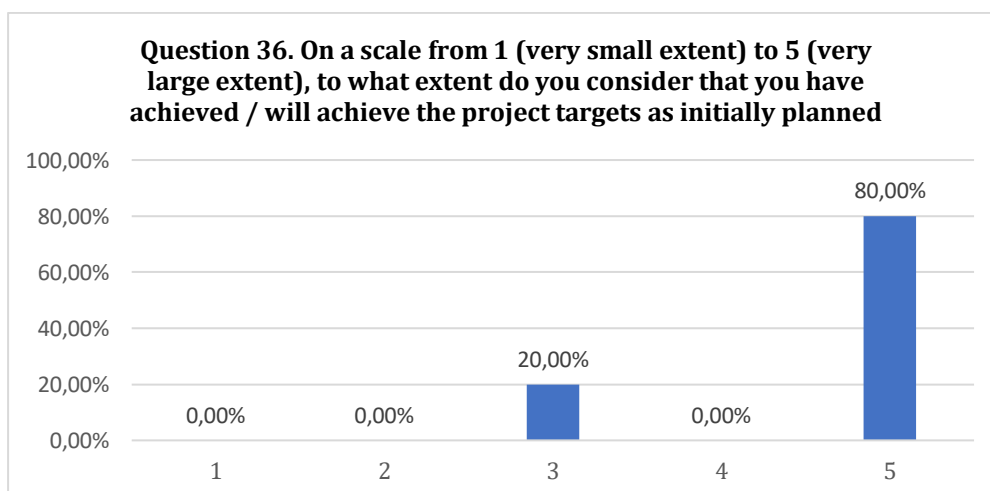
Question 35. In which phase is your project:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	0,00%	0
Finalised	100,00%	5
	Total	3



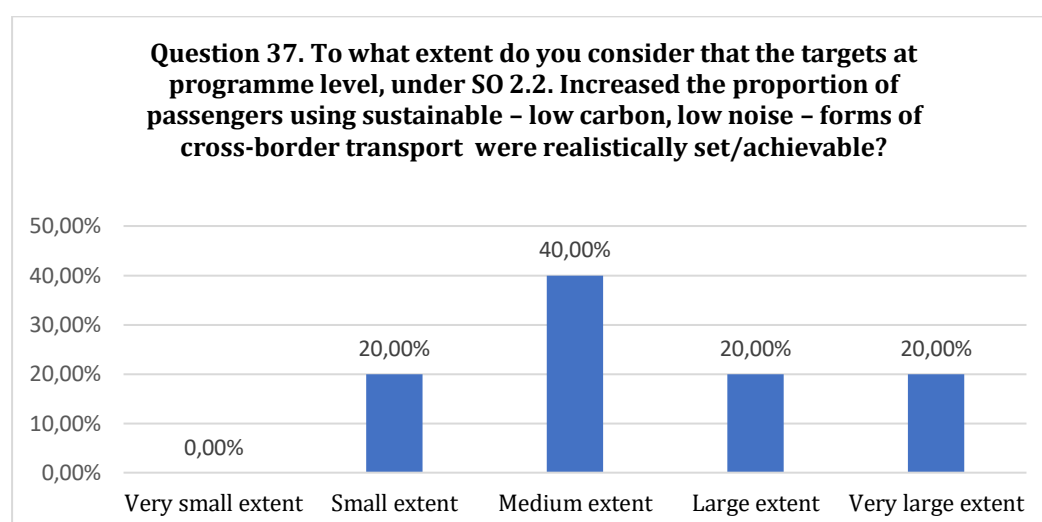
Question 36. On a scale from 1 (very small extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	80,00%	4	5



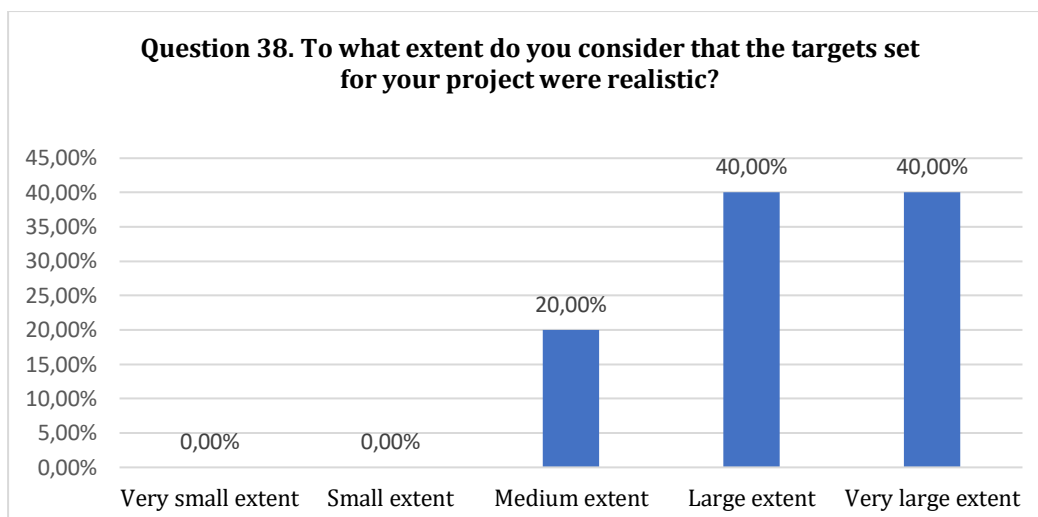
Question 37. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 2.2. Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	20,00%	1
Medium extent	40,00%	2
Large extent	20,00%	1
Very large extent	20,00%	1
I don't know / I cannot answer	0,00%	0
	Total	5



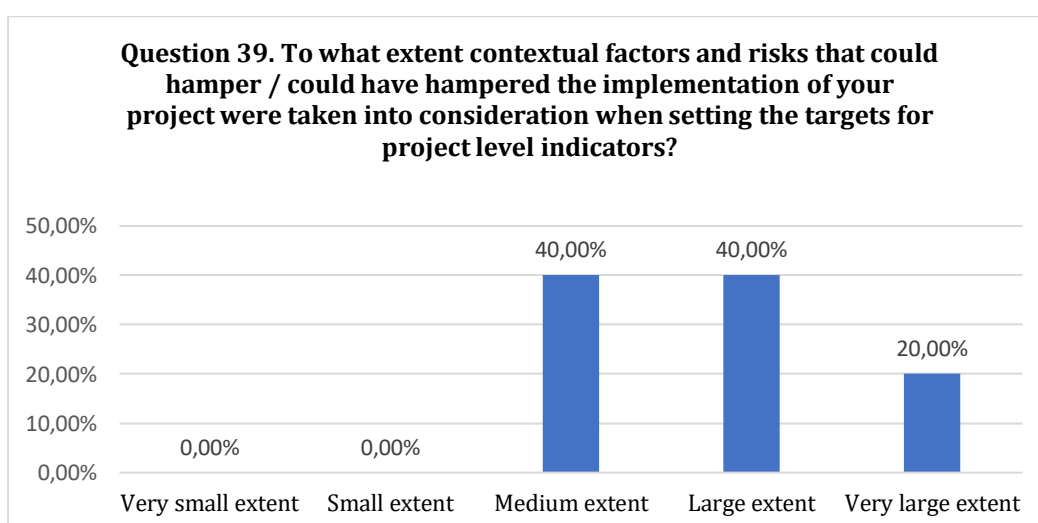
Question 38. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	20,00%	1
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	40,00%	2
	Total	5



Question 39. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	40,00%	2
Large extent	40,00%	2
Very large extent	20,00%	1
	Total	5



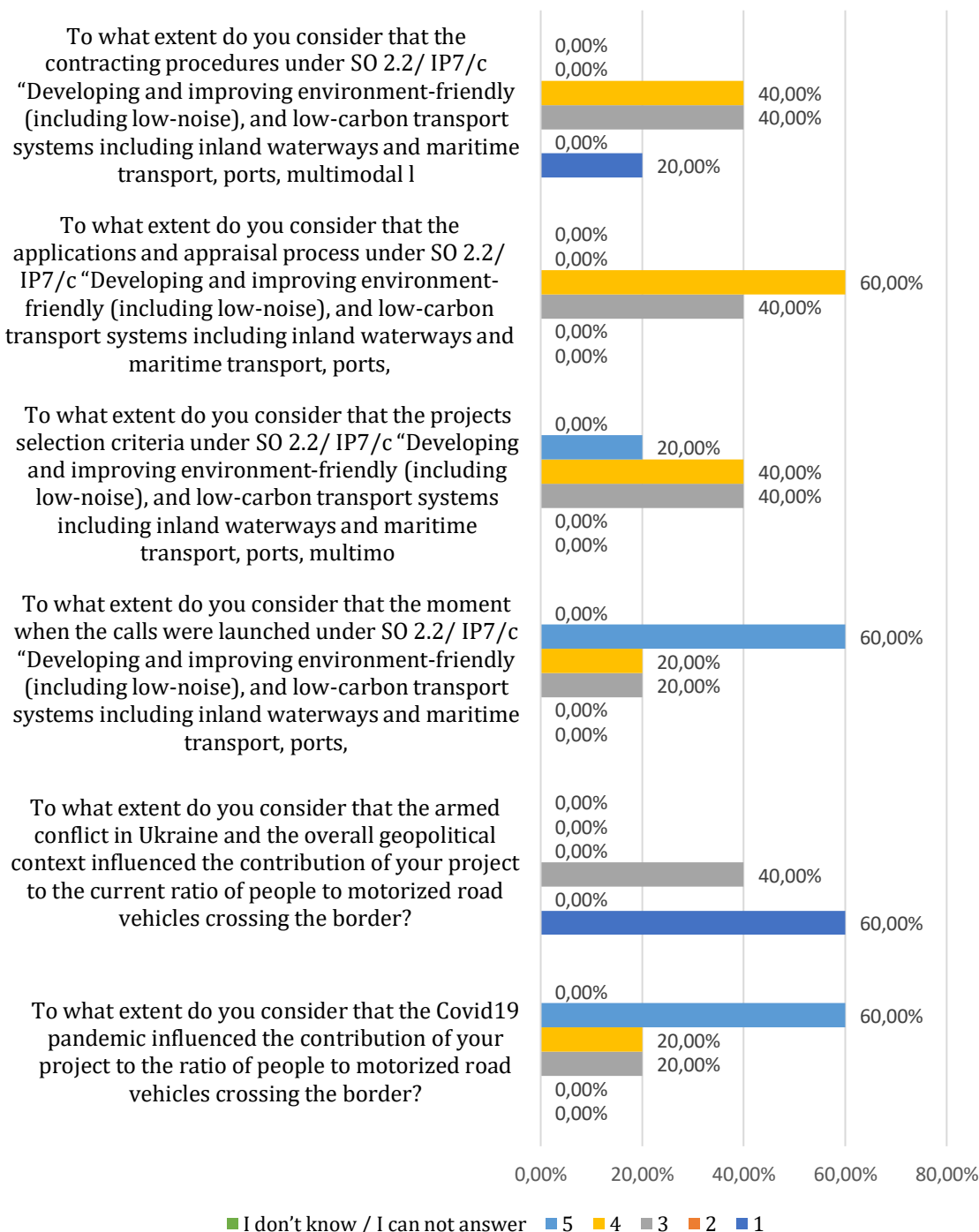
Question 40. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I can not answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	60,00%	3	0,00%	0	5
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the current ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?	60,00%	3	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO 2.2/ IP7/c “Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	60,00%	3	0,00%	0	5

regional and local mobility” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 2.2/ IP7/c “Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	40,00%	2	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	5
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 2.2/ IP7/c “Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	60,00%	3	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5

sustainable regional and local mobility” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 2.2/ IP7/c “Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5

Question 40. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

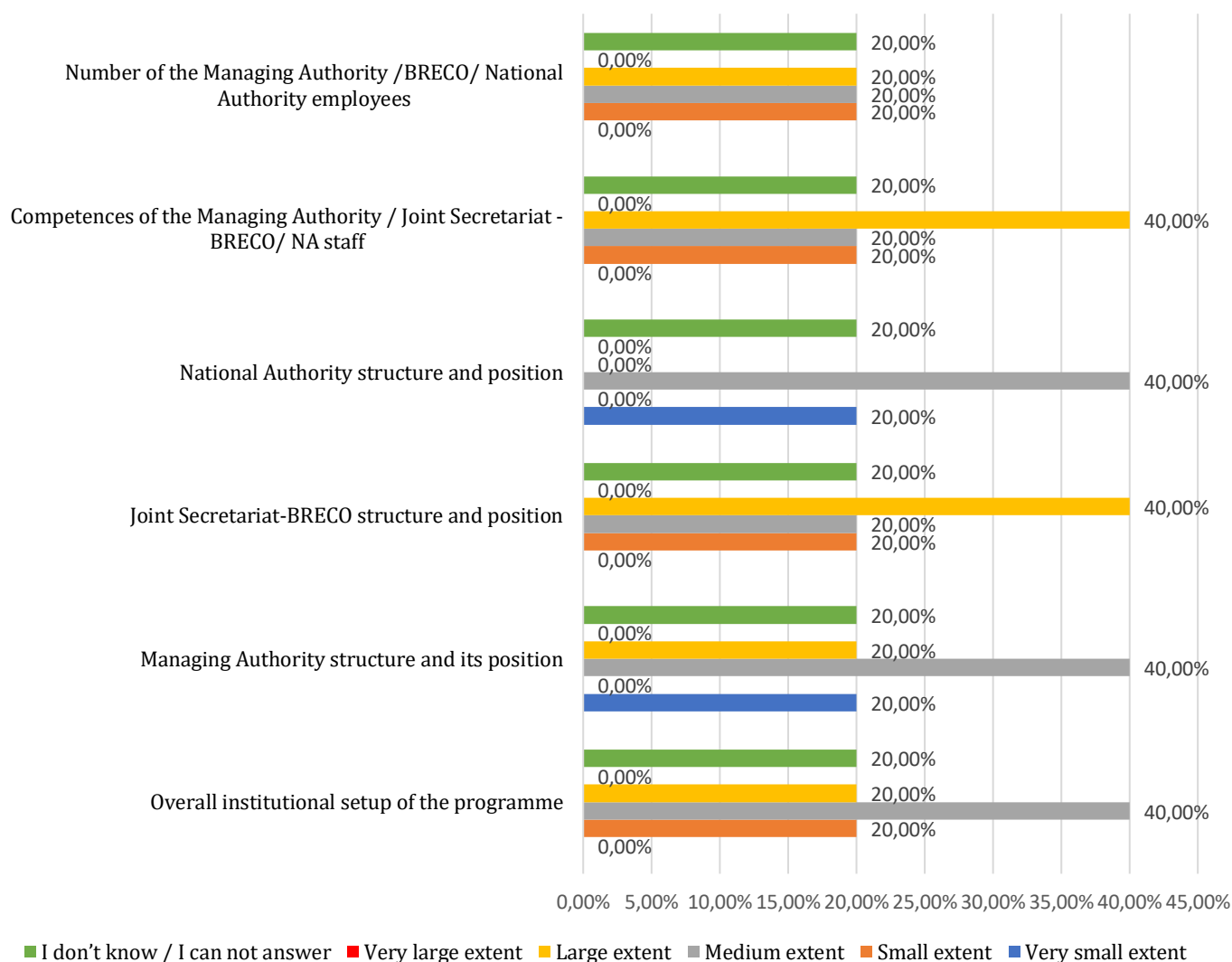


Question 41. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the current ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?

	Very small extent	Small extent	Medium extent	Large extent	Very large extent	I don't know / I	Total
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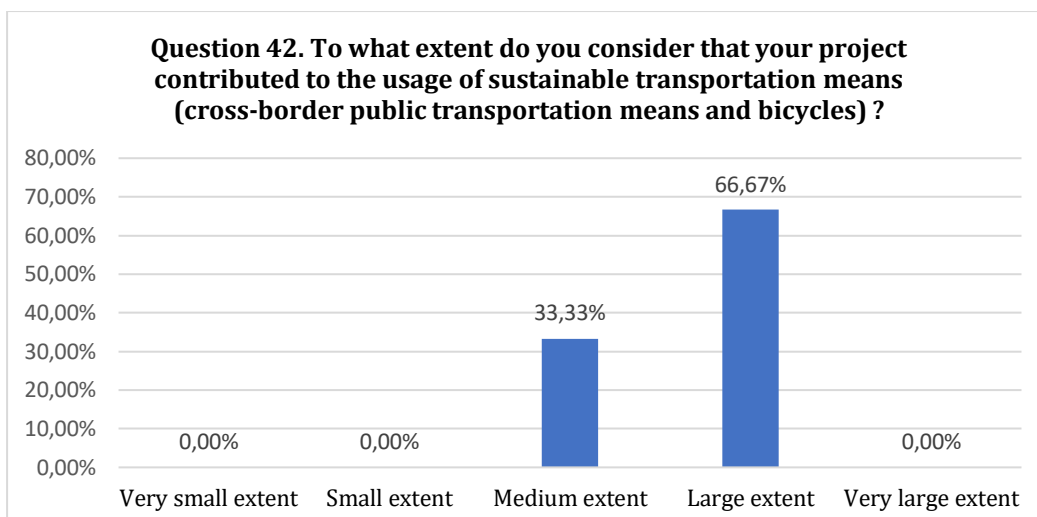
											can not answer		
Overall institutional setup of the programme	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
Managing Authority structure and its position	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
National Authority structure and position	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	40,00%	2	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	20,00%	1	0,00%	0	20,00%	1	5

Question 41. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the current ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?



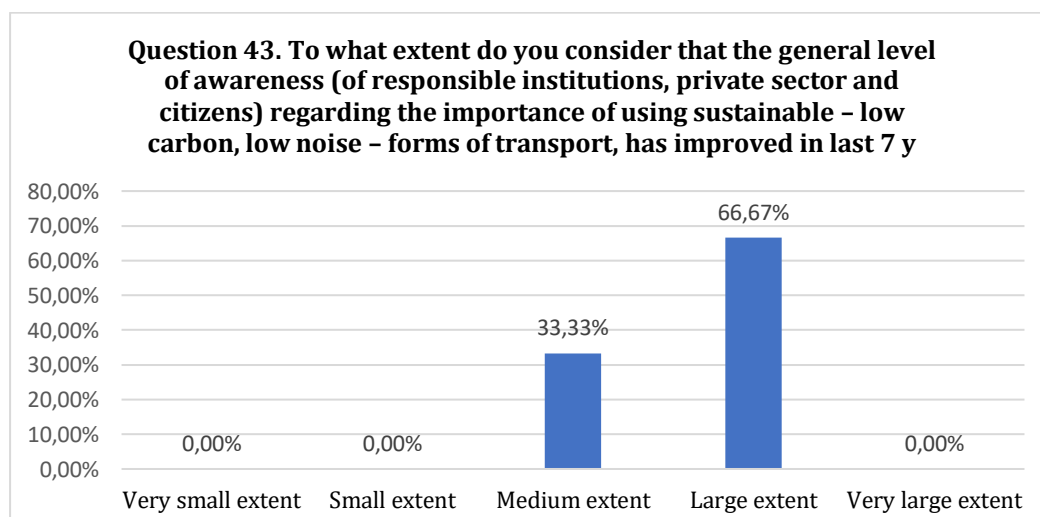
Question 42. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to the usage of sustainable transportation means(cross-border public transportation means and bicycles)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	33,33%	2
Large extent	66,67%	3
Very large extent	0,00%	0
Total		5



Question 43. To what extent do you consider that the general level of awareness (of responsible institutions, private sector and citizens) regarding the importance of using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of transport, has improved in last 7 years?

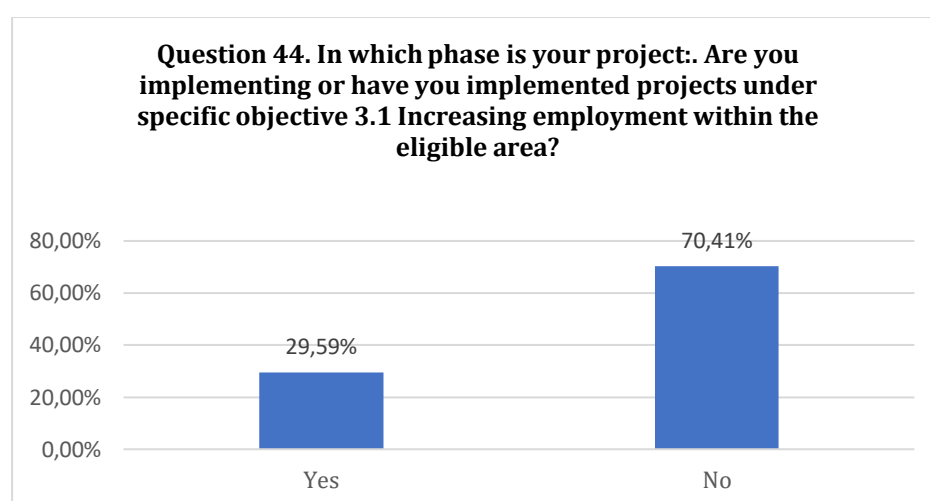
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	33,33%	2
Large extent	66,67%	3
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	5



5. S.O 3.1 Increasing employment within the eligible area

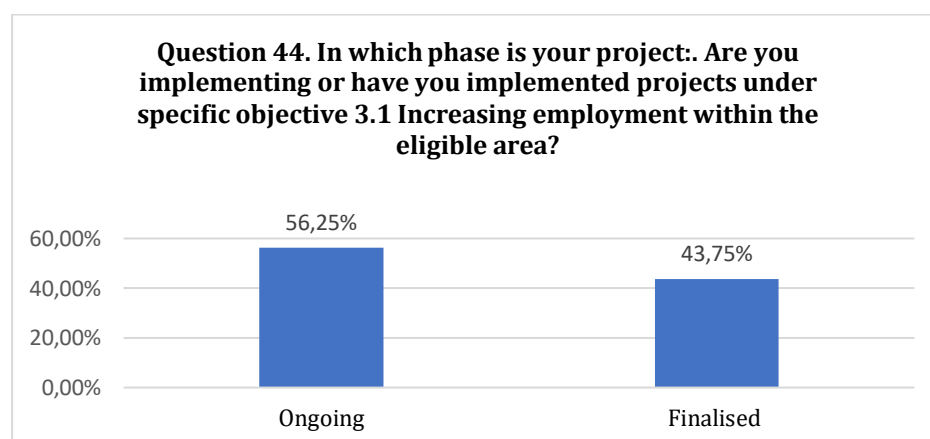
Question 44. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under specific objective 3.1 Increasing employment within the eligible area?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	29,59%	29
No	70,41%	69
	Total	98



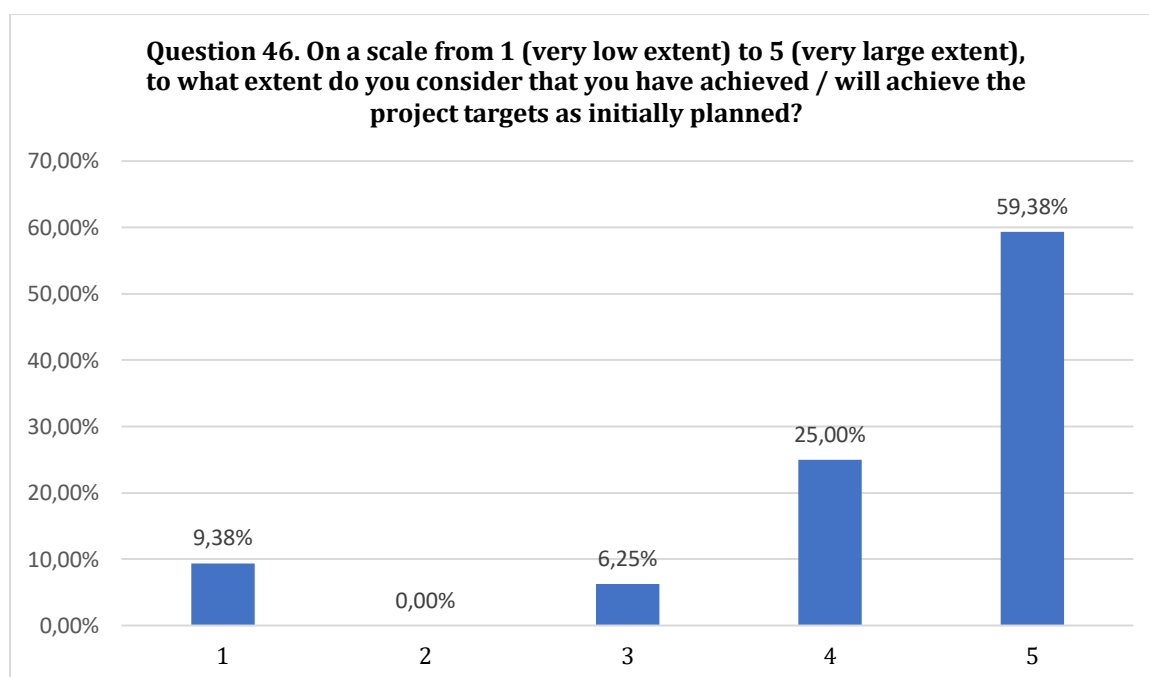
Question 45. In which phase is your project:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	56,25%	18
Finalised	43,75%	14
	Total	32



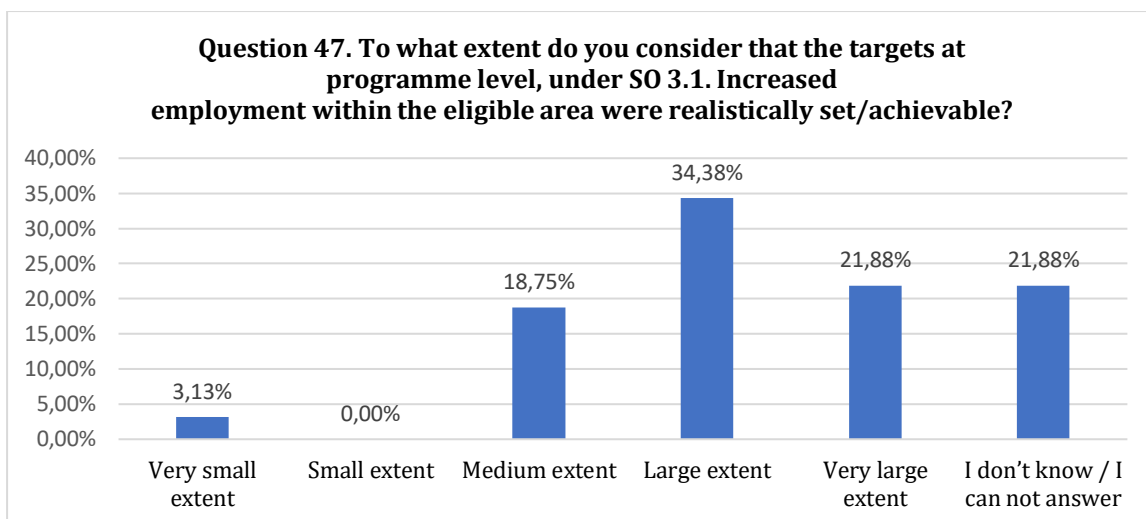
Question 46. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	9,38%	3	0,00%	0	6,25%	2	25,00%	8	59,38%	19	32



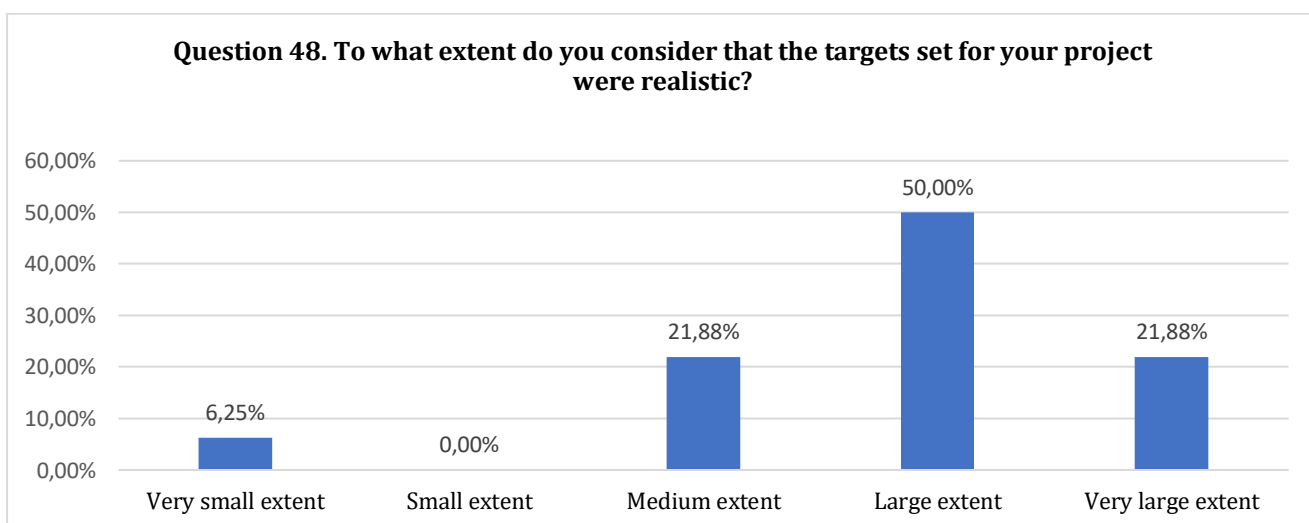
Question 47. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 3.1. Increased employment within the eligible area were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	3,13%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	18,75%	6
Large extent	34,38%	11
Very large extent	21,88%	7
I don't know / I can not answer	21,88%	7
	Total	32



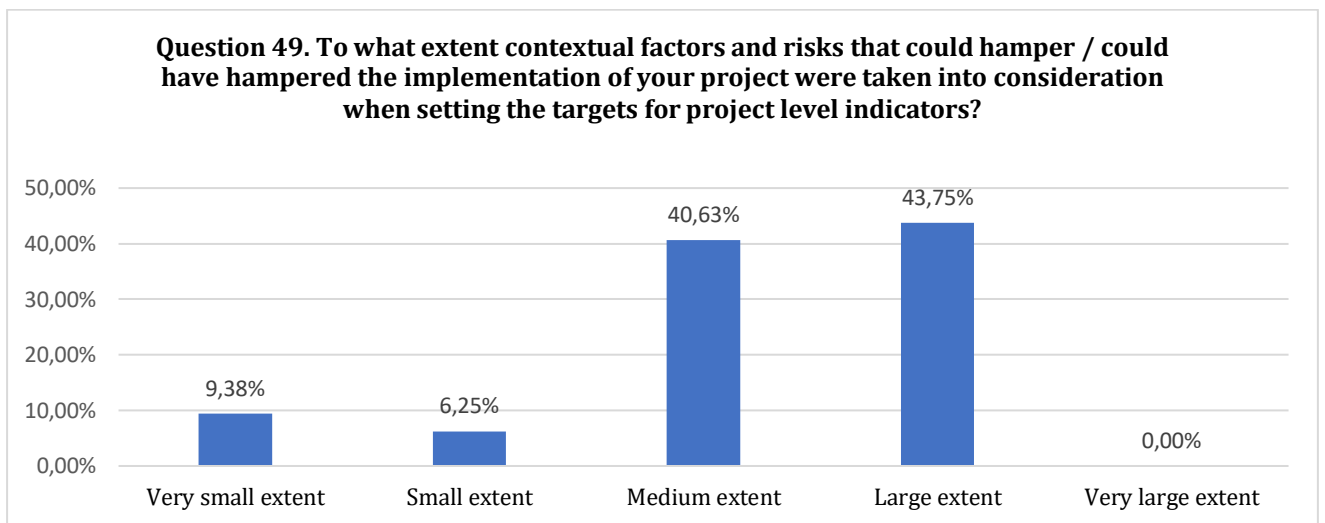
Question 48. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	6,25%	2
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	21,88%	7
Large extent	50,00%	16
Very large extent	21,88%	7
	Total	32



Question 49. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	9,38%	3
Small extent	6,25%	2
Medium extent	40,63%	13
Large extent	43,75%	14
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	32



Question 50. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

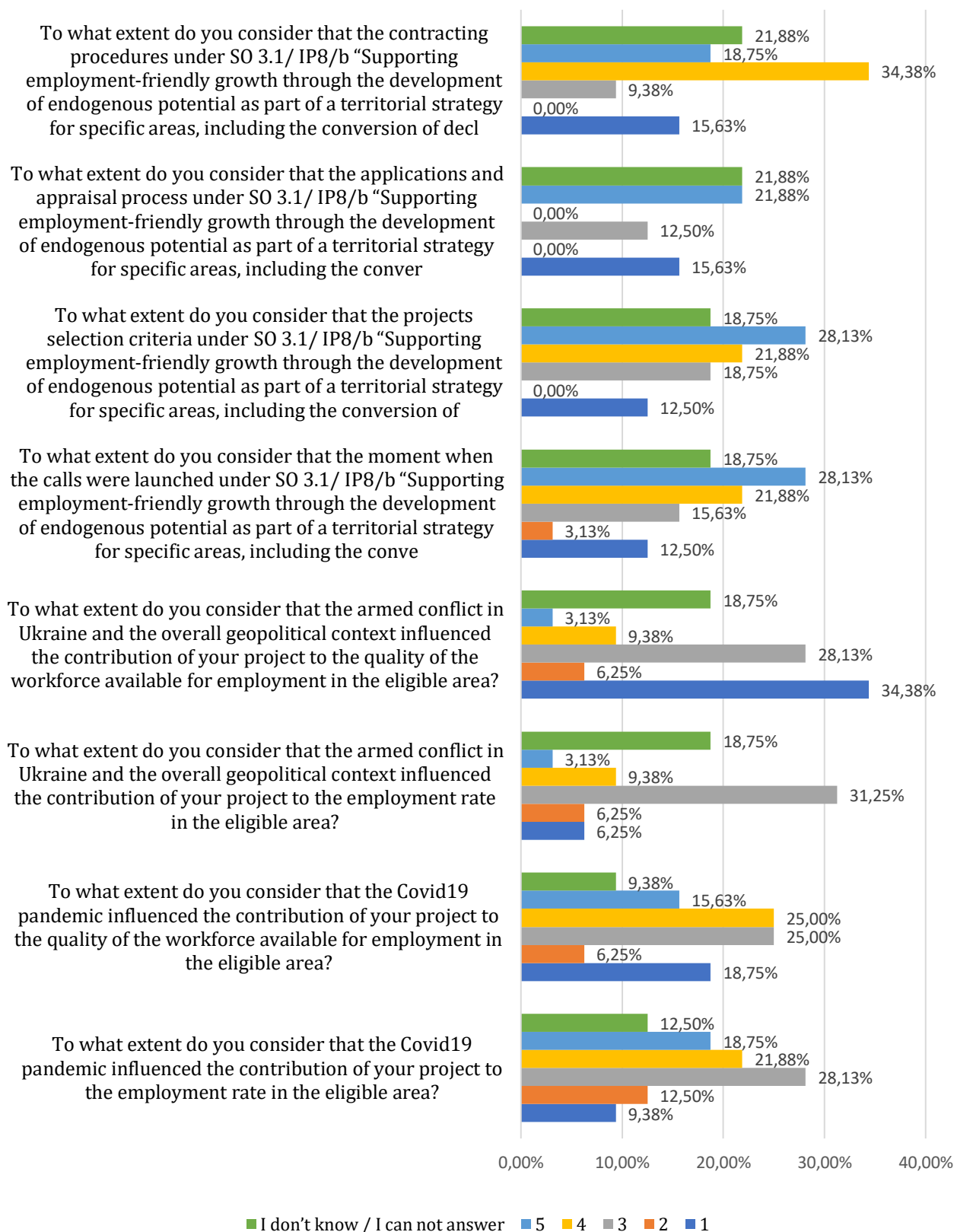
	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I can not answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the employment rate in the eligible area?	9,38%	3	12,50%	4	28,13%	9	21,88%	7	18,75%	6	12,50%	4	32
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the quality of the workforce	18,75%	6	6,25%	2	25,00%	8	25,00%	8	15,63%	5	9,38%	3	32

available for employment in the eligible area?													
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the employment rate in the eligible area?	6,25%	2	6,25%	2	31,25%	10	9,38%	3	3,13%	1	18,75%	6	32
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the quality of the workforce available for employment in the eligible area?	34,38%	11	6,25%	2	28,13%	9	9,38%	3	3,13%	1	18,75%	6	32
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the criteria under SO 3.1/ IP8/b "Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural	12,50%	4	3,13%	1	15,63%	5	21,88%	7	28,13%	9	18,75%	6	32

resources” that have been launched allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 3.1/ IP8/b “Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	12,50%	4	0,00%	0	18,75%	6	21,88%	7	28,13%	9	18,75%	6	32
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 3.1/ IP8/b “Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial	15,63%	5	0,00%	0	12,50%	4	0,00%	0	21,88%	7	21,88%	7	32

strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 3.1/ IP8/b "Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources" allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	15,63%	5	0,00%	0	9,38%	3	34,38%	11	18,75%	6	21,88%	7	32

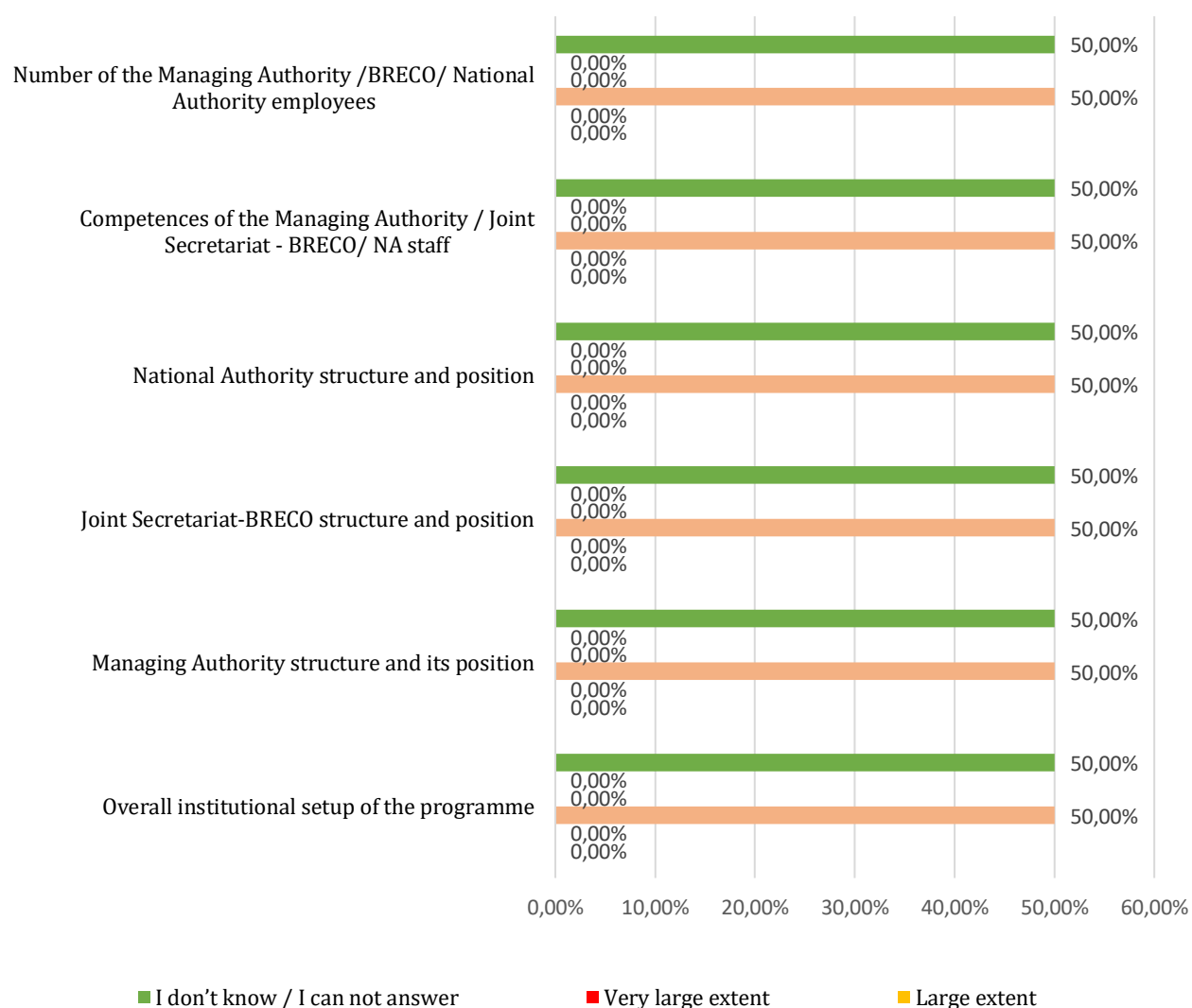
Question 50. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



Question 51. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the current employment rate in the eligible area?

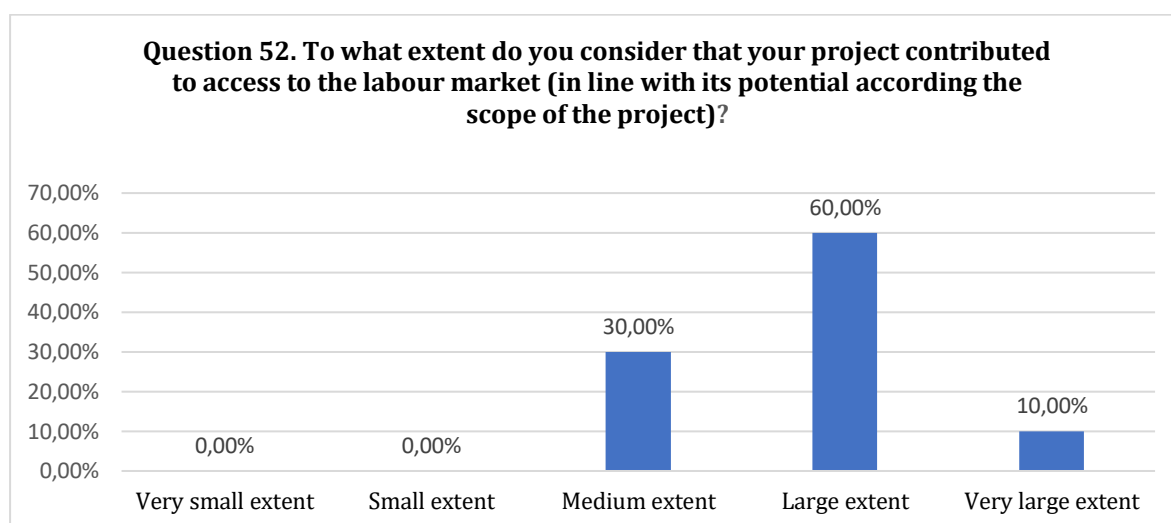
	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Managing Authority structure and its position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
National Authority structure and position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	1	2

Question 51. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the current employment rate in the eligible area?



Question 52. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to access to the labour market (in line with its potential according the scope of the project)?

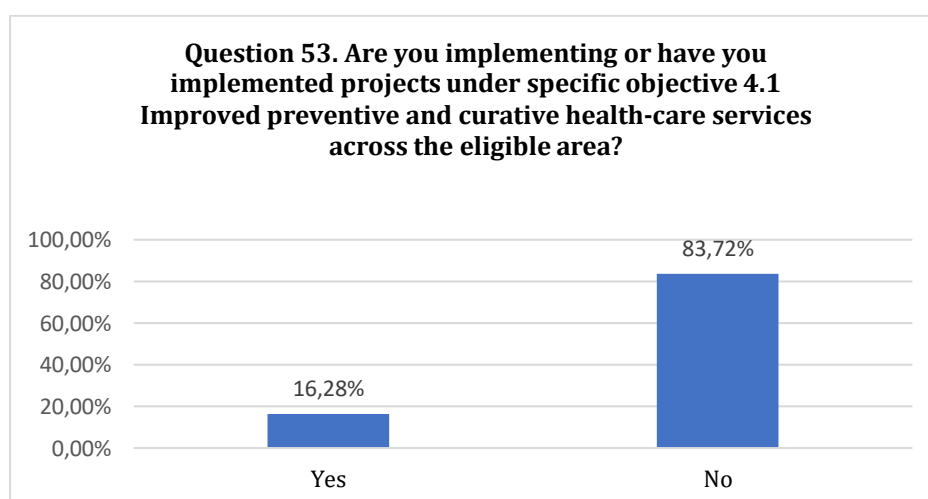
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	4
Small extent	0,00%	1
Medium extent	30,00%	8
Large extent	60,00%	17
Very large extent	10,00%	2
	Total	32



6. S.O 4.1: Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area

Question 53. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under specific objective 4.1 Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area?

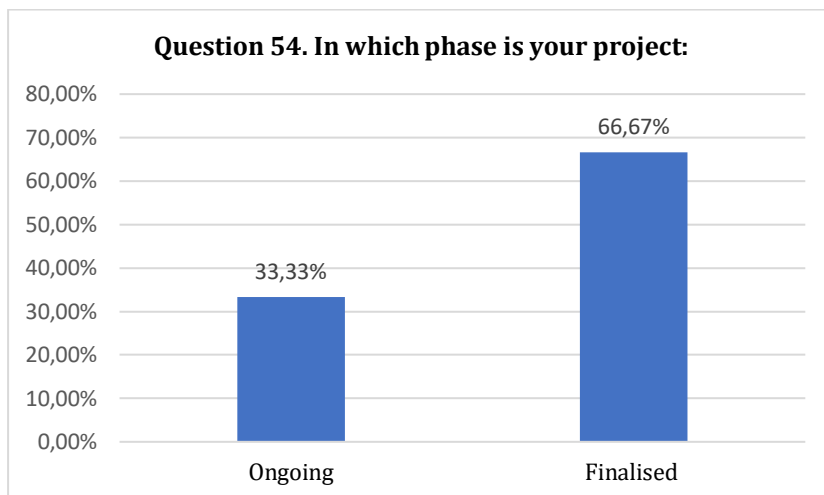
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	16,28%	9
No	83,72%	50
	Total	59



Question 54. In which phase is your project:

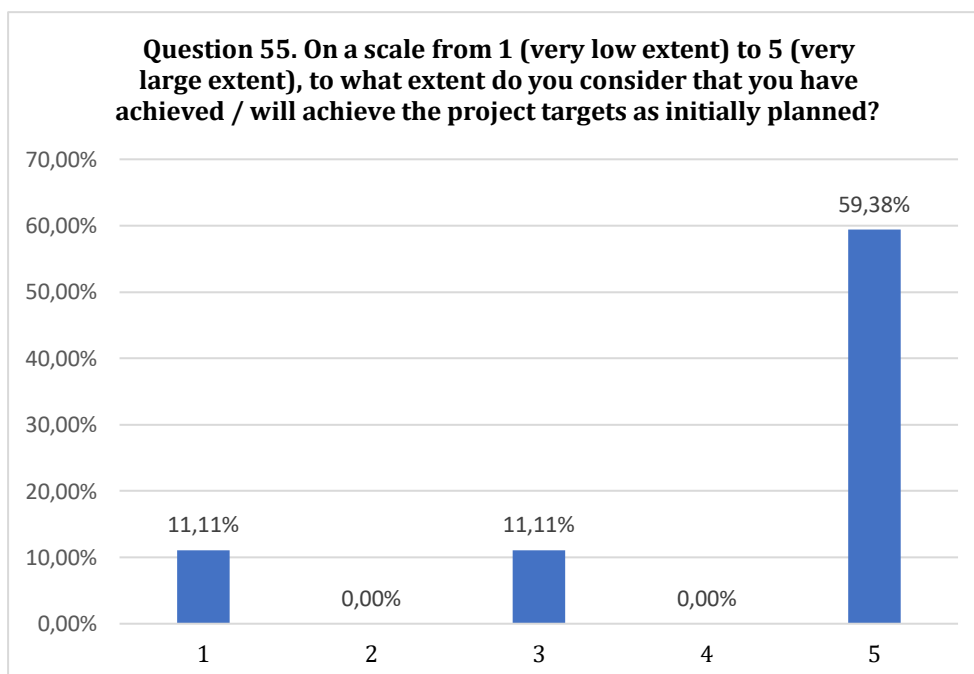
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
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Ongoing	33,33%	3
Finalised	66,67%	6
	Total	9



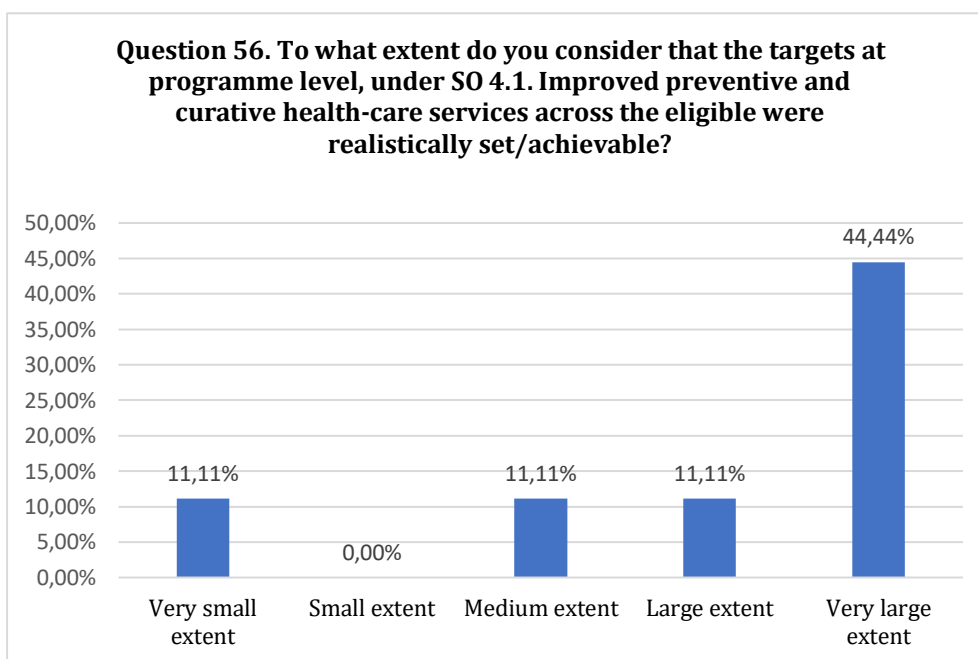
Question 55. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	77,78%	7	9



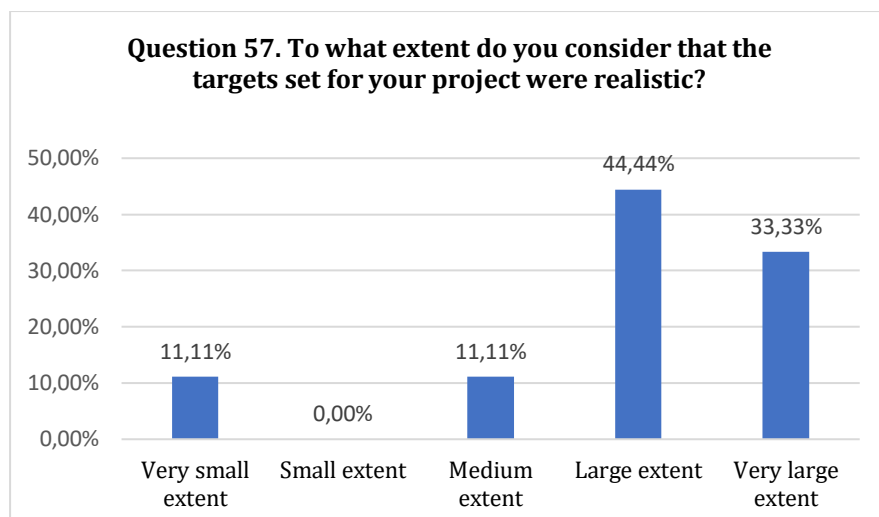
Question 56. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 4.1. Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,11%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	11,11%	1
Large extent	11,11%	1
Very large extent	44,44%	4
I don't know / I can not answer	22,22%	2
	Total	9



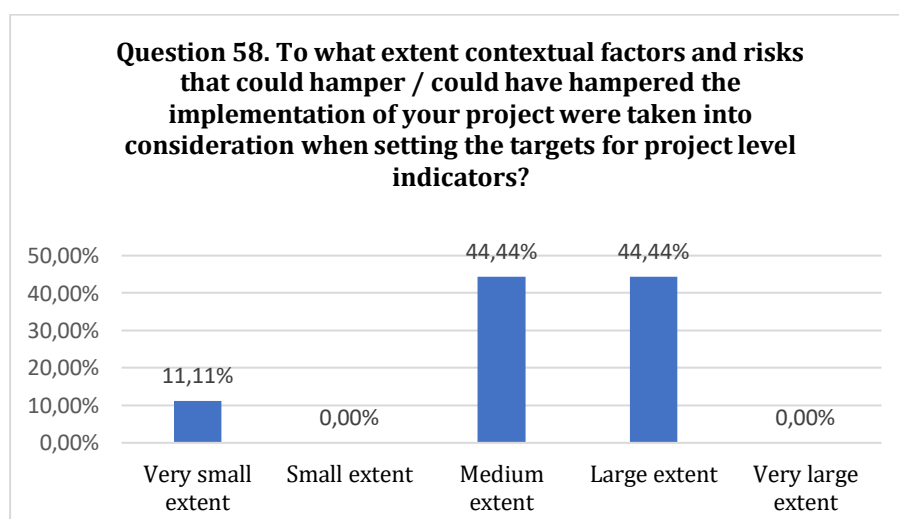
Question 57. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,11%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	11,11%	1
Large extent	44,44%	4
Very large extent	33,33%	3
	Total	9



Question 58. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,11%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	44,44%	4
Large extent	44,44%	4
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	9



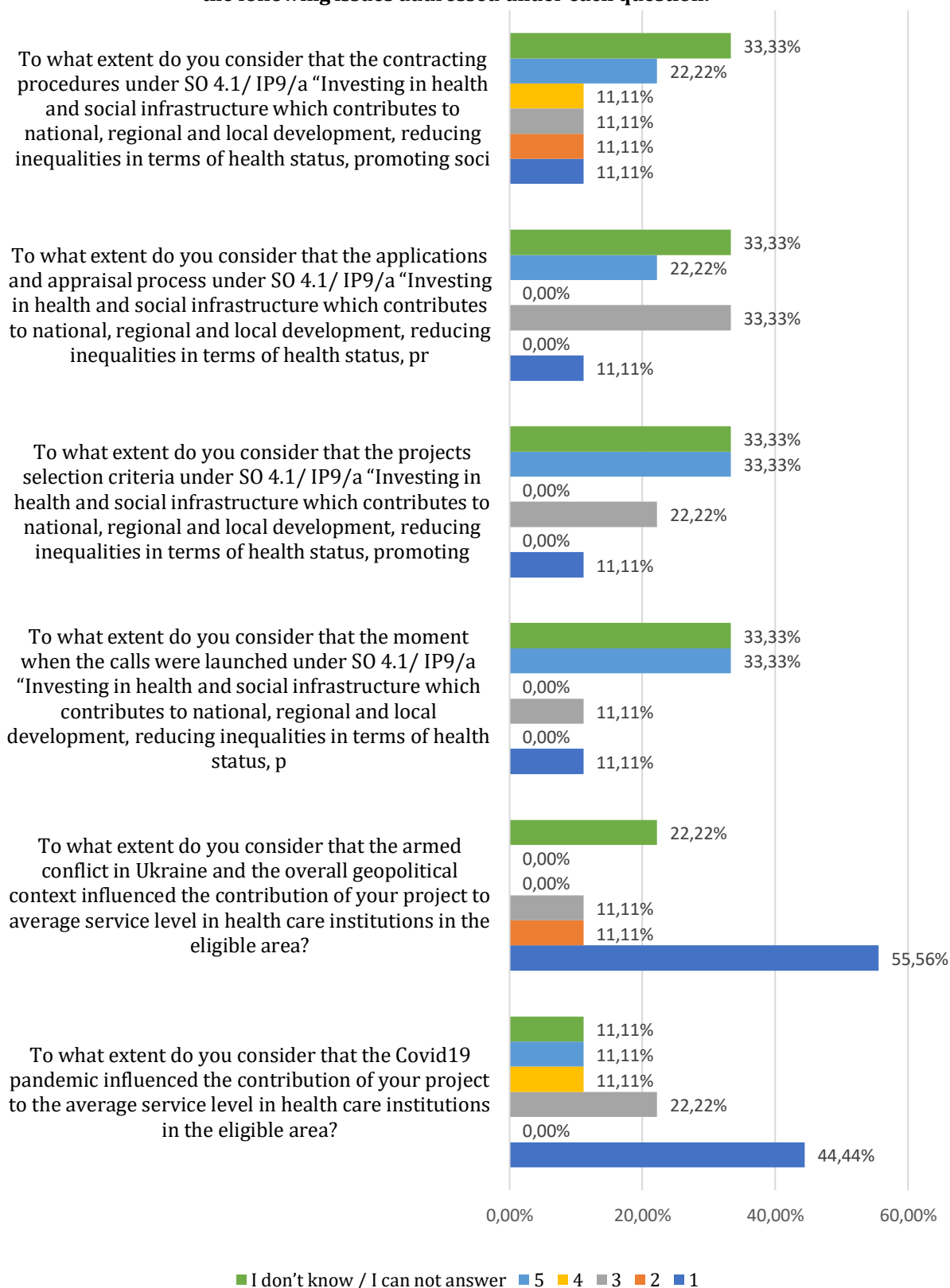
Question 59. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		T
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area?	44,44%	4	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	9
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area?	55,56%	5	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	9
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO 4.1/ IP9/a “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	33,33%	3	33,33%	3	9

To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 4.1/ IP9/a “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	0,00%	0	33,33%	3	33,33%	3	9
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 4.1/ IP9/a “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	33,33%	3	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	33,33%	3	9
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 4.1/ IP9/a “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	22,22%	2	33,33%	3	9

development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
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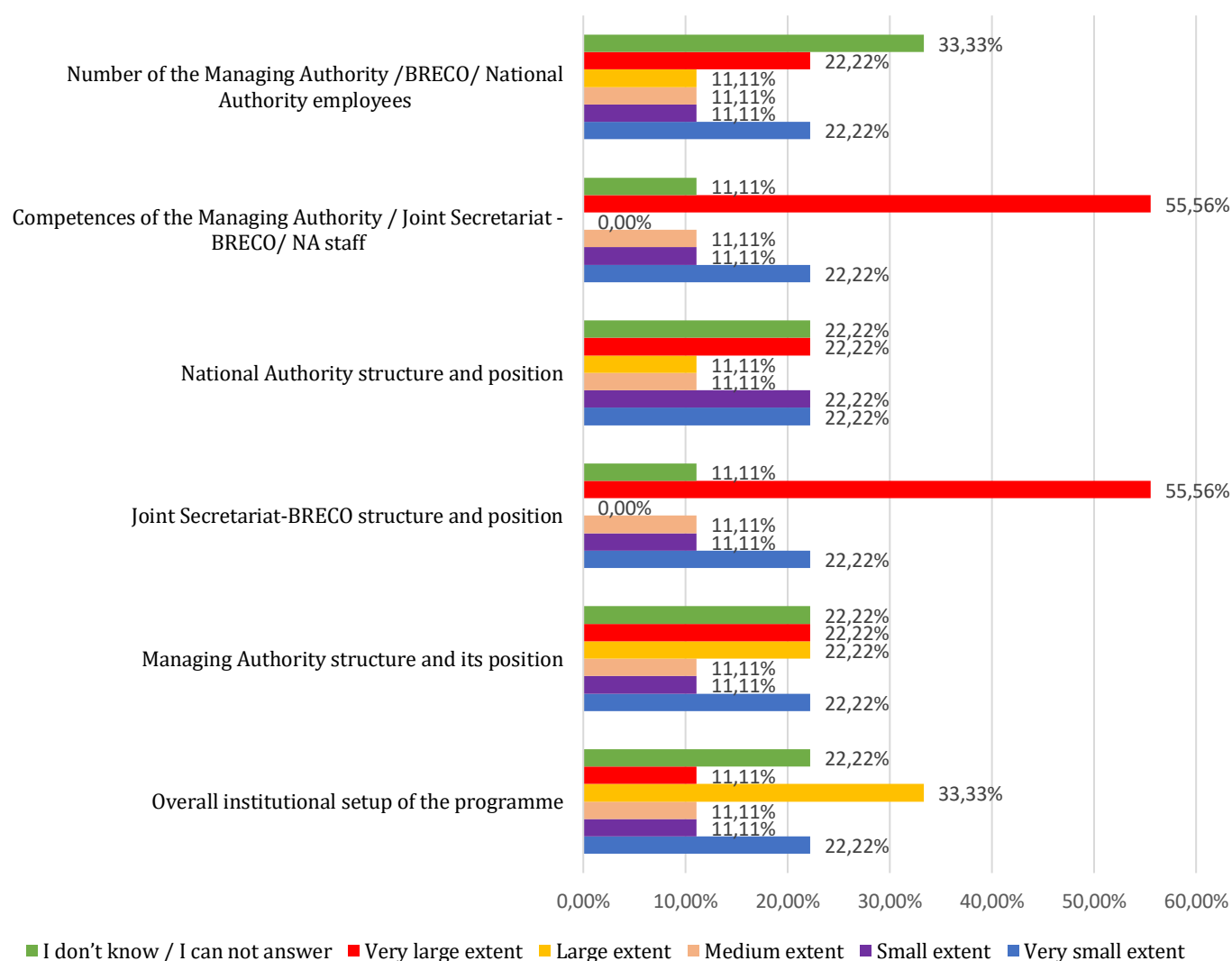
Question 59. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



Question 60. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the average quality level of services provided by health facilities in the eligible area?

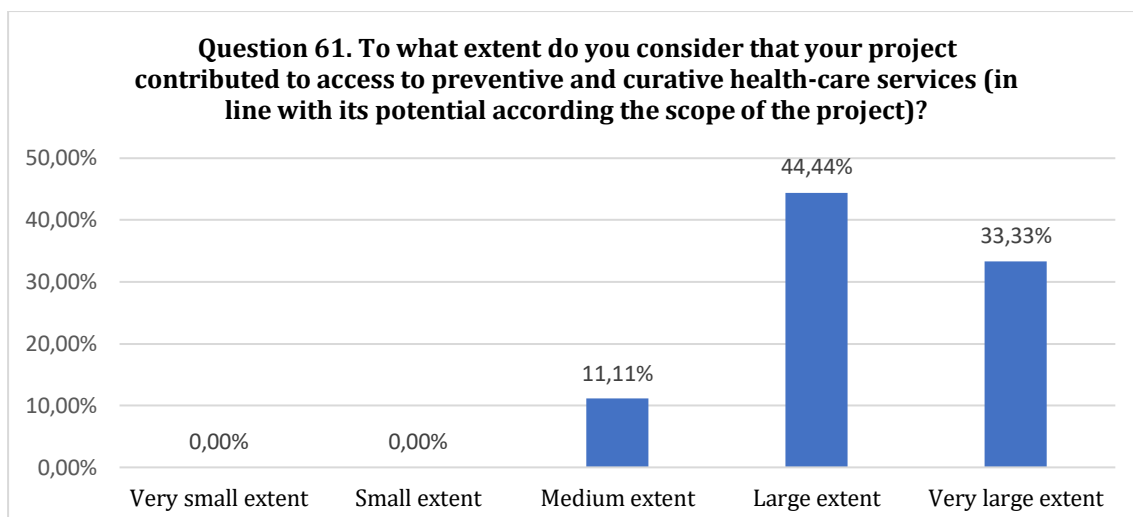
	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	33,33%	3	11,11%	1	22,22%	2	9
Managing Authority structure and its position	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	9
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	55,56%	5	11,11%	1	9
National Authority structure and position	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	9
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	0,00%	0	55,56%	5	11,11%	1	9
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	22,22%	2	33,33%	3	9

Question 60. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think each of the following program structures and related human resources have positively influenced its impact on the average quality level of services provided by health facilities in the eli



Question 61. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to access to preventive and curative health-care services (in line with its potential according the scope of the project)?

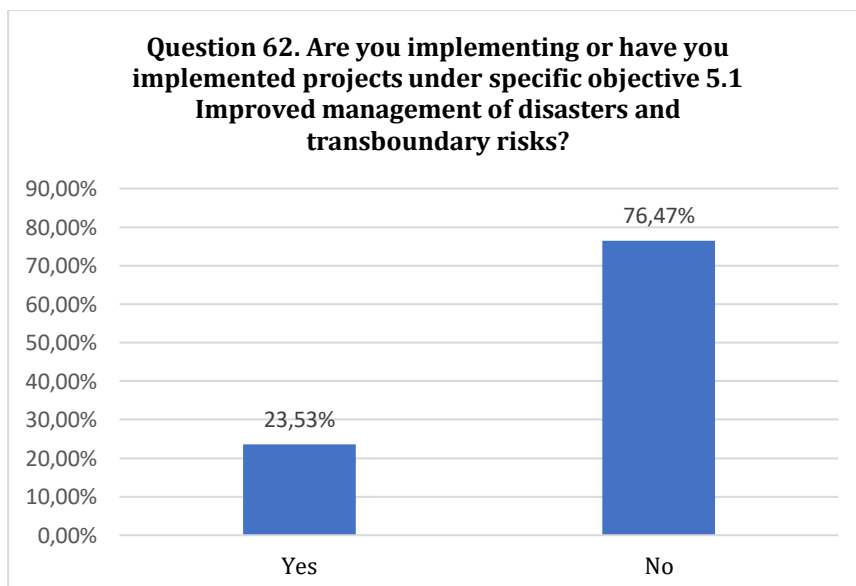
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	11,11%	1
Large extent	44,44%	4
Very large extent	33,33%	3
Total		9



7. S.O 5.1: Improved cross-border disasters and risk management

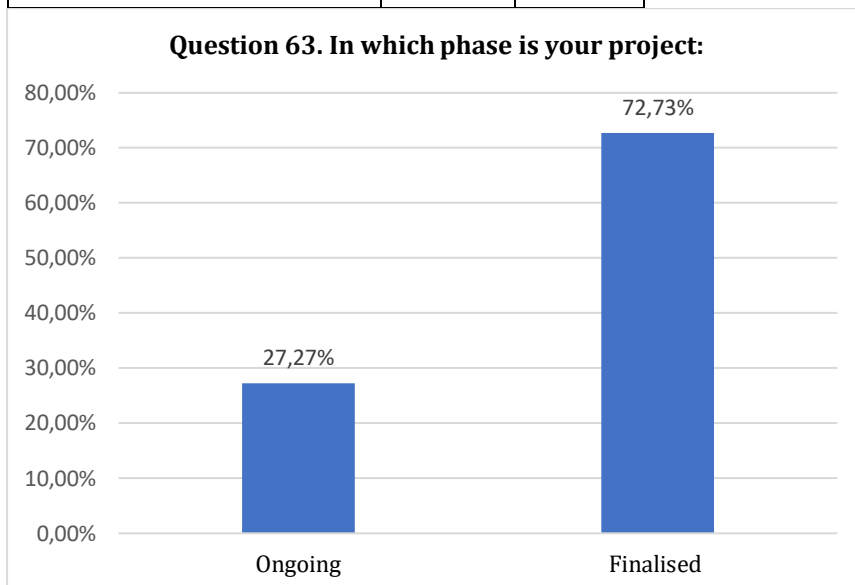
Question 62. Are you implementing or have you implemented projects under specific objective 5.1 Improved cross-border disasters and risk management?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	23,53%	12
No	76,47%	39
	Total	51



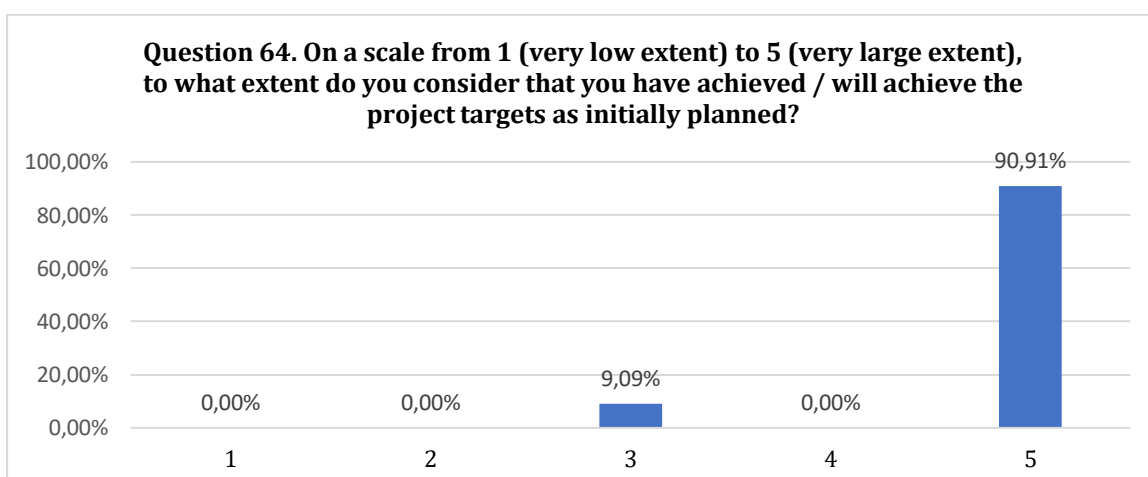
Question 63. In which phase is your project:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	27,27%	3
Finalised	72,73%	8
	Total	11



Question 64. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

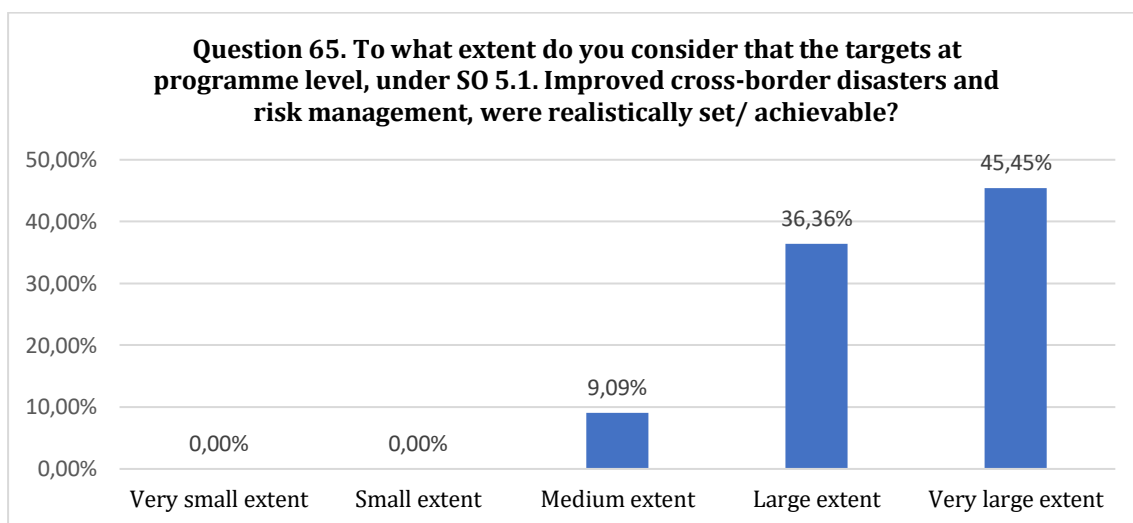
Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	9,09%	1	0,00%	0	90,91%	10	11



Question 65. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 5.1. Improved cross-border disasters and risk management, were realistically set/ achievable?

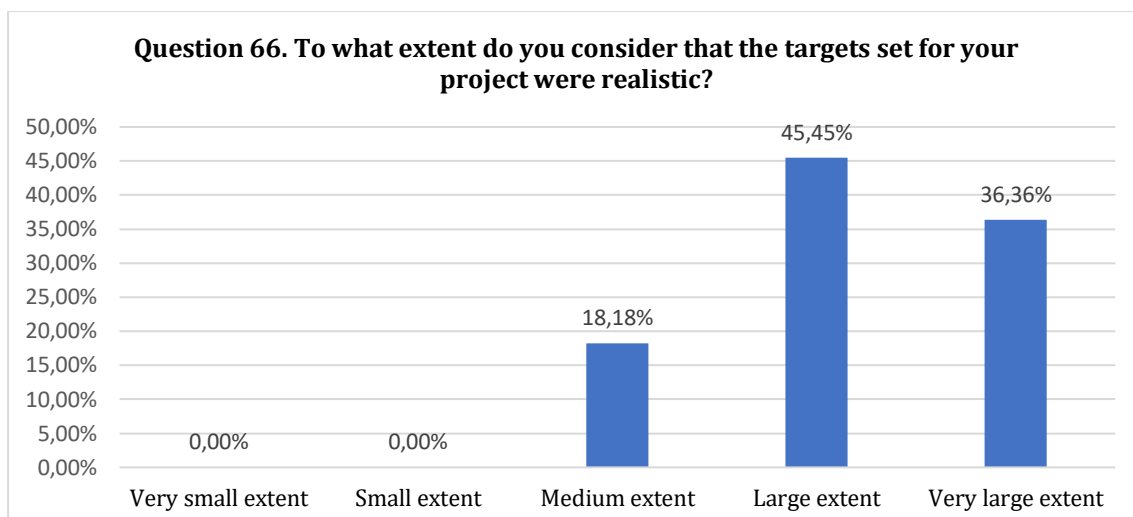
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
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Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	9,09%	1
Large extent	36,36%	4
Very large extent	45,45%	5
I don't know / I cannot answer	9,09%	1
	Total	11



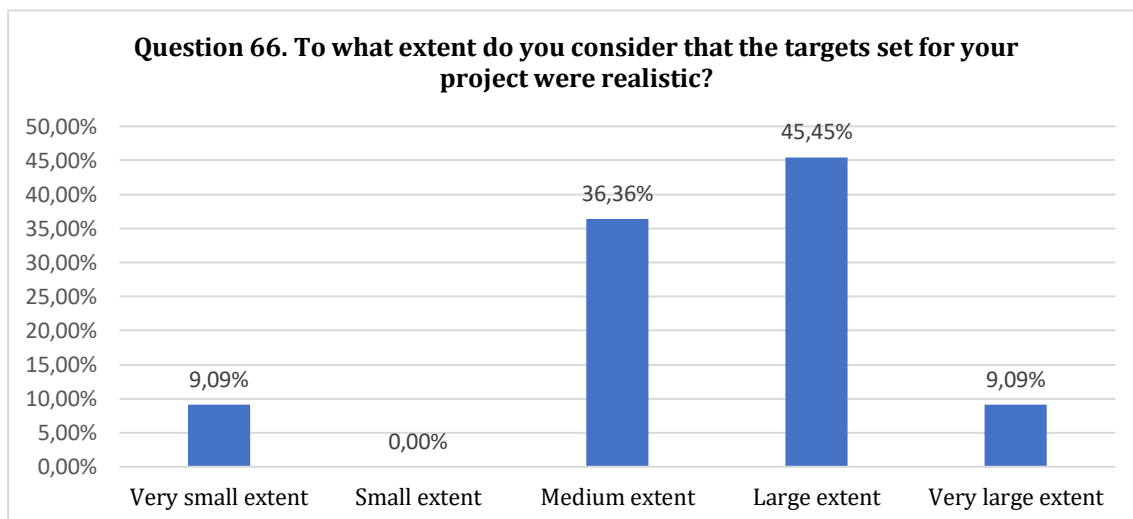
Question 66. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	18,18%	2
Large extent	45,45%	5
Very large extent	36,36%	4
	Total	11



Question 67. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	9,09%	1
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	36,36%	4
Large extent	45,45%	5
Very large extent	9,09%	1
	Total	11



Question 68. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

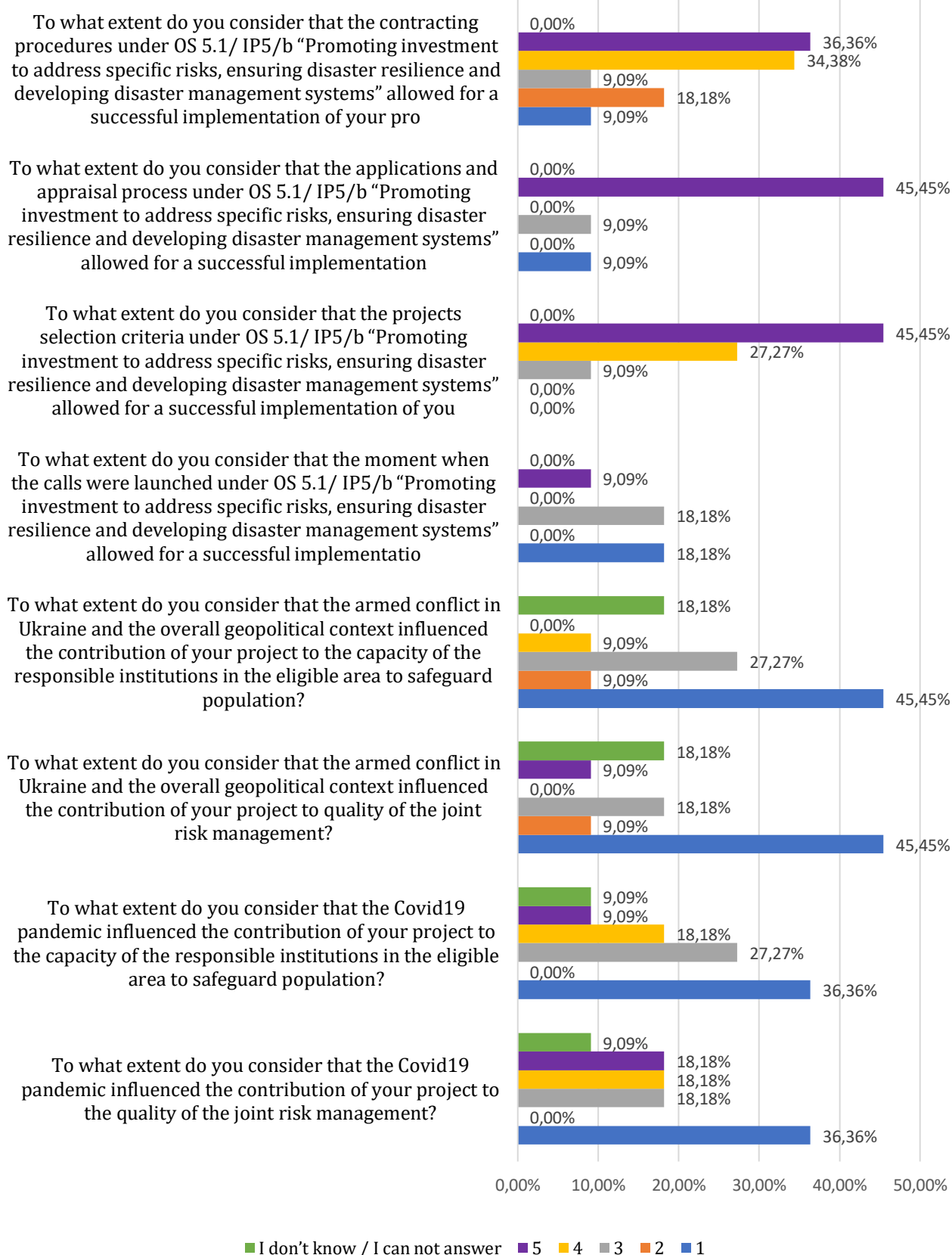
	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know / I cannot answer	Total
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To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the quality of the joint risk management?	36,36%	4	0,00%	0	18,18%	2	18,18%	2	18,18%	2	9,09%	1	11
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population?	36,36%	4	0,00%	0	27,27%	3	18,18%	2	9,09%	1	9,09%	1	11
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to quality of the joint risk management?	45,45%	5	9,09%	1	18,18%	2	0,00%	0	9,09%	1	18,18%	2	11
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population?	45,45%	5	9,09%	1	27,27%	3	9,09%	1	0,00%	0	18,18%	2	11
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under OS 5.1/ IP5/b "Promoting investment to	18,18%	2	0,00%	0	18,18%	2	0,00%	0	9,09%	1	0,00%	0	11

address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?													
To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under OS 5.1/ IP5/b “Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	9,09%	1	27,27%	3	45,45%	5	0,00%	0	11
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under OS 5.1/ IP5/b “Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	9,09%	1	0,00%	0	9,09%	1	18,18%	2	45,45%	5	0,00%	0	11
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under OS 5.1/ IP5/b “Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster	9,09%	1	18,18%	2	9,09%	1	27,27%	3	36,36%	4	0,00%	0	11

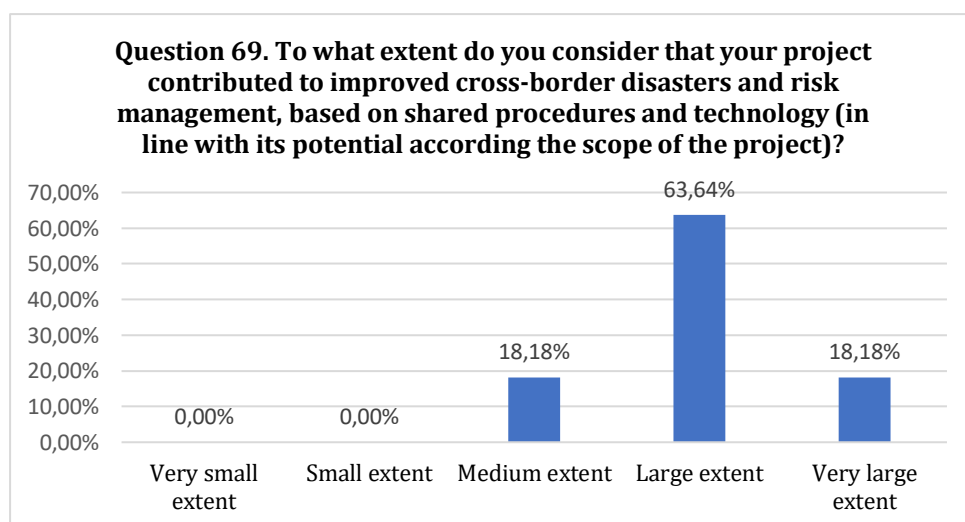
management systems” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?														
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Question 68. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



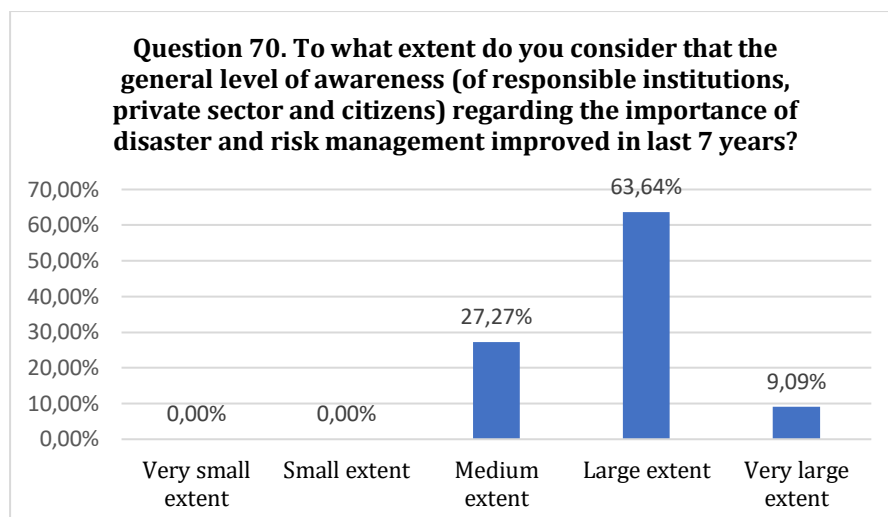
Question 69. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to improved cross-border disasters and risk management, based on shared procedures and technology (in line with its potential according the scope of the project)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	18,18%	2
Large extent	63,64%	7
Very large extent	18,18%	2
	Total	11



Question 70. To what extent do you consider that the general level of awareness (of responsible institutions, private sector and citizens) regarding the importance of disaster and risk management improved in last 7 years?

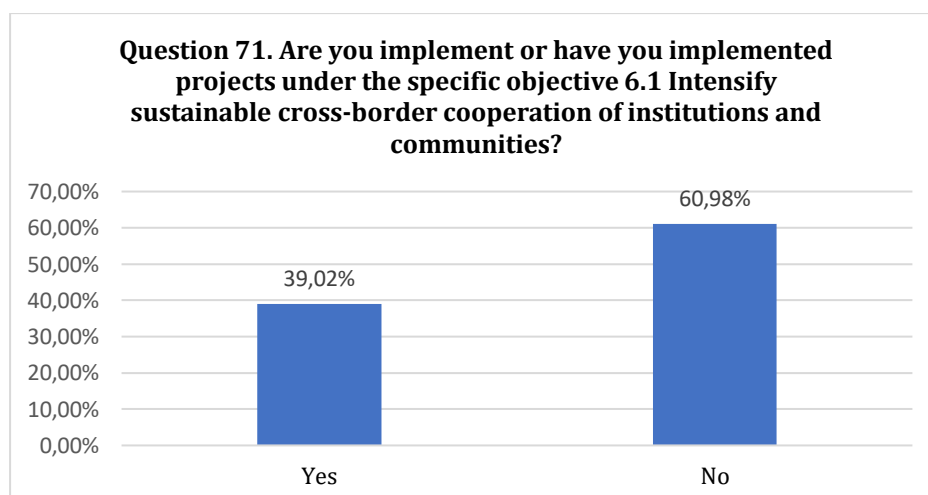
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	27,27%	3
Large extent	63,64%	7
Very large extent	9,09%	1
	Total	11



8. S.O 6.1 Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities

Question 71. Are you implement or have you implemented projects under the specific objective 6.1 Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities?

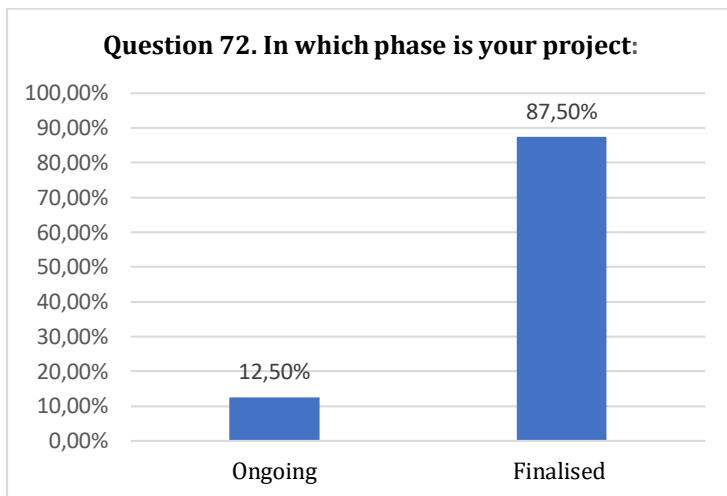
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	39,02%	16
No	60,98%	25
	Total	41



Question 72. In which phase is your project:

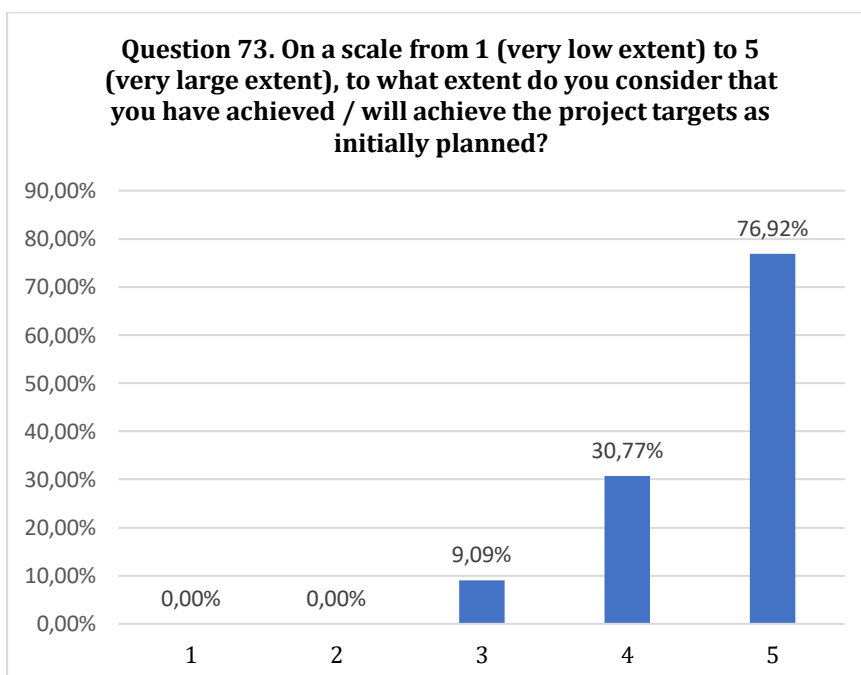
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Ongoing	12,50%	2

Finalised	87,50%	11
	Total	13



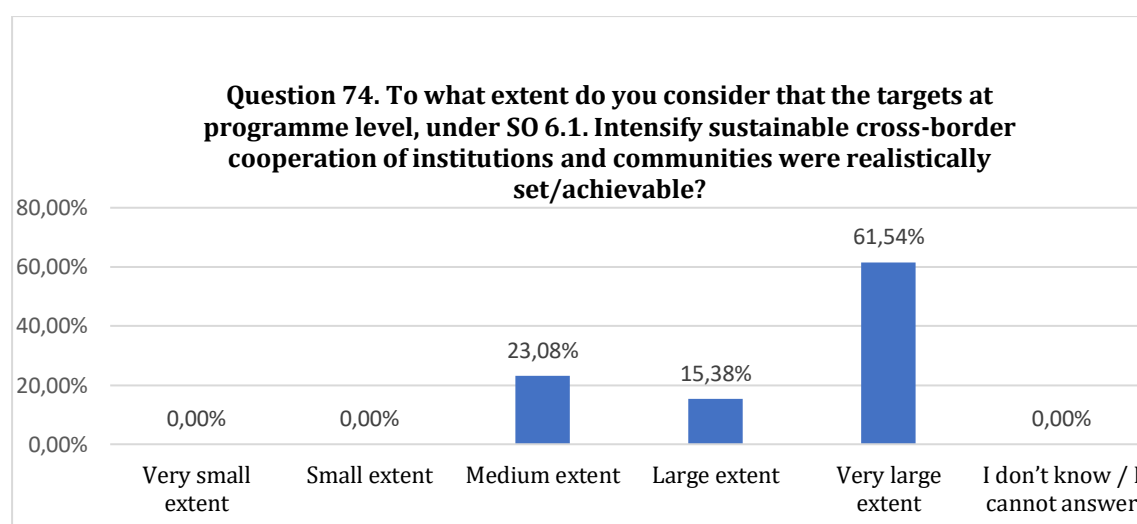
Question 73. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you have achieved / will achieve the project targets as initially planned?

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	2	30,77%	1	76,92%	10	13



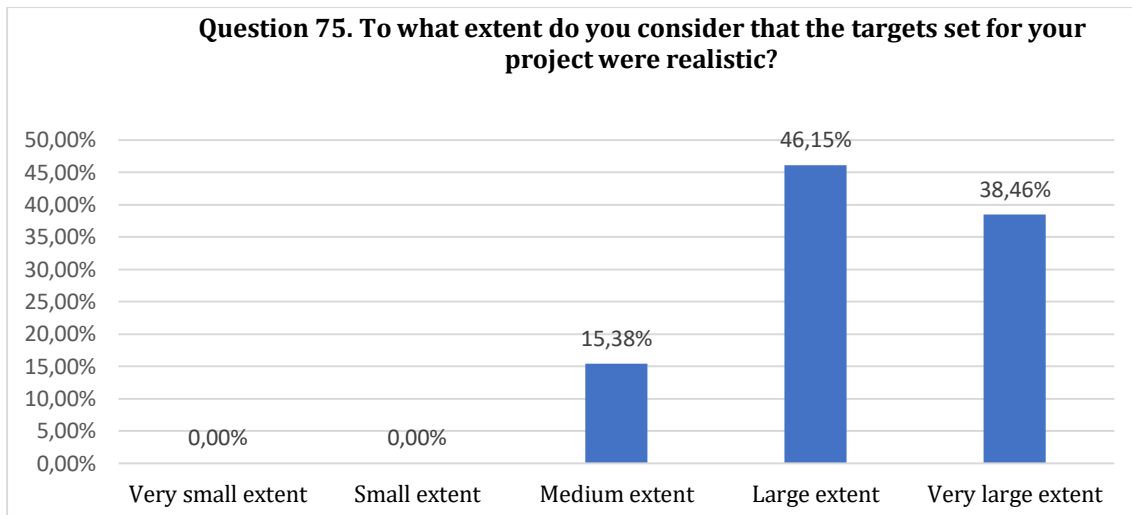
Question 74. To what extent do you consider that the targets at programme level, under SO 6.1. Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities were realistically set/achievable?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	23,08%	3
Large extent	15,38%	2
Very large extent	61,54%	8
I don't know / I cannot answer	0,00%	0
	Total	13



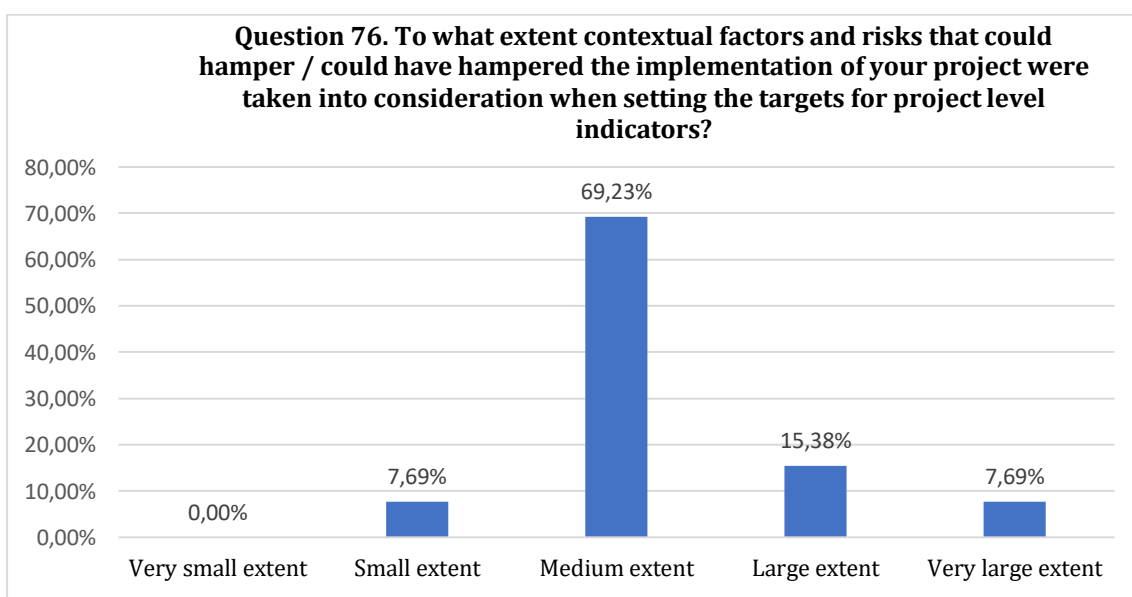
Question 75. To what extent do you consider that the targets set for your project were realistic?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	15,38%	2
Large extent	46,15%	6
Very large extent	38,46%	5
	Total	13



Question 76. To what extent contextual factors and risks that could hamper / could have hampered the implementation of your project were taken into consideration when setting the targets for project level indicators?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	7,69%	1
Medium extent	69,23%	9
Large extent	15,38%	2
Very large extent	7,69%	1
	Total	13



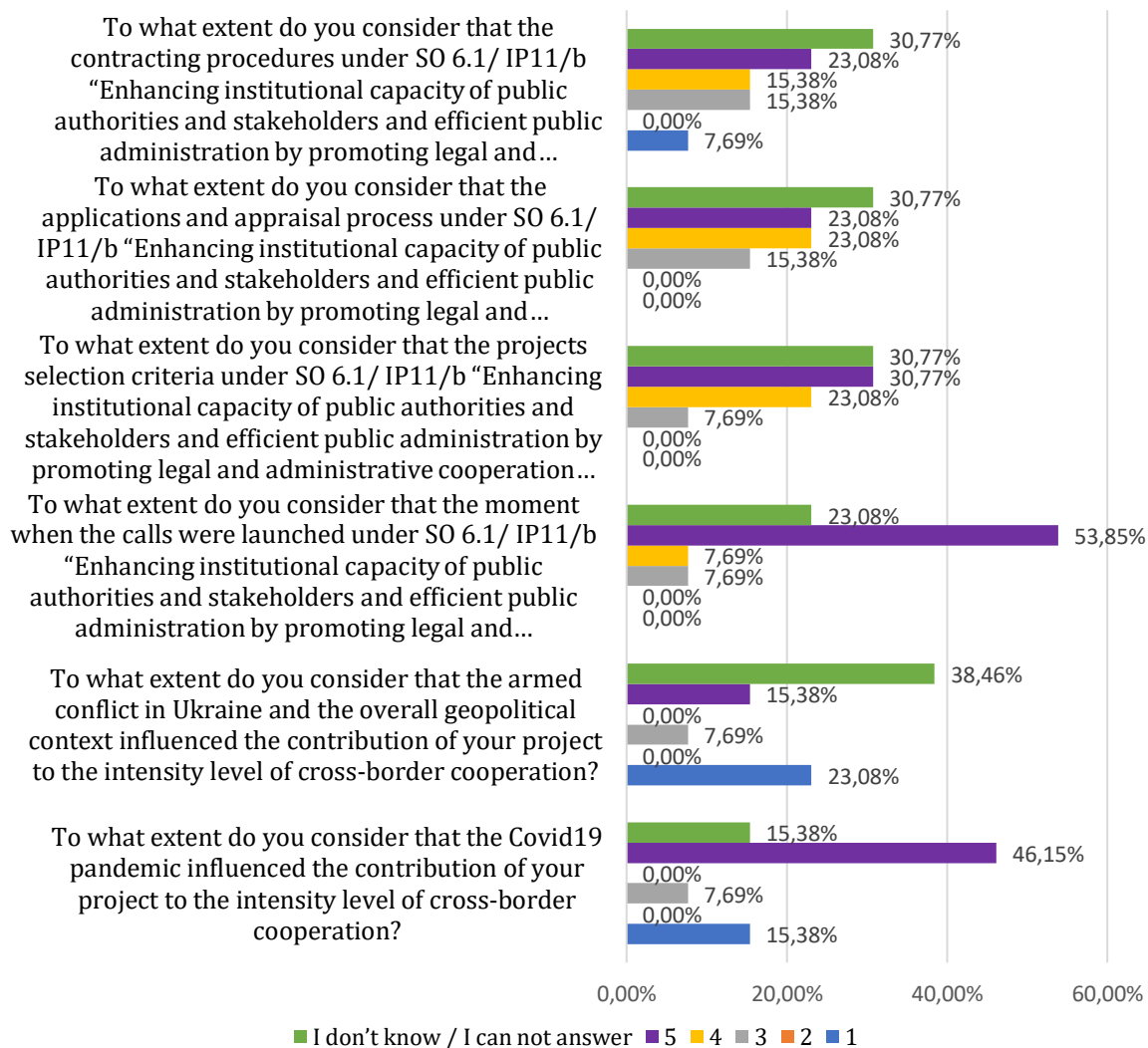
Question 77. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer	Total	
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of your project to the intensity level of cross-border cooperation?	15,38%	2	0,00%	0	7,69%	1	0,00%	0	46,15%	6	15,38%	2	13
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of your project to the intensity level of cross-border cooperation?	23,08%	3	0,00%	0	7,69%	1	0,00%	0	15,38%	2	38,46%	5	13
To what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls were launched under SO 6.1/ IP11/b “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	7,69%	1	7,69%	1	53,85%	7	23,08%	3	13

To what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under SO 6.1/ IP11/b “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	7,69%	1	23,08%	3	30,77%	4	30,77%	4	13
To what extent do you consider that the applications and appraisal process under SO 6.1/ IP11/b “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions” allowed for a successful implementation of your project?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	15,38%	2	23,08%	3	23,08%	3	30,77%	4	13
To what extent do you consider that the contracting procedures under SO 6.1/ IP11/b “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal	7,69%	1	0,00%	0	15,38%	2	15,38%	2	23,08%	3	30,77%	4	13

[illegible]

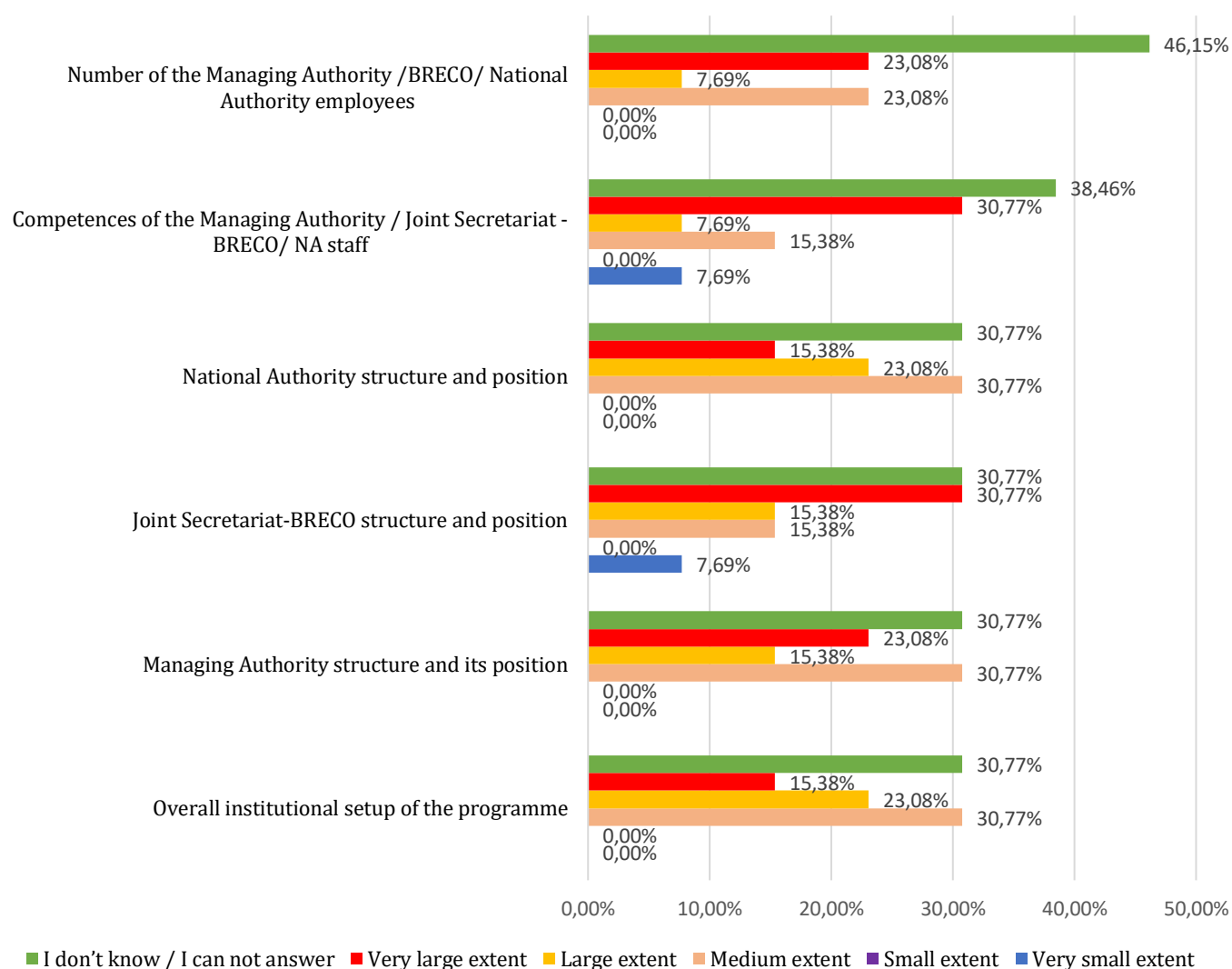
Question 77. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



Question 78. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think that each of the following program structures and related human resources positively influenced its impact on the level of intensity of cross-border cooperation?

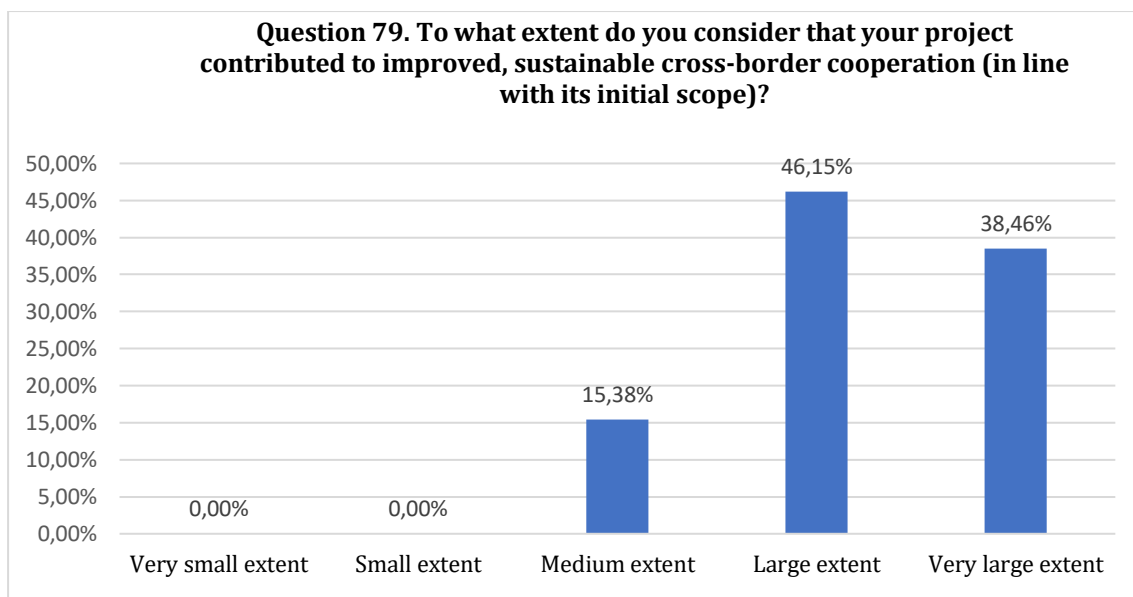
Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	30,77%	4	23,08%	3	15,38%	2	30,77%	4	13
Managing Authority structure and its position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	30,77%	4	15,38%	2	23,08%	3	30,77%	4	13
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	7,69%	1	0,00%	0	15,38%	2	15,38%	2	30,77%	4	30,77%	4	13
National Authority structure and position	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	30,77%	4	23,08%	3	15,38%	2	30,77%	4	13
Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	7,69%	1	0,00%	0	15,38%	2	7,69%	1	30,77%	4	38,46%	5	13
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	23,08%	3	7,69%	1	23,08%	3	46,15%	6	13

Question 78. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you think that each of the following program structures and related human resources positively influenced its impact on the level of intensity of cross-border cooperation?



Question 79. To what extent do you consider that your project contributed to improved, sustainable cross-border cooperation (in line with its initial scope)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	0,00%	0
Small extent	0,00%	0
Medium extent	15,38%	2
Large extent	46,15%	6
Very large extent	38,46%	5
	Total	13



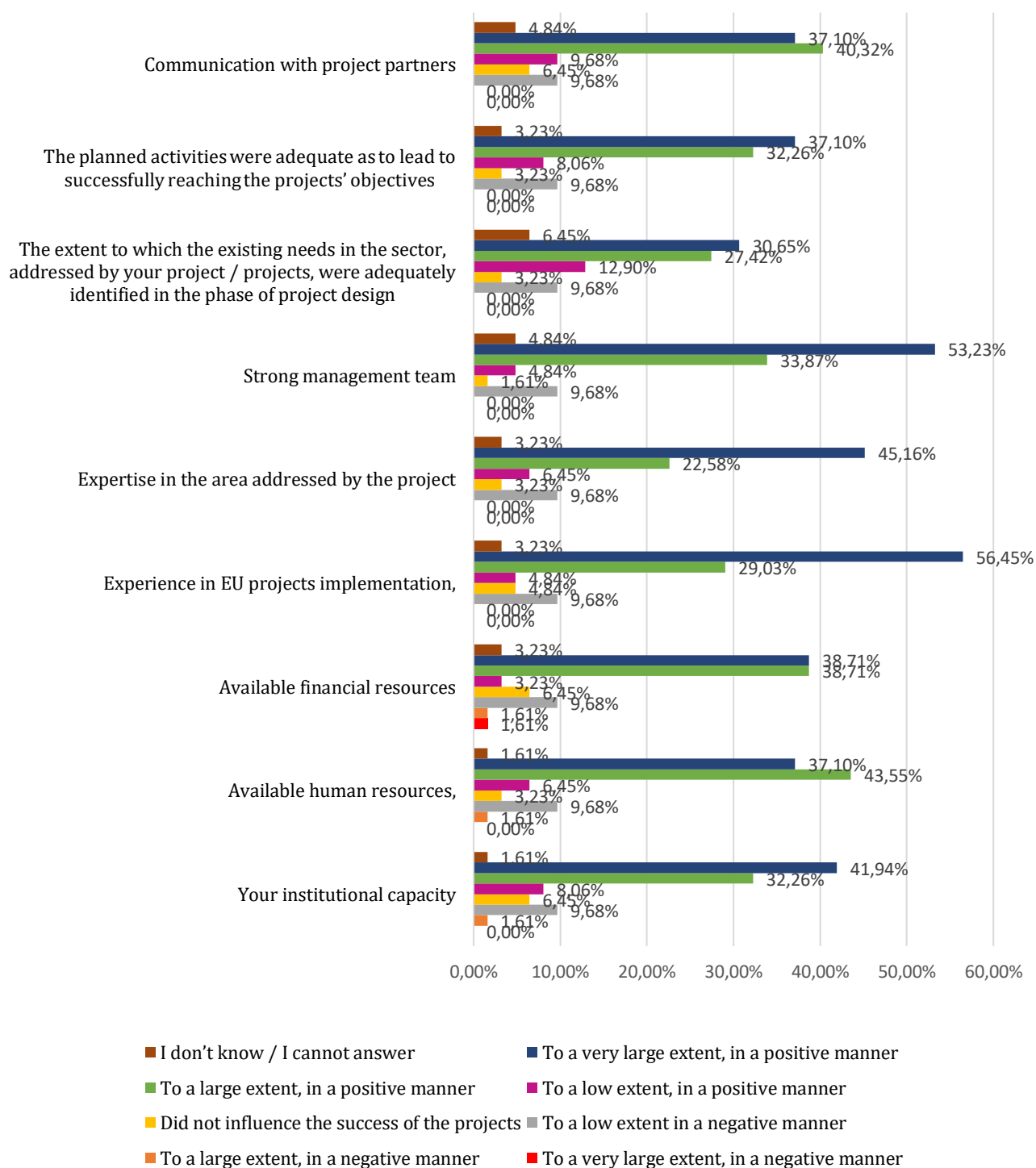
9. General questions:

Question 80. To what extent do you consider that the following factors (project-related) have influenced the achievement of the objectives of your project / projects?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Answer Choices	To a very large extent, in a negative manner	To a large extent, in a negative manner	To a low extent in a negative manner	Did not influence the success of the projects	To a low extent, in a positive manner	To a large extent, in a positive manner	To a very large extent, in a positive manner	I don't know / I cannot answer
Your institutional capacity	0,00%	1,61%	9,68%	6,45%	8,06%	32,26%	41,94%	1,61%
Available human resources,	0,00%	1,61%	9,68%	3,23%	6,45%	43,55%	37,10%	1,61%
Available financial resources	1,61%	1,61%	9,68%	6,45%	3,23%	38,71%	38,71%	3,23%
Experience in EU projects implementation,	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	4,84%	4,84%	29,03%	56,45%	3,23%
Expertise in the area addressed by the project	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	3,23%	6,45%	22,58%	45,16%	3,23%
Strong management team	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	1,61%	4,84%	33,87%	53,23%	4,84%
The extent to which the existing needs in the sector, addressed by your project / projects, were adequately identified in the phase of project design	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	3,23%	12,90%	27,42%	30,65%	6,45%
The planned activities were adequate as to	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	3,23%	8,06%	32,26%	37,10%	3,23%

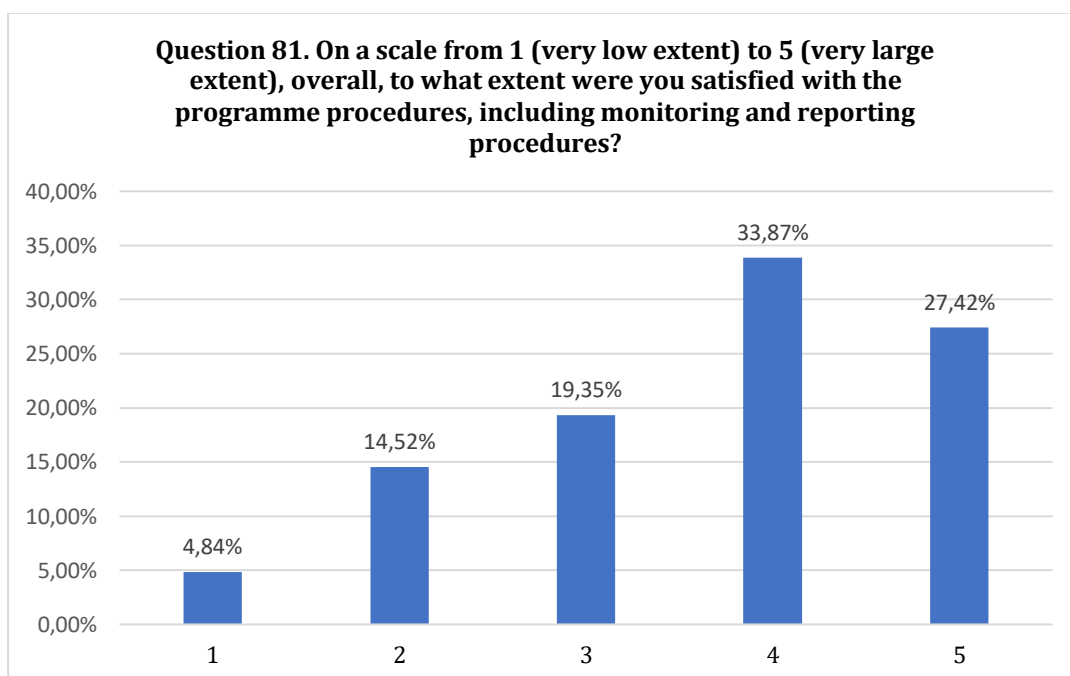
lead to successfully reaching the projects' objectives								
Communication with project partners	0,00%	0,00%	9,68%	6,45%	9,68%	40,32%	37,10%	4,84%
Total	62							

Question 80. To what extent do you consider that the following factors (project-related) have influenced the achievement of the objectives of your project / projects?



Question 81. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), overall, to what extent were you satisfied with the programme procedures, including monitoring and reporting procedures?

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
Percent	4,84%	3	14,52%	9	19,35%	12	33,87%	21	27,42%	17	62

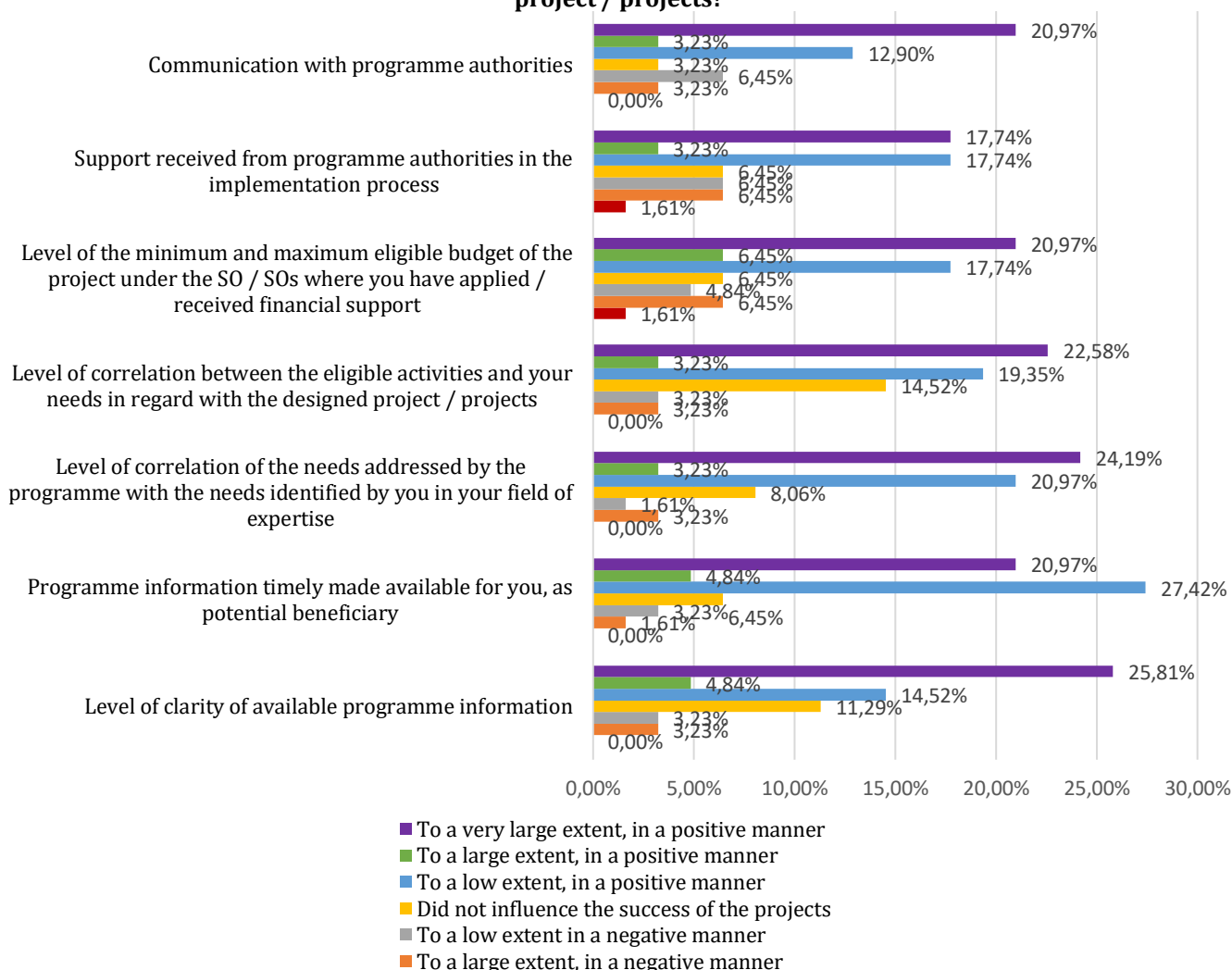


Question 82. To what extent do you consider that the following factors (programme-level) have influenced in a positive manner the achievement of the objectives of your project / projects?

Answer Choices	To a very large extent, in a negative manner		To a large extent, in a negative manner		To a low extent in a negative manner		Did not influence the success of the projects		To a low extent, in a positive manner		To a large extent, in a positive manner		To a very large extent, in a positive manner		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Level of clarity of available programme information	0,00 %	0	3,23 %	2	3,23 %	2	11,29 %	7	14,52 %	9	25,81 %	16	38,71 %	24	3,23 %	2	62

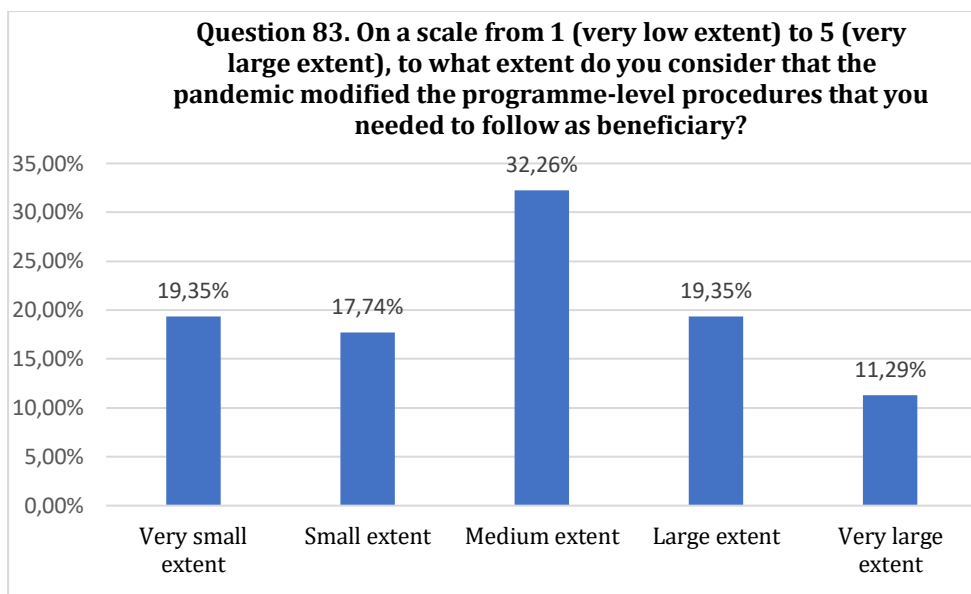
Programme information timely made available for you, as potential beneficiary	0,00 %	0	1,61 %	1	3,23 %	2	6,45 %	4	27,42 %	17	20,97 %	13	37,10 %	23	3,23 %	2	62
Level of correlation of the needs addressed by the programme with the needs identified by you in your field of expertise	0,00 %	0	3,23 %	2	1,61 %	1	8,06 %	5	20,97 %	13	24,19 %	15	37,10 %	23	4,84 %	3	62
Level of correlation between the eligible activities and your needs in regard with the designed project / projects	0,00 %	0	3,23 %	2	3,23 %	2	14,52 %	9	19,35 %	12	22,58 %	14	37,10 %	23	4,84 %	3	62
Level of the minimum and maximum eligible budget of the project under the SO / SOs where you have applied / received financial support	1,61 %	1	6,45 %	4	4,84 %	3	6,45 %	4	17,74 %	11	20,97 %	13	41,94 %	26	3,23 %	2	62
Support received from programme authorities in the implementation process	1,61 %	1	6,45 %	4	6,45 %	4	6,45 %	4	17,74 %	11	17,74 %	11	38,71 %	24	4,84 %	3	62
Communication with programme authorities	0,00 %	0	3,23 %	2	6,45 %	4	3,23 %	2	12,90 %	8	20,97 %	13	48,39 %	30	4,84 %	3	62

Question 82. To what extent do you consider that the following factors (programme-level) have influenced in a positive manner the achievement of the objectives of your project / projects?



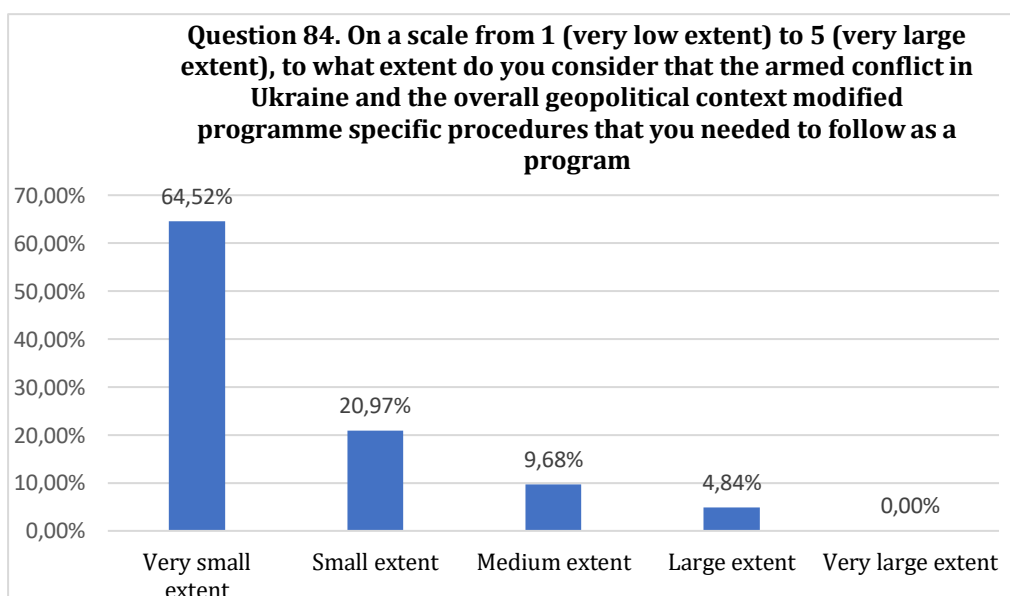
Question 83. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that the pandemic modified the programme-level procedures that you needed to follow as beneficiary?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	19,35%	12
Small extent	17,74%	11
Medium extent	32,26%	20
Large extent	19,35%	12
Very large extent	11,29%	7
	Total	62



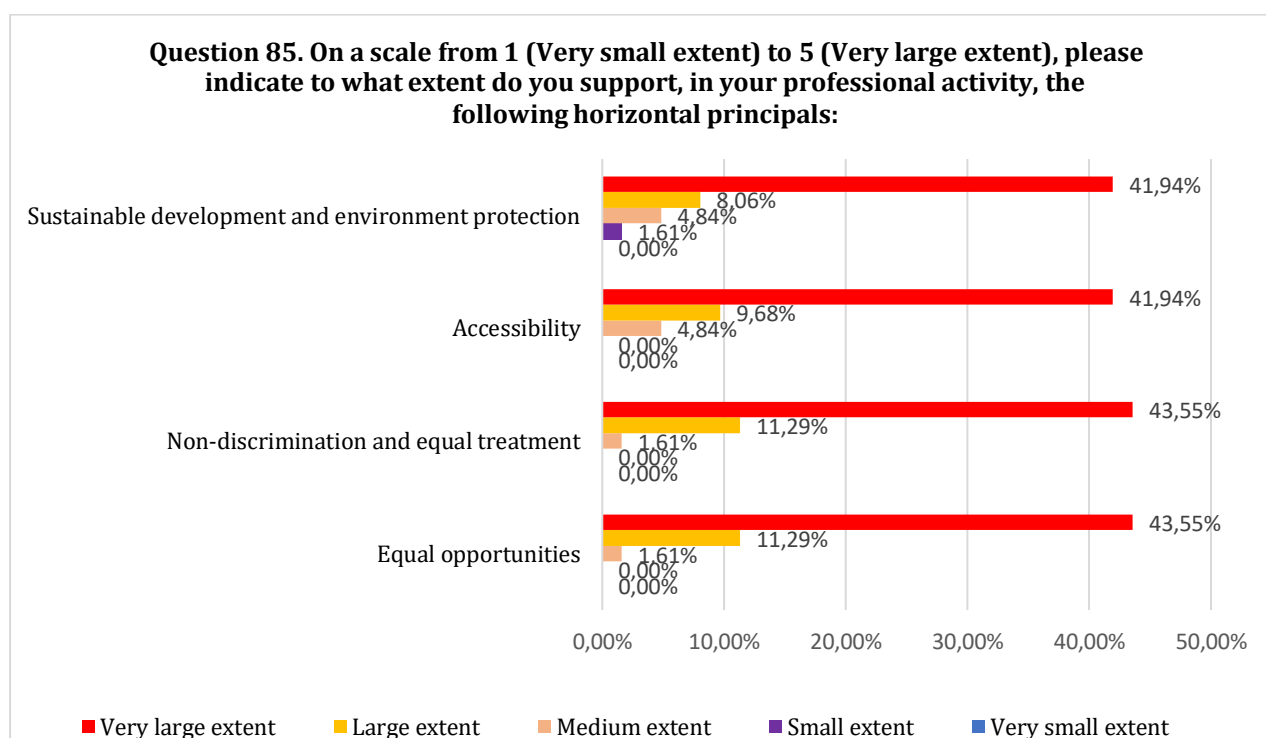
Question 84. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context modified programme specific procedures that you needed to follow as a programme beneficiary?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	64,52%	40
Small extent	20,97%	13
Medium extent	9,68%	6
Large extent	4,84%	3
Very large extent	0,00%	0
	Total	62



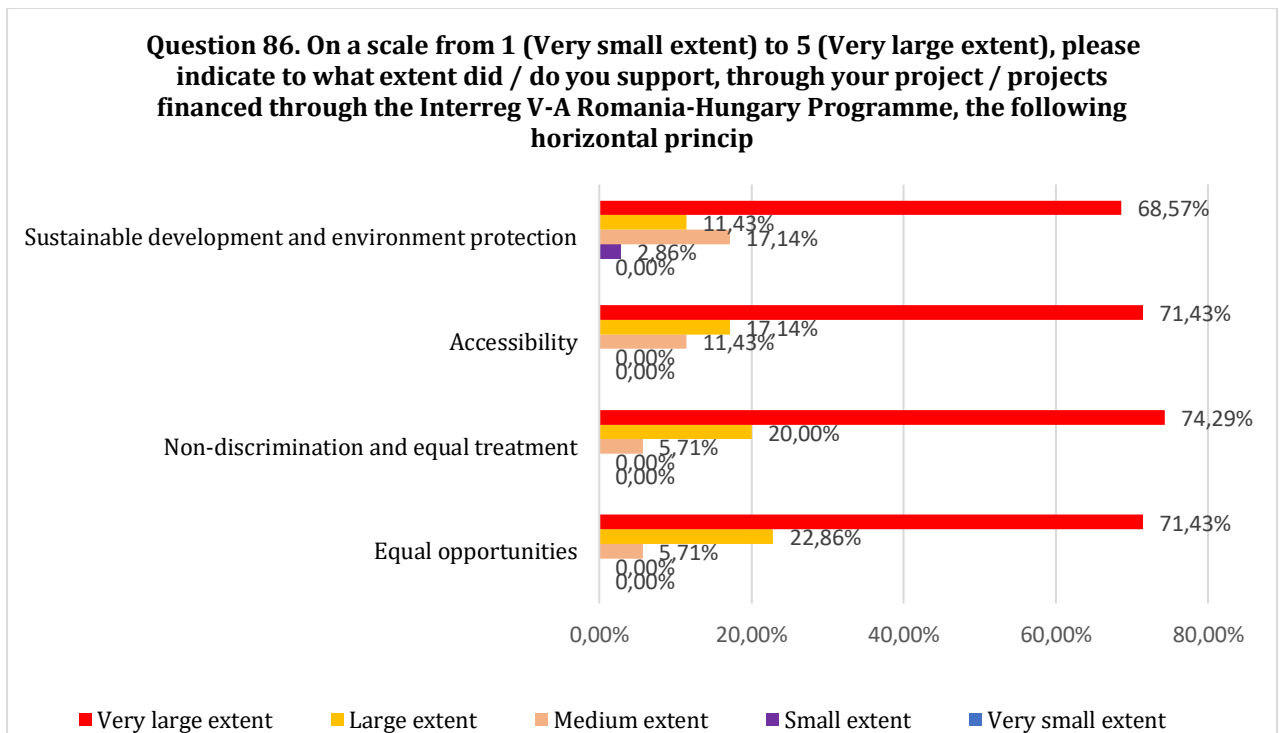
Question 85. On a scale from 1 (Very small extent) to 5 (Very large extent), please indicate to what extent do you support, in your professional activity, the following horizontal principals:

	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		Total
Equal opportunities	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1,61%	1	11,29%	7	43,55%	27	62
Non-discrimination and equal treatment	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1,61%	1	11,29%	7	43,55%	27	62
Accessibility	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	4,84%	3	9,68%	6	41,94%	26	62
Sustainable development and environment protection	0,00%	0	1,61%	1	4,84%	3	8,06%	5	41,94%	26	62



Question 86. On a scale from 1 (Very small extent) to 5 (Very large extent), please indicate to what extent did / do you support, through your project / projects financed through the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, the following horizontal principals:

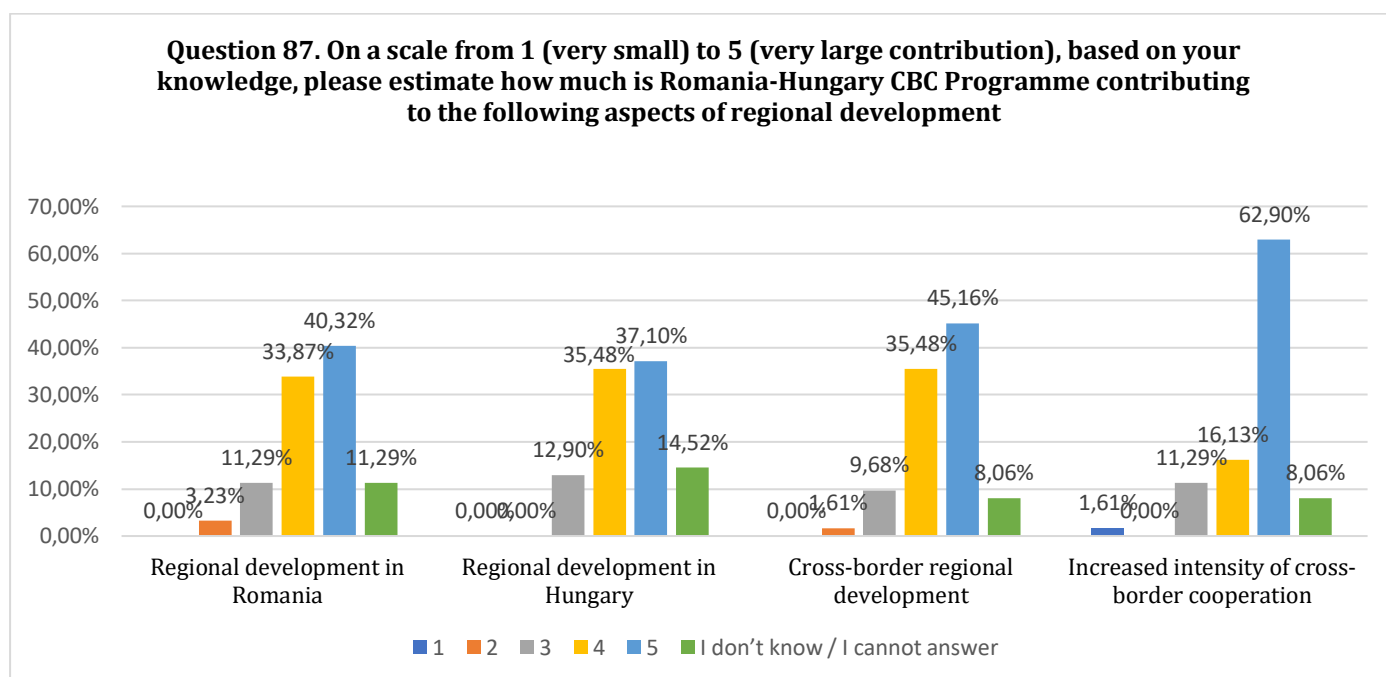
	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		Total
Equal opportunities	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5,71%	4	22,86%	19	71,43%	39	62
Non-discrimination and equal treatment	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	5,71%	6	20,00%	16	74,29%	39	62
Accessibility	0,00%	1	0,00%	0	11,43%	11	17,14%	13	71,43%	37	62
Sustainable development and environment protection	0,00%	1	2,86%	1	17,14%	9	11,43%	13	68,57%	40	62



Question 87. On a scale from 1 (very small) to 5 (very large contribution), based on your knowledge, please estimate how much is Romania-Hungary CBC Programme contributing to the following aspects of regional development

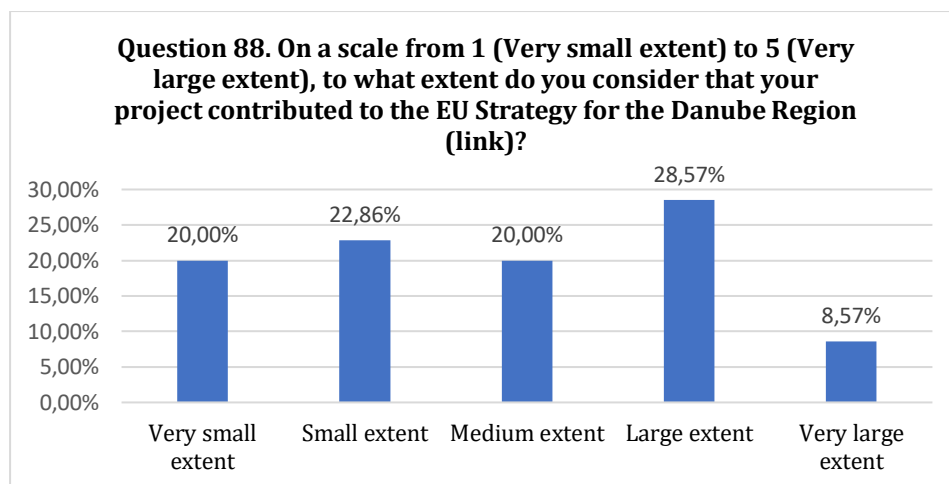
	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer	Total	
Regional development in Romania	0,00%	0	3,23%	2	11,29%	7	33,87%	21	40,32%	25	11,29%	7	62
Regional development in Hungary	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	12,90%	8	35,48%	22	37,10%	23	14,52%	9	62

Cross-border regional development	0,00%	0	1,61%	1	9,68%	6	35,48%	22	45,16%	28	8,06%	5	62
Increased intensity of cross-border cooperation	1,61%	1	0,00%	0	11,29%	7	16,13%	10	62,90%	39	8,06%	5	62



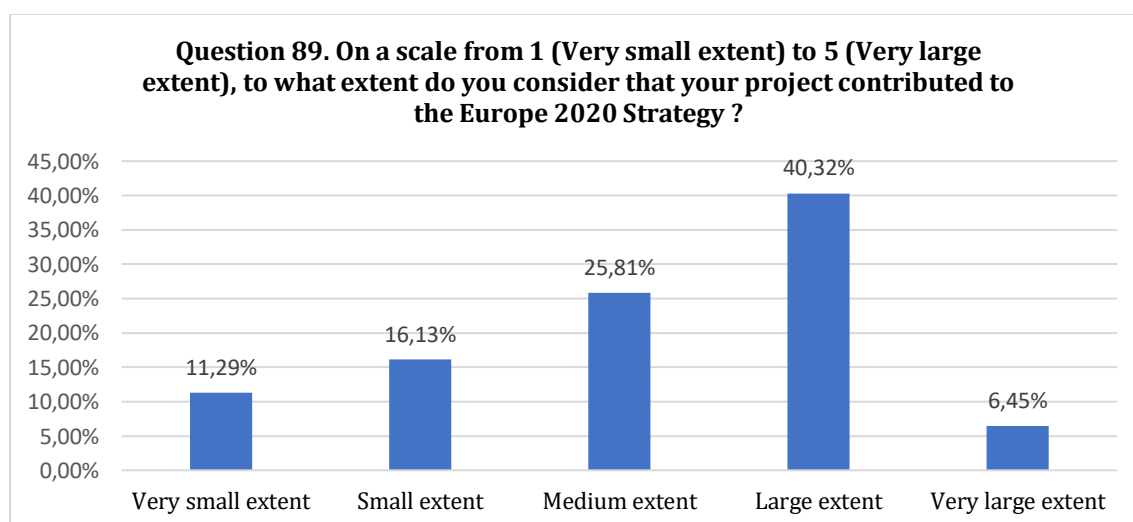
Question 88. On a scale from 1 (Very small extent) to 5 (Very large extent), to what extent do you consider that your project contributed to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (link)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	20,00%	12
Small extent	22,86%	13
Medium extent	20,00%	15
Large extent	28,57%	19
Very large extent	8,57%	3
Total		62



Question 89. On a scale from 1 (Very small extent) to 5 (Very large extent), to what extent do you consider that your project contributed to the Europe 2020 Strategy?

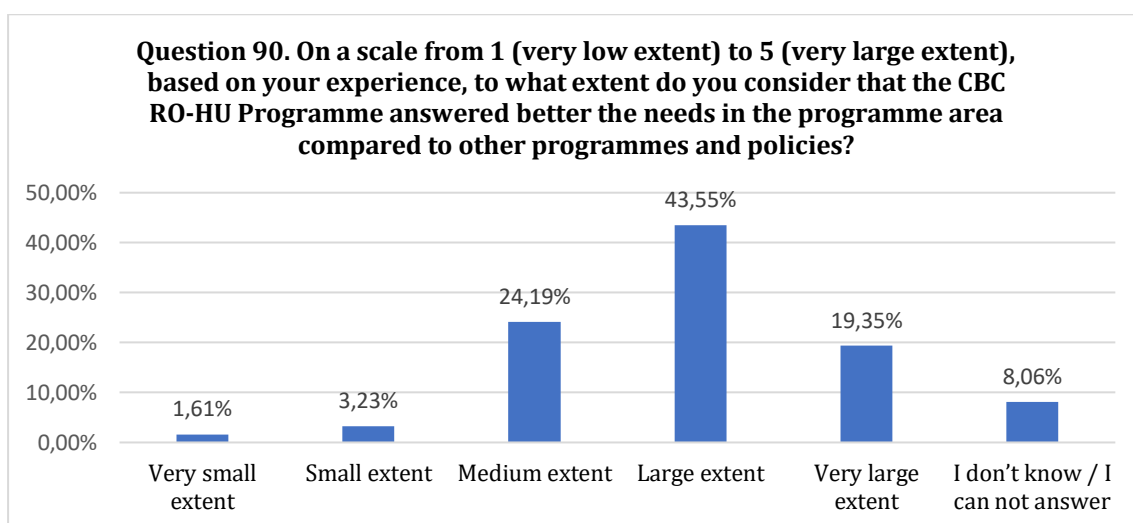
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	11,29%	7
Small extent	16,13%	10
Medium extent	25,81%	16
Large extent	40,32%	25
Very large extent	6,45%	4
	Total	62



Question 90. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), based on your experience, to what extent do you consider that the CBC RO-HU Programme answered better the needs in the programme area compared to other programmes and policies?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
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Very small extent	1,61%	1
Small extent	3,23%	2
Medium extent	24,19%	15
Large extent	43,55%	27
Very large extent	19,35%	12
I don't know / I cannot answer	8,06%	5
	Total	62

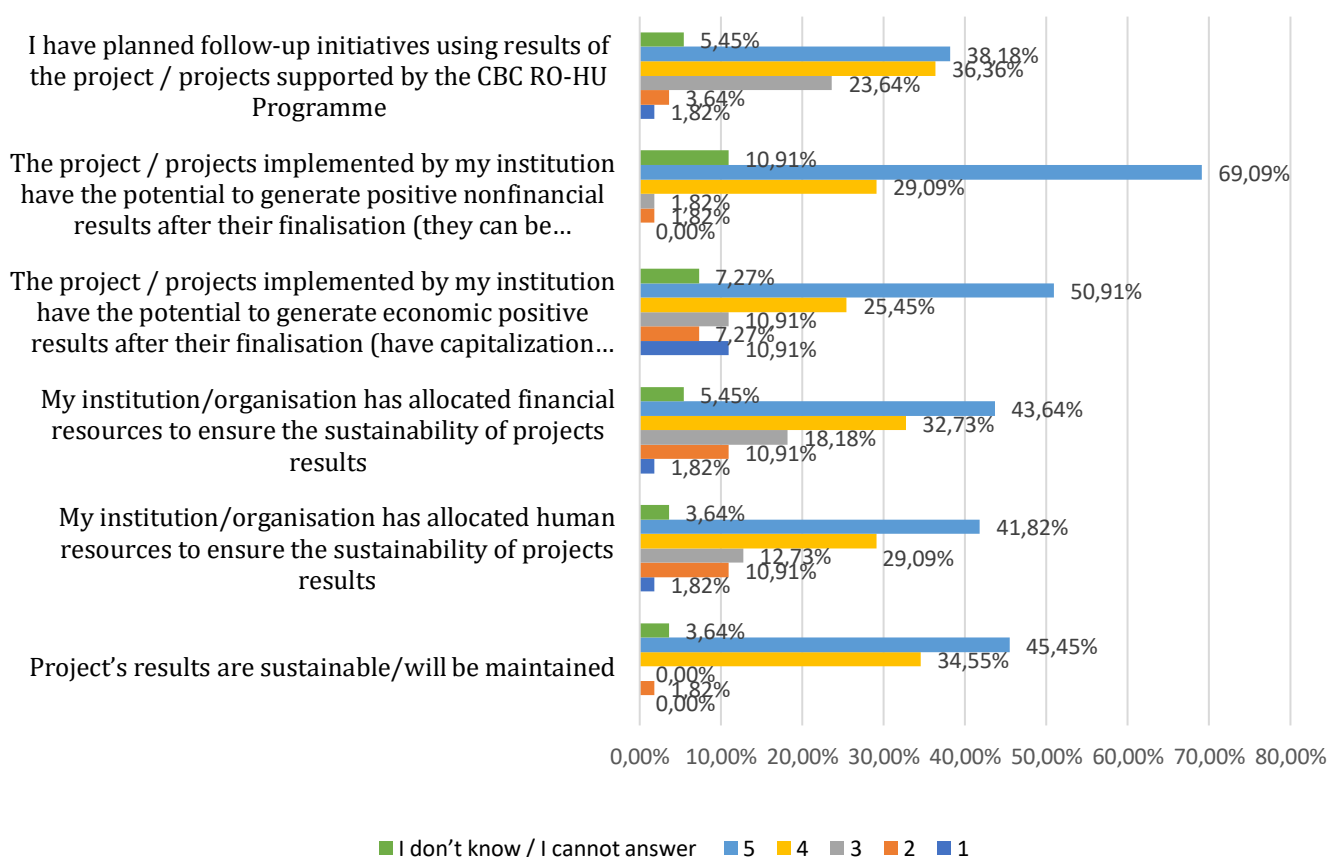


Question 91. Considering the sustainability of your project, please evaluate on a scale from 1 (to a very small extent) to 5 (to a very large extent) the following elements: NOTE – In line with OSCE definitions, sustainability refers to the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention (outputs and results) continue or are likely to continue beyond intervention (the project, in this case).

	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Project's results are sustainable/will be maintained	0,00%	0	1,82%	1	0,00%	0	34,55%	19	45,45%	25	3,64%	2	55
My institution/organisation has allocated human resources to ensure the sustainability of projects results	1,82%	1	10,91%	6	12,73%	7	29,09%	16	41,82%	23	3,64%	2	55
My institution/organisation has allocated financial resources to ensure the sustainability of projects results	1,82%	1	10,91%	6	18,18%	10	32,73%	18	43,64%	24	5,45%	3	55

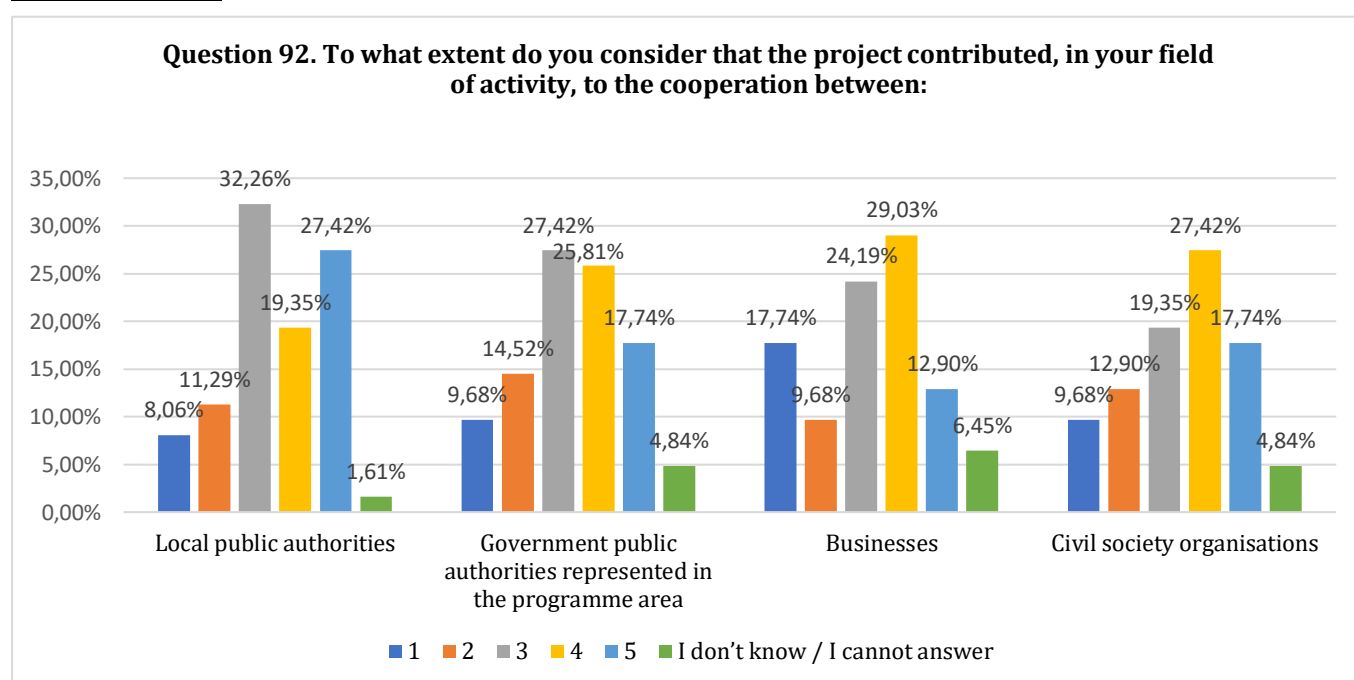
The project / projects implemented by my institution have the potential to generate economic positive results after their finalisation (have capitalization potential)	10,91%	6	7,27%	4	10,91%	6	25,45%	14	50,91%	28	7,27%	4	55
The project / projects implemented by my institution have the potential to generate positive nonfinancial results after their finalisation (they can be replicated or scaled-up)	0,00%	0	1,82%	1	1,82%	1	29,09%	16	69,09%	38	10,91%	6	55
I have planned follow-up initiatives using results of the project / projects supported by the CBC RO-HU Programme	1,82%	1	3,64%	2	23,64%	13	36,36%	20	38,18%	21	5,45%	3	55

Question 91. Considering the sustainability of your project, please evaluate on a scale from 1(to a very small extent) to 5 (to a very large extent) the following elements:



Question 92. To what extent do you consider that the project contributed, in your field of activity, to the cooperation between:

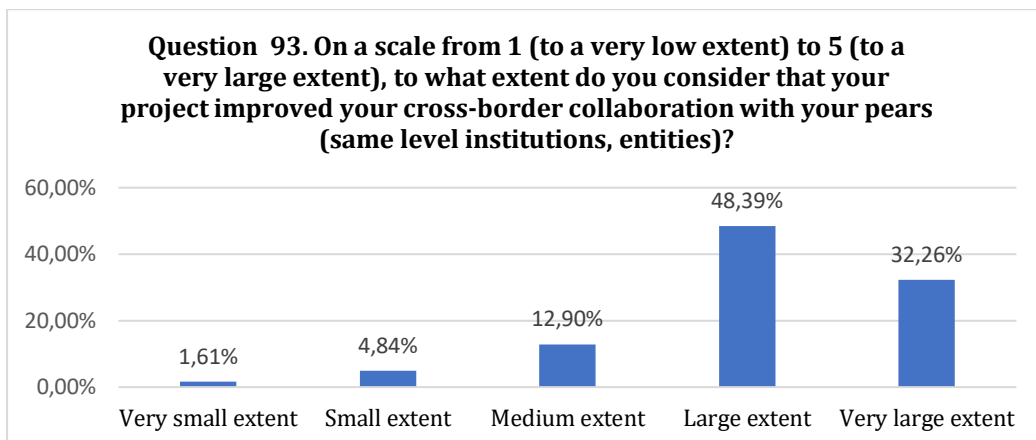
Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Local public authorities	8,06%	5	11,29%	7	32,26%	20	19,35%	12	27,42%	17	1,61%	1	62
Government public authorities represented in the programme area	9,68%	6	14,52%	9	27,42%	17	25,81%	16	17,74%	11	4,84%	3	62
Businesses	17,74%	11	9,68%	6	24,19%	15	29,03%	18	12,90%	8	6,45%	4	62
Civil society organisations	9,68%	6	12,90%	8	19,35%	12	27,42%	17	17,74%	11	4,84%	3	62



Question 93. On a scale from 1 (to a very low extent) to 5 (to a very large extent), to what extent do you consider that your project improved your cross-border collaboration with your peers (same level institutions, entities)?

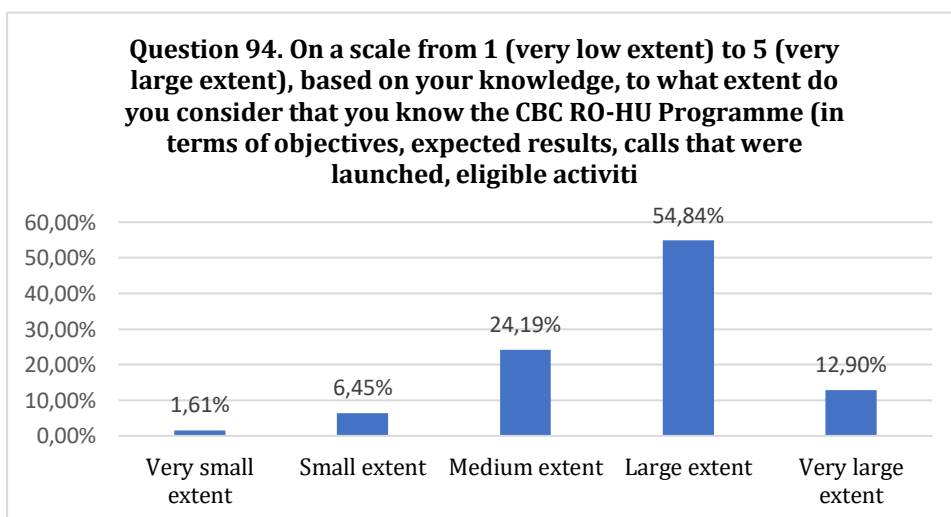
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	1,61%	1
Small extent	4,84%	3
Medium extent	12,90%	8
Large extent	48,39%	30

Very large extent	32,26%	20
	Total	62



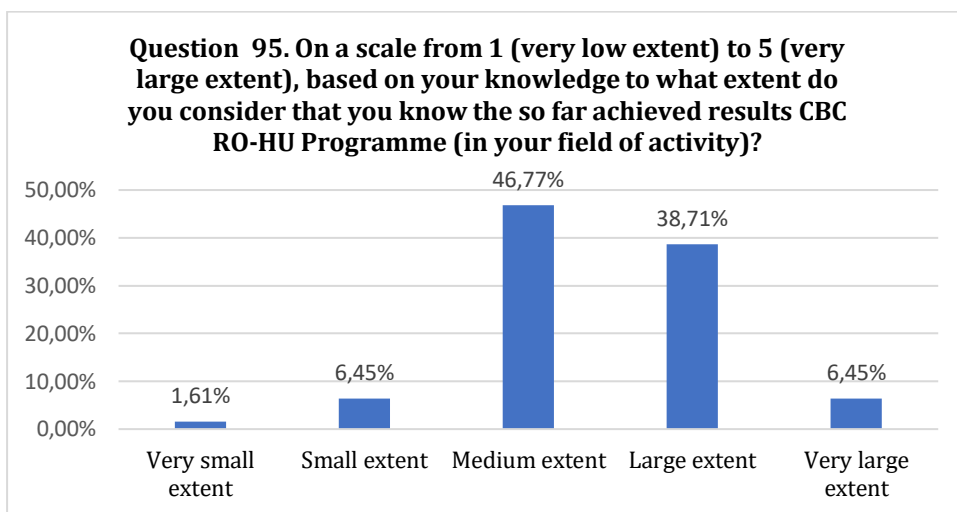
Question 94. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), based on your knowledge, to what extent do you consider that you know the CBC RO-HU Programme (in terms of objectives, expected results, calls that were launched, eligible activities) (in your field of activity)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	1,61%	1
Small extent	6,45%	4
Medium extent	24,19%	15
Large extent	54,84%	34
Very large extent	12,90%	8
	Total	62



Question 95. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), based on your knowledge to what extent do you consider that you know the so far achieved results CBC RO-HU Programme (in your field of activity)?

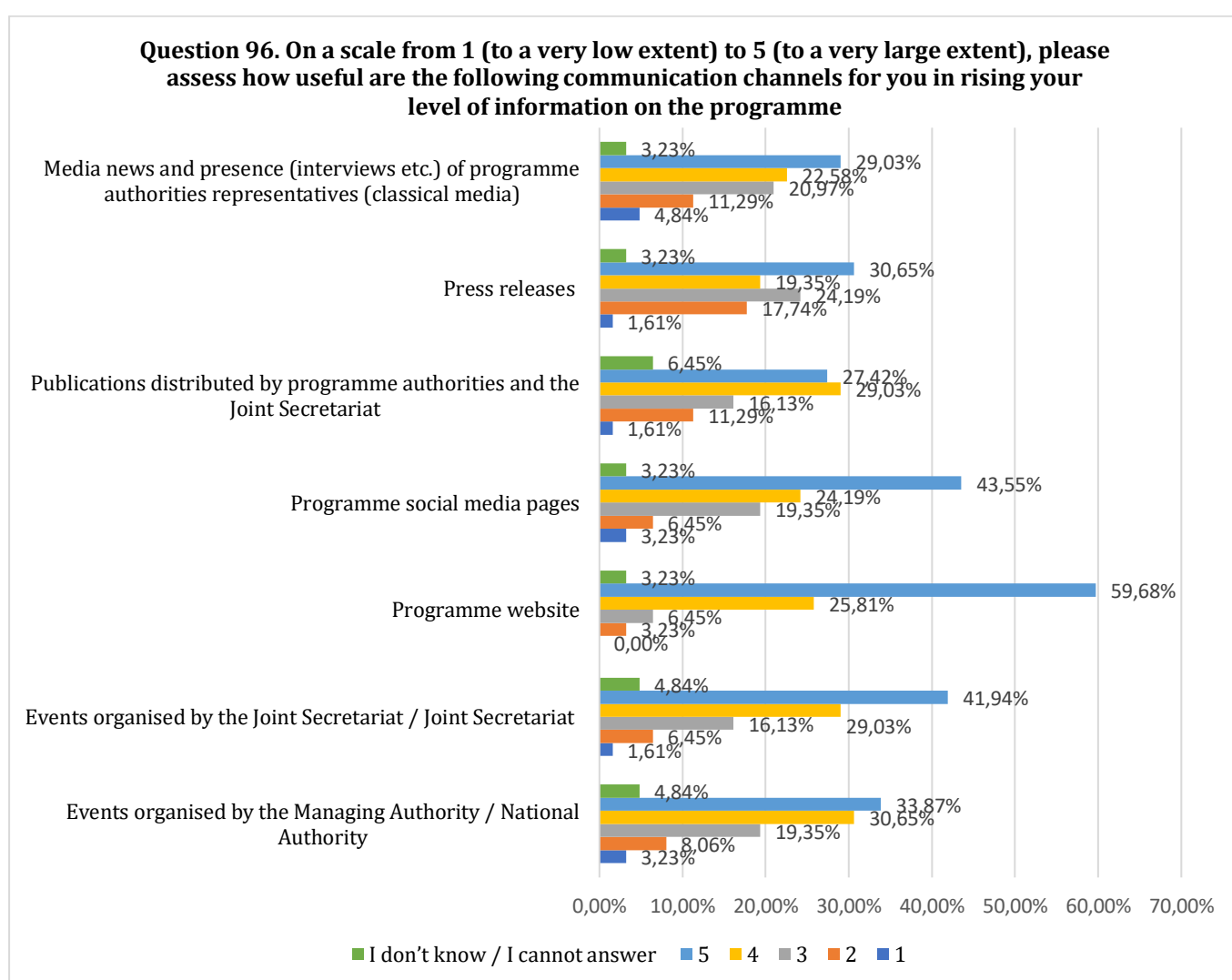
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	1,61%	1
Small extent	6,45%	4
Medium extent	46,77%	29
Large extent	38,71%	24
Very large extent	6,45%	4
	Total	62



Question 96. On a scale from 1 (to a very low extent) to 5 (to a very large extent), please assess how useful are the following communication channels for you in rising your level of information on the programme

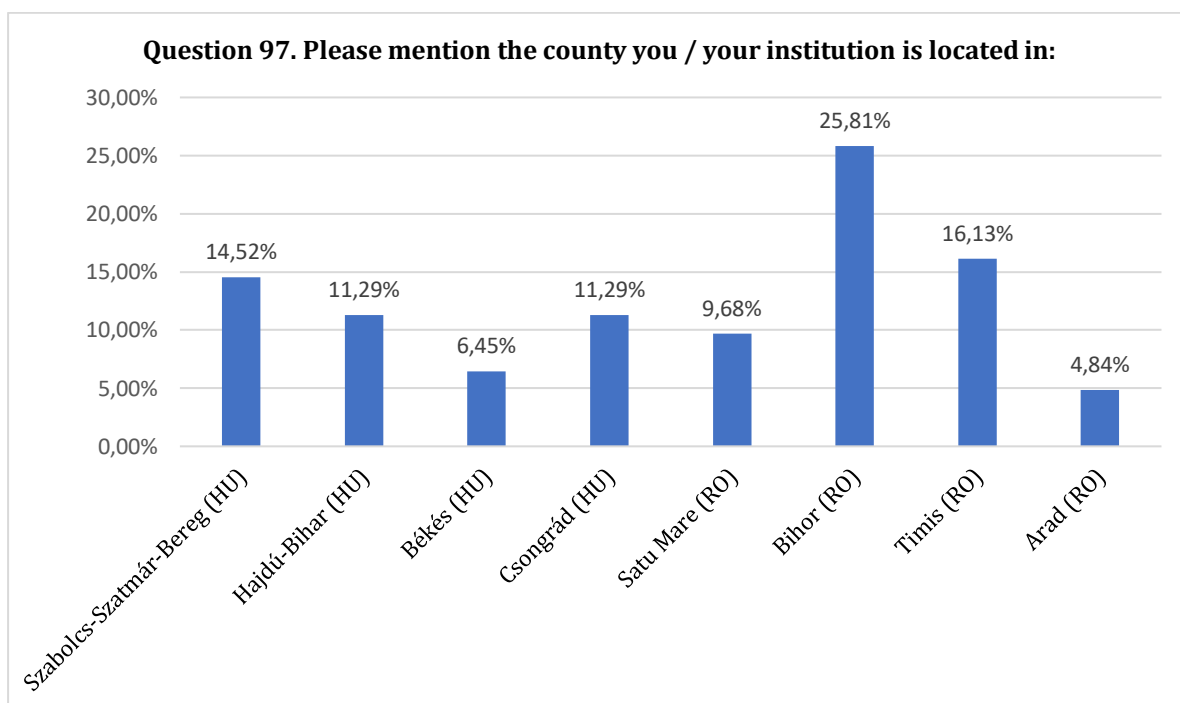
Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Events organised by the Managing Authority / National Authority	3,23%	2	8,06%	5	19,35%	12	30,65%	19	33,87%	21	4,84%	3	62
Events organised by the Joint Secretariat / Joint Secretariat	1,61%	1	6,45%	4	16,13%	10	29,03%	18	41,94%	26	4,84%	3	62
Programme website	0,00%	0	3,23%	2	6,45%	4	25,81%	16	59,68%	37	3,23%	2	62
Programme social media pages	3,23%	2	6,45%	4	19,35%	12	24,19%	15	43,55%	27	3,23%	2	62

Publications distributed by programme authorities and the Joint Secretariat	1,61%	1	11,29%	7	16,13%	10	29,03%	18	27,42%	17	6,45%	4	62
Press releases	1,61%	1	17,74%	11	24,19%	15	19,35%	12	30,65%	19	3,23%	2	62
Media news and presence (interviews etc.) of programme authorities representatives (classical media)	4,84%	3	11,29%	7	20,97%	13	22,58%	14	29,03%	18	3,23%	2	62



Question 97. Please mention the county you / your institution is located in:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (HU)	14,52%	9
Hajdú-Bihar (HU)	11,29%	7
Békés (HU)	6,45%	4
Csongrád (HU)	11,29%	7
Satu Mare (RO)	9,68%	6
Bihor (RO)	25,81%	16
Timis (RO)	16,13%	10
Arad (RO)	4,84%	3
	Total	62

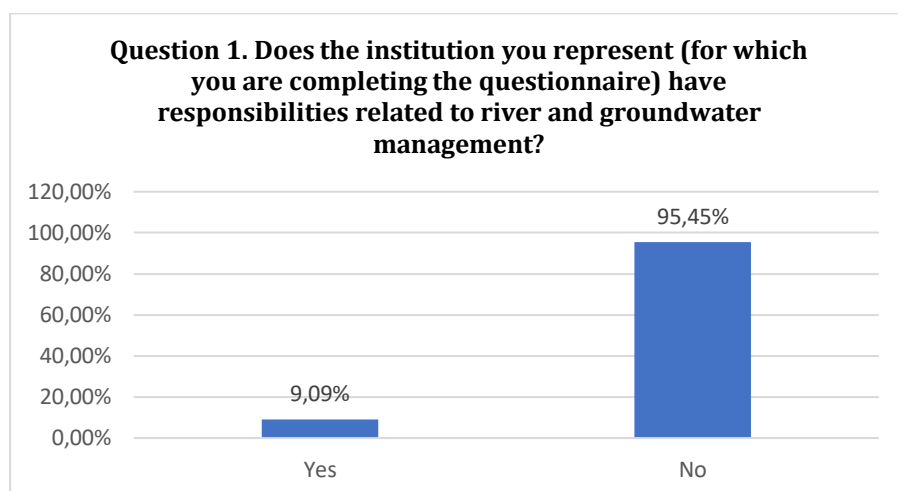


Survey addressed to programme stakeholders

1. S.O. 1.1 Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground waters

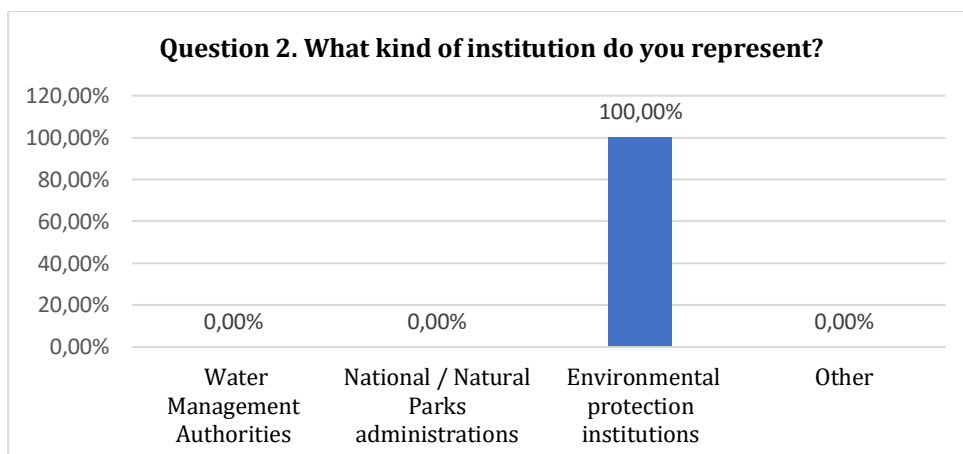
Question 1. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing the questionnaire) have responsibilities related to river and groundwater management?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	9,09%	2
No	95,45%	21
	Total	22



Question 2. What kind of institution do you represent?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Water Management Authorities	0,00%	0
National / Natural Parks administrations	0,00%	0
Environmental protection institutions	100,00%	1
Other	0,00%	0
	Total	1



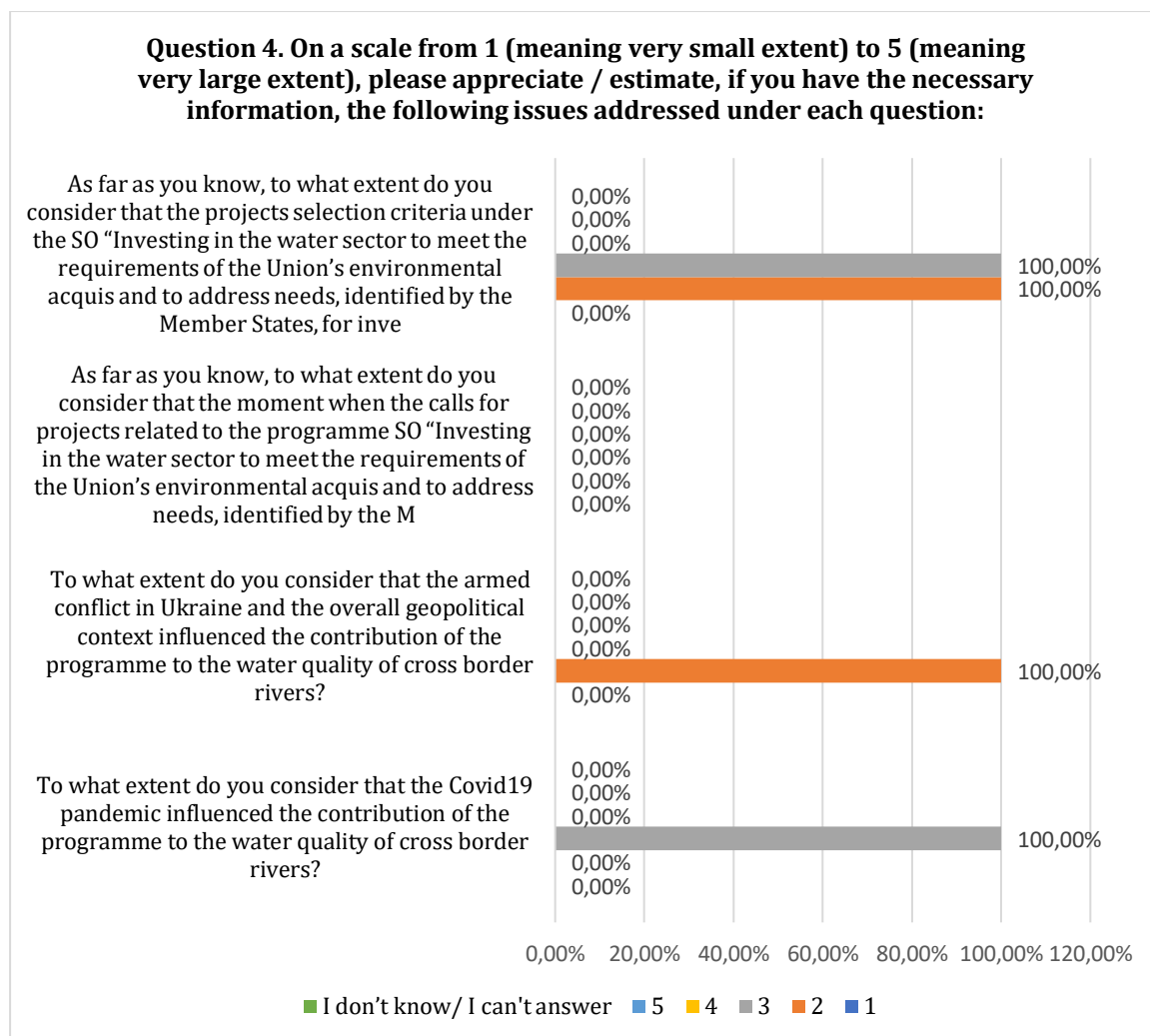
Question 3. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		Total	Weighted Average
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	100,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1	3

Question 4. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/ I can't answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the water quality of cross border rivers?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	100,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the water quality of cross border rivers?	0,00%	0	100,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1

As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO "Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements" were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period ?	0,00%	0	100,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements" allowed for a successful implementation of projects (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	100,00%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	1

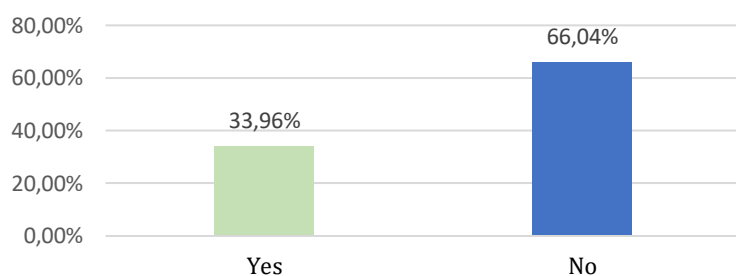


2. S.O. 1.2 Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area

Question 5. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing the questionnaire) have responsibilities related to the management or protection of natural, historical or cultural heritage?

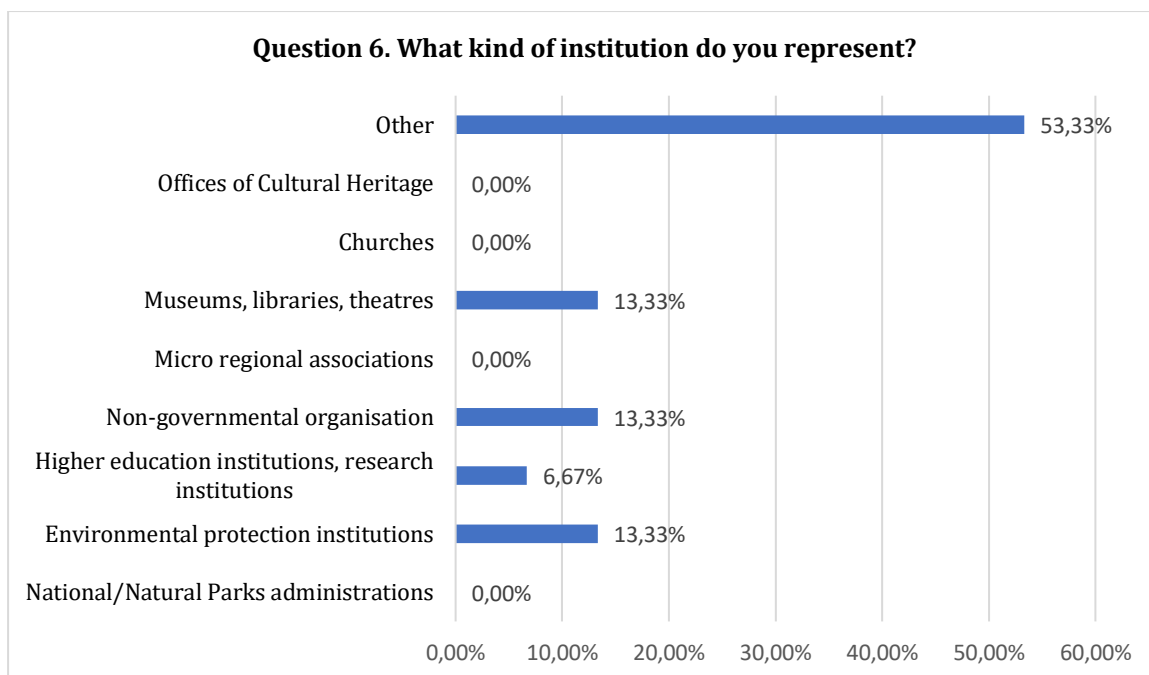
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	33,96%	18
No	66,04%	35
	Total	53

**Question 5. Does the institution you represent
(for which you are completing the questionnaire)
have responsibilities related to the management
or protection of natural, historical or cultural
heritage?**



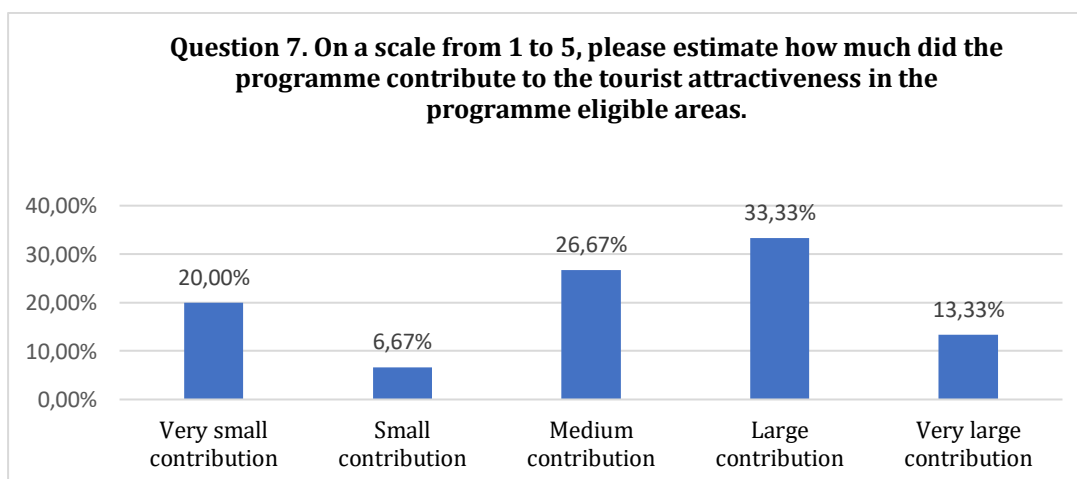
Question 6. What kind of institution do you represent?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
National/Natural Parks administrations	0,00%	0
Environmental protection institutions	13,33%	2
Higher education institutions, research institutions	6,67%	1
Non-governmental organisation	13,33%	2
Micro regional associations	0,00%	0
Museums, libraries, theatres	13,33%	2
Churches	0,00%	0
Offices of Cultural Heritage	0,00%	0
Other	53,33%	8
	Total	15



Question 7. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the tourist attractiveness in the programme eligible areas.

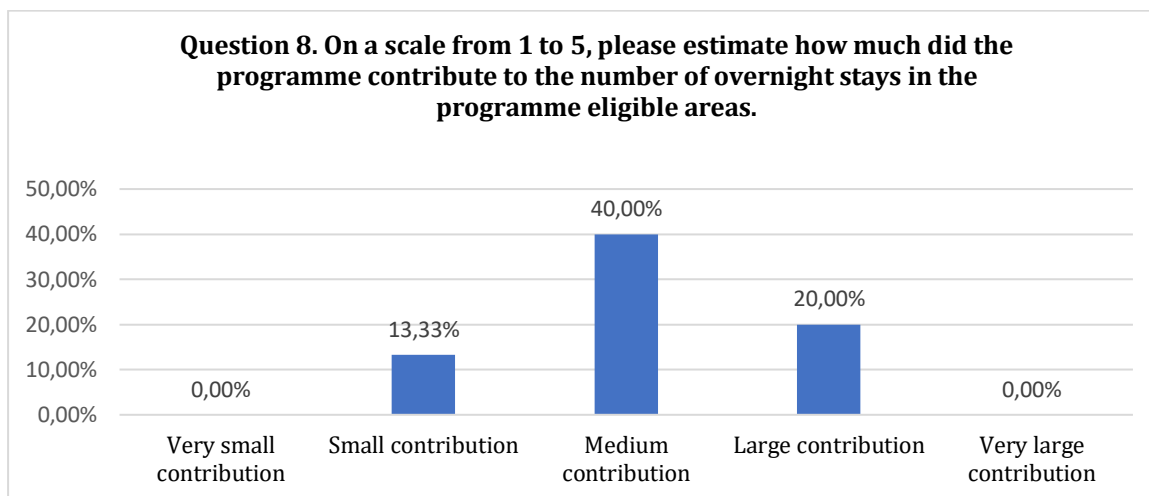
	1.Very small contribution		2.Small contribution		3.Medium contribution		4.Large contribution		5.Very large contribution		Total	Weighted Average
Percent	20,00%	3	6,67%	1	26,67%	4	33,33%	5	13,33%	2	15	3



Question 8. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the number of overnight stays in the programme eligible areas.

	1.Very small contribution	2.Small contribution	3.Medium contribution	4.Large contribution	5.Very large contribution	Total	Weighted Average
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Percent	26,67%	4	13,33%	2	40,00%	6	20,00%	3	0,00%	0	15	3
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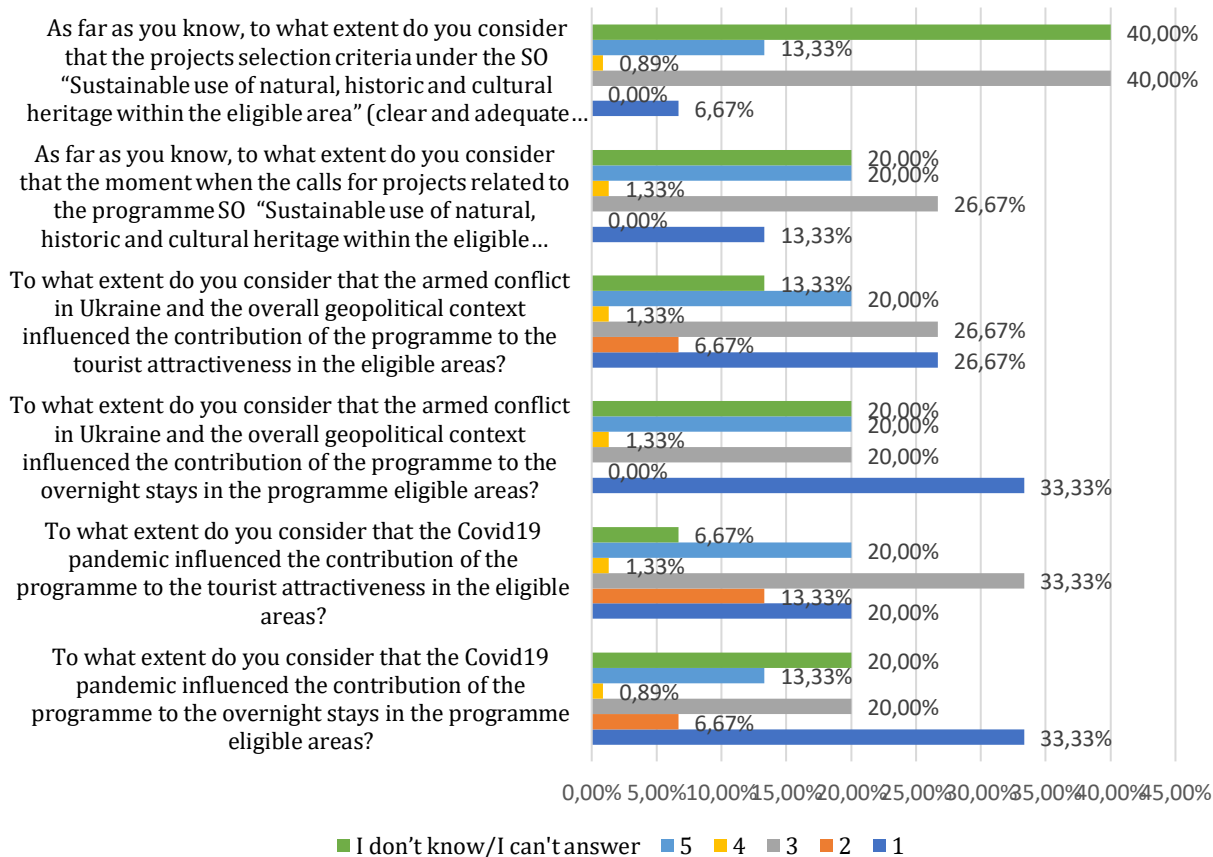
Question 9. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the overnight stays in the programme eligible areas?	33,33%	5	6,67%	1	20,00%	3	0,89%	1	13,33%	2	20,00%	3	15
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the tourist attractiveness in the eligible areas?	20,00%	3	13,33%	2	33,33%	5	1,33%	1	20,00%	3	6,67%	1	15

To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the overnight stays in the programme eligible areas?	33,33%	5	0,00%	0	20,00%	3	1,33%	1	20,00%	3	20,00%	3	15
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the tourist attractiveness in the eligible areas?	26,67%	4	6,67%	1	26,67%	4	1,33%	1	20,00%	3	13,33%	2	15
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO "Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within the eligible area" were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?	13,33%	2	0,00%	0	26,67%	4	1,33%	3	20,00%	3	20,00%	3	15

As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within the eligible area" (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	6,67%	1	0,00%	0	40,00%	6	0,89%	0	13,33%	2	40,00%	6	15
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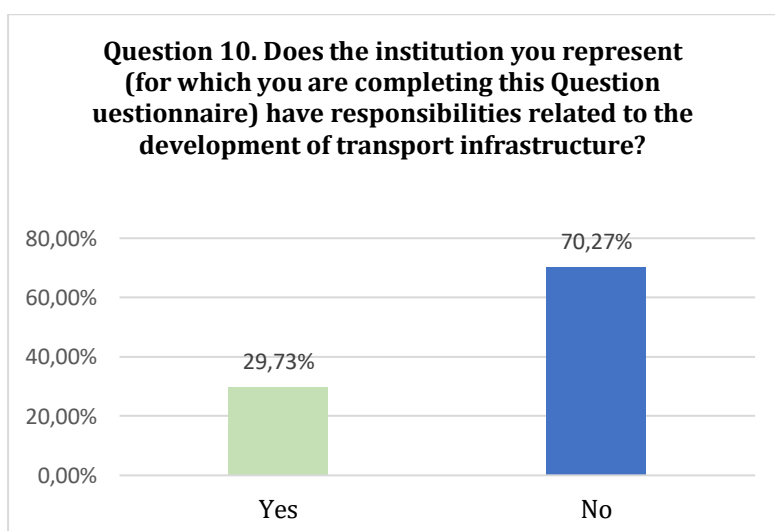
Question 9. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



3. **S.O 2.1 Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure**

Question 10. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing this Questionnaire) have responsibilities related to the development of transport infrastructure?

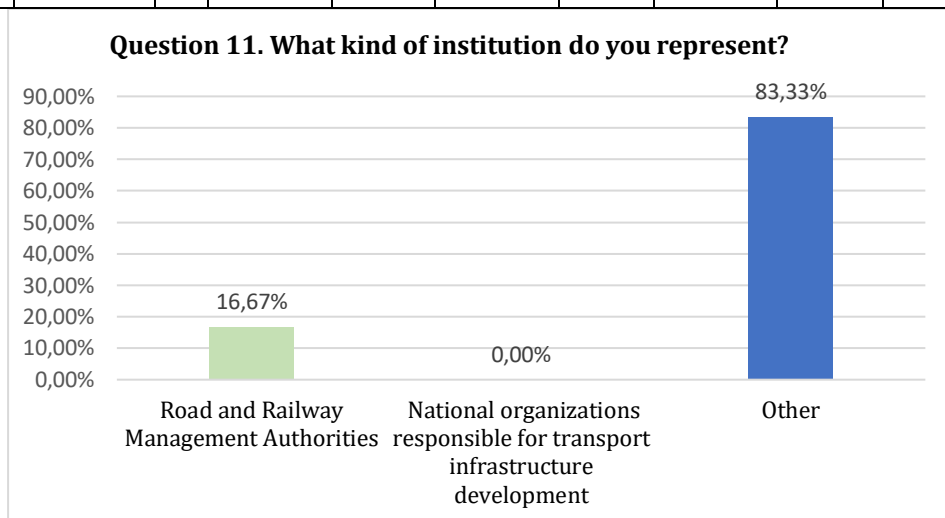
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	29,73%	11
No	70,27%	26
	Total	37



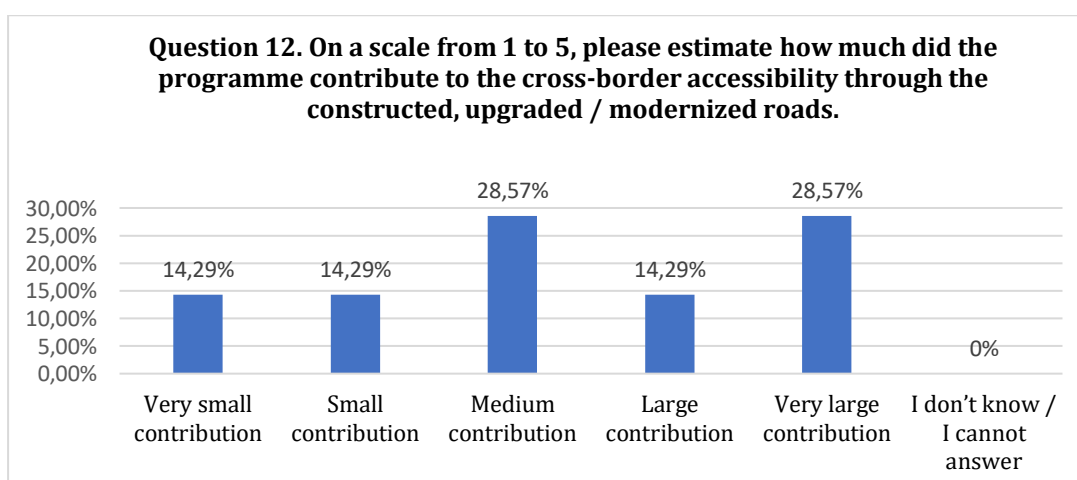
Question 11. What kind of institution do you represent?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Road and Railway Management Authorities	16,67%	1
National organizations responsible for transport infrastructure development	0,00%	0
Other	83,33%	5
	Total	6

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Percent	14,29%	1	14,29%	1	28,57%	2	14,29%	1	28,57%	2	0,00%	0	7



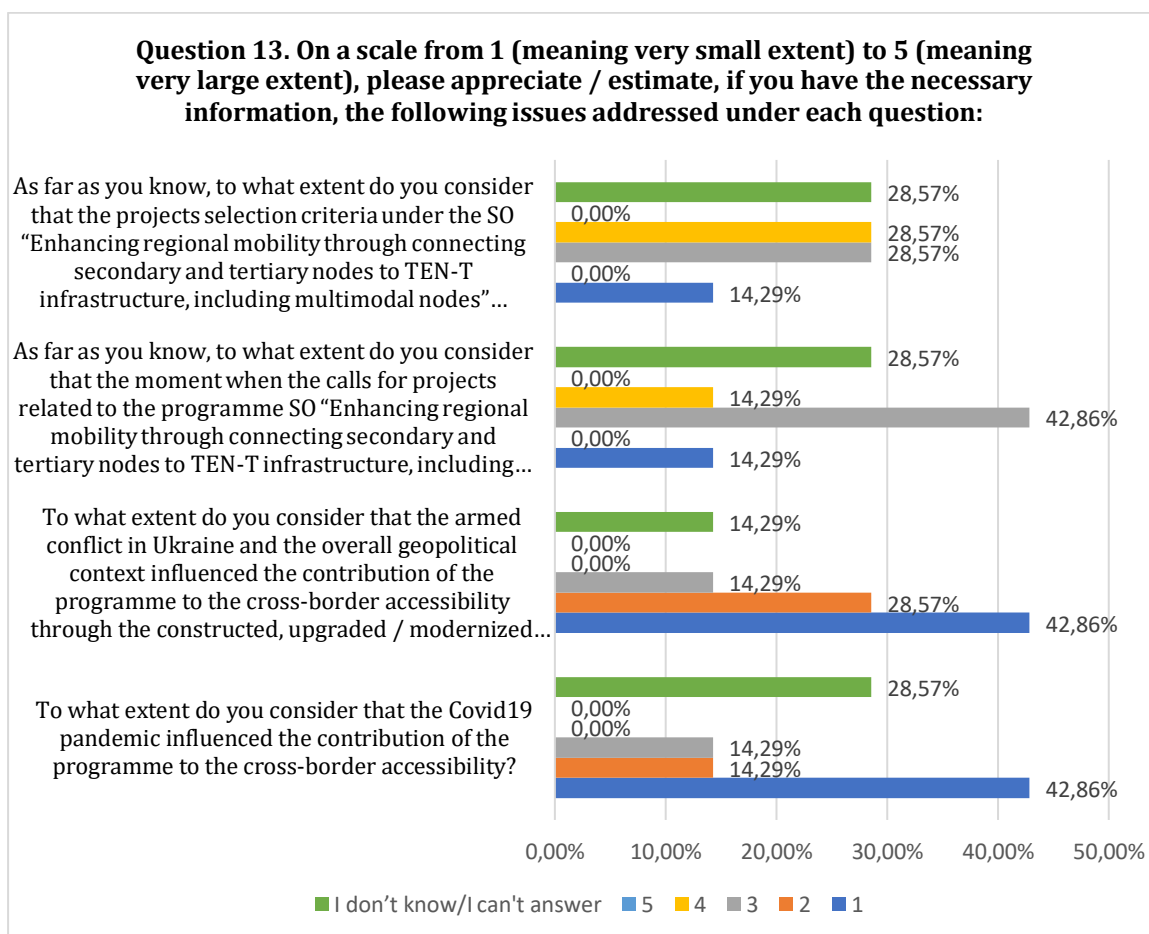
Question 12. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded / modernized roads.



Question 13. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the cross-border accessibility?	42,86%	3	14,29%	1	14,29%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	28,57%	2	7
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the cross-border accessibility through the constructed, upgraded / modernized roads?	42,86%	3	28,57%	2	14,29%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	14,29%	1	7
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO “Enhancing regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes” were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?	14,29%	1	0,00%	0	42,86%	3	14,29%	1	0,00%	0	28,57%	2	7

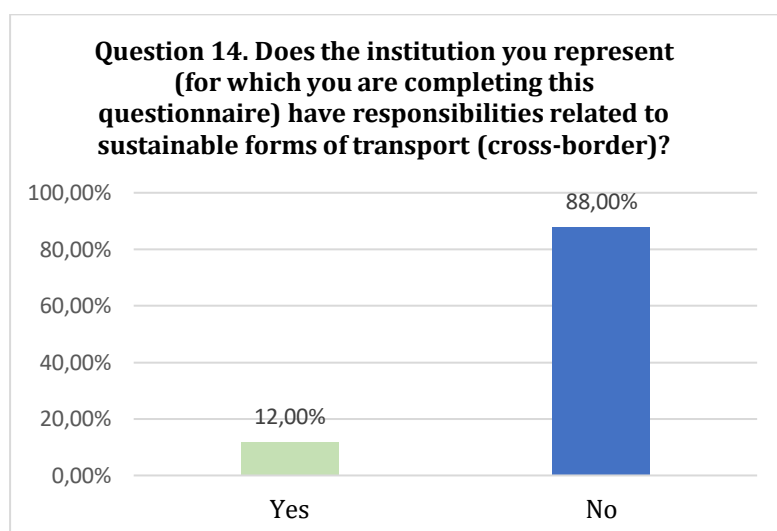
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Enhancing regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes" (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	14,29%	1	0,00%	0	28,57%	2	28,57%	2	0,00%	0	28,57%	2	7
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4. S.O 2.2: Increased the proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport

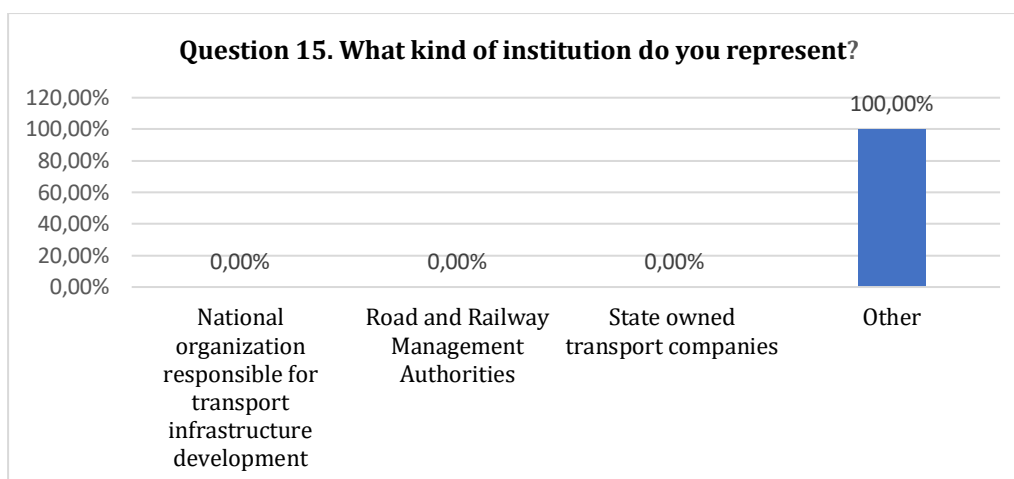
Question 14. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing this questionnaire) have responsibilities related to sustainable forms of transport (cross-border)?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	12,00%	3
No	88,00%	22
	Total	25



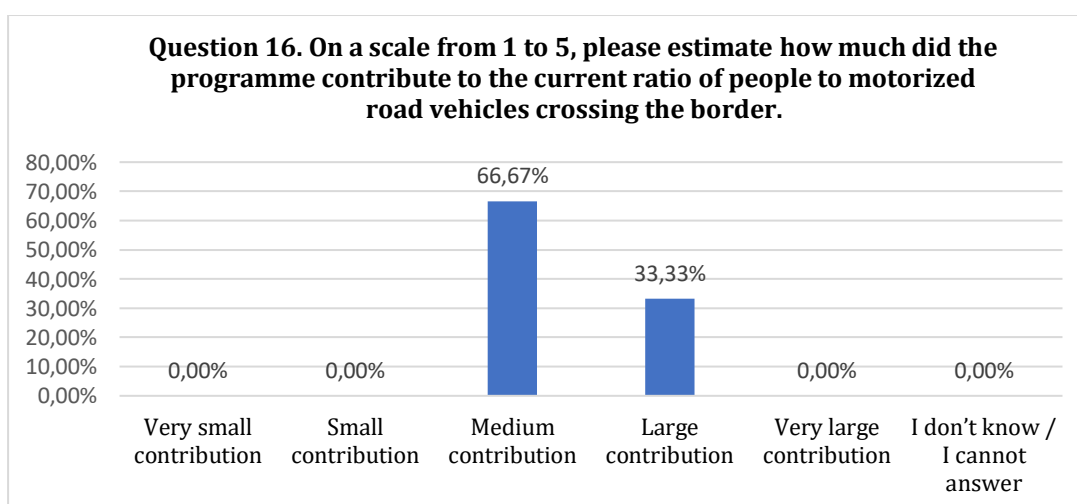
Question 15. What kind of institution do you represent?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
National organization responsible for transport infrastructure development	0,00%	0
Road and Railway Management Authorities	0,00%	0
State owned transport companies	0,00%	0
Other	100,00%	3
	Total	3



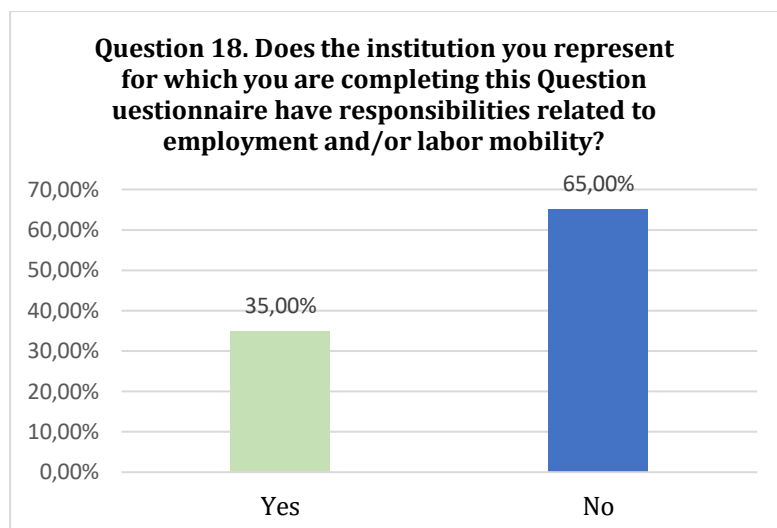
Question 16. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the current ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border.

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		I don't know / I cannot answer	Total	Weighted Average
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	66,67%	2	33,33%	1	0,00%	0	3	0	3



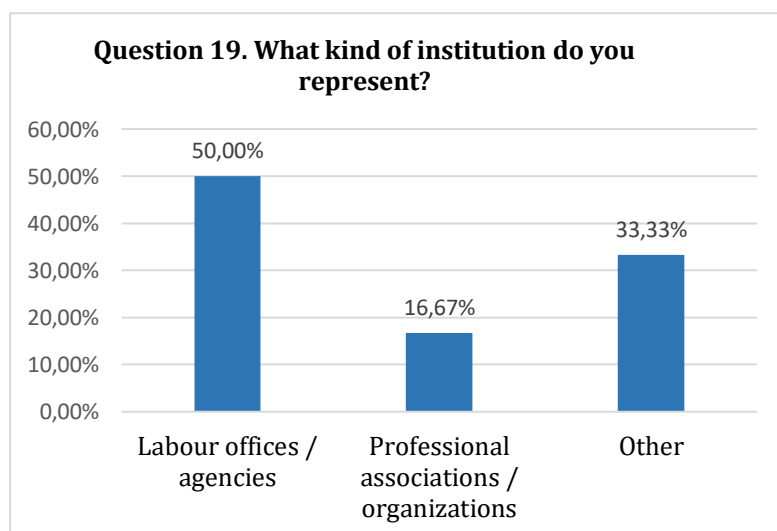
Question 17. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know / I can not answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	66,67%	2	0,00%	0	3
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the current ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	66,67%	2	0,00%	0	3
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO "Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility" were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	33,33%	1	3
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise), and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	0,00%	0	33,33%	1	33,33%	1	3



Question 19. What kind of institution do you represent?

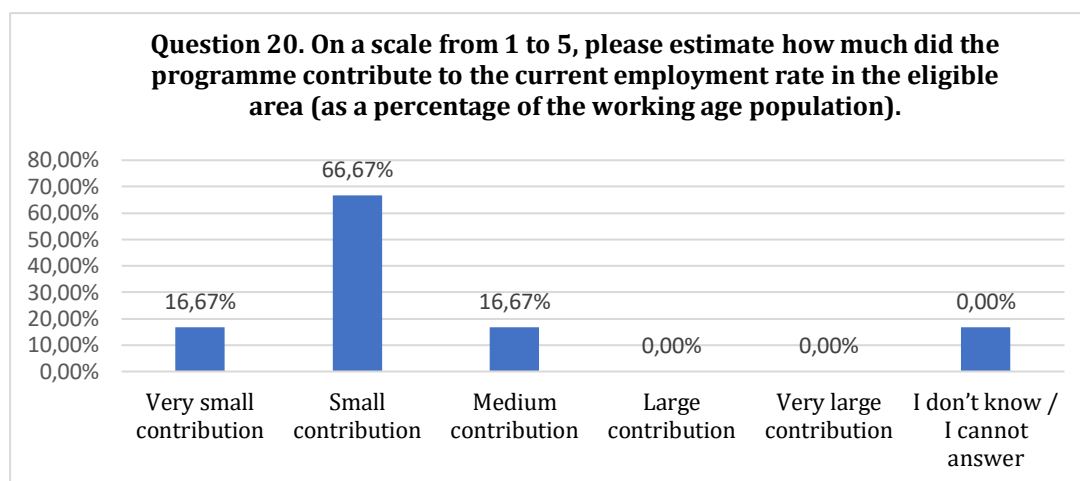
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Labour offices / agencies	50,00%	3
Professional associations / organizations	16,67%	1
Other	33,33%	2
	Total	6



Question 20. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the current employment rate in the eligible area (as a percentage of the working age population).

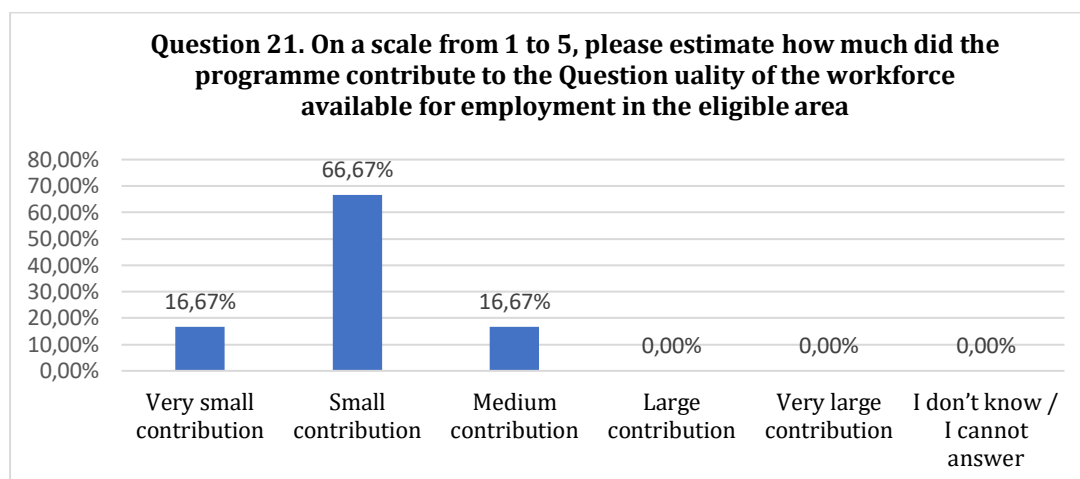
Answer Choices	Very small contribution	Small contribution	Medium contribution	Large contribution	Very large contribution	I don't know / I cannot answer	Total
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Percent	16,67%	1	66,67%	4	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	6
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Question 21. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the Question quality of the workforce available for employment in the eligible area.

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		I don't know / I cannot answer		Total
Percent	16,67%	1	66,67%	4	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	6



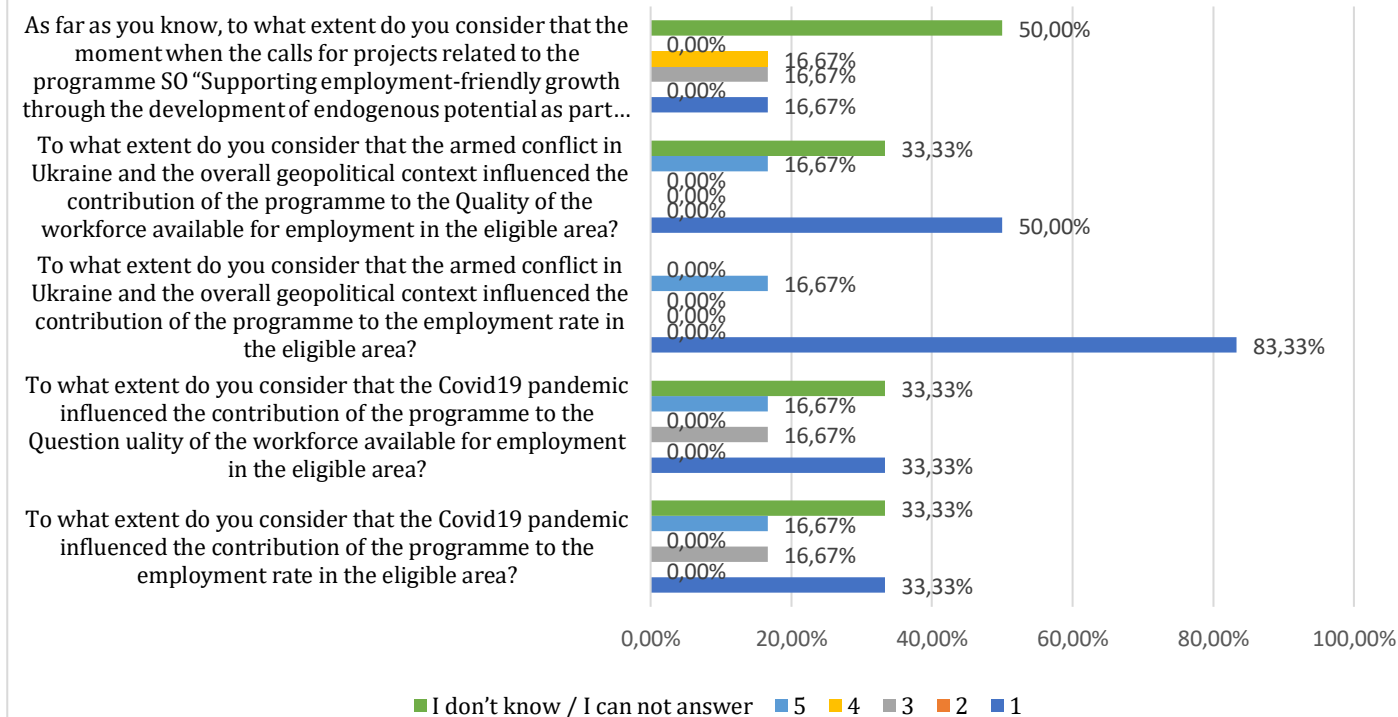
Question 22. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know / I can not answer	Total
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To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the employment rate in the eligible area?	33,33%	2	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	33,33%	2	6
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the Question uality of the workforce available for employment in the eligible area?	33,33%	2	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	33,33%	2	6
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the employment rate in the eligible area?	83,33%	5	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	6
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the Quality of the workforce available for employment in the eligible area?	50,00%	3	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	33,33%	2	6
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO "Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources" were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	50,00%	3	6

As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources" (clear, adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	16,67%	1	0,00%	0	33,33%	2	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	50,00%	3	6
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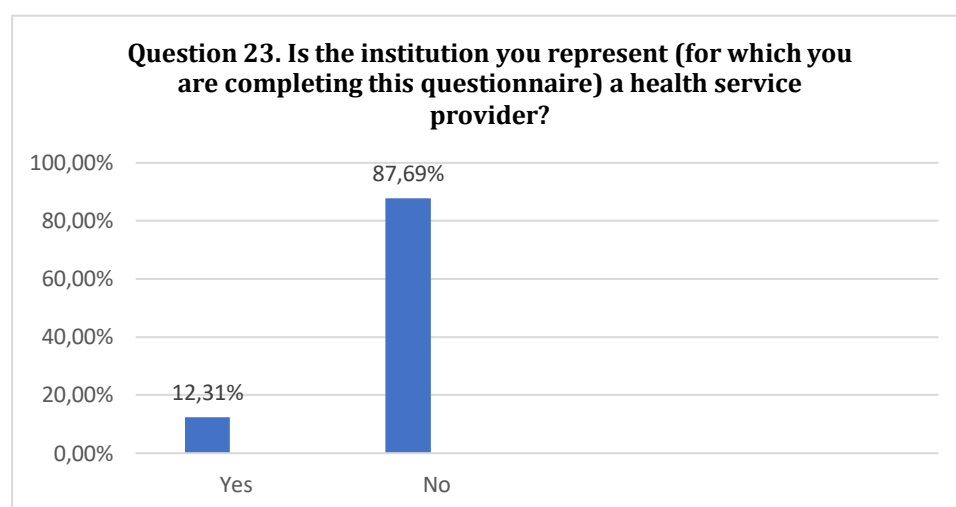
Question 22. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



6. S.O 4.1: Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area

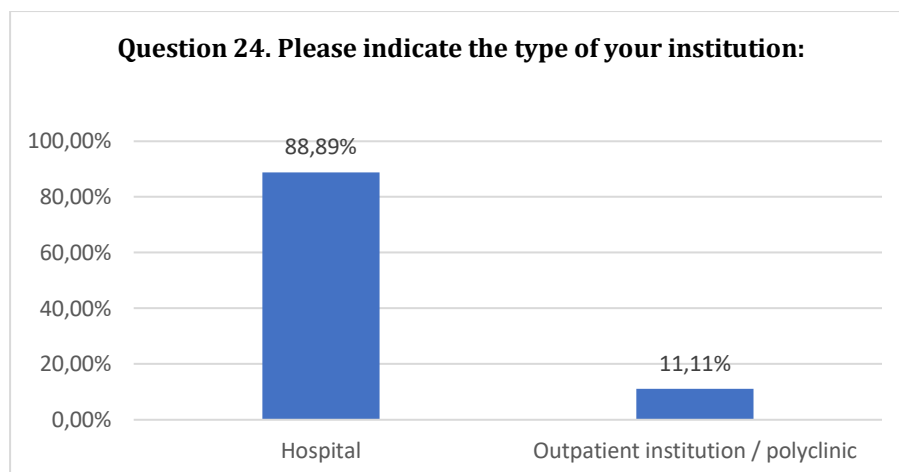
Question 23. Is the institution you represent (for which you are completing this questionnaire) a health service provider?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	12,31%	16
No	87,69%	114
	Total	130



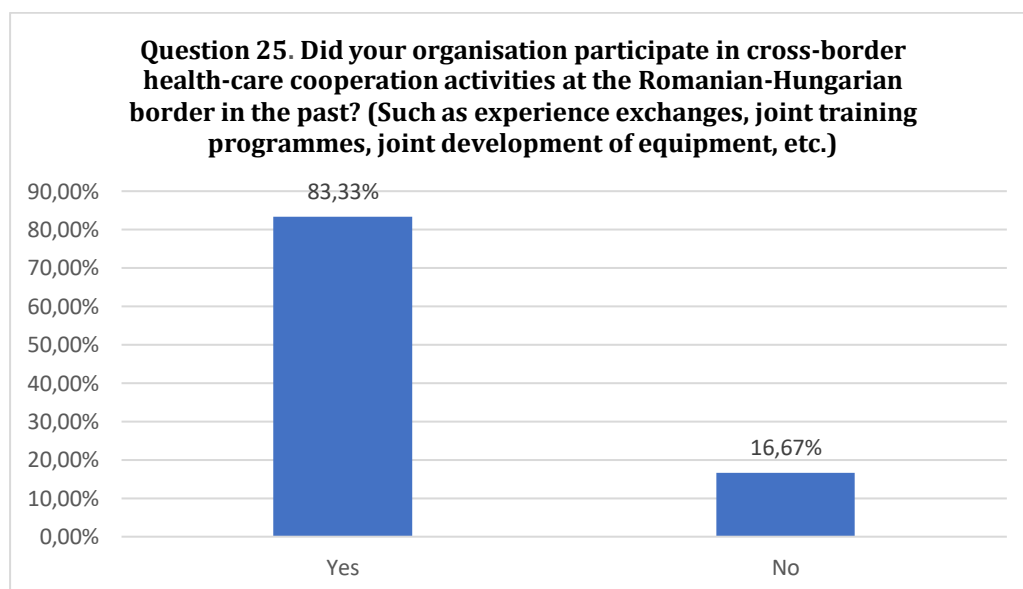
Question 24. Please indicate the type of your institution:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Hospital	88,89%	8
Outpatient institution / polyclinic	11,11%	1
	Total	9



Question 25. Did your organisation participate in cross-border health-care cooperation activities at the Romanian-Hungarian border in the past? (Such as experience exchanges, joint training programmes, joint development of equipment, etc.)

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	83,33%	8
No	16,67%	1
	Total	9



Question 26. Would you consider cooperation in this area in the future useful?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	100,00%	12

No	0,00%	0
I don't know	0,00%	0
	Total	12

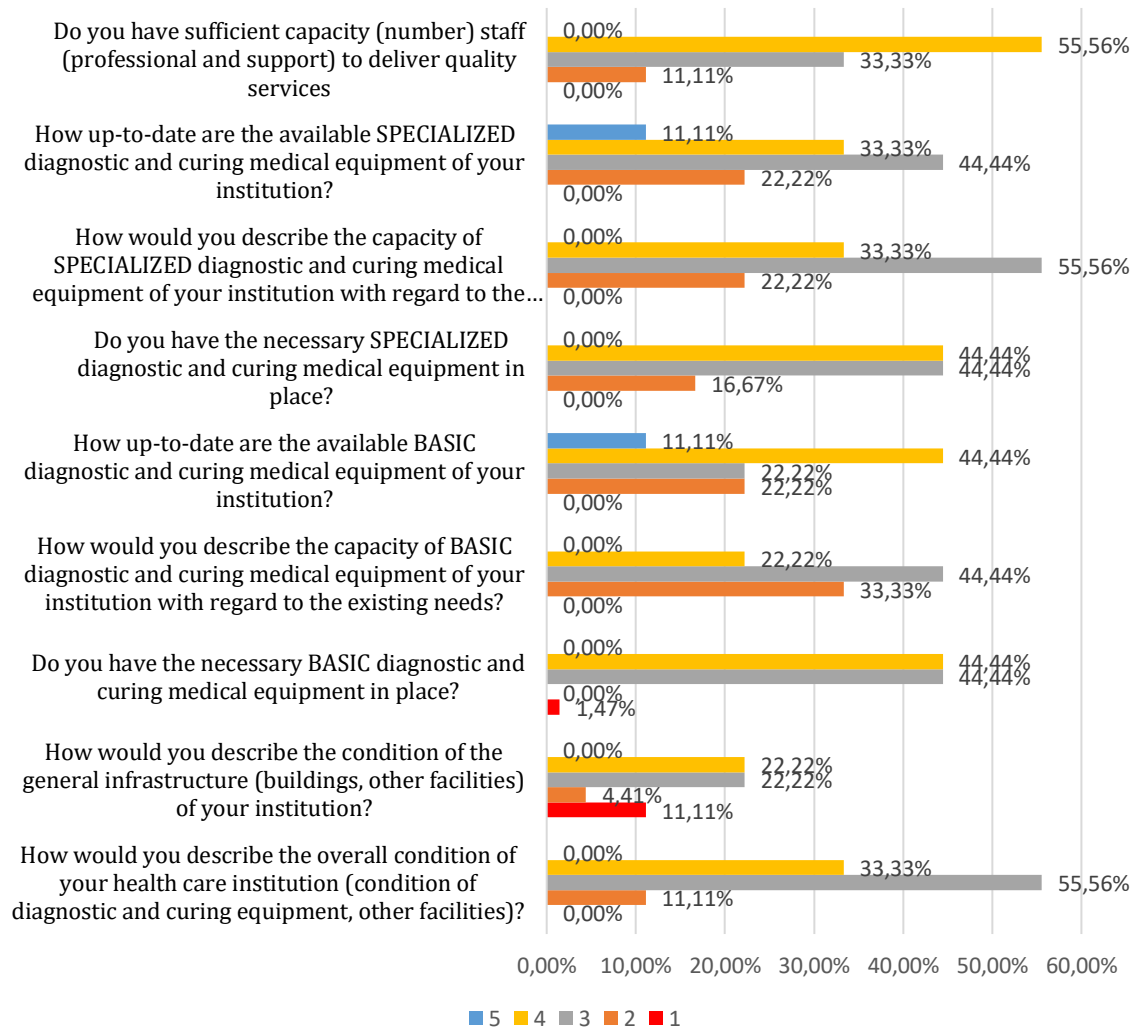
Question 27. On a scale from 1 to 5, please appreciate / estimate the following issues addressed under each question:

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
How would you describe the overall condition of your health care institution (condition of diagnostic and curing equipment, other facilities)? (1 meaning "Poor" and 5 meaning "Excellent")	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	55,56%	5	33,33%	3	0,00%	0	9
How would you describe the condition of the general infrastructure (buildings, other facilities) of your institution?	11,11%	1	4,41%	3	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	0,00%	0	9
Do you have the necessary BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place? (1 meaning "We lack many basic diagnostic and curing medical equipment" and 5 meaning "We have all the necessary diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place")	1,47%	1	0,00%	0	44,44%	4	44,44%	4	0,00%	0	9

How would you describe the capacity of BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution with regard to the existing needs? (1 meaning "The capacity is far from sufficient, we struggle to meet even the basic needs" and 5 meaning "The capacity of these equipment is appropriate, we can meet the needs in our service area")	0,00%	0	33,33%	3	44,44%	4	22,22%	2	0,00%	0	9
How up-to-date are the available BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution? (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	22,22%	2	44,44%	4	11,11%	1	9
Do you have the necessary SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place? (1 meaning "We lack many SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment" and 5 meaning "We have all the necessary SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place")	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	44,44%	4	44,44%	4	0,00%	0	9

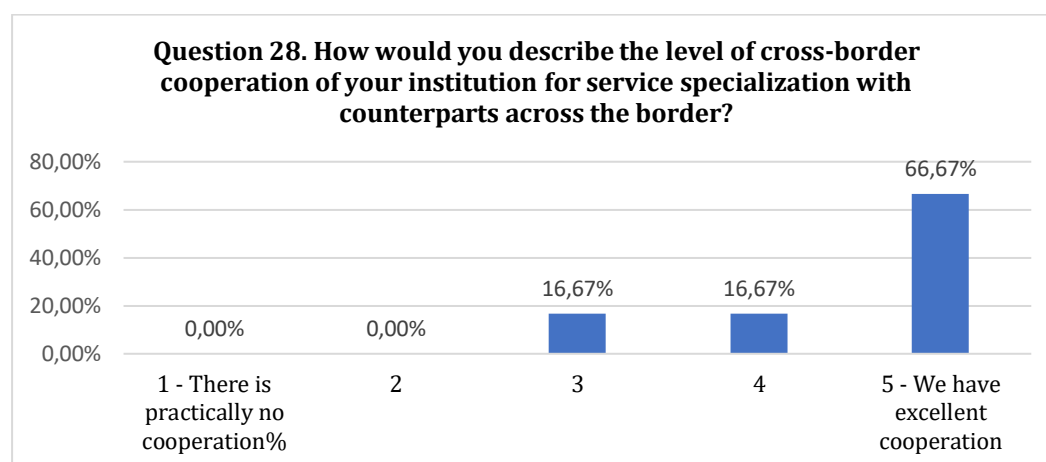
How would you describe the capacity of SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution with regard to the existing needs? (1 meaning "The capacity is far from sufficient, we struggle to meet even the basic needs" and 5 meaning "The capacity of these equipment is appropriate, we can meet the needs in our service area")	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	55,56%	5	33,33%	3	0,00%	0	9
How up-to-date are the available SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution? (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	0,00%	0	22,22%	2	44,44%	4	33,33%	3	11,11%	1	9
Do you have sufficient capacity (number) staff (professional and support) to deliver quality services? (1 meaning "We lack many people, we struggle to provide appropriate services" and 5 meaning "We have appropriate capacity of staff")	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	33,33%	3	55,56%	5	0,00%	0	9

Question 27. On a scale from 1 to 5, please appreciate / estimate the following issues addressed under each question



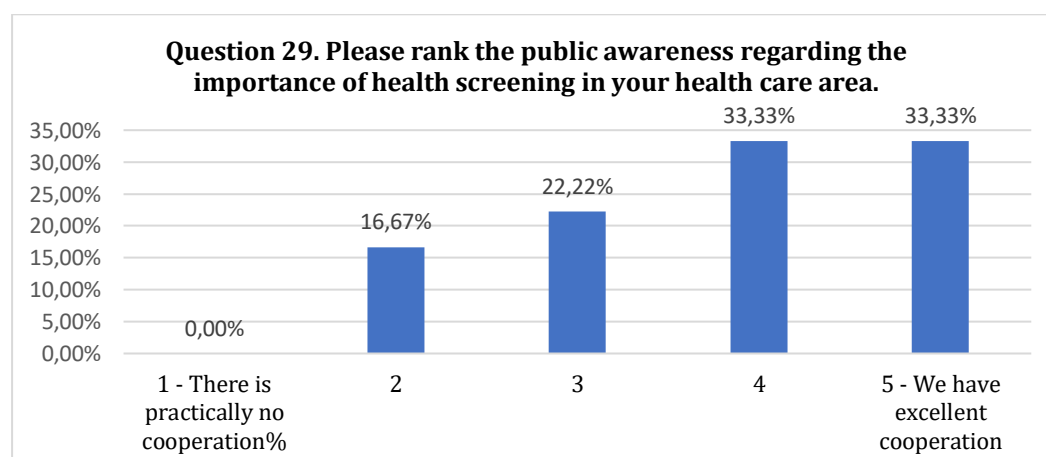
Question 28. How would you describe the level of cross-border cooperation of your institution for service specialization with counterparts across the border?

Answer Choices	1 - There is practically no cooperation		2		3		4		5 - We have excellent cooperation		Total	Weighted Average
Percent	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	16,67%	4	66,67%	4	6	4,5
											Total	6



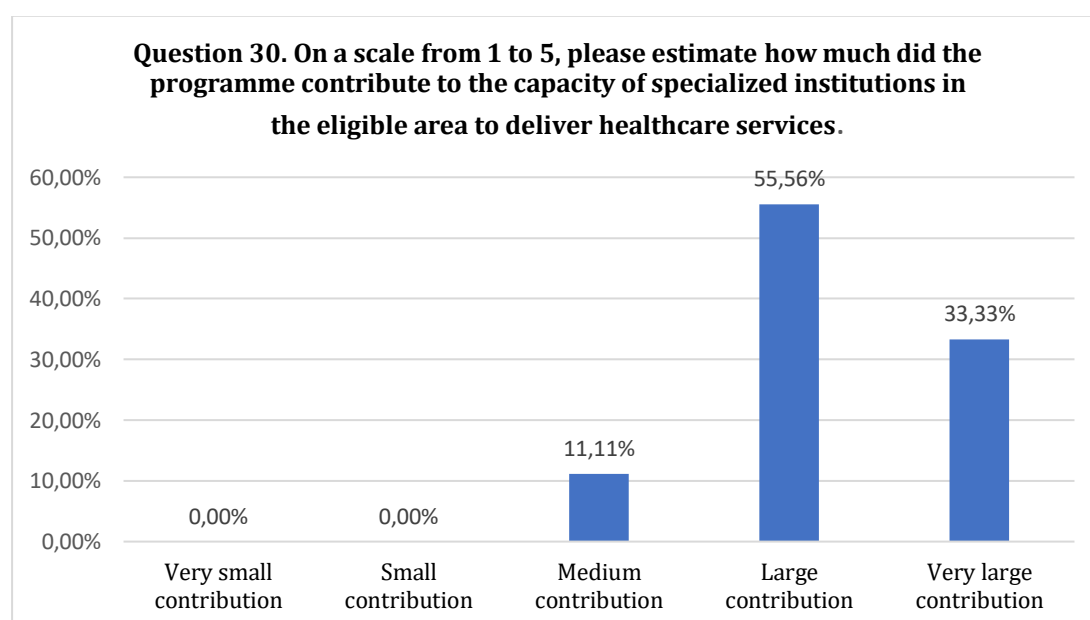
Question 29. Please rank the public awareness regarding the importance of health screening in your health care area.

	1 - Very week		2		3		4		5 - Excellent		Total	Weighted Average
Percent	0,00%	0	16,67%	1	22,22%	2	33,33%	3	33,33%	3	9	4
											Total	9



Question 30. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the capacity of specialized institutions in the eligible area to deliver healthcare services.

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small contribution	0,00%	0
Small contribution	0,00%	0
Medium contribution	11,11%	1
Large contribution	55,56%	5
Very large contribution	33,33%	3
	Total	9



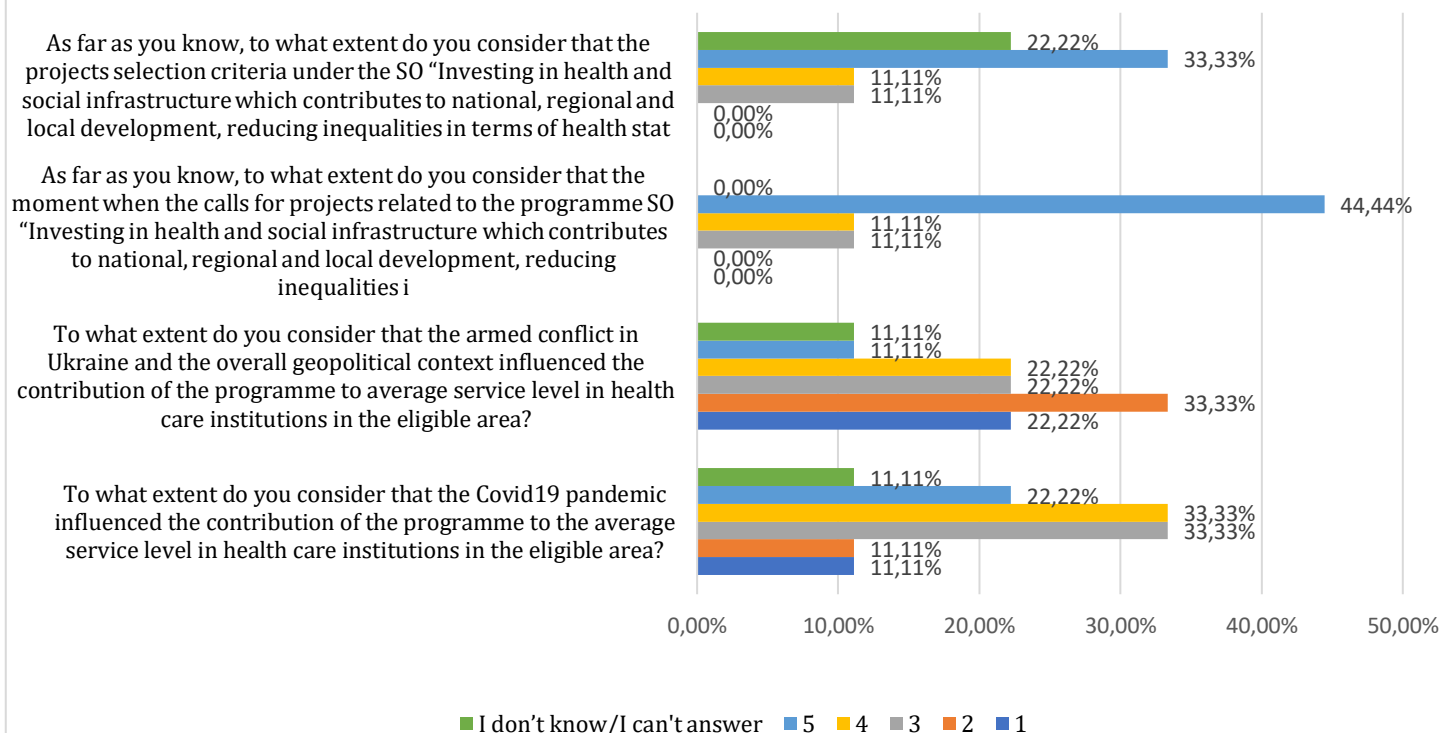
Question 31. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know/I	Total	Weighted Average
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											can't answer			
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area?	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	33,33%	3	33,33%	1	22,22%	2	11,11%	1	9	2,8
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area?	22,22%	2	33,33%	3	22,22%	2	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	11,11%	1	9	2,4
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” were	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	44,44%	4	44,44%	4	0,00%	0	9	4,5

timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?															
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO “Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services” (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	11,11%	1	33,33%	3	33,33%	3	22,22%	2	9	4,5	
													Total	9	

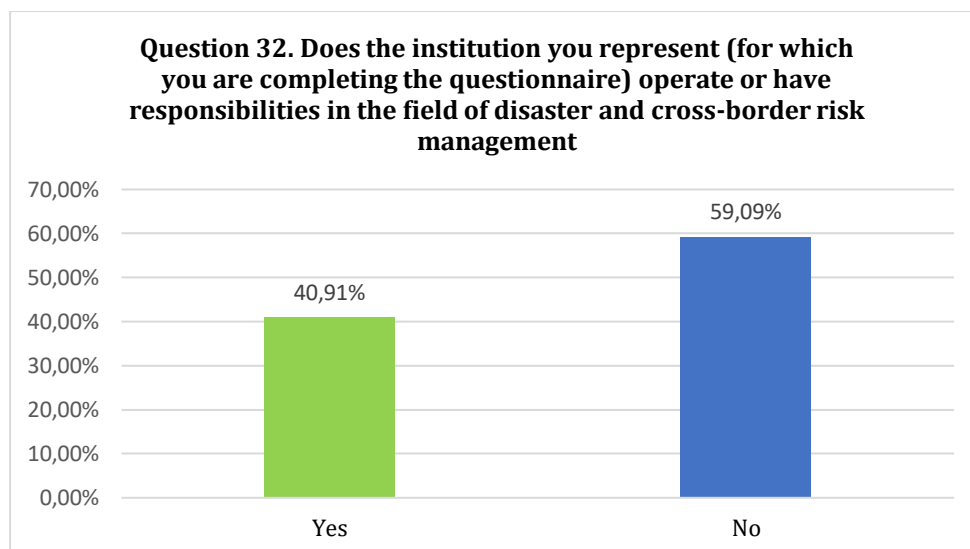
Question 31. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:



7. *S.O 5.1: Improved cross-border disasters and risk management*

Question 32. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing the questionnaire) operate or have responsibilities in the field of disaster and cross-border risk management (member bodies of committees for disaster management and response to emergency situations, at county level)?

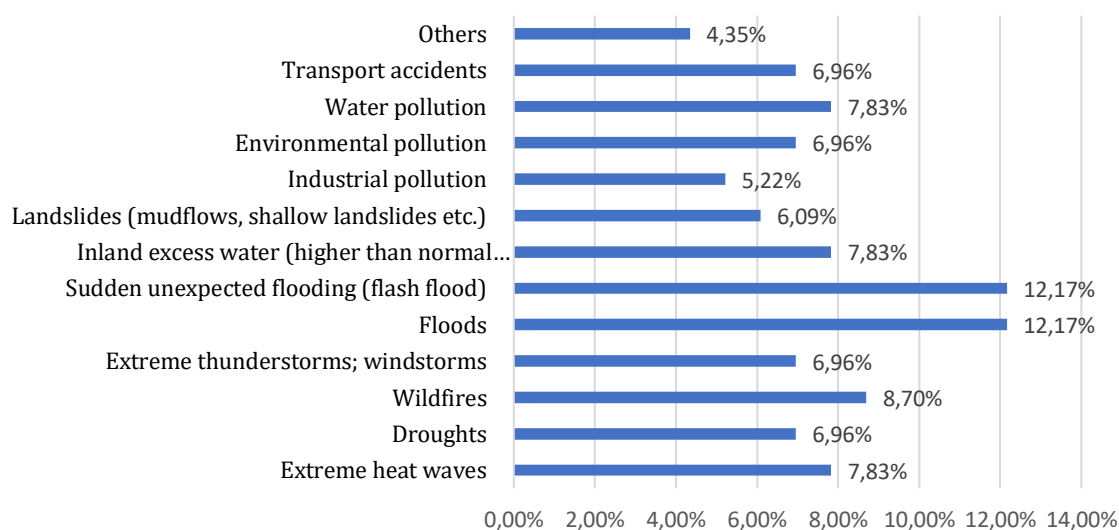
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	40,91%	36
No	59,09%	52
	Total	88



Question 33. In what kind of disaster management and risk prevention actions does the organisation have relevant competence?

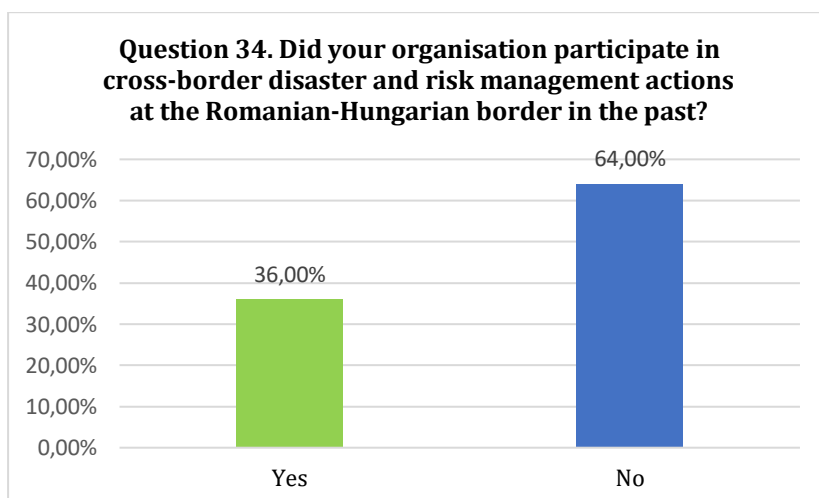
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Extreme heat waves	7,83%	9
Droughts	6,96%	8
Wildfires	8,70%	10
Extreme thunderstorms; windstorms	6,96%	8
Floods	12,17%	14
Sudden unexpected flooding (flash flood)	12,17%	14
Inland excess water (higher than normal groundwater level)	7,83%	9
Landslides (mudflows, shallow landslides etc.)	6,09%	7
Industrial pollution	5,22%	6
Environmental pollution	6,96%	8
Water pollution	7,83%	9
Transport accidents	6,96%	8
Others	4,35%	5
Total		115

Question 33. In what kind of disaster management and risk prevention actions does the organisation have relevant competence?



Question 34. Did your organisation participate in cross-border disaster and risk management actions at the Romanian-Hungarian border in the past?

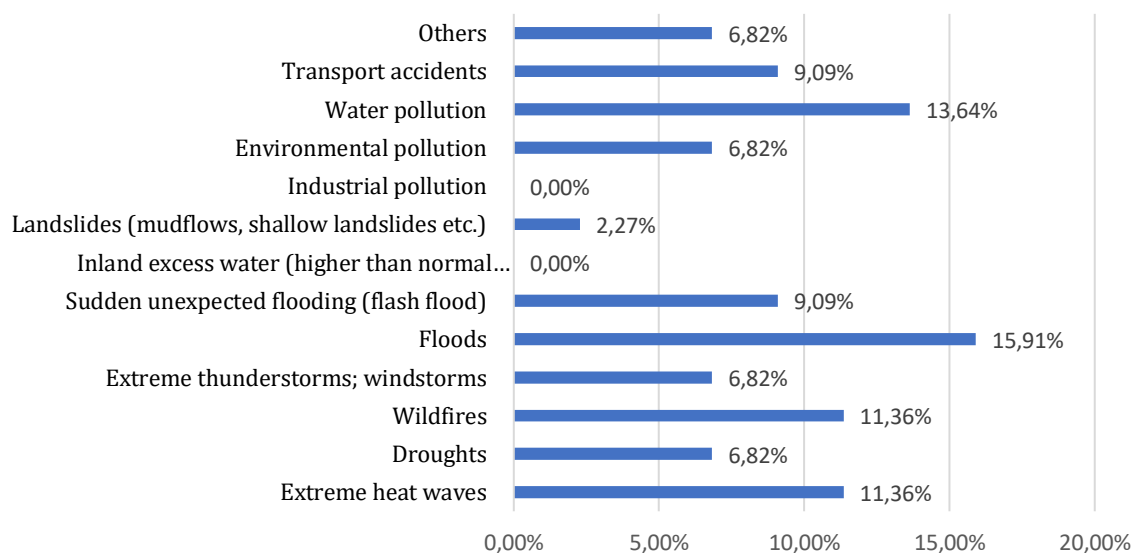
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	36,00%	9
No	64,00%	16
	Total	25



Question 35. Please indicate what kind of cross-border disaster management and risk prevention actions has your organisation participated in the past?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Extreme heat waves	11,36%	5
Droughts	6,82%	3
Wildfires	11,36%	5
Extreme thunderstorms; windstorms	6,82%	3
Floods	15,91%	7
Sudden unexpected flooding (flash flood)	9,09%	4
Inland excess water (higher than normal groundwater level)	0,00%	0
Landslides (mudflows, shallow landslides etc.)	2,27%	1
Industrial pollution	0,00%	0
Environmental pollution	6,82%	3
Water pollution	13,64%	6
Transport accidents	9,09%	4
Others	6,82%	3
	Total	44

Question 35. Please indicate what kind of cross-border disaster management and risk prevention actions has your organisation participated in the past?

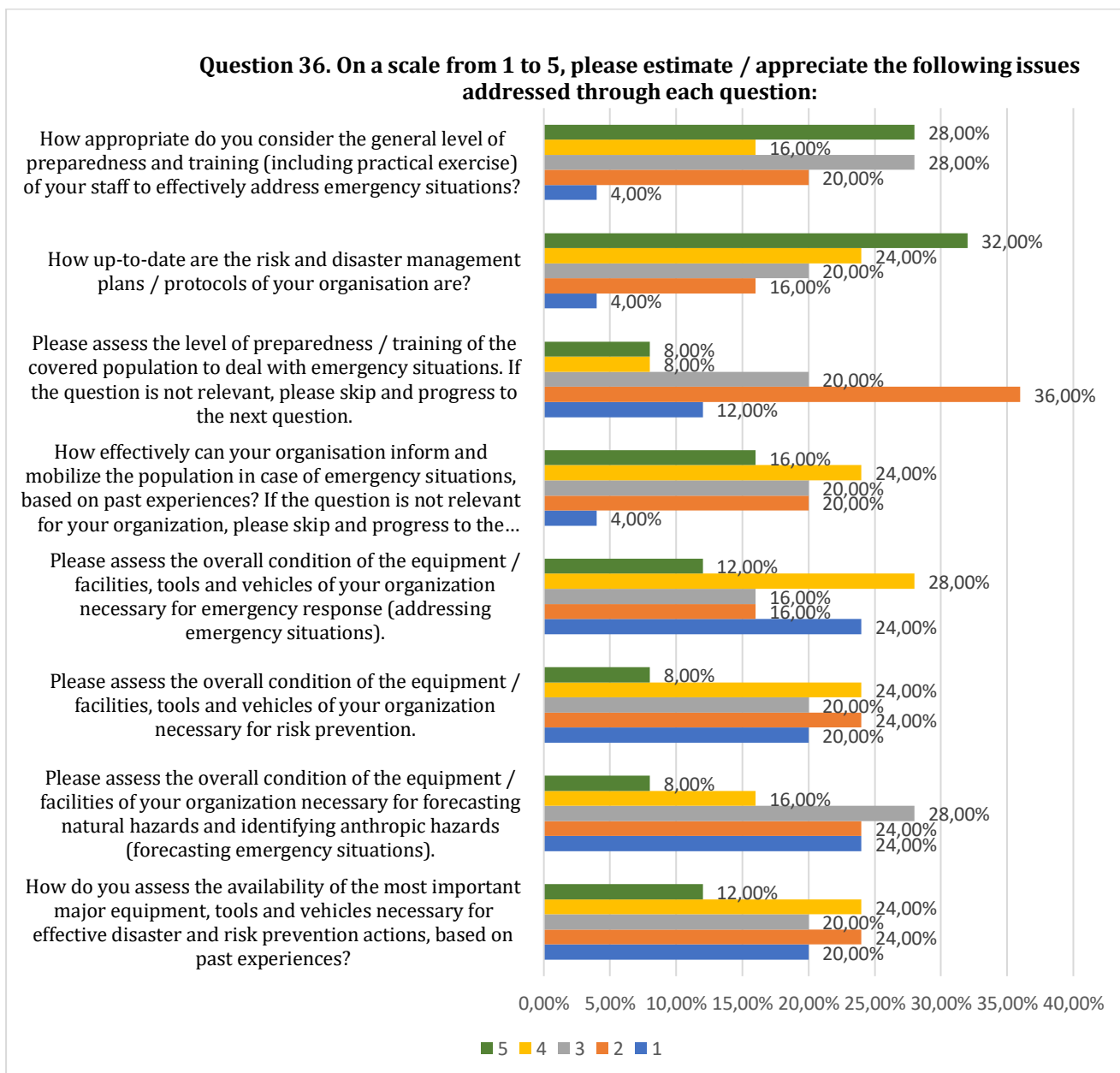


Question 36. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate / appreciate the following issues addressed through each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		Total
How do you assess the availability of the most important major equipment, tools and vehicles necessary for effective disaster and risk prevention actions, based on past experiences? (1 meaning "Most of the key equipment, tools and vehicles are lacking" and 5 meaning "We have all necessary key equipment, tools and vehicles in place")	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	12,00%	3	25
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities of your organization necessary for forecasting natural hazards and identifying anthropic hazards (forecasting emergency situations). (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	24,00%	6	24,00%	6	28,00%	7	16,00%	4	8,00%	2	25

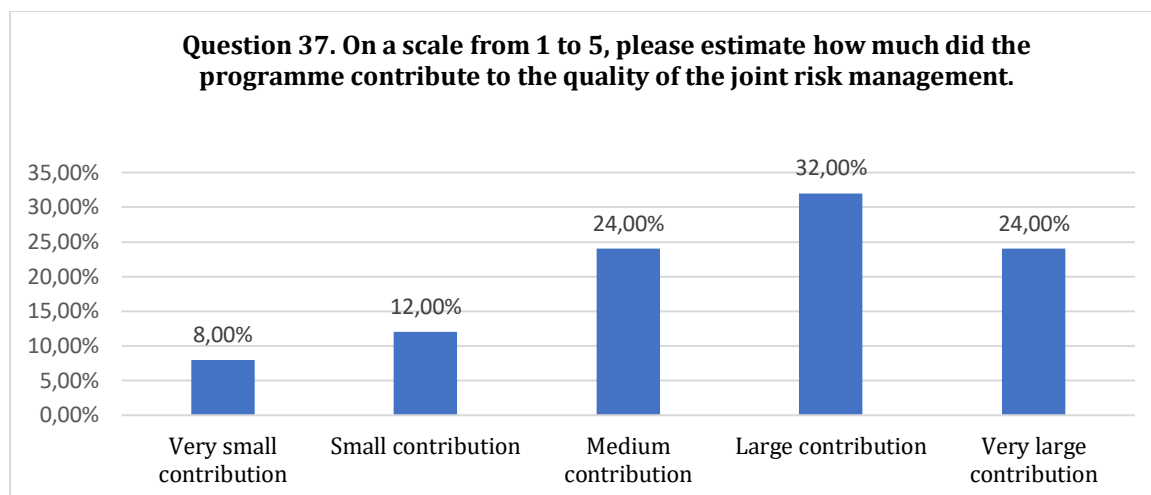
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities, tools and vehicles of your organization necessary for risk prevention. (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	8,00%	2	25
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities, tools and vehicles of your organization necessary for emergency response (addressing emergency situations). (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	24,00%	6	16,00%	4	16,00%	4	28,00%	7	12,00%	3	25
How effectively can your organisation inform and mobilize the population in case of emergency situations, based on past experiences? If the question is not relevant for your organization, please skip and progress to the next question. (1 meaning "Not effectively at all" and 5 meaning "Very effectively")	4,00%	1	20,00%	5	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	16,00%	4	25
Please assess the level of preparedness / training of the covered population to deal with emergency situations. If the question is not relevant, please skip and progress to the next question. (1 meaning "Poor" and 5 meaning "Excellent")	12,00%	3	36,00%	9	20,00%	5	8,00%	2	8,00%	2	25
How up-to-date are the risk and disaster management plans / protocols of your organisation are? (1 meaning "Not up-to-date at all" and 5 meaning "Completely up-to-date")	4,00%	1	16,00%	4	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	32,00%	8	25
How appropriate do you consider the general level of preparedness and training (including practical exercise) of your staff to effectively address	4,00%	1	20,00%	5	28,00%	7	16,00%	4	28,00%	7	25

emergency situations? (1 meaning "Totally inappropriate" and 5 meaning "Totally appropriate")											
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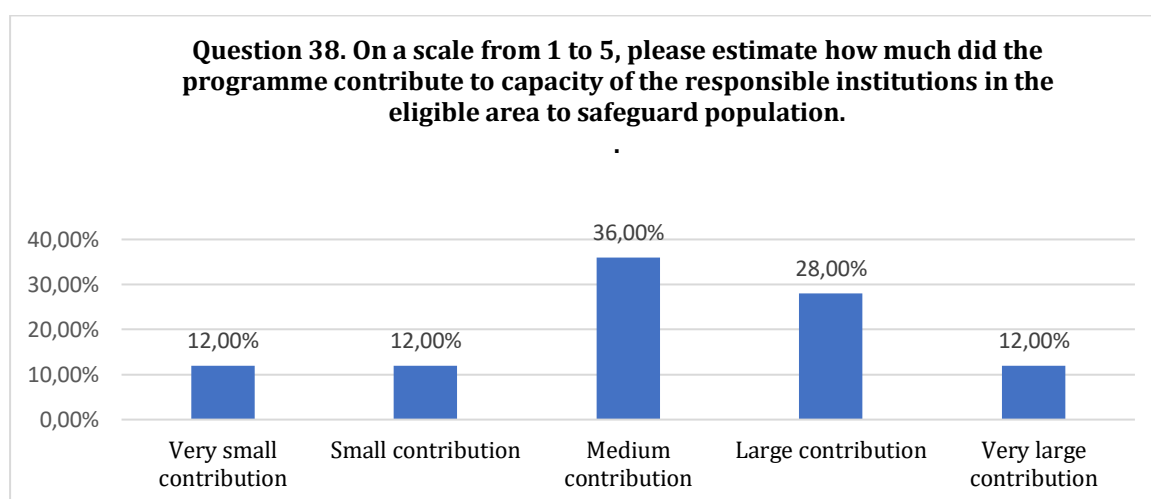
Question 37. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the quality of the joint risk management.

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		Weighted Average
Percent	8,00%	2	12,00%	3	24,00%	6	32,00%	8	24,00%	6	3,27
Total											25



Question 38. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population.

Answer Choices	Very small contribution		Small contribution		Medium contribution		Large contribution		Very large contribution		Weighted Average
Percent	12,00%	3	12,00%	3	36,00%	9	28,00%	7	12,00%	3	3,27
Total:											25

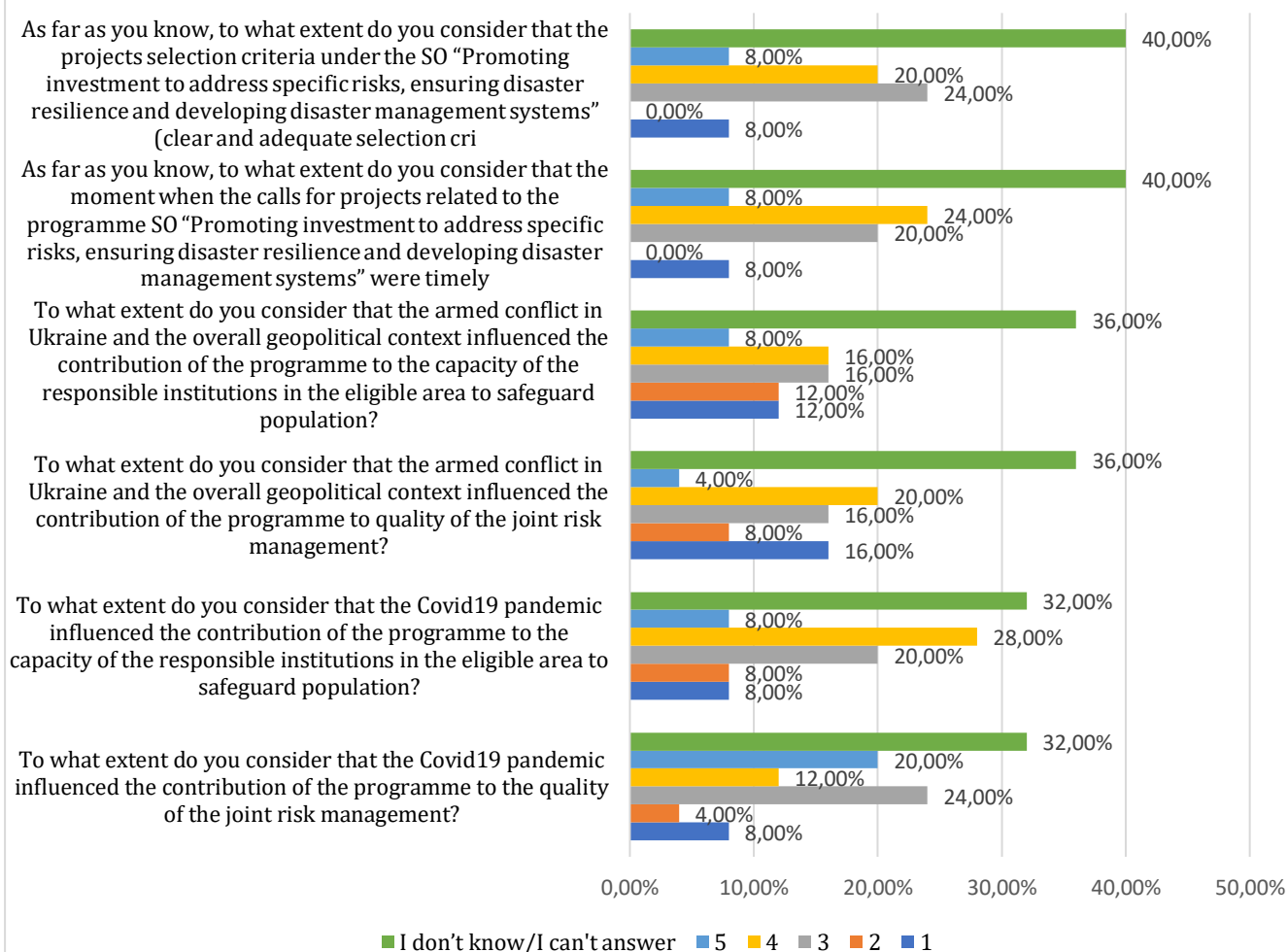


Question 39. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/ I can't answer		Total
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the quality of the joint risk management?	8,00%	2	4,00%	1	24,00%	6	12,00%	3	20,00%	5	32,00%	8	25
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to the capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population?	8,00%	2	8,00%	2	20,00%	5	28,00%	7	8,00%	2	32,00%	8	25
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to quality of the joint risk management?	16,00%	4	8,00%	2	16,00%	4	20,00%	5	4,00%	1	36,00%	9	25
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to the capacity of the responsible institutions in the eligible area to safeguard population?	12,00%	3	12,00%	3	16,00%	4	16,00%	4	8,00%	2	36,00%	9	25
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO “Promoting investment to address specific	8,00%	2	0,00%	0	20,00%	5	24,00%	6	8,00%	2	40,00%	10	25

risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems” were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?													
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO “Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems” (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	8,00%	2	0,00%	0	24,00%	6	20,00%	5	8,00%	2	40,00%	10	25
													Total

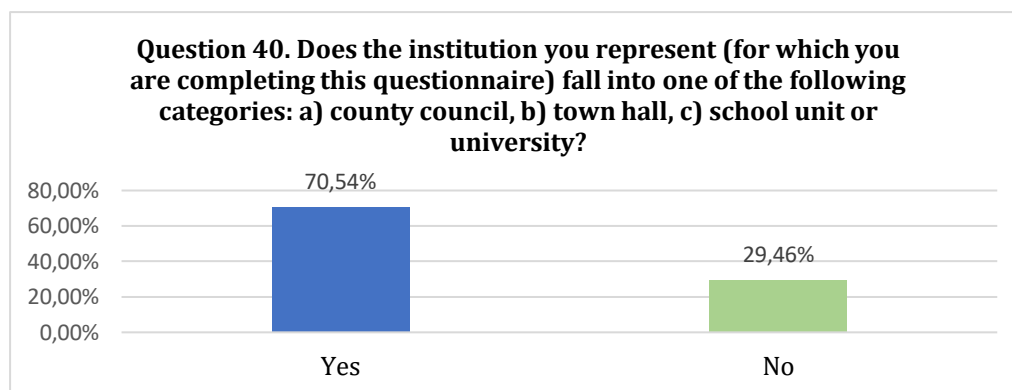
Question 39. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question



8. S.O 6.1 Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities

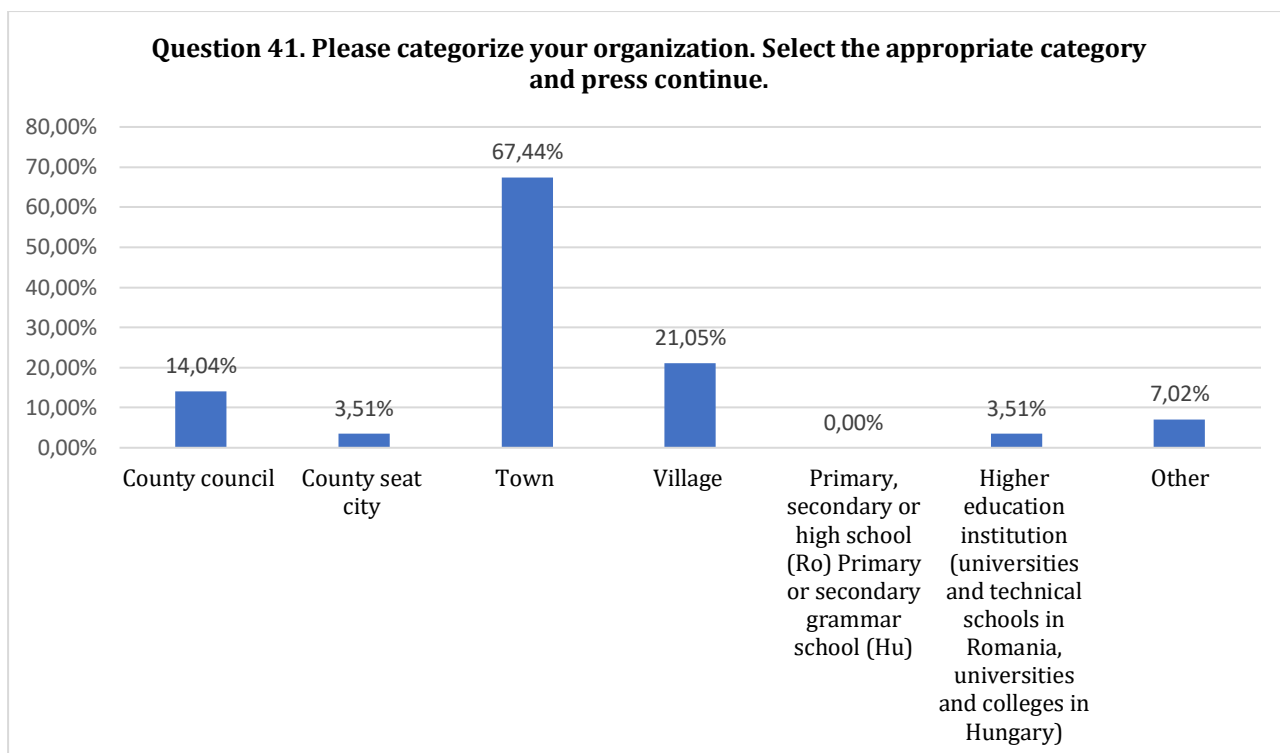
Question 40. Does the institution you represent (for which you are completing this questionnaire) fall into one of the following categories: a) county council, b) town hall, c) school unit or university?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	70,54%	41
No	29,46%	16
Total		112



Question 41. Please categorize your organization. Select the appropriate category and press continue.

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
County council	14,04%	8
County seat city	3,51%	2
Town	67,44%	29
Village	21,05%	12
Primary, secondary or high school (Ro) Primary or secondary grammar school (Hu)	0,00%	0
Higher education institution (universities and technical schools in Romania, universities and colleges in Hungary)	3,51%	2
Other	7,02%	4
	Total	57



Question 42. Currently do you have partner organization(s) in Romania (for Hungarian organizations) / Hungary (for Romanian organizations)? (Partnership may mean having projects together, having sister-city relationship or twinning, etc.)

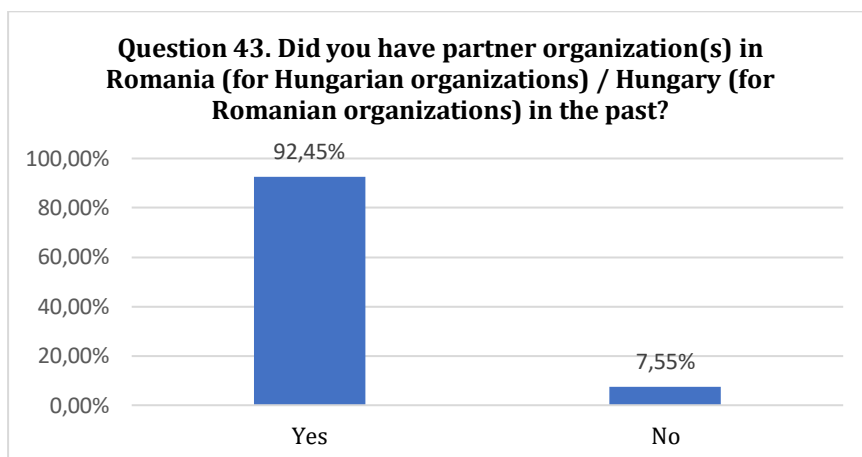
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	71,93%	41
No	28,07%	16
	Total	57



Question 43. Did you have partner organization(s) in Romania (for Hungarian organizations) / Hungary (for Romanian organizations) in the past? (Partnership may mean having projects

together, having sister-city relationship or twinning, etc.) If you had past partnerships, answer the following questions based on the experience of that partnership.

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Yes	92,45%	98
No	7,55%	8
	Total	106

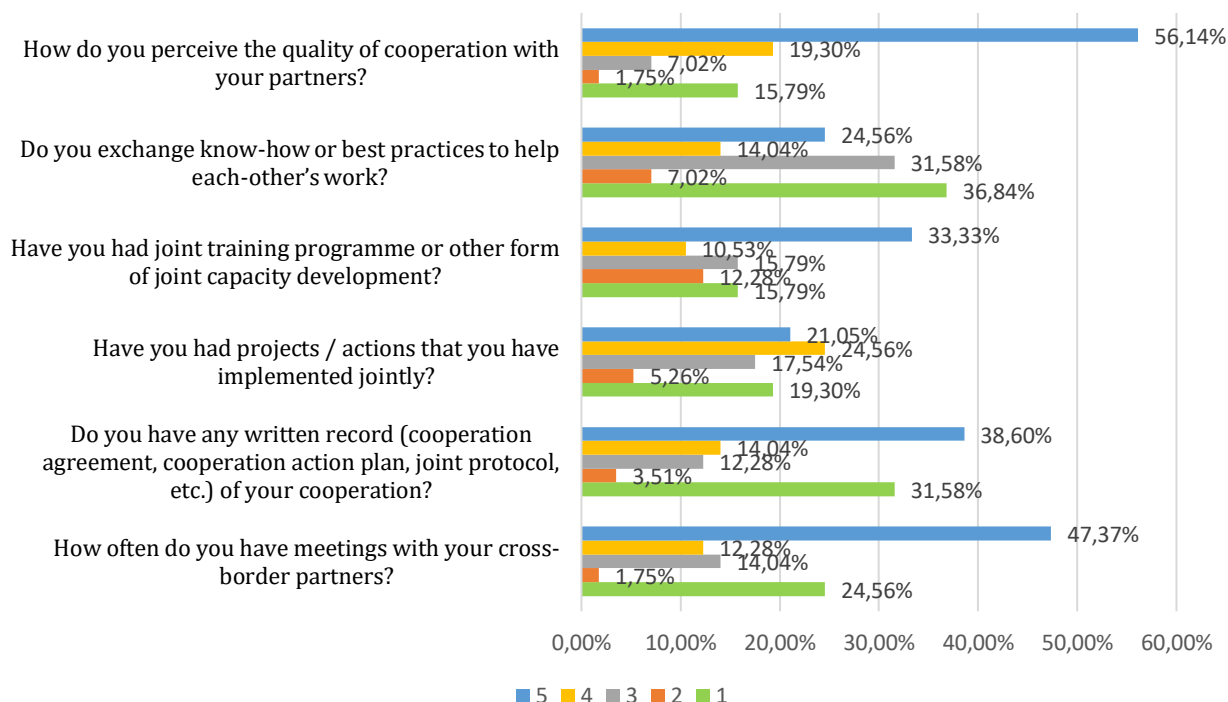


Question 44. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate / appreciate the following issues addressed below:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		Total
How often do you have meetings with your cross-border partners? (1 meaning "We meet very rarely" and 5 meaning "We have regular meetings, at least one meeting per year")	24,56%	14	1,75%	1	14,04%	8	12,28%	7	47,37%	27	57
Do you have any written record (cooperation agreement, cooperation action plan, joint protocol, etc.) of your cooperation? (1 meaning "We do not have any written agreement or plan" and 5 meaning "We have documents that provide the framework for our	31,58%	18	3,51%	2	12,28%	7	14,04%	8	38,60%	22	57

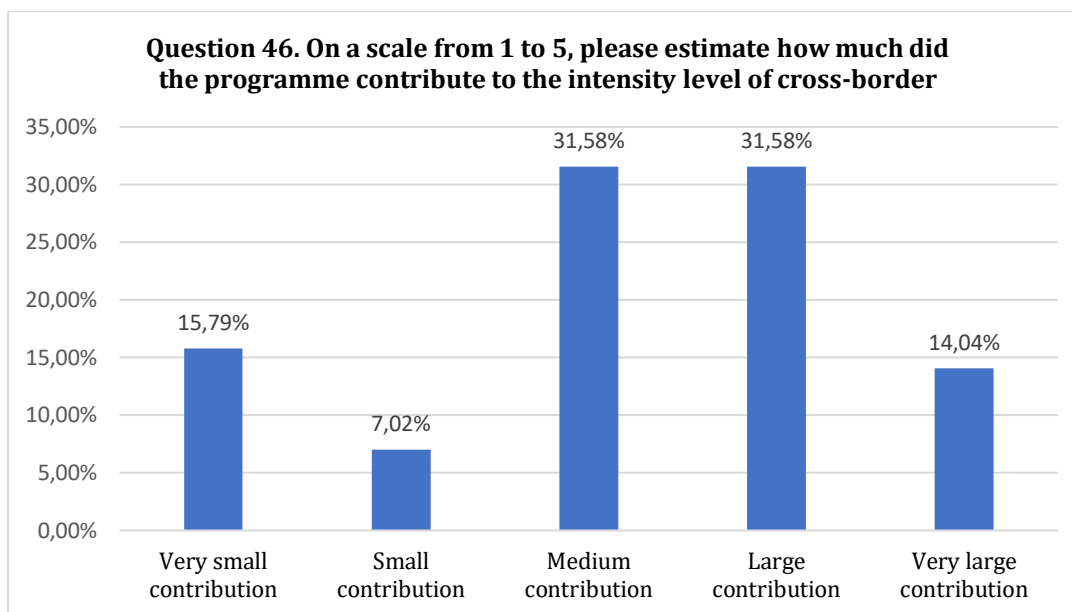
joint actions and we update them regularly”)											
Have you had projects / actions that you have implemented jointly? (1 meaning “We have never implemented projects / actions jointly” and 5 meaning “We have multiple joint projects / actions every year”)	19,30%	11	5,26%	3	17,54%	10	24,56%	14	21,05%	12	57
Have you had joint training programme or other form of joint capacity development? (1 meaning “We have never had joint training or capacity development” and 5 meaning “We have regular joint training programmes and capacity development”)	15,79%	9	12,28%	7	15,79%	9	10,53%	6	33,33%	19	57
Do you exchange know-how or best practices to help each-other’s work? (1 meaning “No, we have never shared knowledge or exchanged best practices” and 5 meaning “We regularly exchange know-how and good practices between us”)	36,84%	21	7,02%	4	31,58%	18	14,04%	8	24,56%	14	57
How do you perceive the quality of cooperation with your partners? (1 meaning “Poor” and 5 meaning “Excellent”)	15,79%	9	1,75%	1	7,02%	4	19,30%	11	56,14%	32	57
										Total	57

Question 45. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate / appreciate the following issues addressed below:



Question 46. On a scale from 1 to 5, please estimate how much did the programme contribute to the intensity level of cross-border cooperation.

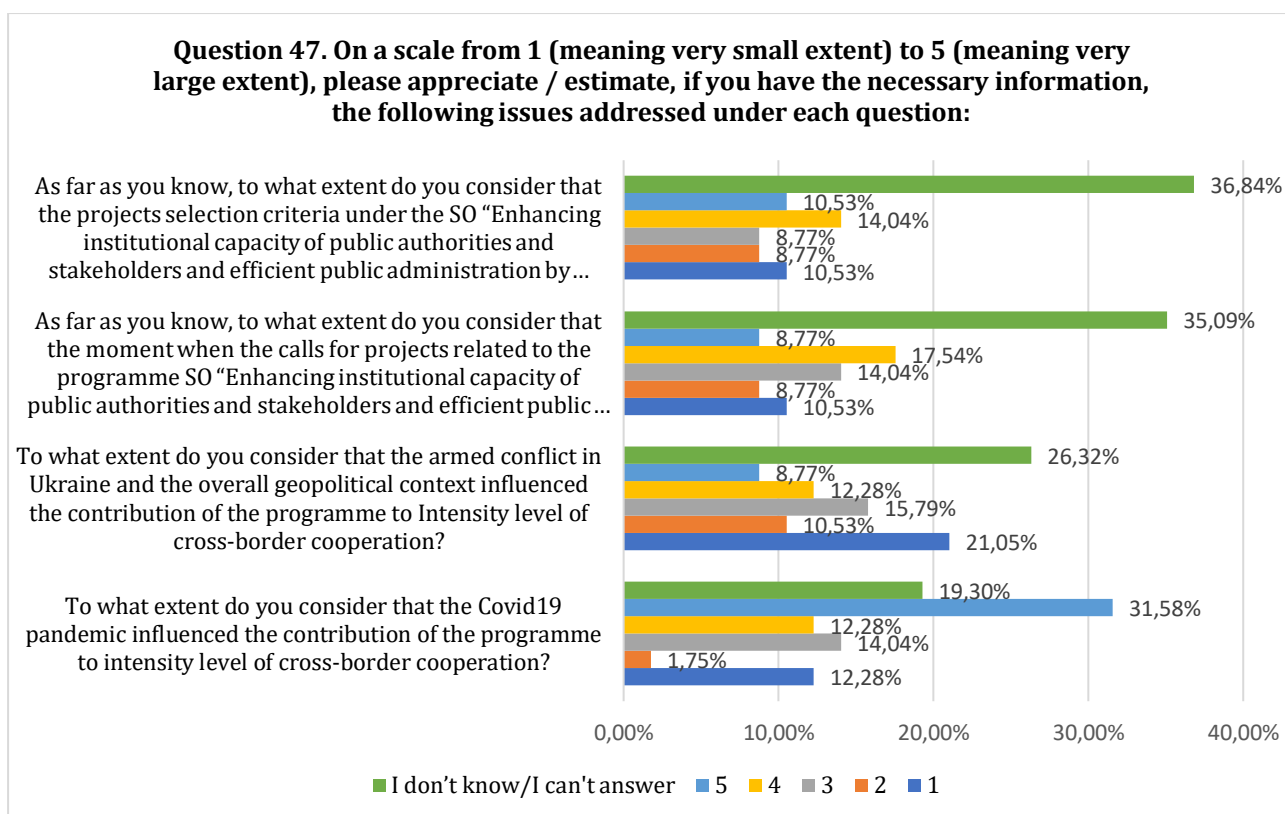
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small contribution	15,79%	9
Small contribution	7,02%	4
Medium contribution	31,58%	18
Large contribution	31,58%	18
Very large contribution	14,04%	8
Total		57



Question 47. On a scale from 1 (meaning very small extent) to 5 (meaning very large extent), please appreciate / estimate, if you have the necessary information, the following issues addressed under each question:

Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/I can't answer	Total	
To what extent do you consider that the Covid19 pandemic influenced the contribution of the programme to intensity level of cross-border cooperation?	12,28%	7	1,75%	1	14,04%	8	12,28%	7	31,58%	18	19,30%	11	57
To what extent do you consider that the armed conflict in Ukraine and the overall geopolitical context influenced the contribution of the programme to Intensity level of cross-border cooperation?	21,05%	12	10,53%	6	15,79%	9	12,28%	7	8,77%	5	26,32%	15	57

As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the moment when the calls for projects related to the programme SO "Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions" were timely launched and properly promoted / disseminated before and during the application period?	10,53%	6	8,77%	5	14,04%	8	17,54%	10	8,77%	5	35,09%	20	57
As far as you know, to what extent do you consider that the projects selection criteria under the SO "Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions" (clear and adequate selection criteria, the selected projects had a high potential of generating effects in their sector, at regional level)?	10,53%	6	8,77%	5	8,77%	5	14,04%	8	10,53%	6	36,84%	21	57

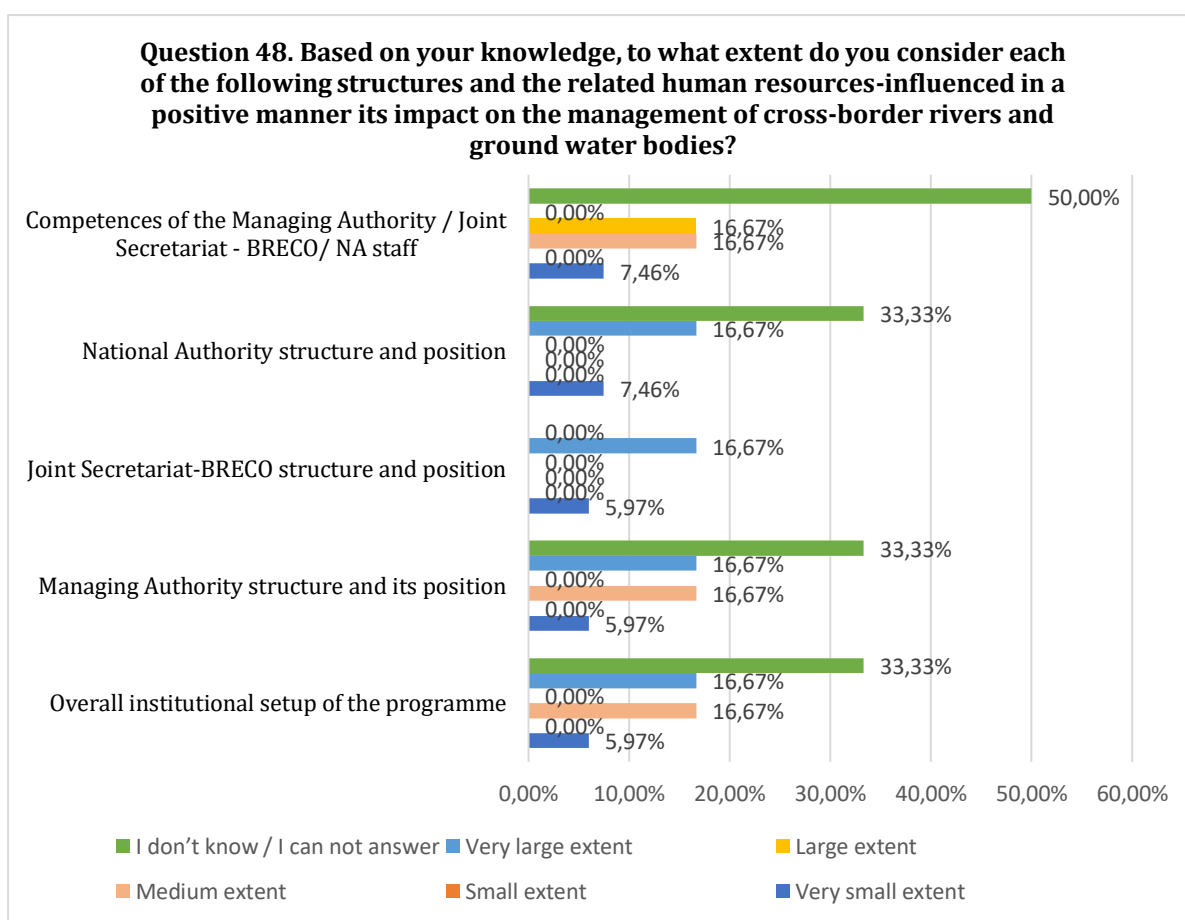


9. General questions:

Question 48. Based on your knowledge, to what extent do you consider each of the following structures and the related human resources-influenced in a positive manner its impact on the management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies?

Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
Overall institutional setup of the programme	5,97%	4	2,99%	2	10,45%	7	14,93%	10	14,93%	10	50,75%	34	67
Managing Authority structure and its position	5,97%	4	4,48%	3	10,45%	7	13,43%	9	14,93%	10	50,75%	34	67
Joint Secretariat-BRECO structure and position	5,97%	4	4,48%	3	5,97%	4	11,94%	8	17,91%	12	52,24%	35	67
National Authority structure and position	7,46%	5	7,46%	5	5,97%	4	13,43%	9	11,94%	8	53,73%	36	67

Competences of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat - BRECO/ NA staff	7,46%	5	4,48%	3	5,97%	4	14,93%	10	16,42%	11	34,33%	23	67
Number of the Managing Authority /BRECO/ National Authority employees	7,46%	5	2,99%	2	4,48%	3	8,96%	6	13,43%	9	59,70%	40	67

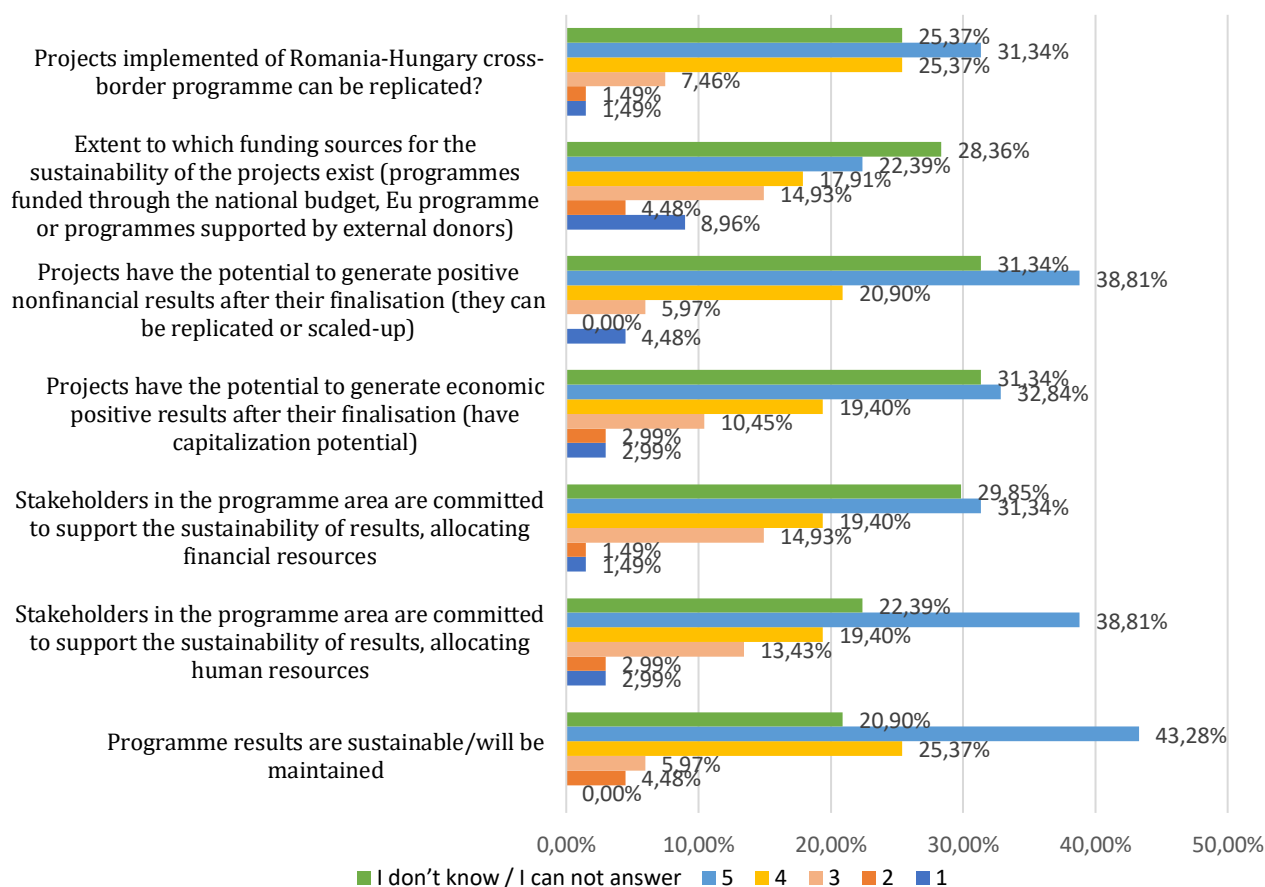


Question 49. Considering the sustainability of Romania-Hungary cross-border programme, please evaluate on a scale from 1(not at all) to 5 (completely) the following elements

NOTE – In line with OSCE definitions, sustainability refers to the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention (outputs and results) continue or are likely to continue beyond intervention (the project, in this case).

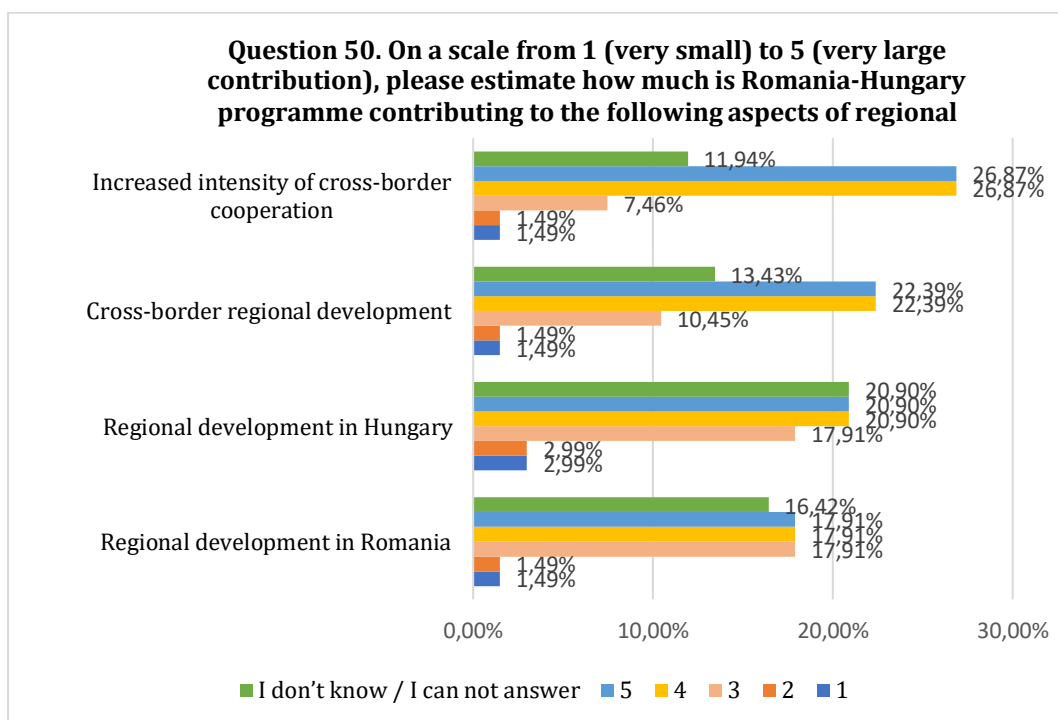
Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/No Respond		Total
Programme results are sustainable/will be maintained	0,00%	0	4,48%	3	5,97%	4	25,37%	17	43,28%	29	20,90%	14	51
Stakeholders in the programme area are committed to support the sustainability of results, allocating human resources	2,99%	2	2,99%	2	13,43%	9	19,40%	13	38,81%	26	22,39%	15	51
Stakeholders in the programme area are committed to support the sustainability of results, allocating financial resources	1,49%	1	1,49%	1	14,93%	10	19,40%	13	31,34%	21	29,85%	20	51
Projects have the potential to generate economic positive results after their finalisation (have capitalization potential)	2,99%	2	2,99%	2	10,45%	7	19,40%	13	32,84%	22	31,34%	21	51
Projects have the potential to generate positive nonfinancial results after their finalisation (they can be replicated or scaled-up)	4,48%	3	0,00%	0	5,97%	4	20,90%	14	38,81%	26	31,34%	21	51
Extent to which funding sources for the sustainability of the projects exist (programmes funded through the national budget, Eu programme or programmes supported by external donors)	8,96%	6	4,48%	3	14,93%	10	17,91%	12	22,39%	15	28,36%	19	51
Projects implemented of Romania-Hungary cross-border programme can be replicated?	1,49%	1	1,49%	1	7,46%	5	25,37%	17	31,34%	21	25,37%	17	51

Question 49. Considering the sustainability of Romania-Hungary cross-border programme, please evaluate on a scale from 1(not at all) to 5 (completely) the following elements



Question 50. On a scale from 1 (very small) to 5 (very large contribution), please estimate how much is Romania-Hungary programme contributing to the following aspects of regional

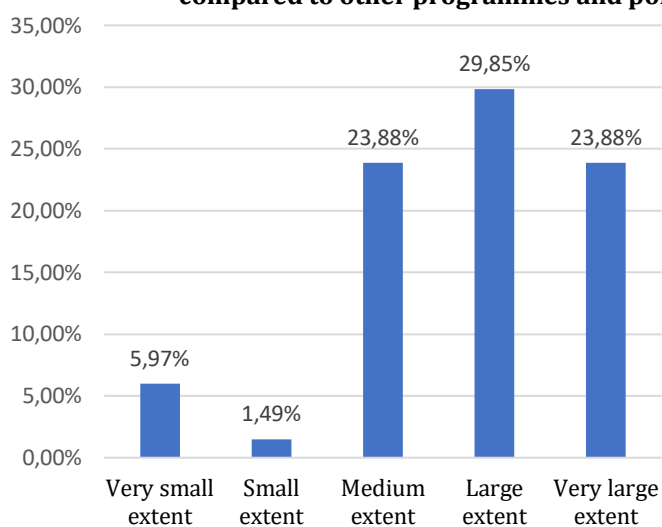
Answer Choices	1		2		3		4		5		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
Regional development in Romania	1,49%	1	1,49%	1	17,91%	12	17,91%	12	17,91%	29	16,42%	11	67
Regional development in Hungary	2,99%	2	2,99%	2	17,91%	12	20,90%	14	20,90%	24	20,90%	14	67
Cross-border regional development	1,49%	1	1,49%	1	10,45%	7	22,39%	15	22,39%	32	13,43%	9	67
Increased intensity of cross-border cooperation	1,49%	1	1,49%	1	7,46%	5	26,87%	18	26,87%	32	11,94%	8	67



Question 51. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that the CBC RO-HU Programme answered better the needs in the programme area compared to other programmes and policies?

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	5,97%	4
Small extent	1,49%	1
Medium extent	23,88%	16
Large extent	29,85%	20
Very large extent	23,88%	16
I don't know/I can't answer	14,93%	10
Total		67

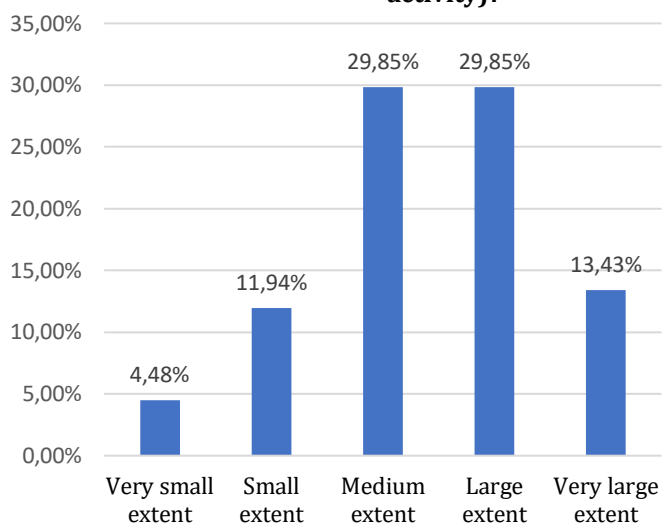
Question 51. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that the CBC RO-HU Programme answered better the needs in the programme area compared to other programmes and policies



Question 52. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you know the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme, its objectives and expected results (in your field of activity)?

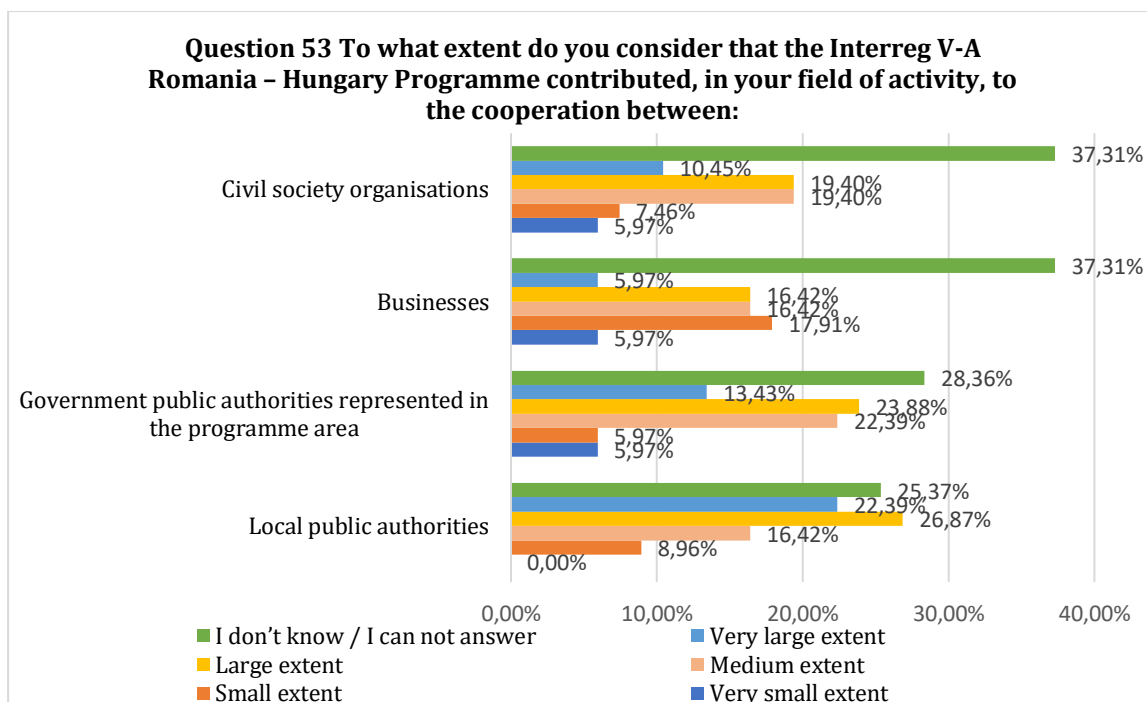
Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Very small extent	4,48%	3
Small extent	11,94%	8
Medium extent	29,85%	20
Large extent	29,85%	20
Very large extent	13,43%	9
I don't know/I can't answer	10,45%	7
	Total	67

Question 52. On a scale from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very large extent), to what extent do you consider that you know the Interreg V-A RO-HU Programme, its objectives and expected results (in your field of activity)?



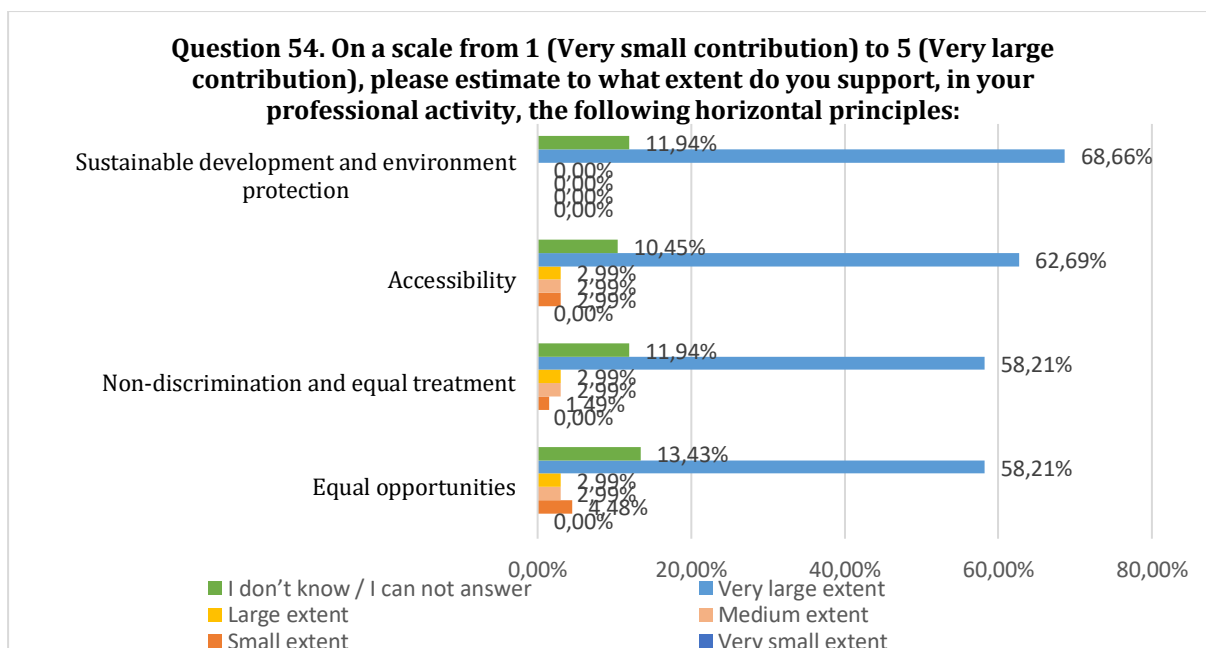
Question 53. To what extent do you consider that the Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme contributed, in your field of activity, to the cooperation between:

Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
Local public authorities	0,00%	0	8,96%	6	16,42%	11	26,87%	18	22,39%	15	25,37%	17	67
Government public authorities represented in the programme area	5,97%	4	5,97%	4	22,39%	15	23,88%	16	13,43%	9	28,36%	19	67
Businesses	5,97%	4	17,91%	12	16,42%	11	16,42%	11	5,97%	4	37,31%	25	67
Civil society organisations	5,97%	4	7,46%	5	19,40%	13	19,40%	13	10,45%	7	37,31%	25	67



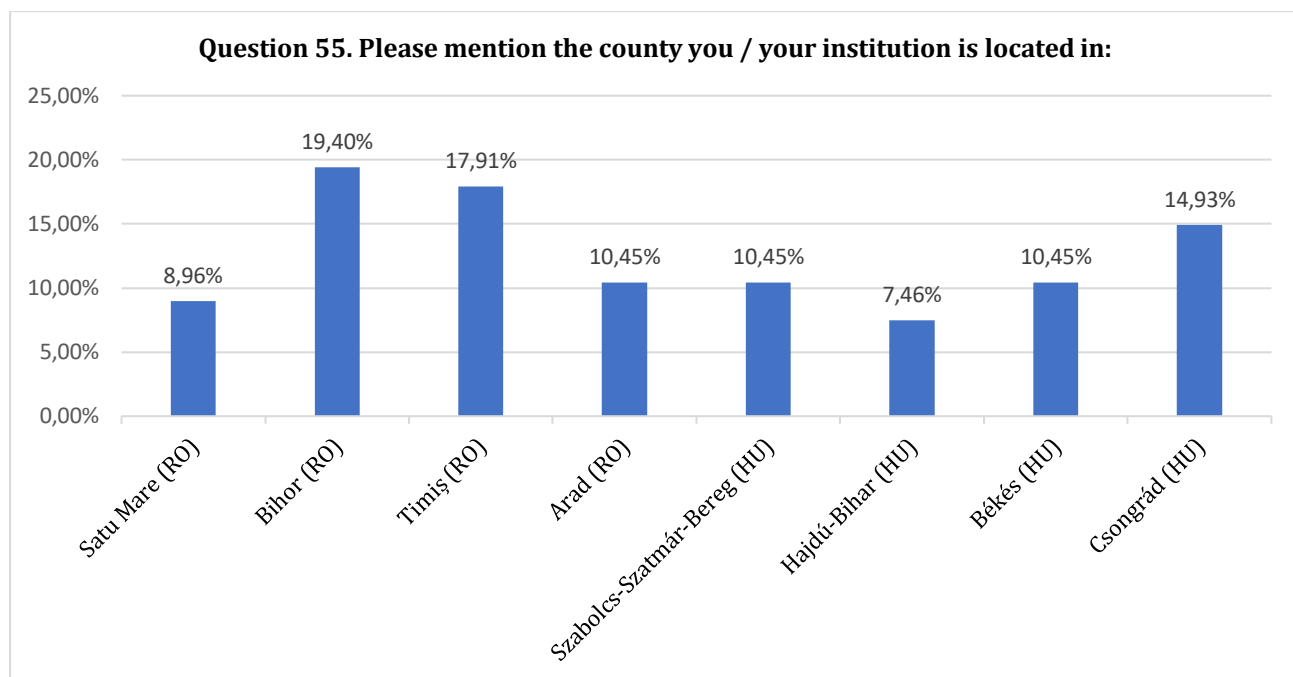
Question 54. On a scale from 1 (Very small contribution) to 5 (Very large contribution), please estimate to what extent do you support, in your professional activity, the following horizontal principles:

Answer Choices	Very small extent		Small extent		Medium extent		Large extent		Very large extent		I don't know/I can't answer		Total
Equal opportunities	0,00%	0	4,48%	3	2,99%	2	2,99%	14	58,21%	39	13,43%	9	67
Non-discrimination and equal treatment	0,00%	0	1,49%	1	2,99%	2	2,99%	17	58,21%	39	11,94%	8	67
Accessibility	0,00%	0	2,99%	2	2,99%	2	2,99%	14	62,69%	42	10,45%	7	67
Sustainable development and environment protection	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	17	68,66%	46	11,94%	8	67



Question 55. Please mention the county you / your institution is located in:

Answer Choices	Percent	Number
Satu Mare (RO)	8,96%	6
Bihor (RO)	19,40%	13
Timiș (RO)	17,91%	12
Arad (RO)	10,45%	7
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (HU)	10,45%	7
Hajdú-Bihar (HU)	7,46%	5
Békés (HU)	10,45%	7
Csongrád (HU)	14,93%	10
Total		67



Annex 10. Detailed methodology used for data collection and validation processes

The data collection methods used for drafting the first version of the Evaluation Report were the following:

1. **Document review**⁹³, which included: a) Programme documents, studies and previous evaluations, official quantitative data on projects progress / status and achievements (i.e., monitoring data extracted from eMS data), monitoring data on programme information and communication activities and achievements; b) European and national strategies and public policy documents and c) Project level documents, such as: application forms, progress reports, final reports (where the case), sustainability reports (where the case), projects' deliverables.
2. **Surveys**⁹⁴:
 - 1 survey addressed to **programme beneficiaries / partners**, covering 125 respondents, out of which: 68 respondents from programme beneficiaries from Romania and 57 respondents from programme beneficiaries from Hungary;
 - 1 survey addressed to **programme stakeholders**, covering 167 respondents, out of which: 81 respondents from programme stakeholders from Romania and 86 respondents from programme stakeholders from Hungary.

The 2 surveys were designed and conducted separately as to meet ToR requirements and especially due to the fact that the evaluation needed to calculate the current values of programme result indicators and for 3 of them, as per the official methodology, stakeholders' perspectives were to be collected. In order to be more specific regarding the categories of entities involved in the quantitative data collection process, we further present the categories of entities included in the each of the 2 surveys.

SURVEY	CATEGORIES OF ENTITIES INVOLVED	FURTHER DETAILS
Beneficiaries survey	This survey was addressed to all programme beneficiaries, regardless of their nature, e.g., county councils, city halls, universities, NGOs, water basin administrations, environment protection agencies, museums, local transport companies, hospitals and other. The responses collected include both, perspectives of lead beneficiaries and of projects' partners.	The survey was sent exhaustively to all institutions partners in the projects financed under the Interreg RO-HU V-A Programme.
Stakeholders survey	Stakeholders include a mix between beneficiaries and relevant county and local level institutions in regards with the expected results of the programme. The two categories overlap to some extent, but they are not identical. The types of entities covered by this second survey include: county councils, city halls, universities, NGOs, emergency situation responsible institutions, environment protection responsible institutions, territorial labor inspectorates, hospitals, schools, being both beneficiaries and	We considered important to make the distinction between the two groups addressed by the two surveys, by developing two separate questionnaires, because the Programme methodology for calculating the baseline and target values of result indicators under SOS 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, which needed to be replicated within this evaluation exercise, implied

⁹³ The complete list of reviewed documents is presented in Annex 6 of this report.

⁹⁴ For the complete results of the 2 conducted surveys please see Annex 9 of this report.

	nonbeneficiaries of the programme but with strong interest in the expected results, in the areas that were addressed by the SOs.	data collection from stakeholders. The methodology indicates all categories that needed to be involved in this process for the analyses conducted at the level of SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1 and the stakeholders' database was developed based on these specifications.
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The preparation of the stakeholders databased begun after the evaluation team was announced by the Contracting Authority that the database with the respondents participating in the survey conducted in 2014, for setting the targets for result indicators under PI 9/a, 5/b and 11/b was not available. This process has been conducted according to the methodology presented in Annex IX.1 of the Programme Document version 4. The structure of the database started from key institutions to be surveyed for each SO is presented in the following table:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	CATEGORIES OF STAKEHOLDERS
SO 1.1	Environmental Protection Agencies Water Basin Administrations
SO 1.2	Environmental Protection Agencies National Agency for Protected Natural Areas County Councils County Directions for Culture City Halls Universities
SO 2.1	County Councils City Halls Public transport companies Chambers of Commerce and Industry Regional Development Agencies
SO 2.2	
SO 3.1	Chambers of Commerce and Industry Training providers Employers' Federations Territorial Labor Inspectorates Territorial Labor agencies City Halls
SO 4.1	Health-care service providers (beneficiaries of AP 4 of the programme and an equal number of per institutions that did not benefited from funding under Interreg V-A Programme Romania - Hungary)
SO 5.1	Environmental Protection Agencies Inspectorates for Emergency Situations Committees for Emergency Situations National Directorate of Forests Environmental guards
SO 6.1	County councils City halls (for large, medium and small town) Village halls Primary, secondary and high schools Universities

For this activity the evaluation team received support from the Joint Secretary and the Info Points of the Programme, who provide the expert with the list of key programme stakeholders and their contact data, used by the JC within communication activities. Further, the 2 data bases were compiled.

3. Interviews⁹⁵:

- **National interviews** conducted with the Managing Authority of the programme, The National Authority of the Programme, The Joint Secretariat of the Programme and the one of the 4 Info Points;
- **Stakeholders' interviews** conducted with representatives of County Councils in the eligible area, Municipalities in the eligible area, Environment protection and risk management institutions and universities;

In regards with the stakeholders' interviews, several adjustments were done during data collection process as to maximize the potential results of this activity, more specifically, the relevance of the information collected for answering evaluation question 1, related to the results of the programme, especially under SOs 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1. While the survey addressed to stakeholders reached a lower than expected range of entities, the interviews could collect additional data meant to partially cover an information gap. Thus, the process of selecting the participant institutions was focused on key institutional actors that could provide qualitative information / evidence regarding the extent to which the projects implemented managed to generate a significant contribution to current status of the areas covered by the programme.

Thus, the list of stakeholders to participate in the qualitative data collection process was adjusted according to the changing needs identified during the evaluation. The risk addressed by this solution referred to the survey which was at that moment ongoing and for which solutions for the increases of its response rate has been sought and applied.

The final structure of stakeholders interviewed under framework of the evaluation included the following types of institutions from both sides of the border:

- County Councils in the eligible area
- County seat town halls in the eligible area
- relevant actors in the area of environment protection and risk management
- universities
- **Case study level interviews** conducted with the lead beneficiaries, partners and representatives of the target groups, where appropriate, for each of the 15 projects included in the sample.

4. The last activities conducted within the evaluation, that involved the stakeholders into this process, were the **Expert Panel and the Workshop for the Qualitative /Semi-quantitative net-impact assessment**. In order to capitalize as much as possible, on one hand, on the findings already formulated and on the other hand, on the types of expected outcomes of the panel / workshop, the evaluation team planned and organized the following two events:

- **A validation experts panel** which was focused mainly on the SO 1.2 of the programme, due to its several inconsistencies identified in the Logic of Intervention and due to the need of corroborating the preliminary findings with expert perspectives in two areas: a) protection of natural and cultural heritage and b) tourism⁹⁶;

Based on the aim of the Expert Panel a wide range of key institutions with responsibilities in the areas of protection of natural and historic heritage and tourism were invited to participate to the discussions and provide the evaluation team with feedback based on their institutional

⁹⁵ For the complete list of institutions that participated in the data collection process please see Annex 5 of this report.

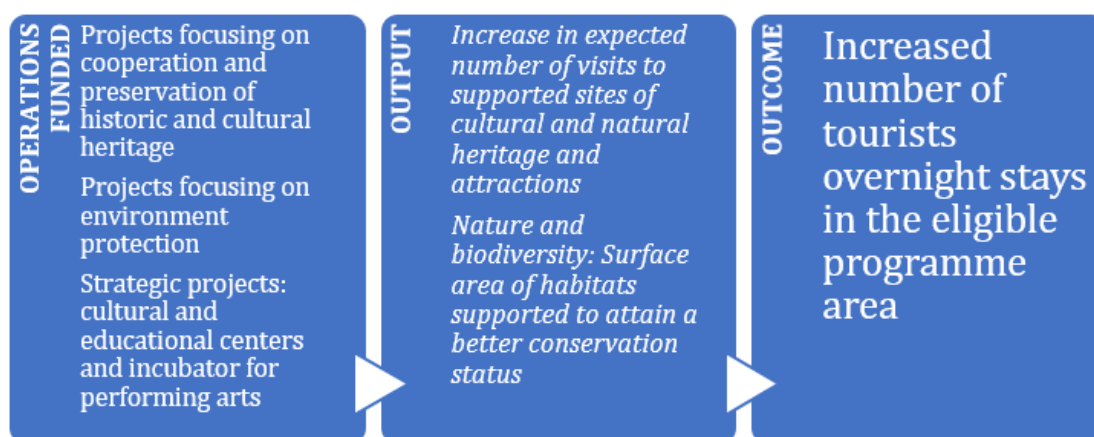
⁹⁶ The list of participants is included in Annex 6.

experience and personal expertise, such as: public institutions (relevant ministries, agencies for environmental protection, county directorates for culture, regional development agencies), NGOs in the areas of natural heritage protection and tourism. Representatives of institutions located in both countries were invited to the expert panel. The list of participants can be consulted in [Annex Z](#) of this report.

Concept note for VALIDATION EXPERTS PANEL – focused on SO 1.2 of the programme

The Specific Objective 1.2 of the Interreg VA RO-HU Programme (*Sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within eligible area*) supported the protection and promotion of the natural, historic and cultural heritage. **Out of 17 projects contracted under the SO 1.2, only 9 have been finalized by the end of April 2023**, the rest being on-going. The projects contracted under the SO 1.2 represent 31% of the total contracted amount at programme level.

Out of the 17 projects contracted, there are four projects (two preparatory projects and two implementation projects) that are strategic: the projects: “Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cultural incubator for performing arts” and “Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Education Centre of Cultural and Historical Heritage” that supported the development of better infrastructure for sharing, creating, protecting and promoting the common cultural values and the flexibility for cultural performance in the cross-border area, especially in Debrecen and Oradea.



Other projects included support for historic and cultural crossborder institutional cooperation and projects supporting the protection of the natural areas in the programme area.

The logic of intervention of the SO 1.2 links the investments in cross-border cultural and educational centres, cooperation in the cultural field and protection of natural areas in the cross-border area with two outputs: increased number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions and a better conservation status of habitats, for improved biodiversity and nature protection overall. These outputs should lead to the outcome of increased tourism visible in an indicator related to the number of tourists overnight stays in the eligible programme area.

The evaluation preliminary finding is that: *„It is clear that both types of projects bring added value in their areas and some have already generated positive effects for their target groups (such as: creating better conditions for survival for protected species, increasing awareness on the importance of environment projects among their target groups, increasing the collaboration among peer institution from Romania and Hungary in the area of natural and cultural heritage and increasing access to culture and cultural acts), but only projects that have explicitly planned to increase in expected number of visits to the supported sites / areas, may directly and in a significant manner contribute to the expected result of SO 1.2.”*

Both indicators for the output have been met. There are 77 267 visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions, compared to 61 000 that was the programme target. There are also over 97 000 ha of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status compared to only 6 000 that was the programme target.

However, compared to 2013, the number of tourists overnight stays in the programme area is lower in 2021. **4 092 628 overnight stays were measured in 2021 in the eligible area of the programme**, against the target value (for 2023) of 5 485 294 overnight stays and the baseline from 2013 that was 4 885 294.

The evaluation finds that the touristic sector was significantly affected by the traveling restrictions imposed during the Covid19 pandemic. Since the effects of pandemic started to decrease and the restrictions were eliminated, the tourist sector has slightly recovered and it is expected that in 2023 to be fully recovered and the number of overnight stays to be much higher than the available data for 2021 are showing.

In this context, it is relevant to add that the evaluation also finds that the Interreg VA RO-HU Programme provides about 25% of the available EU funding for the preservation and promotion of the natural, historic and cultural heritage in the eight counties covered by the programme.

- **A validation net-impact assessment workshop**, focused mainly on Programme effects in the area of cross-border cooperation, from both perspectives, horizontally, thus across all Programme areas and vertically, directly linked with the implementation of PA 6⁹⁷.

Based on the aim of the Net-impact assessment workshop, a wide range of experts in the area of cross-border cooperation were contacted, as it follows: representative of academia specialized in regional development and cross-border cooperation and international experts with expertise in programming and evaluation Interreg Programmes, international organizations working in the area of transnational actions. The list of participants can be consulted in [Annex 7](#) of this report.

Concept note for NET-IMPACT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

The Specific Objective 6.1 of the Interreg V A RO-HU Programme (*Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities*) supported cross-border cooperation projects of public institutions (mainly municipalities), but also educational institutions (schools), cultural institutions (museums) and nongovernmental organisations. It also has the potential to support administrative capacity building of the institutions benefiting from support for cross-border cooperation.

The number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives is the most important output indicator of for PA6/IP11 of the programme. There are in fact a larger number of institutions directly involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives (over 500 are assumed by contracted projects) compared to the programme target (36).

The number of people participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives is the second output indicator for PA6/IP11 of the programme and represents the expression of the target groups of all projects aiming mainly at enhancing the intensity of cross-border cooperation. While the programme target was 2,000 persons, the 33 funded projects assumed 18,445 persons participating in initiatives. Moreover, the number of people actually participating in cross-border cooperation initiatives for the projects with approved reports is over 160% the value promised by funded projects: 30.045 persons.

⁹⁷ Idem

The programme provided support for intense exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge, creating professional linkages among the partner institutions. Moreover, in most cases the projects specific outputs encourage future cooperation ensuring the sustainability of the cross-border cooperation. There are projects outcomes that can, should and will be used for future cooperation activities.

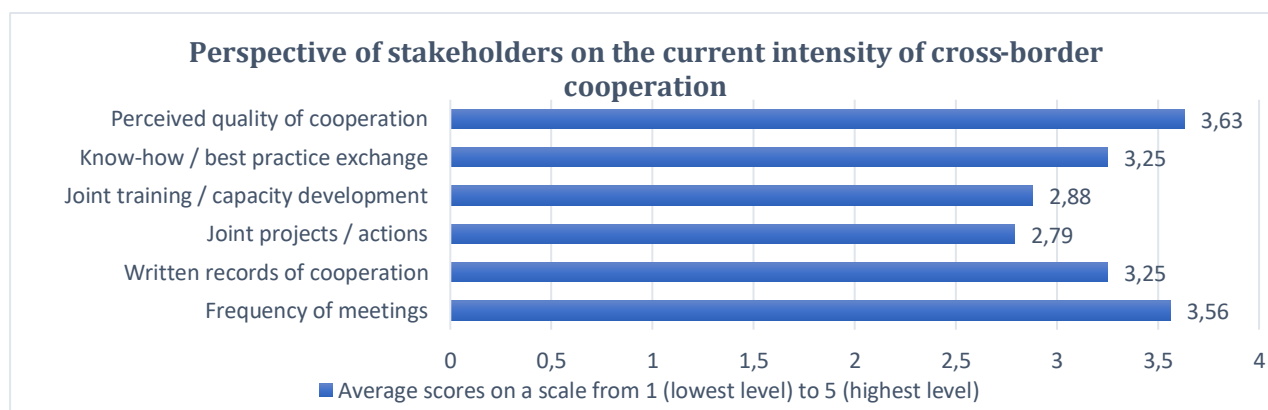
Assessing the programme implementation and results against the criteria for cross-border cooperation and indicators inspired by the [Ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III](#)⁹⁸, the evaluation findings are that:

- The potential for strategic cross-border development is ensured by the programme governance structure;
- The actual “Interreg-V-A-demand of approved projects” is matching the initially planned “Interreg-V-A-funding supply”. There is no significant allocation for cooperation that was not used;
- All selected projects include a mutual exchange of experience and a limited number of projects are developing policy instruments, strategies, or other policy support tools to be used in the future;
- The population directly and indirectly covered by the programme implementation is significant, although a small percent has been directly involved in projects activities.
- The level of involved administrative units proves that the intensity of cooperation is very high and most of the municipalities taking part in projects implementation have several partners on the other side of the border. However, small municipalities are rarely participation in the programme.

The expected outcome for this Specific Objective was the **increased intensity level of the cooperation**. This intensity level of the cooperation was established in 2014 (baseline) and in 2023 (by the impact evaluation), based on a survey with programme stakeholders. The **stakeholders have been asked to give a mark from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) to the intensity of cooperation**. Despite the good results of the programme already observed, the average result, based on the survey conducted for the evaluation is **3,23**, lower than the target for 2023 of 3,57 and also of the baseline calculated in 2014, which was 3,46.

The following figure shows the registered values by assessment criteria.

Figure 34. Perspective of stakeholders on the current intensity of cross-border cooperation



⁹⁸ INTERREG III Community Initiative (2000-2006). Ex-post evaluation, available at: https://files.nettsteder.regjeringen.no/wpuploads01/blogs.dir/473/files/2015/08/2010-06-23_final_report1.pdf

Source: Survey addressed to programme stakeholders. N=57

Nevertheless, it is important to mention here, that when stakeholders are asked directly about the intensity of cooperation, they express a very positive opinion considering that the level of cooperation has increased to a very large or large extent.

On the other hand, 85% of the programme beneficiaries and stakeholders answering the surveys conducted for the evaluation agree that project results can be maintained to a large or very large extent, but only about 60% are committed to support the sustainability of the projects by allocating human and financial resources. Case studies show that in the absence of projects some of the cooperation tools and structures are not used or working (e.g., cross border committees, the implementation of cross-border strategies etc.).

Annex 11. Methodology used for applying the funding framework approach

The evaluation will follow the methodology proposed by the project “Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation”, financed under the ESPON 2020 Programme.

The funding framework identifies a share of funding from different funding sources in case of specific intervention areas (represented by priorities/objectives/specific objective as representative for the investigated indicator). The assumption is that the share of funding of each programme on each intervention area is responsible for the share of impact in the specific intervention area.

The calculated share in % of the CBC programme will be further used to calculate the net impact. The change in indicator values at the time of the start of the intervention and at the time of the end of the intervention provides the gross impact. The net impact is arrived at through multiplication of the gross impact with the calculated share.

Steps for the funding framework:

1. **Financial contribution of CBC** – Calculate the total financial contribution of the programme for each specific objective, by summing the contracted value / budget of the projects under each specific objective of the CBC RO-HU programme, including all eligible and noneligible costs, the EU contribution and the beneficiary's own contribution.
2. **Similar specific objectives** – Identify the specific objectives of other programmes, that are similar to the specific objectives to the CBC RO-HU programme. This should include both EU funded programmes (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020, national programmes and other funding sources (Norwegian and EEA funds),
3. **Create the funding framework table** – Fill in the header rows in the funding framework table, with the similar specific objectives identified,
4. **Similar contracted projects** – Identify projects contracted under the *similar specific objectives* in the programme area (the eight counties - NUTS III - covered by the CBC programme). This step should include:
 - 4.1. Create a data base of projects with beneficiaries from the programme area, funded by other funding sources. Organize the projects in the data base by *similar specific objective*, and include the projects' contracted budget in the database;
 - 4.2. Create a data base of projects implemented to cover at least one of the eight counties in the programme area, but with beneficiaries outside the programme area, funded by other funding sources. Organize the projects in the data base by *similar specific objective*, and include the projects contracted budget in the database.
 - 4.3. Calculate the allocation of the budget for the programme areas by dividing the budget, if needed, assuming that all covered counties receive an equal share of the budget. E.g.: if a project is implemented in 5 counties and 1 is covered by CBC RO-HU programme, assume that the allocation for the CBC RO-HU programme is 1/5 of the project value.
 - 4.4. Include, if available, the executed/paid value of each project in the list until 31/12/2023.
5. **Financial contribution of other funding sources** – Fill in the funding framework table with the total sum allocated to contracted projects, by other funding sources to the similar specific objectives.
6. **Calculate the share of contributions** – Calculate the share of the financial contribution of CBC to each specific objective from the total allocations to contracted projects for the CBC and similar specific objectives.

Notes:

- The list of similar specific objectives should be validated with:
 - the Interreg V-A RO-HU programme: the MA in Romania and the NA in Hungary;
 - the main local authorities and other stakeholders, that could have experience in using other sources;
- The similar contracted projects should be organized in a database that could allow for further verification of projects in order to eliminate projects that are not contributing to similar specific objectives with the ones of the Interreg V-A RO-HU programme, following the attached table. Optional columns are recommended, but if data are not available, the project should be included with their contracted value (column K and M).

Annex 12. Detailed analysis for calculating the values of result indicators and macroeconomic indicators

Water quality (ecological condition) of cross border rivers at the measurement points in the eligible area (PA1, IP 6/b)

Value for 2021 = 2,88

Summarized data for Hungarian area addressed by the programme:

Class	Quality	Ranking factor	Number of Stations			
			Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Hajdú-Bihar	Békés	Csongrád-Csanád
I	very good	1				
II	good	2	1		1	
III	moderate	3	3	3	3	4
IV	weak	4				
V	bad	5				
Total Measurement points			4	3	4	4
Weighted quality average			11	9	11	12

Note: Although water quality is given for 24 river sections in the 4 county (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés, Csongrád-Csanád), only 15 measurement sections were nominated and taken into account in the calculations.

N	15
N*q	43
qav	2,866667

Summarized data for Romanian area addressed by the programme:

Class	Quality	Ranking factor	Number of Stations			
			Arad	Bihor	Satu Mare	Timis
I	very good	1				
II	good	2	9		3	5
III	moderate	3	14	7	10	26
IV	weak	4	3			1
V	bad	5		1	1	
Total Measurement points			26	8	14	32
Weighted quality average			72	26	41	92

Notes:

- In the methodology Satu Mare had 15 measurements points, the data for 2021 provided by ANAR includes only 14 measurement points
- In the methodology Bihor had 36 measurements points, the data for 2021 provided by ANAR includes only 8 measurement points
- In the methodology Timis had no measurement point included, the data provided by ANAR includes 32 measurement points
- In the methodology Arad had 29 measurement points included, the data provided by ANAR includes 26 measurement points

N	80
N*q	231,00
qav	2,8875

Common data for Romanian and Hungarian addressed areas

Class	Quality	Ranking factor	Number of Stations							
			Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Hajdú-Bihar	Békés	Csongrád-Csanád	Arad	Bihar	Satu Mare	Timis
I	very good	1								
II	good	2	1		1		9		3	5
III	moderate	3	3	3	3	4	14	7	10	26
IV	weak	4					3			1
V	bad	5						1	1	
Total Measurement points			4	3	4	4	26	8	14	32
Weighted quality average			11	9	11	12	72	26	41	92

N	95
N*q	274
qav	2,884211

Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area (PA1, IP 6/c)

Value for 2022 = 5.766.974

	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Hajdú-Bihar	Békés	Csongrád-Csanád	Arad	Bihar	Satu Mare	Timis	TOTAL
2018	373.580	1.533.843	777.205	717.093	377.738	1.523.648	132.003	896.276	6.331.386
2019	388.038	1.541.427	770.131	709.044	399.519	1.547.915	149.085	915.081	6.420.240

2020	266.295	743.466	425.777	399.366	171.695	729.449	82.406	361.708	3.180.162
2021	326.478	839.728	449.669	500.491	272.622	1.160.010	133.697	409.933	4.092.628
2022	512.209	1.347.983	649.284	710.400	310.218	1.484.115	183.901	568.864	5.766.974

Cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T (no. of inhabitants) (PA 2, IP 7/b)

Expected value of the indicator when the activities will be finalized = 607.768 of inhabitants (based on the official data from 2022), representing 139,46% of the target.

The value is an estimation that starts from the premises that the project RO-HU 444 will be successfully finalized by the end of the programme. The **current value based on the methodology of the programme is 0**, due to the fact that no result has been reported yet in the eMS.

		Settlements located on the developed road sections		Settlements within 3 km distance from the relevant road sections		
Name of supported projects (HU-RO CBC Programme 2007-13)	Length of road section developed (km)	Name	Number of inhabitants (2014)	Name	Number of inhabitants (2014)	SUM
HU-RO CBC Programme 2007-13 TOTAL / annex IX. Of Programme Document	134		288.047		68.029	356.076
		Settlements located on the developed road sections		Settlements within 3 km distance from the relevant road sections		
Support of the RO-HU 2014-2020 Interreg Programme		Name	Number of inhabitants (2022)	Name	Number of inhabitants (2022)	
ROHU-444 / 1) Modernized road DJ 709B Curtici-Sanmartin - 8.6 km;	8,6	Curtici	8.900	Dorobanti	1.550	
		Macea	7.170			
		Sanmartin	13.165			

ROHU-444 / 2) Modernized road DJ 709B Sanmartin - Socodor - 11.46 km;	11,46	Socodor	2.256			
ROHU-444 / 3) Construction of road DJ 792 Socodor-Nadab - 4.84 km;	4,84	Nadab / Chişineu Criş*	7.990	Padureni	2.035	
ROHU-444 / 4) Construction of South-North Motorway Bypass, City of Curtici - 7.30 km. Purchase of a multifunctional vehicle for road maintenance and a Surveillance camera system for traffic monitoring;	7,3	Curtici (2021)	upper			
Technical documentation for improved connection of 20 tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure in Bekes county				Battonya	5.095	
				Bekes	17.737	
				Elek	4.281	
				Bekescsaba	55.109	
				Csorvas	4.412	
				Fuzesgyarmat	5.026	
				Gyomaendrod	12.134	
				Kondoros	4.544	
				Korosladany	4.096	
				Medgyeshaza	3.181	
				Mezobereny	9.316	
				Mezohegyes	4.470	
				Mezokovacsza	5.356	
				Oroshaza	25.714	
				Sarkad	9.169	
				Szarvas	14.515	
				Szeghalom	8.180	
				Totkomlos	5.330	

				Ujkigyos	4.707	
				Veszto	6.254	
Summary			39.481		212.211	256.680
TOTAL						607.768

Ratio of people to motorized road vehicles crossing the border (PA 2, IP 7/c)

Value for 2021 = 2,35

		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
HUNGARY	Number of people crossing the Hu-Ro border by road vehicles	23.416.639	25.314.988	14.499.752	18.719.305	17.521.183
	Motorized road vehicles crossing the border	10.108.102	10.805.532	7.003.214	8.671.987	7.448.723
	Number of persons crossing the border per one motorized road vehicle	2,32	2,34	2,07	2,16	2,35
ROMANIA	Number of people crossing the Hu-Ro border by road vehicles	19.190.192	21.662.615	11.493.446	11.851.725	15.301.656
	Motorized road vehicles crossing the border	7.811.396	8.226.116	5.424.232	5.617.454	6.537.715
	Number of persons crossing the border per one motorized road vehicle	2,46	2,63	2,12	2,11	2,34
AVERAGE		2,39	2,49	2,09	2,13	2,35

Employment rate in the eligible area as a percentage of the working age population (PA 3, IP 8/b)

Value for 2021 = 56.7

	2019	2020	2021		
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	Number of employed people	Population of working age (15-64 years old)	Employment rate (15-64 years old)	Number of employed people	Population of working age (15-64 years old)	Employment rate (15-64 years old)	Number of employed people	Population of working age (15-64 years old)	Employment rate (15-64 years old)
Szabolcs- Szatmár- Bereg	165,6	236,5	70,0%	239,0	361,4	66,13%	238,9	356,9	66,93%
Hajdú- Bihar	236,2	344,1	68,6%	235,6	341,0	69,08%	238,1	338,2	70,41%
Békés	148,7	211,8	70,2%	146,4	207,5	70,58%	144,2	203,2	70,98%
Csongrád- Csanád	182,5	256,0	71,3%	179,2	253,8	70,63%	183,1	248,9	73,55%
Arad	209300	324554	64,5%	205100	321768	63,7%	187100	318380	58,8%
Bihar	260500	423595	61,5%	259000	420767	61,6%	230500	417503	55,2%
Satu Mare	142700	272933	52,3%	140600	270842	51,9%	123200	268901	45,8%
Timis	347800	526676	66,0%	346700	525134	66,0%	324600	522375	62,1%
TOTAL	961.032,9	1.548.806,3	62,0%	952.200,2	1.539.674,7	61,8%	866.204,3	1.528.306,2	56,7%

Average service level in health care institutions in the eligible area (PA 4, IP 9/a)

The value of the indicator calculated on the bases of the answers presented in the below table = 3,22

QUESTION	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE BY CRITERION	SCHORT NAME OF THE CRITERION
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How would you describe the overall condition of your health care institution (condition of diagnostic and curing equipment, other facilities)? (1 meaning "Poor" and 5 meaning "Excellent")	0	1	5	3	0	9	3,22	Overall condition of institution
How would you describe the condition of the general infrastructure (buildings, other facilities) of your institution?	1	3	2	2	0	9	2,33	Condition of general infrastructure
Do you have the necessary BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place? (1 meaning "We lack many basic diagnostic and curing medical equipment" and 5 meaning "We have all the necessary diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place")	1	0	4	4	0	9	3,22	Availability of BASIC equipment
How would you describe the capacity of BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution with regard to the existing needs? (1 meaning "The capacity is far from sufficient, we struggle to meet even the basic needs" and 5 meaning "The capacity of these equipment is appropriate, we can meet the needs in our service area")	0	3	4	2	0	9	2,88	Capacity of BASIC equipment
How up-to-date are the available BASIC diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution? (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	0	2	2	4	1	9	3,44	Recency of BASIC equipment
Do you have the necessary SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place? (1 meaning "We lack many SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment" and 5 meaning "We have all the necessary SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment in place")	0	1	4	4	0	9	3,33	Availability of SPECIALIZED equipment
How would you describe the capacity of SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution with regard to the existing needs? (1 meaning "The capacity is far from sufficient, we struggle to meet even the basic needs" and 5 meaning "The capacity of these equipment is appropriate, we can meet the needs in our service area")	0	2	5	3	0	9	3,44	Capacity of SPECIALIZED equipment
How up-to-date are the available SPECIALIZED diagnostic and curing medical equipment of your institution? (1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")	0	2	4	3	1	9	3,66	Recency of SPECIALIZED equipment
Do you have sufficient capacity (number) staff (professional and support) to deliver quality services?	0	1	3	5	0	9	3,44	Capacity of staff

(1 meaning "We lack many people, we struggle to provide appropriate services" and 5 meaning "We have appropriate capacity of staff")								
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Quality of the joint risk management (PA 5, IP 5/b)

The value of the indicator calculated on the bases of the answers presented in the below table = 2,78

QUESTION	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE BY CRITERION	SCHORT NAME OF THE CRITERION
How do you assess the availability of the most important major equipment, tools and vehicles necessary for effective disaster and risk prevention actions, based on past experiences?	5	6	5	6	3	25	2,84	Availability of important major equipment
<i>(1 meaning "Most of the key equipment, tools and vehicles are lacking" and 5 meaning "We have all necessary key equipment, tools and vehicles in place")</i>								
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities of your organization necessary for forecasting natural hazards and identifying anthropic hazards (forecasting emergency situations).	6	6	7	4	2	25	2,6	Overall condition of equipment / facilities (Forecasting emergency situations)
<i>(1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")</i>								
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities, tools and vehicles of your organization necessary for risk prevention.	5	6	5	6	2	25	2,64	Overall condition of equipment / facilities (Risk prevention)
<i>(1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")</i>								
Please assess the overall condition of the equipment / facilities, tools and vehicles of your organization necessary for emergency response (addressing emergency situations).	6	4	4	7	3	25	2,32	Overall condition of equipment / facilities (Emergency response)
<i>(1 meaning "They are completely outdated" and 5 meaning "They are of appropriate technological standards and in very good condition")</i>								
How effectively can your organisation inform and mobilize the population in case of emergency situations, based on past experiences? If the question is not relevant for your organization, please skip and progress to the next question.	1	5	5	6	4	25	2,8	Effectiveness of informing and mobilizing population
<i>(1 meaning "Not effectively at all" and 5 meaning "Very effectively")</i>								

Please assess the level of preparedness / training of the covered population to deal with emergency situations. If the question is not relevant, please skip and progress to the next question. <i>(1 meaning "Poor" and 5 meaning "Excellent")</i>	3	9	5	2	2	25	2,16	Level of preparedness and training of population.
How up-to-date are the risk and disaster management plans / protocols of your organisation are? <i>(1 meaning "Not up-to-date at all" and 5 meaning "Completely up-to-date")</i>	1	4	5	6	8	25	3,52	Recency of disaster management plans / protocols
How appropriate do you consider the general level of preparedness and training (including practical exercise) of your staff to effectively address emergency situations? <i>(1 meaning "Totally inappropriate" and 5 meaning "Totally appropriate")</i>	1	5	7	4	7	25	3,32	Level of preparedness and training of staff

Intensity level of cross-border cooperation (PA 6, IP 11/b)

The value of the indicator calculated on the bases of the answers presented in the below table = 3,23

QUESTION	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE BY CRITERION	SCHORT NAME OF THE CRITERION
How often do you have meetings with your cross-border partners? <i>(1 meaning "We meet very rarely" and 5 meaning "We have regular meetings, at least one meeting per year")</i>	14	1	8	7	27	57	3,57	Frequency of meetings
Do you have any written record (cooperation agreement, cooperation action plan, joint protocol, etc.) of your cooperation? <i>(1 meaning "We do not have any written agreement or plan" and 5 meaning "We have documents that provide the framework for our joint actions and we update them regularly")</i>	18	2	7	8	22	57	3,25	Written records of cooperation
Have you had projects / actions that you have implemented jointly? <i>(1 meaning "We have never implemented projects / actions jointly" and 5 meaning "We have multiple joint projects / actions every year")</i>	11	3	10	14	12	57	2,79	Joint projects / actions

Have you had joint training programme or other form of joint capacity development? (1 meaning "We have never had joint training or capacity development" and 5 meaning "We have regular joint training programmes and capacity development")	9	7	9	6	19	57	2,88	Joint training / capacity development
Do you exchange know-how or best practices to help each-other's work? (1 meaning "No, we have never shared knowledge or exchanged best practices" and 5 meaning "We regularly exchange know-how and good practices between us")	21	4	18	8	14	57	3,25	Know-how / best practice exchange
How do you perceive the quality of cooperation with your partners? (1 meaning "Poor" and 5 meaning "Excellent")	9	1	4	11	32	57	3,63	Perceived quality of cooperation

Macroeconomic indicators

Waiting time due to border controls

Most recent available data for Hungary - 2021		
Name	Waiting time from Hungary outwards (minutes)	
	car	truck
Ártánd - Borş	30	30
Battonya - Turnu	10	10
Csanádpalota Autópálya Határátkelő - Nădlac II	90	120
Csengersima - Petea	10	15
Gyula - Vărşand	60	120
Kiszombor - Cenad	10	10
Létavértes - Sacuieni	10	10
Méhkerék - Salonta	10	10
Nagykereki - Bors II	10	10

Nagylak - Nădlac	10	10
Nyírábrány - Valea Lui Mihai	10	10
Vállaj - Urziceni	10	10
Most recent available data for Romania - 2023		
Name	Waiting time from Romania outwards (minutes)	
	car	truck
Halmeu	10	20
Petea	20	210
Urziceni	20	-
Valea lui Mihai	20	10
Bors	20	130
Borş II	10	30
Săcuieni	10	-
Salonta	10	10
Vârşand	10	180
Turnu	10	10
Nădlac	20	60
Nădlac II	40	150
Cenad	10	1
Jimbolia	10	10

Number of unemployed people, between 2015 and 2022 (thousands)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	32,70	30,10	22,70	23,60	21,60	23,20	24,60	22,00
Hajdú-Bihar	27,00	21,20	16,00	13,90	11,20	13,10	14,00	12,60
Békés	13,20	9,40	7,70	7,30	8,80	9,10	9,80	9,70

Csongrád-Csanád	13,50	8,30	6,50	5,40	4,10	6,00	5,40	3,80
Arad	5,10	4,94	3,25	2,90	2,61	4,57	2,95	2,18
Bihor	9,60	8,16	6,50	4,07	4,18	5,97	3,52	2,84
Satu Mare	6,04	6,10	4,73	3,84	3,63	5,46	4,60	4,92
Timiș	4,33	3,94	3,54	2,74	2,78	4,45	2,59	2,66

GDP at county level

	2015 (Euro)	2016 (Euro)	2017 (Euro)	2018 (Euro)	2019 (Euro)	2020 (Euro)
<i>Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg</i>	3.603.288,58	3.740.968,65	4.041.027,71	4.409.217,50	4.774.013,26	3.999.311,01
<i>Hajdú-Bihar</i>	4.378.432,20	4.368.772,48	4.943.951,10	5.321.069,47	5.625.771,90	4.807.768,88
<i>Békés</i>	2.431.404,51	2.483.119,22	2.636.497,11	2.826.827,66	2.866.269,72	2.492.527,48
<i>Csongrád-Csanád</i>	3.498.412,19	3.543.589,41	3.862.953,14	409.123,41	4.399.432,20	3.826.148,74
Average by year	3.477.884,37	3.534.112,44	3.871.107,27	3.241.559,51	4.416.371,77	3.781.439,03
<i>Bihor</i>	3.635.973,00	382.559,90	4.311.332,94	4.747.351,46	5.207.788,92	5.151.020,24
<i>Satu Mare</i>	1.947.109,11	2.037.387,55	2.354.633,22	2.558.439,88	2.801.715,42	2.785.098,51
<i>Arad</i>	3.484.589,43	3.674.690,48	4.110.461,68	4.498.270,12	4.892.965,52	4.536.395,77
<i>Timis</i>	7.601.147,36	7.995.635,52	8.444.648,76	9.472.053,29	10.414.439,86	10.077.339,73
Average by year	4.167.204,72	3.522.568,36	4.805.269,15	5.319.028,69	5.829.227,43	5.637.463,56

Note: The values in Euro have been calculated by using average value of exchange rate by year in Romania and Hungary

GDP per capita

	2015 (Euro)	2016 (Euro)	2017 (Euro)	2018 (Euro)	2019 (Euro)	2020 (Euro)
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<i>Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg</i>	6407,48	6643,82	7189,70	7896,71	8633,50	7284,35
<i>Hajdú-Bihar</i>	8149,44	8166,33	9286,18	10030,97	10655,09	9127,63
<i>Békés</i>	6924,16	7154,77	7699,20	8362,78	8574,87	7540,73
<i>Csongrád-Csanád</i>	8612,43	8761,31	9622,05	10222,00	11025,81	9605,43
Average by year Hungary	7523,38	7681,56	8449,28	9128,12	9722,32	8389,53
<i>Bihor</i>	5854,30	6172,73	6967,55	7676,87	8433,31	8348,45
<i>Satu Mare</i>	4963,57	5208,63	6033,31	6573,44	7221,22	7203,17
<i>Arad</i>	7323,66	7741,87	8680,44	9526,64	10380,64	9641,77
<i>Timis</i>	10255,20	10748,84	11304,96	12618,44	13794,67	13270,50
Average by year Romania	7099,18	7468,02	8246,57	9098,85	9957,46	9615,97

Note: The values in Euro have been calculated by using average value of exchange rate by year in Romania and Hungary

Annex 13. Treatment table of comments

COMMENT	STATUS	RESPONSE
<p>What do we mean by stakeholders?</p> <p>Reading the document, I was not sure if they only applicants who were no selected for financing, or special territorial institutions not even applying for funds, or the mixture of beneficiaries, rejected applicants and other relevant institutions. I am asking because some questions require certain level of knowledge and experience in project implementation, but in some case the source of the feedback is not clear enough. Thank you.</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>Stakeholders include a mix between beneficiaries and relevant county and local level institutions in the context of the expected results of the programme. The two categories overlap to some extent, but they are not identical.</p> <p>We have included in the Report an Annex presenting the detailed methodology used for data collection and we explained there our approach. Please see Annex 10.</p> <p>It is important to mention here that for PA 4,5 and 6 we followed the approach included in Annex IX1 – Methodology result indicators of the Programme. Thus, we have included in the survey the same types of stakeholders as taken into consideration when conducting the baseline survey, in 2014.</p>
<p>Can I ask with whom were the interviews conducted and based on what aspects were they selected?</p> <p>The 4 interviews from HU were conducted only with the County Councils? May we receive the memos of the HU interviews? Thank you.</p>	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	<p>The entire list of participants to the interviews is presented in Annex 6 of this Report. While initially we aimed at selecting 2 or 3 stakeholders for each PA of the Programme, after we realized that the database with the stakeholders included in the baseline survey, in 2014, was not available, and thus, we would encounter difficulties in collecting data for calculating the values of result indicators for PAs 4, 5 and 6, we decided to capitalize as much as possible on these interviews and try to focus them on these 3 areas. During these interviews we also tried to fill out together the survey and further disseminate it. We selected the following categories of stakeholders: county councils, municipalities, environment protection and risk management and universities. Where possible, we tried not to interview the same institutions as for the Case Studies, thus, beneficiaries.</p> <p>This approach was proposed to the Contracting Authority, discussed and agreed and the process is briefly presented in the Activity Reports (we made monthly activity reports additionally to the ToR and Interim Activity Report – Deliverable 3 of the contract).</p> <p>In regards with the minutes of the interviews, the ToR did not require us to draft them and annex them to the Report. On the other hand, we have announced participants during interviews that the discussions are confidential and row information / data collected during interviews won't be shared outside the evaluation team.</p>

<p>Stakeholders who are beneficiaries shouldn't be in the group of beneficiaries? Do we assume that since they are special organization, they have different input concerning management and impact of the programme?</p> <p>It is more likely that in case of question concerning project or programme management they look at the subject from beneficiary point of view and not as an outsider.</p>	REJECTED	<p>We started to prepare and develop the data base with stakeholders based on programme methodology for calculating the baseline and setting the targets for result indicators under PA 4, 5 and 6. In all 3 cases, stakeholders include also Programme beneficiaries.</p> <p>More important from the perspective of an ex-post evaluation and as per the EQs under effectiveness and impact was to determine to what extent the financed actions and their effects are widely known, also among entities that are not programme beneficiaries. We considered to be utmost important to triangulate between sources of data / information. This was the reason for which we aimed to involve as much as possible stakeholders outside of the programme. This approach was also driven by the Annex IX.1 of the Programme Document, according to which the results in the areas of health, risk management and cross-border cooperation are measured based on stakeholders' perspective, the methodology indicating explicitly that this category includes non-beneficiaries of the Programme.</p>
What sectors do you expect to reach the level of pre-pandemic?	ACCEPTED	e.g., tourism, mobility, employment
<p>Not for the draft report, but for the final one please also mention, where it is not already clear from the context/title, a short thematic field next to the number of PAs (e.g. – PA2 – accessibility). Or just use the thematic fields, depending on the fluency of the phrasings.</p> <p>It makes the text much easier to follow by non-expert readers)</p>	ACCEPTED	We have included the short thematic field next to the number of the PA, when mentioning it
<p>Influence of the IPs were left out. In HU side, FLC provides daily assistance to beneficiaries, as well. It is a little unbalanced if we speak about the influence of the setup, and not mentioning IPs or national controllers (on both sides). Were they partner of the questions, or only MA, JS and NA?</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>We have revised the first paragraph. In general, based on the data collected through interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries, we noticed that they do not make a clear distinction between programme authorities and they have an overall very positive perspective regarding the communication and support received from the institutions that they were more often in contact, the Joint Secretariat or the Info Points. In most cases, they consider the relation with programme authorities as being a determinant factor for the success of their projects.</p>

<p>You mean stakeholders, who are not beneficiaries, or they are beneficiaries? In this chapter, stakeholders and beneficiaries are used as synonyms or they are different group of institutions?</p> <p>I am afraid, this is one of the questions (among others), which cannot be properly answered without first-hand experience in project management under the ROHU.</p>	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	<p>We have addressed this issue when answering previous comments. We have also included a new annex in the Report with the detailed methodology that was used in the data collection process.</p> <p>The two terms, beneficiaries and stakeholders, are not use as synonyms. We refer either to stakeholders' perspectives (based on the data collected from surveys or interviews) and beneficiaries (based on the data collected from surveys or interviews).</p>
<p>Without a doubt, however it seems to be in contradiction to the highlighted sentence above.</p>	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	<p>We refer here to the answers received from programme beneficiaries and above to the answers received from programme stakeholders. Indeed, they overlap to some extent, but it is not the same group. Please see the explanations provided for the above questions.</p>
<p>MC members, county councils, project partners, applicants? Same concern as above.</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>Interviewees with stakeholders and programme beneficiaries (conducted in the framework of the case studies).</p> <p>The interviews with stakeholders included: county councils, municipalities in the are covered by the pogramme, risk management institutions and universities.</p>
<p>If this has no significant influence, is it worth to mention, you think?</p> <p>Referring to the phrase: "The staff turnover is an issue that has been highlighted during the data collection process. While with no significant influenceno significant influence, it has been present in most of programme structures. One representative case is the personnel of Info Points from Hungary, which changed to a large extent during the implementation of the programme"</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>We deleted the phrase</p>
<p>According to the case study or the interview, or based on what source of information? Please specify for a better understanding.</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>Programme beneficiaries. The information was collected through the interviews conducted for the case studies.</p>
<p>Please clarify, by the MC, or by what group?</p>	ACCEPTED	<p>As the interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries, they were content with the overall process of contract revision and indicated that all involved</p>

		entities with whom they have directly communicated or collaborated were very supportive.
Please specify which process?	ACCEPTED	The revisions of the financing contracts.
Bi-, or multilingualism would be more specific.	ACCEPTED	We have adjusted the text.
Based on the assessment, is it a negative, positive or neutral factor in terms of the achievement of the objectives?	ACCEPTED	This is perceived as a positive factor in regards with the success of projects implemented under the framework of the Programme. Further, in the same paragraph, we explain to what extent this factor has manifested across project portfolio.
Could you please direct us to the section or chapter where we can find more information how the CBC character was assessed? Thank you.	ACCEPTED	For more findings in this regard please see EQs 22 and 23. But we have also included findings related to the cross-border effects of the Programme when answering also other EQs, such as EQ 16 or 11.
In HU, there is a prepayment system in use since the beginning of 2007-2013, both in terms of HU co-financing and both in relation to the ERDF advance in partner level. Please rephrase and specify the issue you are referring to.	ACCEPTED	We adjusted the phrase.
Could you please specify what does it mean?	ACCEPTED	The payment request instrument is used in order to facilitate the reimbursement process. The payment request covers only invoices that were not paid yet by the beneficiary, by reimbursement requests cover only the already paid invoices. The payments requests are meant to address the cash-flow problems encountered by beneficiaries and they cover smaller amounts than the reimbursements request. The reimbursements requests include the amounts requested through the payment requests.
Please specify for a better understanding.	ACCEPTED	We have deleted the mention from the brackets.
Can you please confirm that MA organized online meetings with the beneficiaries? If yes, on which topic and for what reason?		The Programme Structures organized online meetings and information/ dissemination events and contests with beneficiaries and potential applicants. Some of these events are the following: -Photo competition held on Facebook - "My Favorite landscape" -#ROHUCreativeTogether campaign - artistic creation contest held on Facebook celebrating 30 years of cooperation -Capitalization of results - presentation of results and successful projects - zoom conference

According to our knowledge, this was/is allowed for all projects. If there is money left, the savings can be spent on new activities, equipment purchases, etc.	REJECTED	Yes, but the paragraph refers to the possibility of using the savings for purchasing goods and equipment necessary in the fight against COVID-19.
There is only one project, two if we count the CN, but the CH has already been finalized.	ACCEPTED	We have revised the phrase. Thank you.
There is only one project, or two if we count the CN, FA separately, but the beneficiaries are the same. Can you please double-check?	ACCEPTED	We have submitted the survey addressed to programme beneficiaries to all partners in the projects. Nevertheless, for this specific situation, due to the low number of responses (5 responses) the way in which the information was presented was not appropriated, thus we have revised the entire paragraph.
Same question: what do we mean by stakeholders? And 59% is how many institutions?	ACCEPTED	As mentioned in the answer for the previous comment, we have revised the entire paragraph.
No, it is not, we agree, but the CB development of the main TEN-T network, can be. I would propose to delete this sentence. Referring to: “although it is not necessarily the task of the INTERREG programme to provide a complex development of the main TEN-T network”	ACCEPTED	We deleted the indicated sentence.
They need to be spelled out to be understandable here, so please do that for the final report, referring to CHs and Ps (challenges and problems or potentials)	ACCEPTED	We have included the explanations where necessary.
The question is whether they contribute to the sustainable cross-border transport, referring to the name of the PA2. If yes, please rephrase it.	ACCEPTED	Yes. We have revised the sentence.
Same as above. “Sustainable cross-border transport”	ACCEPTED	We have revised the sentence.
They need to be spelled out to be understandable here, so please do that for the final report	ACCEPTED	We have included the explanations where necessary.

(referring to changes and potentials, as per Programme Document)		
Suggestion to change “on a long term” to “on a wider scope” in the phrase: “The programme contributes to higher access level to the labour market of the persons in the target groups of the projects, however the effects on employment is expected to occur on the long-term. ”	REJECTED	We have changed “on a long term” to “on a longer term”
They need to be spelled out to be understandable here, so please do that for the final report (referring to the challenges and potentials mentioned in the text)	ACCEPTED	We added the full title of the referred to challenge or potential.
And do you imply that this is the reason why they are not involved in CBC? What are you implying to?	ACCEPTED	A phrase was added to clarify the text.
For the final report, not for the draft one and just as a suggestion, should you consider it would be useful to be explored: the distribution trend in other Interreg programmes with geographical overlapping may be consulted here, the maps are already available if you select Romania and Hungary: https://keep.eu/projects/	ACCEPTED	We have checked the data and we have included in this section a new paragraph on this topic. The additional analysis is presented in the text of the report, under section 3.4.1.
Decision issued after the cut-off date of the assessment, but the number of FSP supported is 9.	ACCEPTED	We revised the text. We identified in the most recent database of projects funded under the Programme (https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/results/) that RO-HU 453 is not listed any more.
Taking into account that there are only very few infrastructure (e.g. bridges, border-crossing point) which is used jointly by partners/institutions/people from both side of the border, sustainability of the activities performed (on one side of the border) does not necessarily mean the sustainability of the cross-border cooperation. Please reconsider the assumption.	ACCEPTED	We have revised the phrase and added a new paragraph as to better present the idea.

For the final report, not the draft one: 3 separate pie charts next to each other would make this much easier to be read and compared	ACCEPTED	We deleted the table and inserted a cluster chart. We consider that this format allows very well the comparison
The question refers to the effects. Do you mean that effect of the programme in regional level is equal to the ERDF funds concentrated? We agree that this question is hard to assess, but if we equal the quantity of funds with the effect of the programme, it is not a question anymore why the counties feel that they need guarantees for an equal share of funds.	ACCEPTED	We moved the text at the end of the section, so that the answer to the question does not start with an analysis that is somehow misleading. We also added here a clarification on the assumption of the analysis: Although allocation of funds does not guarantee effects, the general assumption under the analysis in this report (also present in the funding framework analysis presented above) is that the intensity of funding is a proxy for the intensity of effects. I also added some additional findings on the different effects in different counties.
What do we mean by courage in this context? “As showed, despite the extensive communication activities, the number and variety of beneficiaries and their geographical coverage can be improved. There are many usual beneficiaries and some municipalities, institutions or organisations do not have the ‘courage’ to apply.”	ACCEPTED	They do not feel well prepared enough to try to apply and quit before trying.
Earlier, it was mentioned that smaller settlements lack the necessary administrative/financing/human capacity (which might be a reason they are not involved in CBC), which we believe is accurate. Maybe actions recommended could reflect on how to help this issue.	ACCEPTED	We revised the recommendation and complemented with specific actions to enhance the chances of small municipalities to access funding.
Sentence: “...the main factors hampering the effectiveness of the programme are related to ... c) under financing through the national budgets of the sectors addressed by the programme, such as protection of natural, cultural and historic heritage, healthcare (especially in Romania) or employment. Comment: healthcare? “in Romania the programme allocated to healthcare services and infrastructure 159% of the funds allocated by the Regional Operational	ACCEPTED	We revised the phrase.

Programme in the four counties: Arad, Bihor, Satu Mare and Timiș.”		
<p>The sentence “The JS has been the main contact point for beneficiaries and due to its location and the conducted analyses showed that it effectively supported those implementing Interreg funds” might contradict to the above-mentioned influence of the JS on the distribution of projects as: “There is an effect of the Joint Secretariat headquarters in Oradea, determining a more intensive accession of the opportunities provided by the programme in the proximity of the JS: more in Romania than in Hungary, concentrated in Bihor and to a lesser extent in Satu Mare and with a better geographical coverage in the north compared to the south of the programme area.</p>	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	<p>We revised the phrase, but there is no contradiction: the JS supported the existing beneficiaries, and it is a positive issue that the JS is located in the programme area. It is not so positive in relation to the distribution of programme beneficiaries, but the 6th conclusion is not related to the geographical distribution of beneficiaries. This conclusion refers to the programme authorities /bodies contribution to programme implementation for the existing beneficiaries. We complemented another conclusion on the geographical distribution of beneficiaries and partners.</p>
<p>It might not be true in terms of interventions. Maybe the interventions can be replaced by cooperations.</p> <p>“the general perspective being that no other available financing source could support the interventions implemented through Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary”</p>	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	<p>When we say interventions, we refer to the types of projects financed through Interreg V-A Romania – Hungary Programme. Many interviews showed that no other funds cover these types of eligible activities, that can be included in a single project. Indeed, first of all we refer to common / joint activities conducted by Hungarian and Romanian partners.</p> <p>We included in brackets: types of projects as to explain the way in which we are using the term intervention.</p>
Please be more specific, referring to the fact that in HU, the problem in subject is handled in a way it is proposed to be handled. Pre-financing of national co-financing and ERDF advance in partner level is in force since 2007-2013.	ACCEPTED	Recommendation reformulated for the support of Romanian beneficiaries
Although in the Summary, under point d) in subchapter Project level effectiveness, among the main factors that facilitated the effectiveness of the projects, „Joint Secretariat – BRECO and Info Points” is mentioned (page 2), but in further chapters only Joint Secretariat is referred to not mentioning the IPs at all, or only on few	ACCEPTED	The text was complemented with several references to the Info Points. As recommended, when mentioning of the Joint Secretariat we added “and Info Points”.

<p>occasions. Please note that in Annex 13 Treatment table of comments, a comment addressing the Info Points (IPs) says: „Influence of the IPs were left out. In HU side, FLC provides daily assistance to beneficiaries, as well. It is a little unbalanced if we speak about the influence of the setup, and not mentioning IPs or national controllers (on both sides).” The experts accepted the comment and reference was inserted that programme beneficiaries do not make a clear distinction between the programme authorities (page 31). The reference is very much welcomed but it would be wished for either completing this reference with „therefore when mentioning the Joint Secretariat, the Info Points are also referred to.”, or add „and Info Points” (if it is the case) to all mentioning of the Joint Secretariat. This is also supported by the response („they have an overall very positive perspective regarding the communication and support received from the institutions that they were more often in contact, the Joint Secretariat or the Info Points.”) Moreover, according to the programme document: „The IPs will be the main contact and information point in the programme area for information and support. The general purpose and objective of the IP is to contribute in accomplishment of the JS delegated tasks for implementing the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary, in a qualitative manner, as identified to be needed from the 2007-2013 period experience.”</p>		
<p>A chapter describing/summarising the efficiency of the programme structures by institutions is missing from the document, and consequently recommendations for the institutional structure in the new 2021-2027 period are also not included</p>	<p>PARTLY ACCEPTED</p>	<p>The issue is out of the scope of the evaluation, as there is no evaluation question regarding an assessment of the efficiency of the programme structures by institutions. The evaluation conducted is an impact evaluation, therefore the analysis conducted focused on how the programmes structures supported programme effectiveness and impact and there was no evaluation question or additional requirement during the inception period on a more in-depth</p>

		<p>institutional assessment. The answer to EQ7 examined if the programme structures support the effectiveness of the programme and concluded, by analysing separately the support from each type of structures: the MS, the NA, the JS and IPs, that they have been in efficient, according to their mandate, in supporting the projects and programme effectiveness. Therefore, there are no recommendation formulated to increase this support.</p> <p>Where programme structures can improve their work, this could probably contribute to increasing programme efficiency, but the evaluation of the programme efficiency and how it can be increased was not under the scope and objectives of the evaluation. Although the evaluators can express some opinions, the evaluation methodology and the analysis carried out did not included a systematic assessment of the programme efficiency and the organisational structure and procedures of the MS, the NA, the JS and IPs, therefore it is not possible to include more details in this evaluation report regarding the efficiency of the programme structures by institutions and consequently recommendations for the institutional structure in the new 2021-2027 period.</p>
The answer to EQ25 (page 70) lists the possibility of „Limiting the number of projects one organization can implement at one moment, in order to encourage also new institutions and organisations to apply” which is not recommended to be implemented. Instead, the financial and human capacities of the partners should be considered, and in case of equal scores by the projects favour the project involving partners new to the programme.	ACCEPTED	The text has been revised and the recommendation was replaced with the action aiming the same result but considered more feasible by the programme authorities.
There is an important statement in the answer to EQ27, saying: „The most important issue mentioned during interviews on the projects preparation and selection was the long period of time between the moment the applications had been planned and the moment the contracts were signed and projects started.” but no recommendation was found in the document that addresses this issue.	ACCEPTED	A conclusion and subsequent recommendation have been added in the conclusions and recommendations chapter and Annex 1.
Recommendation2 says: „...applying indexation of projects’ budgets with the inflation rate and making adjustment to the programme budget	ACCEPTED	The recommendation was complemented by a suggestion on implementation: “This can be achieved by creating a financial reserve for each call, to be complemented by funds that are not used by projects that can save money due to

taking into account savings from public procurement and the impact of inflation” How can this be implemented in a transparent way? Creating a „financial pool” for such issues or updating MC decisions, or „overspending” by partners and making decisions at the end of the programming period?		public procurement where they obtain better prices than anticipated. The funds from the financial reserve can be afterwards distributed to projects facing serious challenges/bottlenecks due to inflation, based on an updated decision on funding (of the MC) and an addendum to the funding contract.”
Recommendation 4 says that „Moreover, financial incentives (100% grant, ERDF 50% pre-financing) can help the beneficiaries of the projects”. Please note that the new legislation in Hungary (Government Decree No. 241/2023. (VI.20.) is about the possibility of 100% grant, 50% pre-financing of total partner cost (not the ERDF). It might be mentioned in footnote.	ACCEPTED	The footnote suggested was included
Recommendation 7 mentions direct communication to attract new potential applicants via email. The success rate of such interactions (contacts via email) is supposed to be very limited.	ACCEPTED	The recommendation on direct communication to attract new potential applicants via email was deleted. Recommendation 7 was reformulated with the suggestion of a caravan type campaign instead of the direct communication.
The Info Points, according to the Programme document and the Framework Agreement are Info Point(s) (IPs), please use this throughout the document, including the Glossary (where Local Info Points – LIP – is mentioned)	ACCEPTED	The name of the Info Points has been harmonised throughout the document,
Please harmonise the figure for „number of contracted projects” as 108 is written in the Summary (page 2) and in page 44, 66, 75, 83, but 125 in page 14 and 109 in page 29.	ACCEPTED	Figures have been corrected at pages 14 and 29
Page 27: SO 2.2 is included both in the positive and the negative internal factors	ACCEPTED	The error was corrected and SO 2.2 excluded from the list of negative internal factors related to the strength of the intervention logic.
The cut off date of the report is 31.12.2022, but there are conclusions drawn from end of April 2023 (page 37)	ACCEPTED	The cut-off date has been corrected to end of December 2022. The figures presented are correct for the cut-off date.
In page 48, it is written: „For comparison we examined the V-A Austria – Hungary Programme, with a concentration of projects close to the border, in large cities and with over 25% of	ACCEPTED	We excluded the comment of the concentration of projects near the SJ in the V-A Austria – Hungary Programme, taking into account the unclarity of the used concept: “area of a city”. In the data presented at page 48, the “area of a city”

<p>projects in the area of the city hosting the JS;...". Where are the figure and the conclusion from? The city hosting the JS is Sopron – what do you mean by the area of the city? It is sure that there are less projects from Sopron than 25% of the total.</p> <p>And it is right that there are an office for the JS in Szeged and in Pécs, although the JSs of the HUHR and HUSRB are rather located in Budapest. Furthermore the “close to the border” is very subjective, not quite a comparable or academic measure, let us say.</p>		<p>hosting the JS for a given CBC programme has been considered the city and the surrounding area, including the county/district where the city is located.</p> <p>The examples on HUHR and HUSRB have been clarified, excluding the comment on the JS location.</p> <p>Although “close to the border” can be a subjective measurement, the methodology applied was to divide the eligible counties/districts in the programmes’ areas in two, drawing an imaginary line through the middle of the counties/districts, resulting in two halves: one closer and one further from the border. We counted the number of projects in the half closer to the border and the number of projects in the half further from the border and compared them.</p> <p>Data for all CBC programmes, including the number and location of projects, have been extracted from: keep.eu</p>
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