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| **Call: 1st Open Call for Proposals for HARD projects** | |
| **Acronym & project ID** | **B.R.E.A.C.H.– ROHU00503** |
| **Project title** | **„Biodiversity Research & Education Across Cross-border Habitats”** |
| **Priority** | PRIORITY 1 - Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary |
| **Specific objective** | RS02.7 - Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution |
| **Implementation period** | 30 months (28 April 2025 – 27 October 2027) |
| **Objectiv** | To enhance local and cross-border biodiversity protection and preservation in Roșia and Esztár by educating and engaging 10,000 annual visitors at each Biodiversity Observation Hub, thereby increasing community and visitor awareness and fostering active participation in regional conservation efforts within the cross-border area. |
| **Partnership** | **Lead Partner:**  Roșia Commune (RO) |
| **Project Partners:**  PP2: Centre for Protected Areas and Sustainable Development Bihor (RO)  PP3: University of Nyíregyháza (HU)  PP4: Municipality of Esztár Village (HU) |
| **Total buget** | EUR 2,442,157.23 out of which EUR 1,953,725.76 FEDR |
| **Summary** | The project ***„Biodiversity Research & Education Across Cross-border Habitats” (ROHU00503 – B.R.E.A.C.H.)*** is an innovative cross-border initiative uniting Romanian and Hungarian communities to protect and enhance biodiversity in Roșia and Esztár. By integrating the unique mountain ecosystems of Roșia with the marshland habitats of Esztár, the project fosters regional environmental health through education, community engagement, and conservation efforts.  Led by Roșia Commune and partnering with the Centre for Protected Areas and Sustainable Development Bihor, University of Nyíregyháza, and Esztár Village, the project addresses shared biodiversity challenges across the border. Its core objective is to educate and engage 10,000 annual visitors at each of two Biodiversity Observation Hubs, increasing awareness and promoting active participation in conservation.  Key activities include restoring a dried-up lake in Esztár, constructing an inclusive Panoramic Tower in Roșia, developing educational trails and interactive exhibits, conducting biomonitoring and ecosystem service evaluations, and organizing ***workshops*** and a professional biodiversity conference. Communication efforts feature short films to broaden outreach and awareness.  The main deliverables—two Biodiversity Observation Hubs, a Biodiversity Masterplan, and Ecosystem Services Impact Mitigation Strategies—will support local communities, educational institutions, and environmental organizations. The project emphasizes cross-border cooperation to address environmental challenges collaboratively, setting a new standard for integrating conservation with community education and engagement in the Romania-Hungary border region. |
| **Main results** | The main results of the project are:   * *A comprehensive cross-border assessment of local ecosystem services* will be carried out in both Roșia (RO) and Esztár (HU), leading to *two detailed reports* that will evaluate habitat conditions, resource provisioning, and ecosystem regulation capacities. These studies will map key natural assets—including the mountain-karst ecosystems in Roșia and wetland habitats around the former Esztár Lake—and will identify human impacts, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for sustainable use. * *Two cross-border strategies* for reducing human impact on local ecosystem services will be developed—one in Roșia and one in Esztár. These strategies will identify key environmental pressures and propose concrete, community-informed actions such as awareness campaigns, sustainable land use practices, and improved resource management. * *Two Biodiversity Interpretation Plans* will be developed for the Roșia Commune and Esztár, aiming to raise community awareness, promote environmental education, and foster sustainable coexistence with local ecosystems. Each plan will analyze existing biodiversity data, define key educational messages, and produce accessible materials such as signage, brochures, and multimedia content for residents and visitors. * Facilities in Roșia and Esztár municipalities will be *equipped with biodiversity interpretation elements* to enhance understanding of local ecosystems for both communities and visitors. These elements, developed based on the respective Biodiversity Interpretation Plans, will educate, inform, and encourage active participation in exploring and conserving local biodiversity. * The project will promote its activities through *short films* on ecosystem services and biodiversity interpretation in Roșia and Esztár, shared via social media to raise awareness and engage the public. Roșia will produce two films, and Esztár one, all visually appealing and informative, highlighting the bond between local communities and their ecosystems. * The *Roșia Biodiversity Observation Hub* will be created through the project as a multifunctional facility featuring a 19-meter panoramic tower with an accessible walkway and educational panels. It will include an exhibition center, playground, relaxation area, and parking, all designed to promote biodiversity awareness and community engagement. * The *Esztár Biodiversity Observation Hub* will be created through the project by restoring a dried lake into a thriving aquatic ecosystem with educational trails. It will provide an accessible space for environmental education and community engagement. * Roșia Commune and Esztár Village will each organize *three annual workshops* over 30 months, engaging experts and local residents to share knowledge and foster community involvement in biodiversity conservation. These workshops will combine scientific and local insights to promote sustainable practices, strengthen collaboration, and empower ongoing environmental stewardship. * Roșia Commune will lead communication through an opening conference, website, flyers, and a permanent biodiversity exhibition to raise awareness and share project progress. * Esztár Village will host the closing conference to present results, lessons learned, and promote continued collaboration. * A *one-day conference in Nyíregyháza* will gather 100+ experts to develop the Biodiversity Masterplan, promote collaboration, and raise awareness for cross-border conservation. * A comprehensive *Biodiversity Masterplan* for the Romania-Hungary cross-border region will be developed. This strategic document will guide future conservation and sustainable development efforts across four counties, supported by a formal *Collaboration Agreement* among the four project partners to ensure ongoing cooperation beyond the project duration. * *Two press conferences* will be held to disseminate key project updates and engage public interest: one in Nyíregyháza to share outcomes from the Professional Conference and outline future directions for the Biodiversity Masterplan, and a second in Oradea to announce the completion and strategic significance of the finalized Masterplan. These events will ensure broad media coverage and public awareness, supporting the plan’s adoption and implementation across the cross-border region. |