

## **INTERREG PROGRAMME**

### **Interreg VI-A NEXT Hungary Slovakia Romania Ukraine**

2021-2027

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<b>NUTS regions covered by the programme</b>	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg – HU323 Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén – HU311 Košický kraj - SK042 Prešovský kraj – SK041 Maramureş – RO114 Satu-Mare - RO115 Suceava – RO215 Zakarpattia oblast – UA015 Ivano-Frankivsk oblast – UA003 Chernivtsi oblast – UA002
<b>strand</b>	A

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

### 1.1 Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)

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

The **area** of the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Interreg NEXT Programme consists of various regions of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania as EU Member States and Ukraine as Partner Country. The total cooperation area covers a territory of 83 057 km<sup>2</sup> (size of Austria) with a population of 8 078 324 (size between Austria and Bulgaria). Thus, the cooperation area is as large as an EU Member State, a middle-sized European country. However, administratively its territory is divided between four countries with different roles and responsibilities of their respective NUTS III regions.

Based on EUROSTAT methodology<sup>1</sup> the programme area can be considered as a large continuous rural area with only few urban cores and urban regions. Except for Košický Region and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, which are the intermediate regions, all NUTS III regions are predominantly rural. Based solely on population density and the level of urbanisation the Ukrainian regions are also predominantly rural and/or intermediate, with a very strong duality in each of the three regions where the plains and valleys (e.g. around Chernivtsi, Uzhhorod, Ivano-Frankivsk) are more populated and urban than the higher parts of the Carpathian mountain ranges.

*The area and population sizes of the affected counties*

County	Country	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	Hungary	7 246.19	676 093
Chernivtsi oblast	Ukraine	8 095.47	901 309
Ivano-Frankivsk oblast	Ukraine	13 959.28	1 370 526
Košický kraj	Slovakia	6 756.93	800 414
Maramureş	Romania	6 286.95	522 302
Prešovský kraj	Slovakia	8 981.33	825 022
Satu Mare	Romania	4 408.71	387 918
Suceava	Romania	8 632.94	761 808
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Hungary	5 933.65	578 963
Zakarpattia oblast	Ukraine	12 755.67	1 253 969
		83 663,00	8 078 324,00

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

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

<sup>1</sup> EUROSTAT: Urban-Rural Typology:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/rural-development/methodology>

### **1.2.1 Summary of main joint challenges**

#### **Environmental conditions and challenges**

Regarding the natural conditions, the programme area covers three biogeographical regions of similar features, which stretch across the four countries: Continental, Alpine and Pannonian. Apart from the similarities in terms of climate, geological, pedological features, flora, and fauna, the transboundary character of the regions comes with shared challenges as well. Many of the environmental potentials and challenges in the programme area can be deduced from the cross-border landscape diversity.

The regions incorporate natural habitats of transnational, and in some cases of European, relevance. The Carpathians are one of the most significant corridors for species migration and dispersal. Over 300 bird species can be found here, lot of them are included in the Habitats Directive due to their restricted range. The Carpathians are famous for harbouring Europe's most significant populations of large carnivores (bears, wolves, lynxes). Extensive montane forests cover most of the range. The natural vegetation of the Pannonian region especially is under threat by alien invasive species.

The dominant land cover of the programme area is various forest areas (57% in total), particularly in the Carpathians stretching across borders. The forests are indispensable for the climate change adaptation, resilience and disaster prevention of the whole programme area. Forest across the area, however are under pressure from both environmental and human point of view. Climate change results in forest degradation, increased number of forest fires and spread of invasive species. Multiple challenges derive from the intensification of forestry and illegal logging in particular. The impacts of deforestation are more and more relevant increased vulnerability to extreme weather; loss of rainfall and crop pollinators; respiratory illness due to forest fires; unsustainable management of water resources; CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; biodiversity loss are among the most severe problems.

Considering arable land both the Pannonian region and the Continental suffer challenges deriving from industrial scale intensive farming that largely ignore wildlife-friendly solutions, the original vegetation, resource-efficient technologies and decreasing use of chemical pollutants.

Protected areas covering habitats from Carpathians coniferous forests to Pannonian steppic grasslands, often in territorial overlap with each other, play a significant role in the preservation of the biodiversity and natural values of the programme area. Some special habitat types across the programme area serve key ecological goals. Wetlands and Ramsar Sites are among the most valuable areas regarding the ecological networks and biodiversity. Several fulfil additional functions such as flood control and habitat connectivity. The major environmental and human threats include uncontrolled tourism and fishing; intensification of forestry and eutrophication; spreading of invasive species of flora; pollution from wastewater and domestic waste; heavy metal pollution. Another habitat type, of which some components are part of the natural world heritage, is the beech forest of the Carpathians that stretches from Slovakia to Romania across Ukraine. Intense logging threatens their environments the most.

Some sites lie along or touch upon the border, creating cross-border interconnections of ecological networks. Examples include the UNESCO World Heritage Site Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst, Natura 2000 (SPA) 'Upper Tisza' along the Hungarian-Ukrainian border and the 'Vynohradivska Tysa' belonging to the Emerald network; along the Slovak-Ukrainian border, Natura 2000 (SCI) 'Stinska' and the 'Uzhanskyi National Nature Park', also part of the Emerald network; Examples of the Romanian-Ukrainian border are the Natura 2000 (SCI) 'Munții Maramureșului' and the 'Marmaroski ta Chyvchyno-Hryniavski Hory' of the Emerald network. The different level of environmental and nature protection measures, roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders varies from country to country making the joint study, monitoring, prevention, management significantly more difficult.

One of the most significant common issues is water management. Almost 85% of the total area is part of the Danube Basin. Major rivers, i.e. the Váh, the Tisza, the Siret and the Prut as tributaries flow into the Danube. Among the tributaries of the Danube, the Tisza is also the most significant in the programme area (60.23% of total area). There are more than 20 bigger rivers as tributaries of Tisza in the analysed cross-border area.

The chemical status of the rivers in the related river basins varies from river section to river section. Transnational intervention would be needed in the case of Tisza and many of its transboundary tributaries (Someş in particular). Regarding the ecological situation of the affected freshwaters, the water bodies mainly have moderate ecological status. Tisza and many of its transboundary tributaries have poor chemical status. Transboundary coordination in the field of water supply management in the frames of a river basin management system is required in relation to many water bodies, including groundwater.

The climate change has an enormous high impact not only to the environmental conditions of the programme area but also to the frequency and intensity of natural disasters including floods and wildfires, among others. Climate change adaptation as well as disaster prevention and preparedness have to face increasing extremes related to temperature (e.g. increasing number of heat days). It is expected that extreme precipitation events will increase in the future. Heavy rains can cause flash floods. Key impacts of the climate change can be summarized as follows: temperature rise larger than European average; upward shift of plant and animal species (e.g. decreasing beech and pine land uses); high risk of species extinctions; increasing risk of forest pests; higher risk of rock falls and landslides, and increase in heat extremes; decrease in summer precipitation; increasing risk of river floods; increasing risk of forest fires; decrease in economic value of forests.

In many cases waste management, wastewater treatment, and air pollution are responsible for having a negative cross-border impact. Only in Hungary and Slovakia the recycling of waste is significant, while especially in Ukraine the share of disposal in the form of landfills has high shares in municipal waste management. Waste management and wastewater treatment face significant difficulties in the Ukrainian regions in particular. Waste pollution of transboundary character became common due to discharge of solid waste and untreated wastewater into the rivers. Because of full landfills which do not meet European requirements, illegal dumping of waste into the floodplain of the Tisza, unsolved transportation of waste and provision of waste-related public services along with outdated and underdeveloped sewage treatment and drainage. Waste pollution in the rivers of the Upper Tisza region has been a major environmental burden since the 2000s for all the upstream and downstream countries.

Environmental sustainability also has particular regional importance. All four countries have a larger footprint than their biocapacity. Share of fossil fuels is dominant in the energy consumption of all the countries. The level of GHG emission has not significantly decreased in the last nearly one decade except for Ukraine. Transfer of knowledge could play an important role in improving resource efficiency across the border region. The efficient technologies and the use of alternative energy sources should be further supported.

Based on the disaster risk profiles elaborated by the collaboration of the IASC Task Team for Preparedness and Resilience and the European Commission, Ukraine has the highest risk among 40 European countries. With regard to natural hazards and exposure the four countries show similarities and rather high values. Considering natural hazards flood is the main threat for all the four countries. Human hazard and exposure in the case of Romania is the third highest value in Europe, while Ukraine has the highest rate on the continent. The coping capacity is very low in the Ukrainian and Romanian areas.

According to 125 disaster events registered in the past 20 years nearly 95% of the registered cases were of natural origin. Among these, hydrological events and extreme temperature (38% of them; cold/heat wave, drought) occurred in almost equal proportions. The programme area is heavily exposed to large floods (40% of natural events). The main reasons of very high floods in the region are heavy, torrential rains (almost 80%) and snow melts (a bit more than 20%), but human factors should not be underestimated (e.g. weak flow regulation, lack of detention reservoirs, deforestation, over-ploughing of soil). Both the number of flood events and the severity of the events cause major transboundary challenges for large parts of the programme area. In addition to the usual spring floods, there is a need to prepare for sudden and significant floods during the most unexpected periods due to climate change effects. Apart from direct water damage floods are responsible for transboundary pollution as floods transport and spread various pollutants including solid and liquid waste.



The programme area shows a consistent worsening pattern in the sense of wildfire danger that is strongly connected to climate change with increasing droughts, air temperature, decreasing humidity and rainfall. However, human activities are responsible for a high share of forest fires, which, owing to extensive forested areas of the programme area, can spread across borders. Due to climate change the frequency of storm damages may increase. Weather conditions will influence the composition and condition of habitats, and new biotic pests which are not typical to the area may appear.

There are plenty of human-made disaster situations that affect several areas of the border region from communal pollution through illegal logging to certain mining, metallurgy and other industrial activities. Among human-made disasters pollution affecting transboundary watercourses in particular is an important element to respond to jointly. There are industrial and mining areas to be rehabilitated in several places in the region, and on the other hand, their environmental impacts in some cases extend beyond the borders (e.g. heavy metal pollution from mining waste, extreme salt concentration).

### **Functional areas in the sense of environmental cohesion**

With regard to climate change, biodiversity and natural hazards in particular, the key elements in the case of each area are essentially related to the catchment area of the Tisza River and the Carpathian forests. These hydrological and biogeographical features create a common functionality across the analysed area affecting the whole programme area, and are closely interlinked with all the related subtopics. However, certain functional areas can be identified in relation to each subtopic of the priority, therefore such areas are explained below:

**Biogeographical regions:** out of them the Pannonian and Alpine regions are having the most significant effects owing to their highly cross-border character. Within the same biogeographical region, several natural endowments show similar characteristics, thanks to which there are potentials for cross-border cooperation.

**Nature conservation areas, ecological networks and identical habitats:** areas, networks and habitats that meet along the borders have environmental functions that are also suitable. In this respect, the situation of the “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” can be considered special, which, although not physically continuous, has a spatial network in terms of its functionality.

**River basins, the Tisza Basin in particular:** river catchment areas are not aligned to state borders but to the continental-level watershed of the Carpathians in particular, which play an important role. The functional integration of river basin areas situated west of the Carpathians can be considered much stronger, given that all sub-basins (of the Zagyva, the Sajó/Slaná, the Bodrog, the Someş, the Körösök/Criş) are integral part of the Tisza basin reaching all the related countries. The Tisza basin has an utmost importance within the programme area, more significant than of the river basins east of the Carpathians.

**Carpathian Mountains:** due to the complex impact of climate change on the Carpathians (e.g. extreme precipitation events), almost the entire programme area can be considered a functional area in terms of adaptation and mitigation. The forested areas (the western part of the Slovak-Hungarian border; the northern part of the Slovak-Ukrainian border; almost the entire Ukrainian-Romanian border area) stretching across borders can also be regarded as functional areas from environmental point of view.

**Cross-border impact areas of environmental damage (pollution, human-made risks):** with regard to this subtopic, waste generated, deposited and carried in the Tisza River Basin is a significant risk of cross-border relevance. Thus, floodplains, riverside areas affected by waste pollution of Ukrainian and Romanian watercourses especially are also decisive functional areas. The challenges in waste management in the case of both upstream and downstream areas unite extensive areas along rivers flowing through the borders. The areas of watercourses with the same transboundary river basin district within the border region can be considered as functional areas because watercourses can act as mediating



agent, which not only transmit natural hazards (flood, ice breaking) but also play a role in spreading human-made pollution.

**Areas affected by natural disasters:** from the point of view of disasters, the border region suffers from natural disasters of essentially the same origin and to a similar extent. Wet climatic disasters have a complex mechanism of action in almost the entire program area (heavy rainfall in the Carpathians appears as floods in the lowland areas of the programme area). In the case of disasters of dry climatic origin, according to the conditions of the program area, it is basically divided into two main functional areas: 1. the forest-covered Carpathians with forest fires; 2. the lowland areas with droughts.

### **Joint intervention needs related to territorial cohesion**

- PO2 SOi and SOii: Regional cooperation to increase resource efficiency (including utilization of renewable energy sources);
- **PO2 SOiv:**
  - o Joint preparation for climate-related hazards and changes related to drought;
  - o Joint preparation for climatic hazards and changes associated with extreme rainfall;
  - o Joint knowledge sharing, prevention, preparation and management of the potential disaster situations (floods, extreme temperatures, wildfire, landslides. as well as human-made disasters in particular);
  - o Development and implementation of joint revitalization plans;
- PO2 SOv: Monitoring of the transboundary groundwater bodies; Support of wastewater treatment;
- **PO2 SOvii:**
  - o Cooperation to maintain biodiversity and protected areas (related to ecological networks, Carpathian forests, wetlands and Pannonian grasslands in particular);
  - o Environmental actions tackling the intensification of forestry;
  - o Environmental actions tackling the spread of invasive species and the degradation of natural habitats;
  - o Environmental actions regarding all kinds and sources of water pollution (with special regard to the Tisza River Basin);
  - o Work on cross-border warning mechanisms for pollution peaks (including actions to improve monitoring and modelling);
  - o Implementing air quality measures;
- **ISO1:**
  - o Need for capacity building and knowledge exchange to establish new forms of territorial and inter-institutional cooperation along with the support of existing ones (Euroregions and European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (hereinafter as “EGTCs”) in particular);
  - o Support for partnership search and partnership building;
  - o Need for enhanced institutional cooperation in relation to climate adaptation and disaster management in particular.

### **Economic performance and challenges**

There are large inequalities in terms of economic performance within the analysed area. Regional disparities have a strong east-west divide in favour of the westernmost and more prosperous regions. (Košický County: 12,900 EUR/person, Prešovský: 9300, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén: 9600). The least developed, which have been historically lagging behind, are all located in Ukraine (Chernivetska: 1036, Zakarpatska: 1125, Ivano-Frankivska: 1523) and Romania (Suceava: 5500, Maramureş: 6800) in a peripheral situation. In a wider context, the cooperation area consists of territories which are part of a group of regions having the lowest GDP per capita in their respective countries.

Given the lagging-behind character of the often peripheral analysed area, the general catching-up of the regions to the economically core areas of the EU would be supported. Especially for Ukraine but for the Member States too encouraging EU integration is of crucial importance. To fully use the growth potential of the national economies there encouraging economic cohesion within the area is much needed. The obstacles related to cross-border economic relations are still hindering factors in field of actions like foreign investment, trade relations, value chains and supplier networks, business development etc. Weak economic performance of the majority of the border regions is heavily based on limited efficiency with regard to innovation ecosystem. All the four countries perform worse than the EU average in terms of main indicators related to smarter Europe. Based on the patent applications per million inhabitants Slovakia and Hungary belong to the moderately performing group of European countries with 5 to 20 patents per million people. Romania and Ukraine especially are lagging behind in terms of knowledge production with less than 5 patents per million persons. The border region is a technology-follower area compared to the economic and technology-leader areas of the EU (e.g. Germany with more than 200 patents per million inhabitants). Similar results are valid regarding gross domestic expenditure on research and development. Intramural R&D expenditure does not even exceed 50 million EUR in the case of Ukraine and Romania despite of their significantly larger sizes, but even Slovakia and Hungary stay in the second weakest-performing group of states with 50-200 million EUR spent on R&D. Consequently, it is a real challenge that there are still insufficient measures to capitalize from comparative advantages and economic peculiarities. This calls for a tighter cooperation in smart specialisation with a special focus on SMEs. There are large differences in smart specialisation policies in terms of field of specialisation, sectors and territorial coverage. Ukraine has just started giving more attention to this topic crucial for the economic development of the border regions as well. Low added value of economic activities because of structural problems is a widespread problem in the programme area. Therefore, support for the exchange of best practices in relation to smart specialisation policies is an important field of action. Such cooperation, coupled with a strong focus on policy learning and policies development, is a need for many regions and stakeholders.

Various zones to support business development have been designated within the analysed area. Such zones vary in terms of ownership, management, economic-legislative background, terminology. Huge differences persist in relation to their size, number of residing companies and the number of employees. The uneven spatial distribution of industrial parks is very apparent, and has a strong East-West divide in favour of Hungary, Slovakia and Satu-Mare County. There is an untapped potential in economic cooperation based on cross-border axes and zones of the related infrastructure and services. There is a need for joint business development, investment promotion, networking, knowledge exchange in order to capitalise from the gateway location of the region and the fundamentally distinct characteristics of the four countries.

There are significant inequalities with regard to enterprises per inhabitants in the analysed area. The western part of the area has sometimes even 6-7 times higher values than the easternmost, mostly Ukrainian areas.

Considering road transport network, one of the main features of the area is the weakly developed and non-harmonised national systems in terms of construction, planning and maintenance as well. Limited number of any kind of high-level road creates direct connections across the state borders. Due to weakly developed transnational high-speed routes extensive areas with weak interconnectedness and weak accessibility persist. The delay of (large) infrastructural investments conserves the unfavourable situation of regions lagging behind. There is a lack of motorways/highways across the Carpathian Mountains.

Despite of having multimodal transport nodes in the analysed area, there is a persisting lack of well-functioning networks between the regional seats and largest cities across borders. Chernivtsi and Suceava in particular have the most unfavourable location in terms of travel times to the other regional centres.

Regarding railway transport many lines and sections have been suspended and out of operation for either public or freight transport, or both. Bottlenecks and non-harmonized infrastructures persist including

technical differences in gauge parameters, electrification and number of tracks. Gauge changes and track switches are of major hindering factors of quick railway transport. Logistical potential of the trilateral border region around the Záhony, Čierna nad Tisou and Chop transshipment zone should be mentioned; the shared cross-border logistics zone is of European potential as a railway freight gateway, but this potential has not been fully exploited.

Bottlenecks are especially concentrated at border crossing points, and are severe factors hindering stronger cohesion. One of the main obstacles to any type of cross-border cooperation requiring frequent movements and flows across state borders is the unfavourable quantity and quality of crossing points. Partly excluding the Slovak-Hungarian crossings, there are extensive border regions with no or limited number of crossings (e.g. the joint Ukrainian-Romanian sections of the border river Tisza and the surrounding Carpathian mountainous area). Freight traffic has strong limitations since trucks with an axle load exceeding 7.5 tonnes are allowed to enter only at very few crossings. In spite of generally growing cross-border mobility low density and capacity of the existing border crossings hinders traffic.

The often strict border regime is also relevant including control rules and procedures. Weak interoperability and long caused waits at border crossings on the external border of the EU and the Schengen Zone weaken cohesion considerably. Daily migration has become largely impossible due to increased congestion and long control mechanisms. The Schengen external border is heavily exposed to illegal border crossings linked to petrol, alcohol and cigarette smuggling, black trade and distinct contraband products. Uncertain situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic requires stronger cooperation of authorities since the permeability of borders heavily depends in the upcoming years on how the different measures are harmonised and put into practice.

The public transport services are rather uncoordinated on the level of the related four countries. The services, either bus or train, are generally creating connections between two countries only. More international services are needed which would connect at least three countries, while multimodality and real-time passenger information apart from the required infrastructural developments would also be provided based on real mobility needs.

### **Functional areas in the sense of economic cohesion**

- Transport network of international relevance: these elements are either core or comprehensive elements of the pan-European and Trans-European Transport Networks (hereinafter as “TEN-T”) corridors crossing the analysed area, which create direct links between at least three of the four related countries. The developments centred on the creation of better east-west relations linking Ukraine and Central Asia with Western Europe across the four countries can create new impetus for forming functional areas in the frames of EU integration. Strong interconnections, with regard to intermodality and interoperability, could be created including the transport axes and services within the area defined by the nodes of Miskolc, Košice, Uzhhorod, Mukacheve, Satu Mare and Nyíregyháza in particular.

- Network of industrial parks and business zones: such infrastructure can stimulate economic performance of the region by creating and developing operational networks of relevant stakeholders. These are tools of stimulating entrepreneurship and building capacities. The most apparent place for capitalising from cross-border economic flows is the transshipment-logistics zone around Čierna nad Tisou, Chop and Záhony.

- Network of the quadruple helix model: a sort of functionality can be described especially in relation to members of the innovation ecosystem, with participation of the academia and the entrepreneurs. These stakeholders have networks of relevant stakeholders and facilitate knowledge production and transfer, smart specialisation with higher added value by enhanced business and RDI cooperation.

- Border crossing points: the spatial distribution, number, capacity, technical parameters and personnel define the status of and potentials to all types of cross-border cooperation to a large extent. The permeability of crossings affects the functional relations including health care, education, labour

market etc. Thus, transport infrastructure and services via such crossing points are crucial for creating well-functioning cross-border hinterlands, and supporting cross-border mobility (for instance labour and student migration, tourism).

- Areas with weak transport accessibility: these areas (e.g. along the joint section of the river Tisa on the Ukrainian-Romanian border, or in mountainous areas of the Carpathians) are often situated on the periphery along state borders, and characterised by unfavourable transport network, low number of border crossings, weak economic performance. Such areas are often also rural areas lacking urban functions largely because of weak permeability of borders and dysfunctional cross-border transport infrastructure and service provision.

#### **Joint intervention needs related to economic cohesion**

- PO1 SOiii and SOiv: Territorially integrated economic developments within the cross-border transshipment zones based on joint activities in loading, sorting, storage, processing and transport of transported products; Development of joint and harmonisation of complementary infrastructures and services supporting industrial-logistics cooperation
- PO3 SOi and SOii: Support for studies, planning and construction to enhance multimodality, intermodality and interoperability of transport nodes; Support for eliminating technical obstacles to international passenger services, for multimodal traffic management and real-time passenger information; Support for better coordination of regional and national road transport policies, planning and construction activities; Coordination in the identification and elimination of bottlenecks at border crossing points; Establishment of new border crossing points and capacity increase at existing ones
- **ISO1:**
  - o Setting up and piloting measures for regions allowing for exchange of experience on implementation of smart specialisation strategies, support for related knowledge exchange between model regions and regions lagging behind in terms of elaborating and implementing policy and management schemes, as well as border management cooperation reflecting the urgent needs of the current situation in Ukraine.
  - o Support for capacity building and knowledge transfer by cross-border cooperation of regional stakeholders interested in the quadruple helix model, for enhancing entrepreneurship and increasing added value of joint products and services
- **ISO2:** Better harmonisation of border control and information procedures connected to pandemic and other emergency situations especially; Cooperation of authorities in capacity increase (improvement of technical conditions, know-how exchange and training of border guards and custom officers, unification and simplification of customs and border control systems) / Complementary activities to the EES installing; Enhancing police cooperation and border control techniques on the green borders to tackle organised crime. These interventions need more focus and emphasize under current circumstances in Ukraine.

#### **Social cohesion and challenges**

The population density of the total area is relatively low, 97.26 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. The analysed area has long been affected by emigration (net migration rate in 2018: -1.89), which is one of the main reasons of depopulating areas. The main migration targets are usually capital city and metropolis regions, better performing western regions of the given countries or Western European destinations. Regarding the population size of 2014 and 2018 the number of inhabitants decreased by 21,429 from 8,099,753 to 8,078,324 inhabitants. In all the related regions apart from Suceava County (+2.43%) and the Slovak regions (Prešovský: +0.62%, Košický: +0.61%) population decrease was a decisive demographic trend.

High unemployment is a profound problem across the majority of the area. Unemployment is also a reflection of low educational attainment, unfavourable economic structure, lack of major employer companies, and poses a real poverty threat. Apart from few regions in all the related territories unemployment exceeds 8%. In-work poverty has to be mentioned as well meaning that even the employed people can suffer from certain level of poverty in the region. Inequalities in the labour market

needs and offers are significant across the area, thus certain harmonisation and cooperation in the field of cross-border employment and related services might be integral part of the joint fight against unemployment.

Roma communities are often exposed to severe social challenges such as low income, exclusion from labour market, and suffer from financial and material deprivation. The share of Romas living in or at risk of poverty is very high, making this group part of the most vulnerable population within the analysed area. The Roma minority is also threatened by further physical segregation. Such negative socio-geographical processes are taking place in large part of the area, especially in relation to rural areas. Furthermore, the most populous and peripheral communities live in small remote villages and/or border areas having disadvantageous socio-economic situation like bad infrastructure, weak accessibility, lack of workplaces, housing problems, low educational attainment etc.

These challenges to social cohesion within the border region are further aggravated by focusing on the needs of marginalised groups to help access newly developed or improved services, especially with telemedicine solutions. The health-related issues and healthcare cooperation deserves special attention. Bad and sometime deteriorating health status of the population is one of the reasons why in most parts of the region unfavourable mortality rates persist. Natural population decrease can be observed in recent years as more people deceased than were born except for Slovakia.

Looking at data of life expectancy at birth in Europe it shows that the affected countries by the programme largely fall into the same categories (between 75.3 and 77.4) which is lower than the Western (around 81), Northern (between 81.8 and 82.8) and Southern European (between 78.9 and 83.5) averages. The data show positive trends in growing life expectancy at birth in every region for both sexes in the past ten years, but large inequalities in reaching positive changes exist.

The observation of the leading causes of death is always important, it shows the biggest challenges that should be immediately tackled jointly. Diseases that attack the circulatory system are by far the leading causes of death. These types of diseases are often linked to poor life circumstances and habits such as smoking, higher alcohol consumption, reduced physical activity, obesity, diet rich in saturated fats and insufficient fresh vegetable and fruit intake. The second most dangerous type of disease in the programme area is the neoplasms. Diseases of the respiratory system as well as the digestive system are also among the leading cause of death.

The distribution of the healthcare institutions is uneven within the regions. There are counties – such as Chernivtsi or Satu Mare – where the majority of these institutions are located in the central, bigger cities meaning the accessibility and service provision of these centres are of great importance to support. Medical service is not every time accessible or available in remote areas in particular. However, in general relatively widespread network of hospitals and health care institutions can be found in the programme area making opportunities for cooperation. The number of doctors reaches the EU's average (37 doctors per 10 000 people) only in the three Ukrainian regions and in Košice region. One of the main reasons for the understaffing of doctors is the emigration of medical personnel to external regions.

Cross-border rescue and the free movement of the ambulances is an often-discussed issue with paramount importance. Despite the fact that there is an unquestionable need for it in the programme area – especially in territories where a hospital is considerably closer on the other side of the border – currently, ambulances are only allowed to drive within the Schengen area without control. However, in the case of non-Schengen borders (with Romania and Ukraine) there is an obligatory control, which significantly slows down the rescue. In addition, border controls are not the only obstacle in smooth cross-border rescue, but a lack of harmonized legal and administrative procedures also blocked so far the realisation of this initiative. Thus, underdeveloped cross-border rescue procedures should be named as a major challenge to tackle within the region as there is definitely a need for cross-border rescue at several border sections. The question of cooperation is also often raised in relation to rescue with helicopters as currently, the helicopters meet at the border and hand over the patient to one another, a practice whose efficiency is questionable. Due to Russian military aggression against Ukraine beyond



the economic cohesion even the social cohesion became more important. Increased need on frequent dialogue and prepared/equipped border control could be foreseen under these circumstances.

Even though medical tourism lies on the border of health care and tourism, it was thought to be important to briefly consider for the benefit of the future cross-border programme since if developments are carried out for the sake of inviting more medical tourists in the region that will undoubtedly have a spill-over effect and raise the quantity and quality of healthcare provision for the locals too.

The latest new Coronavirus crisis has shed light on the transboundary relevance of cooperation in epidemiological issues. The high number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and cumulative deaths per million people have also showed that it might be more efficient if the coordination of the handling of such epidemics would not exclusively be organised on a national level, but rather on a cross-border way with regions bearing similarities working more closely together.

Considering COVID-19, there is a general consensus about the negative present and predicted long-term impacts on people already experiencing poverty and social vulnerability. Access to health care has become more elementary than only a few quarter years earlier. The crisis highlighted the importance of social inclusion for vulnerable groups. Projections suggest that the social impacts of the health and economic crisis are likely to be quite significant.

Tourism and culture have important role in supporting the livelihood and interethnic dialogue of people within the region. The distribution of nature protected areas and the cultural sites nicely cover almost the whole border region, which call for joint management and development covering a large variety of assets of international relevance from UNESCO World Heritage sites (e.g. wooden churches, beech forests, Tokaj wine region) to theatres and museums.

Religious tourism has always been a key point of the regions. Today, it overgrew the face value of organised pilgrimages and church visits and religious tourism expresses the connection of cultural and heritage tourism with sacred sites, churches, monasteries and abbeys but not only due to their spiritual value but also because they are important monuments and ecclesiastical buildings. Several related pilgrim routes, churches and monasteries serve the economic and social cohesion of the region. However, further developments – such as the better inclusion of the Slovakian territories – are also needed.

Despite of numerous cultural events and festivals, weak international visibility is a hindering factor with regard to creating real tourism attractions with international or cross-border appeal. Thus, a closer cooperation could be achieved. Multilingualism still falls short.

There are large inequalities in terms of attractiveness taking into account guest nights. The most attractive regions for tourists are Prešov and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county where the number of guests per 1 000 inhabitants were 1 132 and 947 respectively. The other regions could have only low number of guest nights. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county and Satu Mare county fall in the same category attracting 250-500 guests (per 1 000 inhabitants), while Maramureş and Suceava are reaching a better rate (500-750). The ratio of the three Ukrainian regions did not even reach 100. Excluding Prešov and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén the total number of guest nights can also be considered relatively low. Apart from Košice, Prešov and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg the share of foreign visitors do not exceed 21%, and is barely reached in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén. In most of programme area an increase in guest nights is observable. The patterns are similar to that of the guest nights spent in the region. Prešov (728) has the highest number of accommodations by far and here the number increased significantly from 2008 to 2018. Suceava also has 460 accommodations while Košice 340. The end of the scale is Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county with only 148 registered accommodations. Košice region is the only where a decrease in the number of accommodation is observable between 2008 and 2018.

The governance of the region faces several challenges and potentials. Along with the actual regions, cross-border bodies have also been formed in the analysed area, which consist of regional and local governments, municipalities. The region shows examples of innovative, long-term and institutionalised cooperation forms, i.e. Euroregions and European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. However, low

number of such bodies operates with the participation of Ukraine. The better involvement of Ukrainian partners would serve stronger cohesion and more coordinated management and territorial development of the border region along with the European integration goal of Ukraine. The Euroregions and EGTCs have had important territorial cooperation initiatives in relation to thematically heterogeneous actions. Based on their past experience and needs, they can be important stakeholders in strengthening cohesion in promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage, climate adaptation, waste management and disaster prevention, IT, P2P, educational cooperation, and many other relevant fields for the border region. Limited capacities and difficulties in partnership building however create difficulties for such organisations to be successful.

#### **Functional areas in the sense of social cohesion**

- **Network of cultural heritage:** a network of joint and complementary built heritage, cultural heritage sites such as historical monuments, castles, palaces, art nouveau buildings or folk art/rural architectural form a colourful but coherent territory that could be positioned and advertised for tourists. Also the tourism built on the religious sites and heritage belongs here together with the network of churches of different denominations.
- **Network of natural heritage:** the network of sites rich in natural values such as different nature protection areas are and could be the prime locations for thematic routes such as cross-border routes with a network approach which thematically connect and territorially integrate different points of interest, attractions, infrastructure, products, services and stakeholders from both sides of the border in relation to at least a single tourism branch/sector. This could be for instance the active tourism with different hiking, cycling, kayaking etc. options.
- **Spa and health tourism functional area:** the abundance of thermal and mineral water sources scattered around the programme area can act as a real connecting power if these are correctly capitalised on through a cooperative and not competitive approach. Also, there are synergies between the spa and medical tourism offers between the different regions that could be tied in to a more comprehensive network of preventive and recovery services.
- **Universities of medicine and hospitals in the border region:** the universities of medicine (such as the Faculties of Medicine at the Uzhhorod National University, the Debrecen University and the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University) create a knowledge triangle in which joint research and dissemination of information could take place. Similarly, the hospitals located in the region can cooperate with each other and with the universities as well and also strive to enlarge their range of activities to territories which are more function deficient.
- **Places and cooperation networks of telemedicine and remote diagnostics:** in the Ukrainian regions – compared to the other regions of the programme – there are a relatively higher number of medical personnel which could be employed to cover a larger, cross-border area through technologies of telemedicine. Furthermore, with the cooperation of universities and larger hospitals, certain diagnostic centres could also be established specialised for those illnesses that are the most prevalent in the region. However, in order for these resource efficient and modern telemedicine initiatives to work preparatory activities are needed such as sensitization and knowledge sharing so that people would be aware of and trust these services as well as investment in tools and infrastructure in order for the users to actually be able to have access to these platforms.

#### **Joint intervention needs related to social cohesion**

- PO4 SOi: Tackling unemployment of a cross-border level; Harmonisation and cooperation in the field of cross-border employment and related services;
- PO4 SOiii: Social inclusion of peripheral communities of small remote villages and border areas; Social inclusion of Roma communities;
- **PO4 SOv** (health care) according to the Rationale for SOs:



o	Prevention of widespread causes of death (cardiovascular and neoplastic diseases in particular);
o	Creation of joint procedures for fighting pandemics;
o	Creation of the legislative, administrative and technical framework for cross-border rescue;
o	Telemedicine, cross-border ambulance service, regional centers;
o	Cross-border elderly care, silver economy;
o	Establishment and development of specialised centers offering high quality treatment;
o	Joint initiatives and projects based on the existing institutional background;
o	Attracting and keeping talent in the cross-border region, provision of attractive career model in the region in relation to medical employees;
•	<b>PO4 SOvi</b> (tourism and culture) according to the Rationale for SOs:
o	Creating cross-border networks and thematic routes based on the cultural heritage sites;
o	Creating cross-border networks and thematic routes based on the religious sites, joint renovation projects;
o	Creation of a cross-border 'heritage watch' dedicated to the preservation of the built heritage from further decay;
o	Establishment joint marketing strategies and platforms for cultural tourism;
o	Organizing cross-border events and festivals;
o	Creating cross-border thematic routes and services for active tourism (hiking, skiing, cycling, rowing etc.);
o	Creation of longer holiday plans offering several sites from each counties of the programme area;
o	Developing medical tourism based on thermal and mineral springs;
o	Establishment of cross-border medical tourism facilities;
o	Supporting multilingualism in tourism and culture;
•	<b>ISO1:</b>
o	Creation of the legislative, administrative and technical framework for cross-border rescue;
o	Organizing cross-border events and festivals;
o	Supporting multilingualism in the region.
	<b>ISO2:</b>
o	Strengthening legislative, administrative and technical framework, equipments and smaller scale developments and solutions for border management, for passenger and freight transport

### 1.2.2 Lessons learnt from past experience

**The first phase evaluation of the previous ENI CBC Programme (2014-2020)** drafted a set of recommendations, most of them are valid for the current Interreg Programme (2021-2027). The relevant recommendations below address two distinct fields (indicated by bold letters):

#### 1. Programme procedures

##### 1.1 Compensation of the delay

- Speed up the processes
- Train the beneficiaries on the use of the IMIS
- Improve internal communication

##### 1.2 Better performance

- Ensure stricter monitoring over the projects

- Monitor the implementation of the LIP projects with special attention
- Enhance the branch offices
- Facilitate better-based partnerships through a partner evaluation system
- Improve the beneficiaries' communication capacities
- Improve the cross-border character of the projects
- Promote the best practice examples
- Follow up the level of contribution to EUSDR

## **2. Lessons-to-go for the design of the next programme**

### **2.1 Strategic framework**

- Ensure a more balanced geographic coverage in the programme
- Ensure untroubled transition to the next programme
- Re-consider the current set of the priorities
- Improve the permeability of the border through cross-border infrastructural developments

- Involve the selected beneficiaries in the designing of the next programme

### **2.2 Tools**

- Keep the practice of advance payment
- Plan the TA budget with special concern
- Keep the tool of the strategic projects
- Apply the tool of small project fund

In order to unfold the **experiences and insights of the local stakeholders** on the cross-border programmes, a stakeholder consultation has been carried out within the planning process. The primary aim was to gather information from the local stakeholders on a number of issues such as their opinion about the previous programme; preferences regarding the new programme; existing potential project ideas and their opinion on the tools and solutions which can be applied by the programme.

The two biggest difficulties stakeholders experienced when participating in the programme were mostly structural: the unavailability of the required own contribution and the experienced delay in the application procedures. Then the lack of partners, inappropriate scope of supported actions and lack of capacity (mostly lack of language skills) in the organization were considered as the other primary problem points.

Several respondents felt that the administration is overcomplicated and thus the preparation of the projects are too time consuming and requiring too much human resources which is paired with a lengthy approval process. Somewhat in connection with this it was identified as a serious problem that the reporting rate is fixed for the month of reporting. Furthermore, during the application process there is no possibility to consult with professional reviewers to channel in their insights.

The survey intended to shed light on the extent the respondents felt that the priorities of the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020 (hereinafter as "ENI HU-SK-RO-UA") corresponded with the programme area's territorial needs. They were offered a 1 to 4 scale to rate each priority and an option to indicate whether they are not familiar enough with the given priority to give an informed assessment. The "TO3-P1: Promoting local culture and historical heritage along with tourism functions" is the priority that reflects the best the local needs as it received a somewhat outstanding 3.24 mark. The second best was the TO8-P1 (Disasters) with 3.08, the third the TO6-P1 (Environment) with 3.05.

The respondents were asked to rate on a 1 to 4 scale the extent the Large Infrastructure Projects. On average it seems that the respondents were satisfied with this tool as they rated its adequacy at 3.26. A question targeted to assess the general opinion of the respondents on the effectiveness of the application of three innovative tools. The country level responses show that the Small Project Fund is almost equally popular in all four countries with an overall rate of 3.55.

According to the **Joint paper on “Interreg NEXT Strategic programming 2021-2027”**, proposed by the European Commission and the European External Actions Service (EEAS), in comparison to the internal ETC programmes, the given programme on EU external borders faces additional complexities. During the previous programming periods, such programmes experienced delays, which significantly reduced the time for the real implementation on the ground. In the orientation annex, the Policy Objective 4 (focusing on education, health, social inclusion) and Policy Objective 2 (focusing on climate change, natural risk, biodiversity and natural resources) and the Interreg Specific Objective 1 was considered the most relevant for support through programmes, which is reflected also in the programme strategy as chosen fields of support for the future.

**“Result Oriented Monitoring exercise on ENI CBC 2014-2020”** concludes that emphasis should be put on communication about the unique governance model of the ENI CBC widely to raise its awareness among EU and national stakeholder and decisions makers. Certain findings and recommendations outlined by the ROM report have been confirmed also by the programme and partner countries stakeholders who answered to the consultation launched in April 2019 during the ENI CBC Annual event by Technical Support to the Implementation and Management of ENI CBC programmes (hereinafter as “TESIM”). Based on that, simplified procedures and rules, appropriate financial allocation and strengthened synergies with other instruments/initiative are key areas to successful implementation.

### 1.2.3 Synergies with macro-regional strategies

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is one of the four macro-regional strategies targeting the European Territorial Cooperation objective, adopted by the European Commission, and endorsed by the European Council. It provides an integrated framework for strengthening cooperation between nations of 14 countries including both Member States (e.g. Hungary, Slovakia and Romania) and non-EU countries (e.g. Ukraine).

The synergy analysis on the connection between the Interreg NEXT Programme and the EUSDR is based on the document named “Embedding EUSDR into EU funds. A comprehensive tool.” This tool was developed in order to fully embed the EUSDR into the EU funds.

Proposed SOs → PAs of the EUSDR ↓	PO2-SO4 climate change adaptation and risk prevention	PO2-SO7 biodiversity and reducing pollution	PO4-SO5 equal access to health care	PO4-SO6 culture and sustainable tourism	ISO1-2 Institutional cooperation
PA 1a Inland Waterways					
PA 1b Road, rail and air links				+	+
PA 2 To encourage more sustainable energy					+
PA 3 To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts				++	

Proposed SOs → PAs of the EUSDR ↓	PO2-SO4 climate change adaptation and risk prevention	PO2-SO7 biodiversity and reducing pollution	PO4-SO5 equal access to health care	PO4-SO6 culture and sustainable tourism	ISO1-2 Institutional cooperation
PA 4 To restore and maintain the quality of waters	++	++			
PA 5 To manage environmental risks	++	+			
PA 6 To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils	+	++			
PA 7 To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies					+
PA 8 To support the competitiveness of enterprises, including cluster development					+
PA 9 To invest in people and skills			+		
PA 10 To step up institutional capacity and cooperation			++		++
PA 11 To work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime					++

In the case of these thematic synergies, the Programme can facilitate the implementation of the Danube Strategy's objectives through the application of one or more of the following tools: Specific selection

criteria benefiting MRS, targeted calls for proposals, inclusion of the transnational component, joint or synchronised call for proposals, complementary projects, labelling projects.

#### 1.2.4 Synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

The **EU programmes** are designed to contribute to joint activities on EU and international level covering several countries and regions. These sources of financing applies for every Member State; Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The participation and eligibility for Ukraine is limited in them owing to its status as a non-Member State. However, thanks largely to the full implementation of the Association Agreement in September 2017, cooperation areas such as foreign and security policy, justice, freedom and security (including migration) taxation, public finance management, science and technology, education and information society have been either emerged or reinforced. The major forms of such EU-wide programmes in relation to Ukraine cover the Erasmus+ programme and the Horizon Europe Programme. Furthermore EU level contribution in relation to Ukraine include the House of Europe programme (professional, cultural and youth exchanges, artistic cooperation), the EU4Business initiative, the Ukrainian Energy Efficiency Fund. In addition, large-scale support to Ukraine's governance reform via programmes on decentralisation (U-LEAD with Europe), anti-corruption (EUACI), the rule of law (PRAVO), public administration reform (EU4PAR) and public finance management (EU4PFM) should be named. As part of Team Europe, the EU has mobilised a tailor-made COVID-19 response package for Ukraine using a mix of existing and new funds to deliver concrete support. This includes support to health sector and emergency needs, to civil society, and to SMEs and small farms, among others. In the future, the LIFE programme could be important for green developments (Ukraine expressed its interest to participate in this programme).

It is worth taking into account the designated **cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes** covering NUTS III regions of participating countries. The objectives selected by the given programmes may be in line with or supplement the ones set up in HU-SK-RO-UA. To point out possible cross-relations, the following table shows the border relations which affect the realisation of potential shared priorities of the respective programmes.

Regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights and the related action plan, the programme pays special attention to principle 3 (equal opportunities) to principle 16 (health care) principle 1 (education, training and life-long learning) as well principle 17 (inclusion of people with disabilities). Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality. Disadvantaged people, people with disabilities, Roma, rural, elderly people, early school leavers in particular are addressed, and under ISO1 attention can be paid to digitalisation, training, vocational training and mentoring services. The envisaged ISO support the headline target that at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year, which includes that at least 80% of those aged 16-74 should have basic digital skills, and early school leaving should be further reduced and participation in upper secondary education increased.

County	Programmes						
	HU-SK	RO-HU	RO-UA	SK-PL	PUB	DTP	Central Europe
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County	+					+	+
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County	+	+				+	+
Maramureş County			+			+	
Satu-Mare County		+	+			+	
Suceava County			+			+	
Košický Region	+			+		+	+

		Programmes					
Prešovský Region				+		+	+
Chernivetska Region			+			+	
Ivano-Frankivska Region			+		+	+	
Zakarpatska Region			+		+	+	

Thirdly, various national development plans in line with the general content of the selected SOs of the programme can be added to the list. They can offer additional leg of funding and secure the inland, national part of cross-border developments of the programme area and the jointly shared transboundary functional areas. In relation to national level the Country Reports (CR) worth mentioning. Regarding climate change the thematic focus is centred around risk prevention, mainly in connected to floods along the rivers of transnational relevance. Adaptation is relevant for all countries. Each of the CRs mention pollution reduction and protection of water bodies, particularly in the Romanian Report. In the Hungarian and Slovakian Report the focus is also on air quality. Support for management and conservation measures in protected areas has high importance on a transnational level concerning Romania. Slovakia and Romania received recommendations on rehabilitation of industrial sites. Equal access to health care is important in all CRs especially for disadvantaged people and for reducing territorial inequalities in services. There are differences in terms of which form of care should be supported the most (e.g. primary). Culture and tourism appear moderately in the CRs; it is grasped only by focusing on the endogeneous potentials of the given regions. Only in the Hungarian CR it is explicitly formed that investments in tourism regions should be supported in non-urban areas. In the CR of Hungary support for cross-border activities in relation to integrated development is suggested. Deprived areas, areas of economic decline are mentioned in some way in all the three documents.

Synergies can be shown with the Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTP) being developed in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County (Hungary) and Košice Region (Slovakia) to reduce the socio-economic costs of communities highly dependent on fossil fuels and emission-intensive industries. The envisaged developments of the TJTPs will contribute to the achievement of the Programme's objectives in relation to PO2-SO4 (technology change, green economy, renewables, greener energy production and use) and PO2-SO7 (land use change of abandoned mines) in particular.

### **1.2.5. Horizontal principles**

All actions within the programme will respect the horizontal principles of fundamental rights, equality between men and women, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and promoting sustainable development, UN sustainable development goals as well as EU Charter of Fundamental Rights during project preparation, implementation and follow-up period. Horizontal principles are a must and they will be assessed. Applicants are encouraged to prepare projects foreseeing specific actions designed to advance and promote the values of the horizontal principles.

According to Article 9 (4) and Recital 10 of CPR, in order to comply with the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle, all the types of actions included in the Interreg programme have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

Programme may consider the eligibility and selection criteria for actions envisaged, based on the SEA Directive and the DNSH, in particular where actions are carried out in Natura 2000 sites and where infrastructures are planned. Moreover relevant actions will be financed with full respect of the Natura 2000 network, the Water Framework Directive, the “Habitats” and “Birds” Directives.

As regards the support of climate objectives, the programme plans to reach around 28% and for biodiversity objectives 27% and the planned environmental co-efficiency is 45%

Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out in all 4 countries in national language according to legislation and the report and annexes are appendix of the programme.

During the implementation of the Programme the MA will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support POs. Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental and social considerations as well should be incorporated in the procedures.

Programme will consider to promote the New European Bauhaus initiative and the MA/JS will inform the MC about it and provides opportunities how to adjust in the implementation.



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

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

*Table 1*

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
PO2	iv) promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system-based approaches	A resilient and green border region	<p>Protection and management of common natural values are relevant for the area. Nature reserves, species and habitats stretch over administrative boundaries. Central and large landscapes, biogeographical regions are shared, their values and challenges are very similar. Damage prevention and joint risk management have cross-border importance. Increased capacity is needed to address challenges. The region is exposed to negative consequences of the climate change to a higher degree than global average. Coordinated actions are required for timely and efficient mitigation of the effects of climate change which amplifies existing and causes new natural disasters. Four countries are affected by the natural and human-made disasters of the functional area of the Tisza River Basin. Among natural disasters hydrological events and climate-related disasters have the highest cross-border relevance. A common challenge is the region being one of the most flood-prone regions in Europe. In 5 counties, more than 20 flood events were registered since 1998. Other 5 counties are also parts of Europe that is severely affected by floods. Several transboundary projects were implemented on flood risk management. Initiatives should be continued and new ones developed, based on previous findings. Several areas are affected either by drought, hail, storms, forest fires and geophysical disasters in the area. Carpathian landscapes as well as Pannonian and Continental ones face joint climate-related challenges of similar kind. Damage prevention and joint risk management have high cross-border importance. Natural and human-made factors often create devastating disasters in at least two countries' regions. Pollutants entering rivers due to heavy rainfall, especially in Tisza and its tributaries (e.g. cyanide pollution or the extreme salt concentration), require a rapid response and the sharing of knowledge and capacity. It enjoys the second highest support from the stakeholders in their territorial needs.</p>

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.
PO2	vii) enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	A resilient and green border region	Common natural values are relevant in several respects. Nature reserves are transboundary and species and habitats (especially Carpathian and water habitats) take on a different configuration from administrative boundaries. Central and large landscapes, biogeographical regions such as the Carpathian Range or the Pannonian Plains are shared by several states, their natural values and challenges are very similar. There are differently regulated, classified and protected areas, so coordination of the nature and environmental protection activities, the development of ecological corridors and green infrastructures require serious efforts from the partners. Biodiversity is under threat by deforestation, illegal logging, spread of invasive species, soil degradation, aridification. Impact of man-made disasters escalates owing to the highly transboundary hydrogeographical and biogeographical features in the form of Carpathian forests, catchment areas and river basins. Pollution of air and water is relevant across the border. Water bodies play a role in spreading human-made pollution (such as pollution of the upper section of the Tisza spreading to the lower sections of the river) and adverse effects of certain industrial activities (mining, metallurgy, etc.) also spread. Water pollution due to unresolved communal waste management and wastewater treatment is of paramount relevance.

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Based on the stakeholder opinions in the conducted survey possible interventions of SO are the most supported ones (how much the given priority meet the territorial needs). The most frequently mentioned topics are waste-related ones including pollution of rivers as major subtopic. Others are connected to natural values including conservation of species and habitats, creation of cross-border protection areas. The need for concrete joint development and management projects and plans, the call for the cooperation of authorities and other public bodies were also underlined. Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.</p>

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
PO4	v) ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care	A healthy and attractive border region	<p>The situation of the healthcare causes a concern, which cannot be fully addressed by the programme, but progress can be made in some sub-areas. Cardiovascular diseases are among the leading causes of death in each region and reduction of risk of human epidemiology hazards is a must. Relatively low life expectancy highlight the need of joint actions in health development and prevention. Healthcare cooperation deserves attention as the preserve of good health and efficient treatment is vital for the population. Cross-border cooperation is essential in exchange of knowledge, joint trainings, investments in telemedicine etc. There are a number of legal-administrative obstacles to be solved in joint organization of healthcare, cross-border patient care and emergency rescue. Cross-border rescue and free movement of ambulances is an important discussed issue. The programme helps identify barriers, build partnerships, develop prevention activities, and develop health-related social programs. An important assessment is that the distribution of the healthcare institutions is uneven within the regions, which hampers equal access to healthcare infrastructure and services. The survey pointed out that it is necessary to distribute and share medical infrastructural devices, equipment and knowledge. In COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the importance of cooperation in solving emergency care, Russian military aggression against Ukraine further intensified those proposed needs. There is a need for joint preparation for similar situations and institutionalised exchange of experiences in handling a regional or global pandemic or other mass health hazard situation.. The survey showed that different prevention programmes and campaigns would be helpful in increasing the knowledge and responsibility of the individuals to take care of their own health, including the participation in regular screening programmes could ameliorate the statistics regarding cardiovascular diseases among others.</p>

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.

PO4	vi) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	A healthy and attractive border region	<p>Sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to cluster area's economy, due to presence of UNESCO site and sites of natural beauty. Culture and tourism could be important drivers of regional economic development and growth in the region, as cultural roots and heritage show similarities from World Heritage Sites (e.g. beech forests, wooden churches) through shared historical past the affluence of festivals and cultural events and lively cultural life. The area is suitable for the development of common or joint tourism products based of cultural, religious, eco- and health tourism. The sector needs extensive and comprehensive preservation and development of historical traditions and architectural assets. There is a need to fill the shortcomings of the cross-border tourism infrastructure and service offer of the programme area as tourism is very concentrated on few destinations, while many regions especially in Ukraine seems unable to valorise their assets. There are large inequalities in the programme area in capitalisation on natural and cultural heritage despite of shared elements. A trend of significant growth of tourism across the majority of the area has been witnessed; however a challenge is to increase the number of stays. Strengthening of marketing and information providing activities is listed as a huge development need; new tourist directions, recreational, historical, cultural and natural events and resources need to be popularized. The role of tourism and culture in social inclusion can be further supported, there are large parts of the region which have outstanding attractions with large share of people with poverty and disabilities in less visited, often border areas. According to opinions, cooperation for safe tourism in the post-COVID-19 period was ranked as the most important among the opportunities, which seems to be equally important for all countries. Tourism is one of the sectors being the most affected by the pandemic making the sector a key in recovery. Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.</p>
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Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
ISO1	b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	A cooperating border region	EGTCs and Euroregions, among others, give great examples to cooperation between regional and local governments, municipalities. The programme can help in the most frequent difficulties of stakeholders when participating in the programme; the lack of capacity in the organization and the lack of partners. The objective reflects the focus of the Programme on the exchange of experiences and capacity building. While a number of needs can be satisfied by actions under other SOs, many relevant cooperation needs do not fit to these objectives. Still, enhancing the cooperation in these fields is desirable. The projects are small-scale and diverse, so that their volume in each topic is not sufficient for a dedicated SO. It can enhance cooperation in important fields to the actors like cross-border inter-municipal cooperation, RDI and creation of products with high added-value, capacity building and knowledge transfer related to entrepreneurs and smart specialisation strategies, educational cooperation, and to a great extent, cultural cooperation and citizens' cooperation. ISO1 b is the most suitable one, allowing for a wide range of partners to participate in the cooperation.

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Other main goal is to identify and to support the overcome of legal and administrative obstacles which hampers many potential areas of cooperation from cross-border rescue through cross-border transport development to border control. Harmonised solutions and enhanced and new forms of cooperation would significantly improve the overall cohesion of the area regardless thematic focus to tackle joint challenges and utilize joint potentials lie in SME and business development, entrepreneurship and digitisation, energy efficiency and renewable energy, education, with focus on vocational training, inclusion of marginalized communities, coordination of transport development. Operation of border guard and customs services in border management field need special attention due to current circumstances. Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.</p>

Selected policy objective or Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
ISO2	a) border crossing management and mobility and migration management, including the protection and economic and social integration of third-country nationals including migrants and beneficiaries of international protection	A cooperating border region	<p>In the orientations for the Interreg NEXT cooperation between Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine (Ref. Ares(2020)450163 - 24/01/2020) Interreg Specific Objective 2 (focusing on border crossings management) was recommended for the whole cluster area. It can be implemented through actions in the fields of border crossing management. Actions in the field of disaster risk management can also be supported. Due to the limited financial sources and the quadrilateral character of the CBC programme, smaller upscaling, purchase of equipments, installments, and trainings, know-how transfer would fit in the programme. Also the Territorial Analysis drew attention to the importance of border management. A comprehensive cooperation and development are required in the field of bringing stakeholders together to mitigate congestions and support capacity increase, improving technical conditions, sharing know-how and training border guards and custom officers, unifying and simplifying the systems of customs and border control. Training of customs and police officers, sharing of border control know-how, purchase of up-to-date technologies and equipment in passenger and freight transport to speed up border control procedures are named as proposed activities by stakeholders. Russian military aggression against Ukraine further intensified those proposed needs.</p> <p>Grant will be provided, the nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments. The supported operations will not generate income, therefore, using financial instruments is not optimal because the beneficiaries will not have the resources to pay back the support.</p>

## 2. Priorities

*Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)*

### 2.1 A resilient and green border region

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

Text field: [300]

#### 2.1.1 iv) promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system-based approaches

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

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

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

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by increasing preparedness and resilience of the region to natural hazards such as floods, droughts, extreme temperatures (such as heatwaves), landslides and ice jams on rivers as well as man-made disasters, such as industrial disasters and forest fires. Additionally, actions are expected to contribute to the mitigation of the impacts of the climate change. Activities should promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

#### Type of Actions 1.1.

##### **Joint actions aimed to reduce the impact of climate change and human threats on nature: technical preparation of common infrastructure development projects and implementation of common interest infrastructure development projects**

The aim of this Type of Action is to promote the implementation of targeted development that help increase the level of the responsive capacities of the relevant institutions to human-made and natural threats and disasters and adverse impacts of the climate change. Large-scale infrastructure projects will be selected in call for proposals and they will be considered as operations of strategic importance. (Disclaimer: the monitoring committee will approve the call for proposal documents and the evaluation and selection criteria, therefore the final scope of the themes and individual projects will be known after the selection.)

*Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:*

- *implementation of infrastructure development projects in order to increase preparedness for natural and human-made threats and/or disasters and adverse impacts (existing or potential) of the climate change including*
  - *Joint interventions and prevention activities aimed to mitigate the effects of extreme weather conditions with increased frequency due to climate change (e.g. prevention of floods, prevent and respond to emergencies related to floods and forest fires, retention of waters to reduce the negative effects of droughts, monitoring and protection of cross-border ground water bodies);*
  - *Joint interventions and prevention activities aimed to mitigate natural and human-made environmental risks, including the protection of forests (e.g reforestation programs, joint measures to protect forest from the negative effects of climate change, close to nature forest management –*

*silviculture measures, forest protection, forest infrastructure, joint measures against illegal logging, etc), improvement of the chemical status of transboundary waters, increasing the intervention capacity in case of industrial accidents, etc.*

*- Develop specific monitoring and warning systems and cooperation protocols that enable the regional institutions to effectively forecast, monitor and manage adverse effects of the climate change and accidental natural and human-made disasters.*

### **Type of Actions 1.2.**

#### **Joint education, awareness raising and knowledge sharing activities in the field of climate change adaptation and risk prevention for better understanding, increasing preparedness and prevention**

The aim of this Type of Action is to increase the capacities of local institutions and the formal and informal groups of the society, as well as of the individuals to understand and manage threats of natural and human-made disasters and the adverse impacts of the climate change.

*Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:*

- Joint learning and knowledge-sharing actions to increase organisational capacity of relevant national and crossborder organisations, local and regional governments public institutions, schools and civil organisations (NGOs);*
- Information campaigns and public dissemination events targeting various groups of inhabitants (such as seniors, students or businesses as local agricultural producers) of the border areas severely impacted by climate change risks or damages;*
- Development of joint data collection instruments and creation of joint databases, based on primary data sources;*
- Joint education events for children and young people, such as fieldtrips, trainings, school events, joint outdoor programmes, thematic camps connected to climate change. This type of activities may be complemented with other horizontal elements which support cooperation in this specific field, such as mutual language-learning programs for participating students, sessions on digital “hygiene” (safe usage of internet tools and sources, etc).*

*Under the types of actions, the eligible activities can be complemented by the development of partnership-based risk-management risk prevention,, climate change strategies and action plans at local and regional level, closely linked to the focus of the projects. Any strategies and action plans can gain support only if are prepared with the involvement of relevant partners and there is a commitment of these partners to consider these strategies and plans to be implemented in their future operations.*

The Types of actions, as outlined above, promote the following objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR, as defined by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020, Commission Staff Working Paper Plan (hereinafter as "Action Plan (2020)"):

Priority Area 5 of the EUSDR “To manage environmental risks” targets inter alia

- at addressing the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan – Update 2015, the report on the impacts of droughts in the Danube Basin in 2015 (due in 2016) and the ongoing work in the field of climate adaptation,*
- at providing and enhancing continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan – adopted in 2015 in line with the EU Floods Directive – to achieve significant reductions of flood risk events by 2021, also taking into account potential impacts of climate change and adaption strategies and*

- at supporting the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities in line with the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

**For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Not applicable

### 2.1.1.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	iv)	RCO26	Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change	ha	0	180
1	iv)	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Number of events	0	18
1	iv)	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	54

Table 3: Result indicators

Prior ity	Specif ic object ive	ID	Indicator	Measure ment unit	Baseli ne	Refere nce year	Final targe t (2029 )	Source of data	Comme nts
1	iv)	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project	Number of organisations	0	2021	40	monitoring system / beneficiary report	

			completion						
1	iv)	RPR 01	Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters (flood, wildfire, other	Numer of people	0	2021	950.000	monitoring system / beneficiary report	

### 2.1.1.3 The main target groups

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

The main target groups of the actions are

- public and semi-public institutions in the programme area, especially those in the field of environmental and nature protection, water management, forestry and emergency services by being involved in the actions and taking up the solutions developed in the projects, improving their capabilities and resilience

Following the principle of partnership, a variety of legal entities of the programme area will be able to contribute to the actions above as beneficiaries. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Local, regional or national public authorities, including thematic authorities on environment, nature, water and disaster management
- public or semi-public territorial agencies such as local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies
- interest groups including civil organisations (NGOs), operational at regional and local level
- public or private organisations for higher education and research
- public or private and formal and informal educational institutions

### 2.1.1.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

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

Actions will be implemented throughout the entire programme area. Particularly vulnerable territories will be identified in the CfPs and will be preferred. No ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools will be used.

### 2.1.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

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



No financial instrument will be used.

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	058	5 000 000
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	059	5 000 000
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	060	5 000 000
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	064	1 772 012
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	067	1 762 013

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	01	18 534 025

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	iv)	33	18 534 025

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

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

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

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

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective by supporting the proper protection and management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the region as well as helping reduce the burden of pollution on air, soil and waters of the area of the borders. Especially pollution of waters by poorly managed communal waste, contaminated soil on abandoned industrial and mining sites as well as contaminated transboundary groundwater bodies and transport-originated air-pollution will be in the in the focus us of the actions. Activities should promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

#### Type of Actions 2.1.

**Joint initiatives for ensuring the sustainable development of natural areas: technical preparation of common infrastructure development projects and implementation of common interest infrastructure development projects**

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint interventions for reconstruction/protection, restoration or revitalization of natural habitats, aimed to protect and restore local and regional ecosystems, protection of forest genetic resources improving biodiversity and connectedness of habitats.

- *Creation of educational trails in nature, interconnected between the borders (either geographically or by thematic focus);*
- *Re-introduction of native species to cross-border habitats, control of invasive species;*
- *Joint interventions to map pollution sources and/or development of up-to-date solutions to eliminate or reduce various pollution sources and pollutants from air, soil, or water*
- *Develop specific joint monitoring systems that enable the regional institutions to effectively forecast, monitor and manage changes in status of environmental elements and biodiversity, including the development of warning mechanisms for pollution or cross border inventory of forests.*

Large-scale infrastructure projects will be selected in call for proposals and they will be considered as operations of strategic importance. (Disclaimer: the monitoring committee will approve the call for proposal documents and the evaluation and selection criteria, therefore the final scope of the themes and individual projects will be known after the selection.)

## **Type of Actions 2.2.**

### **Joint education activities, and awareness raising and knowledge sharing in the field of nature protection and biodiversity**

The aim of this Type of Action is to increase the capacities of relevant local institutions, the formal and informal groups of the society and the individuals to understand the importance and to manage natural assets and biodiversity, ecological approaches and networks. Additionally, increased capacity to understand main drivers, mechanisms and potential tools and measures to reduce or eliminate pollution of environmental elements – with a focus on surface- and groundwater bodies, soil and air - across the border is expected, as result of the actions implemented. Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

Organisation of information campaigns, social events, online events on the sustainable use of natural resources,

- *Implementing joint awareness raising programs, with the objective of developing environmental awareness, understanding the impact of human consumption and other activities in the deterioration of natural habitats in order to develop environmental consciousness.*
- *Joint learning and knowledge-sharing activities in the field of environment and nature protection, aimed to increase organisational capacity of relevant national and cross-border organisations, local and regional competent public institutions (including public administration, if the case) and civil organisations*
- *Joint education events for children, such as fieldtrips, trainings, school events, joint outdoor programmes (e.g. hiking, camping, birdwatching), thematic camps for children/youth connected to nature and environmental protection, This type of activities may be complemented with other horizontal elements which support cooperation in this specific field, such as mutual language-learning programs for participating students, sessions on digital “hygiene” (safe usage of internet tools and sources, etc).*
- *Development of joint data collection instruments and creation of joint databases, based on primary data sources.*

*Under the types of actions, the eligible activities can be complemented by the development of partnership-based risk-management, sustainable development and biodiversity-related strategies and action plans at local and regional level, closely linked to the focus of the projects. Any strategies and action plans can gain support only if are prepared with the involvement of relevant partners and the commitment of these partners to consider these strategies and plans to be implemented in their future operations.*

The Types of actions, as outlined above, promote the following objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR, as defined by the Action Plan (2020):

Priority Area 6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils” targets

- at improving management of Natura 2000 sites and other protect-ed areas through transnational cooperation and capacity building.
- at strengthening the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region and covered by EU nature legislation and in particular to continue the on-going work and efforts to securing viable populations of Danube sturgeon species.
- at reducing the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region
- at maintaining and restoring Green and Blue Infrastructure elements through integrated spatial development and conservation planning.
- at improving and/or maintaining the soil quality in the Danube Region
- at decreasing air pollution in the Danube Region.

**For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

*Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)*

*Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure*

Not applicable

## 2.1.2.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	vii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	45
1	vii)	RCO36	Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change	ha	0	10
1	vii)	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Number of public events	0	15

Table 3: Result indicators

Priori ty	Specifi c objecti ve	ID	Indicator	Measure ment unit	Baseli ne	Refere nce year	Fina l targ et (202 9)	Source of data	Comme nts
1	vii)	RCR 84	Organisati ons cooperati ng across borders after project completi on	Number of organisatio ns	0	2021	34	<i>monitor ing system / benefici ary report</i>	
1	vii)	RPR 02	Populatio n benefittin g from better ecosystem services (biodivers ity, green corridors, improved ecological status, etc.)	Number of people	0	2021	50.0 00	<i>monitor ing system / benefici ary report</i>	

### 2.1.2.3 The main target groups

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

The main target groups of the actions are

- public and semi-public institutions in the programme area, especially those in the field of environmenta (air-, soil, water) protection by being involved in the actions and taking up the solutions developed in the projects, improving their capabilities and resilience

Following the principle of partnership, a variety of legal entities of the programme area will be able to contribute to the actions above as beneficiaries. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Local, regional or national public authorities, including thematic authorities on environment, nature, water management
- public or semi-public territorial agencies such as local or regional development agencies, environmental associations
- interest groups including civil organisations (NGOs), operational at regional and local level
- public or private organisations for higher education and research

- public or private and formal and informal educational institutions

#### **2.1.2.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools**

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region.

Regarding preserving and restoring biodiversity, a special focus shall be given to the region's sensitive and protected areas such as national parks or Natura 2000 sites as core elements of a transnational biotope network, and the areas interlinking them as they are crucial to enhance the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes and related ecosystem services. Additionally, also not protected areas with valuable natural assets, particularly affected by environmental pressure and/or having potential for restoring the region's biodiversity are to be given priority. No ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools will be used.

#### **2.1.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments**

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

No financial instruments will be used.

#### **2.1.2.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention**

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	vii)	079	11 937 364

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	vii)	01	11 937 364

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	vii)	033	11 937 364

## 2.2 A healthy and attractive border region

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

Text field: [300]

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

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

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

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

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective by building the capacities of the stakeholders in the healthcare sector to act effectively together and across the borders in epidemic and emergency situations, to improve accessibility of healthcare services by using digital technologies and by implementing joint programmes of healthcare screening and health promotion. The implementation of the Actions will be coordinated with similar interventions financed under ERDF or ESF+ in the participating Member states.

#### Type of Actions 3.1.

##### **Creation of the legislative, administrative and technical framework for common epidemiological measures and the cross-border rescue services**

The aim of this Type of Action is to make necessary framework conditions available for a meaningful cooperation of the relevant stakeholders of national healthcare systems. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *development of joint data collection and harmonisation methods and create joint databases*
- *studies to identify and elaborate solutions to unblock legal, administrative and technical obstacles of cooperation and to elaborate jointly applicable processes and protocols*
- *trainings, workshops and other cooperative learning events to construct, interpret, test and further develop cooperation processes and protocols*
- *solutions for eliminating legal, administrative and other obstacles*

#### Type of Actions 3.2.

##### **Investments for improving cooperation in epidemiology and in cross-border rescue services**

The aim of this Type of Action is to provide investment support for infrastructure developments (including refurbishment of buildings and purchase of equipment) necessary to pilot-test and operate joint services in the field of fight against epidemics and of provision of joint emergency services across the border(s). To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *infrastructure developments including the renewal of necessary parts of buildings and purchase of equipment for healthcare institutions*
- *trainings, workshops and other cooperative learning events to share information and experiences related to improved services*

### **Type of Actions 3.3.**

#### **Enhancing the use of digital technologies in healthcare and health development**

The aim of this Type of Action is to boost the use of telemedicine solutions and digital technologies in healthcare and health development in order to improve the accessibility of medical and health development services. Actions are expected to result in cooperating crossborder networks of competent professionals on the basis of jointly elaborated procedures and protocols using digital technologies for remote diagnostics and consultation or supervision and some pilot investment in necessary small-scale investment, especially purchase of the necessary equipment. Solutions are expected to cover a wide variety of potential intervention areas like the joint promotion of treatment of rare diseases, or the prevention and prophylactics of widespread diseases like overweight or obese diabetes, as examples. EU standards in eHealth and guidelines of eHealth Network, and of MyHealth@EU should be respected, whenever it is relevant.

Accessibility of services also for vulnerable groups will be promoted via awareness-raising and training elements, specific to the needs of the groups concerned. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *conducting targeted feasibility analyses on crossborder applicability of digital technologies in healthcare and health development*
- *trainings, workshops and other cooperative learning events to construct, interpret, test and further develop cooperation processes and protocols*
- *small-scale infrastructure developments (including and refurbishment of buildings and purchase of equipment) to pilot-test and operate joint services.*

### **Type of Actions 3.4.**

#### **Implementation of health screening and health promotion programmes**

The aim of this Type of Action is to raise awareness and build up knowledge and awareness with regard to the prevention of diseases (with the focus on cardiovascular diseases) and the importance, methods and skills of health promotion and increase the efficiency of health prevention in the region. Accessibility of services also for vulnerable groups will be promoted via awareness-raising and training elements, specific to the needs of the groups concerned as well as via need-specific design of programmes. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *design and implementation of local and regional health screening programmes*
- *carry out local and regional awareness raising and training programmes on health prevention and health development*
- *implementation of skills development and training programmes on health prevention and health promotion*
- *infrastructure developments (including and refurbishment of buildings and purchase of equipment) necessary to pilot-test and operate joint programmes*

#### **For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

*Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)*

*Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure*

*Not applicable*



### 2.2.1.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	v)	RCO117	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	Number of solutions	0	3
2	v)	RCO69	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	Number of people/year	0	15.000
2	v)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Number of participations	0	38.450
2	v)	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Number of participants	0	150
2	v)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	36

Table 3: Result indicators

Priori ty	Specifi c objecti ve	ID	Indicator	Measure ment unit	Baseli ne	Refere nce year	Fina l targ et (202 9)	Source of data	Comme nts
2	v)	RCR 82	Legal or administra tive obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved	Number of obstacles	0	2021	1	monitor ing system / benefici ary report	
2	v)	RCR 73	Annual users of new or modernise	Number of users per year	0	2021	13.8 00	monitor ing system / benefici	

			d health care facilities					ary report	
2	v)	RCR 81	Completion of joint training schemes	Number of participants	0	2021	135	monitoring system / beneficiary report	
2	v)	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Number of organisations	0	2023	18	monitoring system / beneficiary report	

### 2.2.1.3 The main target groups

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

The main target groups of the actions are:

The public and semi-public organisations (hospitals, outpatient care institutions) in charge of providing healthcare services as well as non-governmental non-profit providers of healthcare and health development services in the border region by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions developed in the actions.

Following the principle of partnership, a variety of legal entities of the programme area will be able to contribute to the actions above as beneficiaries. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Local, regional or national public authorities, including thematic authorities on healthcare and health development
- public or semi-public territorial agencies such as local or regional development agencies,
- non-governmental civil organisations (NGOs), operational at regional and local level
- public or private organisations for higher education and research
- public or private and formal and informal educational institutions

### 2.2.1.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region. No ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools will be used.

### 2.2.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

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

No financial instruments will be used.

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	v)	128	6 258 924
2	NDICI CBC	v)	129	6 000 000
2	NDICI CBC	v)	131	2 000 000
2	NDICI CBC	v)	132	4 000 000

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	v)	01	18 258 924

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	v)	33	18 258 924

### 2.2.2 (vi) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

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

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

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

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective by promoting cultural cooperation and increasing the offer of environmentally and socially sustainable tourism on the basis of the valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage assets, including the built heritage of the region. The implementation of the Actions will be coordinated with similar interventions financed under ERDF or ESF+ in the participating Member states.

#### Type of Actions 4.1.

##### Capacity development by data collection, knowledge sharing and training

The aim of this Type of Action is to increase the capacities of relevant local management institutions, the formal and informal groups of the society and the service providers involved in the tourism to manage tourism-related services in a more sustainable way and at a higher service level. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *collection of primary data, including development of methods of data harmonisation and creation of joint databases*
- *preparation and establishment of joint systems of visitor- and asset monitoring*
- *joint learning and knowledge-sharing actions to increase organisational knowledge of relevant national and crossborder organisations, local and regional governments and civil organisations (NGOs)*
- *trainings for stakeholders of the tourism sector on topics associated with cultural heritage, environmental, social and financial sustainability, quality standards, healthcare regulations and general cooperative approaches in tourism including measures enhancing relationship between climate change and cultural heritage (impacts of climate change on cultural heritage, but also solutions that cultural heritage can offer to fight climate change) by considering the Sustainable cultural tourism: report of the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) working group of Member States' experts*
- *studies, applied research and strategic and action planning with regard to the ways and potentials to exploit the region's natural and cultural heritage assets by sustainable tourism*

#### **Type of Actions 4.2.**

##### **Development of common or joint tourism products, including development of cross-border networks and routes**

The aim of this Type of Action is to help design, organise and establish crossborder networks of tourist attractions and provide common tools to market and reach these networks. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- preparation (conceptualise, design and organisation) of joint tourism products and jointly provided services (service packages), including preparation of crossborder thematic routes and networks of attractions and services, including potential sites and attractions linked to Culture Route identified under the DiscoverEU initiative, covering currently the Literature route, extending to Slovakian and Hungarian territories of the programme area.
- investment (including technical design, feasibility analysis and implementation) in infrastructure necessary for the brand identity and the consistency of the quality of services in joint and networked cultural and natural heritage sites and the accessibility of the networked/connected sites by bike
- investment (including technical design, feasibility analysis and actual implementation) in infrastructure to
  - restore, upgrade or transform built elements of the cultural heritage appropriate for a contemporary use as cultural venues or tourist attraction sites in compliance with ICOMOS' Guidance on European Quality Principles for EU-funded Interventions with potential impact on Cultural Heritage
  - improve accessibility of new or existing touristic sites of cultural or natural heritage, including the provision of a barrier-free access to sites, provision of making digital guides, tutorials, exhibits or other digital means of information available, including multilingual services on sites and in networks or making soft mobility offers available, such as “solutions for the last mile”, mobility on demand, or improving public transport and connections of attractions by bike
- Establishment of joint platforms for marketing (including placement of offers, booking system, etc.) attractions, services and networks
- Facilitating the establishment of local healthcare regulations and processes for tourism securing the health of every involved actor in epidemic situations

### **Type of Actions 4.3.**

#### **Promotion of local and regional cooperation in culture and arts**

The aim of this type of action is to preserve and enrich the shared cultural traditions, including community sports traditions and to encourage the creation of new joint cultural and artistic products including the involvement and education of youth on cultural values. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *organisation or creation of joint cultural community level sport and artistic events or products, including ones built on the basis of preserving and developing local cultural traditions*
- *trainings, workshops and other cooperative learning events to promote cultural cooperation and intercultural dialogue*
- *investment in public cultural and community sports infrastructure to support preservation and development efforts*

### **Type of Actions 4.4.**

#### **Pilot actions to boost social innovation and the inclusion of vulnerable groups of the society in cultural activities, tourism services and projects**

The aim of this Type of Action is to identify and test cooperative innovative approaches to the provision of cultural activities and tourism-related services locally, especially in less developed and peripheral locations, including ways and processes to involve individuals from vulnerable groups including the involvement and education of youth on cultural values. To achieve this aim, indicative activities can be the following ones:

- *Selection, implementation and monitoring of innovative local projects*

The Types of actions, as outlined above, promote the following objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR, as defined by the Action Plan (2020):

Priority Area 3 “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts” :

I. Developing sustainable tourism by developing sustainable forms of tourism (green tourist products and sustainable mobility solutions) and ensuring the sustainable preservation, conservation, socialization and contemporary interpretation of cultural heritage and natural values;

II. Science, research and new technologies in culture, tourism and people to people contacts by supporting the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system dedicated to sustainable tourism and cultural/natural heritage and promoting the exchange of practices and networking in the field of a.) Arts incl. contemporary arts b.) Support the creation of linkages and synergies between the cultural and creative sectors and the tourism sector;

III. Valorising, promoting and protecting the cultural heritage, inter alia by establishing the Danube Region as important European tourist destination, by promoting the development of quality products, infrastructure and innovative forms of tourism and culture by SMEs and public private partnerships and by promoting skilled labour workforce, education and skills development in the areas of tourism and culture for sustainable jobs in the region

**For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Not applicable

### 2.2.2.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	vi)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	81
2	vi)	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Number of sites	0	29
2	vi)	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Number of participants	0	185
2	vi)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Number of participants	0	610

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	vi)	RCR77	Visitors of supported cultural and tourism sites	Number of visitors	0	2021	75.000	monitoring system / beneficiary report	
2	vi)	RCR81	Completion of joint	Number of people	0	2021	120	monitoring system /	

			training schemes					beneficiary report	
2	vi)	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Number of organisations	0	2021	42	monitoring system / beneficiary report	

### 2.2.2.3 The main target groups

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

The main target groups of the actions are:

The public, private and civil (NGO) organisations and individuals providing tourism-related services or managing natural or cultural assets in the border region by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions developed in the actions.

Basically, all legal entities being able to contribute to the actions above are possible beneficiaries. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Local, regional or national public authorities
- Public cultural institutions
- civil and professional associations, including ones of professional artists and self-organising (“grassroots”) actors
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Institutions for higher education and research
- Educational institutions, training centres and schools
- Economic and territorial development institutions, such as county or regional development agencies
- National statistical offices

### 2.2.2.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region. No territorial tools will be used.

### 2.2.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments

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

No financial instruments will be used.



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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	vi)	165	4 97 3902
2	NDICI CBC	vi)	166	4 973 902
2	NDICI CBC	vi)	167	4 973 901

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	vi)	01	14 921 705

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	vi)	33	14 921 705

## 2.3 A cooperating border region

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

Text field: [300]

### 2.3.1 b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions

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

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

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

#### Type of Actions 5.1.

##### Institutional cooperation between public and civil society organisations

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective by providing opportunity of cooperation for a wide range of partners in topics not being selected for the thematic concentration of the programme, but are relevant in the areas, especially for the exploration of opportunities for further topics of cooperation in the future.

Special area of priority within these types of actions is to enhance cooperation across the border to increase the economic performance of the region, mostly by

- creating and developing operational networks (like clusters, networks of science- and industrial parks and logistic centres) of relevant stakeholders and facilitating the sharing and transfer of knowledge

- collaborative development of place-based ways and methods of stimulating entrepreneurship in the border area, with emphasis on innovative approaches to and forms of economic activities that match specific local demand
- enhancing the transfer of knowledge among and building capacities of local authorities, business, academia and civil society in the field of smart specialization to build synergies and create added value by cross-border cooperation.

To enhance cooperation on these fields, at least one third of the budget allocated to the Priority “2.3.A cooperating border region” is intended to be used to support viable projects that address the topics listed above. Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- *conducting preliminary studies and planning on future structures and areas of cooperation, including the preparation of strategic actions and projects to be implemented e.g. in the next period of programming*
- *exchanging experiences and sharing information, data and knowledge necessary to solving current cooperation problems or avoiding potential perspective conflicts or risks or to exploit opportunities jointly*
- *harmonising existing and developing new tools, methods, processes and procedures for a more effective and efficient cooperation, networking and for an enhanced institutional performance*
- *institutional level organisational development and skills development of staff for a more effective and efficient cooperation, networking and for an enhanced institutional performance*
- *upscaling technical conditions (e.g. purchase of equipment and necessary trainings) for border management;*

Potential thematic fields of activities can include, but are not limited to:

- *smart specialization, entrepreneurship and business development, digitisation*
- *energy efficiency and renewable energy*
- *education, with focus on vocational training improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education*
- *socioeconomic inclusion of marginalized communities*
- *coordination of cross border transport development plans, including public transport developments and development of transport accessibility of the border stations*
- *Border management for passenger and freight transport, operation of border guard and customs services, border- and border-crossing controls, cooperation among such bodies*
- *analysis and elimination of obstacles of different fields*

Harmonised solutions as well as enhanced and new forms of cooperation would significantly improve the overall cohesion of the whole area regardless thematic focus to tackle joint challenges and utilize joint potentials lie in SME and business development, entrepreneurship and digitisation, energy efficiency and renewable energy, education, with focus on vocational training including green skills, inclusion of marginalized communities, coordination of transport development, operation of border guard and customs services especially. By taking into account the cooperation character of the ISO 1 between the relevant actors of other sectors than the one of selected SOs, only soft projects of smaller scale might be foreseen, such as cooperation, exchange of experience, knowledge transfer, skills development, plans and strategies.

The Type of actions, as outlined above, promote the following objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR, as defined by the Action Plan (2020):

Priority Area 10 “to step up institutional capacity and cooperation” targets

- at strengthening institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance.
- at increasing involvement of civil society and local actors for effective policy-making and implementation.
- at enhancing coordination and knowledge for better use of funding and to develop needs-based funding instruments

Most relevant actions are:

(Action nr. 2) “To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions”

(Action nr. 7) “To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region”

Action nr. 8) “To enhance capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development”

Priority Area 11 “Security” with a focus on strengthening personal and technical conditions on border management and border control.

**For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

*Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)*

*Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure*

*Not applicable*

### 2.3.1.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
3	ISO1 b)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	48

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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3	ISO1 b)	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Number of organisations	0	2021	24	monitoring system / beneficiary report	
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### 2.3.1.3 The main target groups

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

The main target group in general is the citizens of the cooperating countries who experience the benefits of the cooperation— through public or civic organisations operating at local level. Thus, beneficiaries are predominantly

- National level public organisations and authorities, including their regional or local branches
- Local and regional public authorities or semi-public bodies
- Organisations managing specific territories (such as Euroregions and EGTCs)
- Public or civil economic development organisations, including chambers of commerce/trade/agriculture
- Public or civil educational institutions and training service provider organisations
- Civil (Non-governmental) organisations and other interest groups
- Public Higher Education institutions, universities, public research institutions
- public and civil bodies and institutions in charge of SME and economic development or innovation management
- public management bodies of business infrastructures (like industrial parks, science parks, etc.)
- border control and border management bodies

### 2.3.1.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region. No ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools will be used.

### 2.3.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

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

No financial instruments will be used.

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO1b)	171	5 774 843

3	NDICI CBC	ISO1b)	173	2 000 000
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Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO1b)	01	7 774 843

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO1b)	33	7 774 843

## 2.3.2 A safer and more secure Europe

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

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

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

#### Type of Actions 6.1

##### Cooperation on border control and management

Special attention is given to types of actions is to enhance cooperation of border control and management bodies. The programme tries to maximize the 5% limit for “A more safe and secure Europe initiative” with the aim of intensified operation of border guard and customs services, border- and border-crossing controls.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- exchanging experiences and sharing information, data and knowledge necessary to solving current cooperation problems to exploit opportunities jointly
- harmonising existing and developing new tools, methods, processes and procedures for an enhanced institutional performance
- organisational development and skills development of staff and
- education with focus on border control training
- analysis and elimination of obstacles of different fields
- conducting preliminary studies, preparing plans and permits for border and transport investments
- smaller scale developments and solutions and equipment for upgrading border crossing points.

The Type of actions promote the Priority Area 11 “Security” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR with a focus on strengthening personal and technical conditions on border management and border control.

*The actions should be implemented in coordination with other ongoing initiatives in this area. In particular, the programme should consider complementarities with Integrated Border Management projects (DG NEAR), Connecting Europe Facility projects (DG MOVE), Member States’ national funding and projects with funding sources from different countries and international donors. It should be noted that actions under this specific objective are complementary to the programme “Border Management and Visa Instrument” (BMVI). The actions aimed to improve the infrastructure of border crossing points should be coordinated with the BMVI support, in particular*

with regards to construction and development of buildings, or investments in equipment for verification of electronic travel documents and biometric fingerprints.

**For INTERACT and ESPON programmes:**

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Not applicable

**2.3.2.2 Indicators**

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
3	ISO2	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Number of organisations	0	6

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ISO2	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Number of organisations	0	2023	6	monitoring system / beneficiary report	

**2.3.2.3 The main target groups**

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

The main target group in general is the citizens of the participating countries benefitting from the cooperation. Thus, beneficiaries are predominantly border control and border management bodies. By

taking into account the specificities of the proposed activities, the potential beneficiaries shall consult the relevant national/regional authorities.

#### **2.3.2.4 Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools**

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region. No ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools will be used.

#### **2.3.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments**

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

No financial instruments will be used.

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO2	173	3 693 185

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO2	01	3 693 185

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	ISO2	33	3 693 185



### **3. Financing plan**

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

#### **3.1 Financial appropriations by year**

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

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
NDICI - CBC <sup>1</sup>	0	13 885 938	14 632 415	14 868 604	15 109 090	12 066 053	12 619 949	83 182 049
Total	0	13 885 938	14 632 415	14 868 604	15 109 090	12 066 053	12 619 949	83 182 049

#### **3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing**

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

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<sup>1</sup> Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

Table 8

<b>Policy objective No</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Fund (as applicable)</b>	<b>Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)</b>	<b>EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)</b>	<b>Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution</b>		<b>National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)</b>	<b>Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart</b>		<b>Total (e)=(a)+(b)</b>	<b>Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)</b>	<b>Contributions from the third countries (for information)</b>
					<b>without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)</b>	<b>for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)</b>		<b>National public (c)</b>	<b>National private (d)</b>			
PO2 'A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment,	<b>Priority 1</b> A resilient and green border region	NDICI CBC	Total eligible cost	33 741 627	30 471 389	3 270 238	3 749 070	3 374 163	374 907	37 490 697	90%	0

<i>the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</i>												
<i>PO4 A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights'</i>	<b>Priority 2</b> <i>A healthy and attractive border region</i>	<i>NDICI CBC</i>	<i>Total eligible cost</i>	<i>36 741 627</i>	<i>33 180 629</i>	<i>3 560 998</i>	<i>4 082 403</i>	<i>3 674 163</i>	<i>408 240</i>	<i>40 824 030</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>ISO1 'Better cooperation governance'</i>  <i>ISO2 A safer and more secure Europe</i>	<b>Priority 3</b> <i>A cooperating border region</i>	<i>NDICI CBC</i>	<i>Total eligible cost</i>	<i>12 698 795</i>	<i>11 468 028</i>	<i>1 230 767</i>	<i>1 410 978</i>	<i>1 269 880</i>	<i>141 098</i>	<i>14 109 773</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>0</i>
	<b>Total</b>	<i>All funds</i>	<i>Total eligible cost</i>	<i>83 182 049</i>	<i>75 120 046</i>	<i>8 062 003</i>	<i>9 242 451</i>	<i>8 318 206</i>	<i>924 245</i>	<i>92 424 500</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>0</i>

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

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

##### **Partners and their roles in the preparation of the Programme**

In accordance with the multi-level governance principle, the involvement of partners was a central component throughout the development of the Programme. The programming process has been coordinated by the Programming Committee (PC) set up in April, 2020 and consists of relevant ministries and regional/county/local level organizations from 4 countries.

**From Hungary these include:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department for Cross-border Cooperation Programmes (MA for HUSKROUA 2014-2020), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department for Water Diplomacy and the Danube Region Strategy, Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit Llc, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Council, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Council.

**From Slovakia:** Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of Slovak Republic (NA for HUSKROUA 2014-2020), and as central coordination body (Central Co-ordinating Authority (CCA) Section); Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Prešov Self-Governing Region (Department of Strategic Development and Project Management), Košice Self-Governing Region (Department of Regional Development, Spatial Planning and Environment), Association of Towns and Communities of the Slovak Republic.

**From Romania:** Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (NA for HUSKROUA 2014-2020), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Satu Mare County Council, Maramures County Council, Suceava County Council

**From Ukraine:** Secretariat of Cabinet of Ministry of Ukraine (NA for HUSKROUA 2014-2020), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Transcarpathian Regional State Administration, Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State Administration, Chernivtsi Regional State Administration.

Representatives of the Joint Technical Secretariat of the HUSKROUA ENI CBC Programme (hereinafter referred to as JTS) (including Branch Offices) took part at the PC meetings in a coordinative and professional supportive function. The representative of the European Commission and experts of the TESIM Project were invited to the meeting of the PC as advisors.

The key milestones of the programming process:

- PC meetings with the participation of the PC members
- external experts prepared the Inception Report
- advisors and experts drafting the Territorial analysis
- the external expert teams drafting Chapter 2 “Priorities” of IP document as well as strategic environmental assessment experts
- other chapters are made internally but approved by the Programming Committee

The role of the PC— besides steering and strategically coordinating the planning process —was to discuss and approve the major milestones and outputs of the programming process.

In order to ensure satisfactory level of territorial ownership and in line with the principle of inclusive partnership, according to Article 6 of CPR, the programming process also included advisors from central and local level as well as representatives of civil society that offered valuable input into the programming process, the relevant stakeholders and partners were duly consulted. They had timely access to relevant information allowing them to play a meaningful role during the design, and influence the implementation and monitoring processes of the future Programme. Due to the security measures applied by the 4 governments during the COVID pandemic, their involvement has been carried out through a series of online workshops, interviews and public consultation in order to generate an active dialogue with them (e.g. identifying local challenges and development needs, concrete actions and project ideas, existing and potential applicants and cooperation networks etc.).

Online surveys in 4 national languages were sent online to wide range of stakeholders to around 700 contacts. Online workshops for the discussion of the territorial analysis were organised for involvement

of the stakeholders in the programming process in all 4 countries. The workshops and the online surveys resulted with in the territorial analysis, which then served a solid base for further work on the selection of policy objectives and shaping the Interreg Programme document.

The public was informed about the programming process on multiple outlets; mainly on the website of the previous programme and social media platform. Public consultation on the draft Interreg programme and the draft SEA report was also conducted before the finalization of the content in multiple languages.

### **Partners and their roles in the implementation of the Programme**

Partners from participating countries shall be involved in implementation of the Programme, including their participation in the Monitoring Committee (hereinafter: MC). The MC supervises the Programme and its performance and makes decisions accordingly. The composition of the MC shall be agreed by the partner countries and shall ensure a balanced representation of the relevant authorities, including intermediate bodies as well as representatives of the programme partners referred to in Article (5) of Regulation (EU) CPR from partner states and according to the (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The setup will be ensured by nomination of the partner countries The MC shall adopt its rules of procedure which shall include provisions on its functioning, on rights and obligations, on voting rights and rules for attending the meetings as well as means and tools to deal with conflict of interest. It shall be made public as per Article 28.4 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council 2021/1059. The list of the members will be published on the website.

### **Institutional coordination mechanism**

The Partnership Agreement among other important elements describes the mechanism of the coordination, demarcation and complementarities between the Funds and coordination between national and regional programmes as well as complementarities between the Funds and other Union instruments in the Member States. It provides help and information in coordination exercise for our Programme as well. By this mean, two-sided information flow is ensured.

The Programme partners supported by the work of MC, the Joint Secretariat (with one or more branch offices in the partner countries), the Controllers and other Programme Bodies will be used as a permanent coordination mechanisms, ensuring overall coordination and monitoring of implementation of other Union and relevant national funding instruments. The members and observers of the MC might be involved in other programme implementation and/or decision-making (e.g. counties/VUCs in regional/territorial development programmes in Hungary, Slovak Republic and Romania), therefore they possess extended relevant information. The knowledge hub provided by the Széchenyi Programme Office (SZPO) hosting the JTSs and controllers of CBC and transnational/international programmes has also extended relevant information on other border section. Moreover SZPO is taking part in implementaion mechanism of the mainstram programmes.

In Hungary, the portfolio for planning and implementation of Interreg CBC Programmes belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFA). In the planning phase, the MFA coordinated the programming process of all cross-border cooperation programme Hungary participates, and also the Prime Minister's Office being as coordinator of Cohesion policy funds in Hungary, and the Ministry of Finance being responsible for territorial development at national level took part in the process. MFA being responsible for CBC Interreg programmes, takes part in the monitoring committee of the parntership agreement in Hungary in a consultative role. In addition to that MFA takes part together with MAs of mainstream programme in the Development Policy Coordination Committee dealing with all development policy issues in Hungary.

In Slovakia the planning and implementation responsibilities belong to the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of Slovak Republic.

In Romania these functions belongs to the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration.

In Ukraine - Secretariat of Cabinet of Ministry of Ukraine and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine are involved into the planning phase and future implementation.

In addition to that coordination will be ensured by occasionally inviting the programme authorities to the MC meetings or having regular national level consultation in specific topics prior to MC meetings and decisions.

### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

The main body in charge of monitoring and evaluation of the Programme is the MC with the help of the Joint Secretariat, Branch Offices. The MC will examine on a regular basis among others:

- the progress in the Programme implementation and in achieving its milestones and targets of the Interreg Programme;
- any issues that affect the performance of the Programme and the measures taken to address those issues;
- the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings
- the implementation of communication and visibility actions;
- the progress in implementing the Programme's operations of strategic importance and, where applicable, of large infrastructure projects;
- the progress in administrative capacity building for public institutions and beneficiaries, where relevant.

In addition to its tasks concerning the selection of operations listed in Article 22 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council 2021/1059, the monitoring committee shall approve:

- the methodology and criteria used for the selection of operations including any changes thereto, after notifying the Commission, where requested, including set up of special steering committees that will be in charge of selecting operations;
- the evaluation plan and any amendment thereto;
- any proposals by the Managing Authority for the amendment of the Programme including for a transfer in accordance with Article 19(5) of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council 2021/1059;
- the final performance report.

In order to measure progress and performance, evaluation of the Programme will be carried out among others alongside the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes. Evaluations may also cover other relevant criteria, such as inclusiveness, non-discrimination and visibility, and may cover more than one programme. The evaluation shall be public. Given the enhanced role of the MC in the performance review of the Programme as well as on data transmission and transparency, the members of the MC will commit to providing data in order to establish criteria for performance review as well as take on the role of data providers for the territory under their jurisdiction or area of expertise.

### **Monitoring system and e-cohesion**

The INTERREG+ system - especially designed for the Programme - is a fully functional electronic data exchange, monitoring and workflow based IT system developed in line with the e-cohesion principles. The system can be used throughout the whole programme and project lifecycle. The full range of the system's Back Office and Front Office functionality ensures that all data exchanges are carried out electronically between the beneficiaries and the programme bodies and it provides report and statistics on the project and programme performance.

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

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

Communication is for building understanding, a key to successful social change. It is mission driven, audience focused, and action oriented. It is an integral part of the programme implementation, activities serve the achievement of programme objectives. Strategy for the key communication elements is designed at the beginning of the Programme: objectives are defined with special focus on the selected Priorities, providing

tailor-made solutions of reaching the relevant target groups (as listed under sub-sections 2.1.1.3, 2.1.2.3, 2.2.1.3, 2.2.2.3 and 2.3.1.3 per specific objectives) and defining thematic key messages to them.

**Objectives:** specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound:

1. Programme and specificities are well-known, is widely publicised towards the target groups, relevant actors are widely reached, information on funding opportunities and results are easily available;
2. Programme is implemented efficiently and transparently: internal communication among programme bodies works well; identified project best practices are shared; attention is paid to capacity building of the beneficiaries to understand the importance of communication;
3. Positive impact of Interreg cooperation at European level is demonstrated.

**Target audiences:** Communication is directed to policy and decision makers on national, regional and local levels, to potential applicants and beneficiaries (public national, regional and local authorities, regional agencies, universities, knowledge and research institutes, NGOs and relevant private non-profit organisations) and to wider public of countries involved.

The following principles apply:

- Transparency –at all stages to make the Programme information available
- Accuracy – information is only valid if accurate;
- Timeliness – timely information is useful to the audiences and to the media;
- Clarity –it shall be understandable to the target audience, the information must be clear.
- Focus on the projects and results, they are the best ambassadors of the Programme;
- Exchange of best practices between Interreg programmes, between the Programme and its projects

The Programme considers following principles when planning and implementing information and communication measures: sustainable development (practices which protect environment), equal opportunities and non-discrimination (vulnerable groups (including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, elderly people, children, women, unemployed, etc.)), equality between men and women.

Digital strategy and use of social media is important for information and visibility purposes. It is very cost-effective. Internal communication is an integral part of communication strategy to better coordinate activities among the programme bodies.

**Online Tools:**

- Programme website not only for programme stakeholders but also for the wider public.
- Project websites for online presence with the programme. “Website creation tool” for saving projects’ time and money on website development. Content is streamlined easily with the programme website, and project outputs is available.
- Communication campaigns (short promotional videos/audio podcasts and storytelling).
- European Cooperation Day – to showcase achievements.
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) – interactive dialogue and two-way conversation for community-building.
- Videos for visual, human, lasting effect on achievements.
- Photographs – relatively simple and effective way to produce attractive, visual images.
- Traditional media.

**Offline tools:**

- Seminars/workshops for potential beneficiaries
- Trainings and meetings for project beneficiaries, controllers and other programme bodies
- Participation in third-party events to increase awareness, access to good practices and share positive stories.

Output **indicators** for the main activities: number of visitors to website; number of appearances in media.

Social media content will be threefolded: 1) content promoting the programme; 2) content sharing activities, events and success stories of beneficiaries and 3) content interacting personally with the audience. Twitter platform will be used for posting programme and project news. LinkedIn – for B2B content (updates) and Facebook – for posts, re-posts, photo and video content.

Social media **objective** – to grow Programme’s recognition. Social media **goal** – 1) to raise awareness among existing and potential audience and 2) to improve engagement showing how audience is interacting with the



content. **Indicators:** number of followers and shares; comments, likes, @mentions; website clicks, newsletter signups, etc.

In line with Reg. 2021/1059 Article 36 (1), the communication activities will be ensured within the JS, the communication officer will be appointed. The indicative budget is around 300.000 EUR based on the previous programming period of 2014-2020 and a realistic planning until 2029.

Special attention will be paid to the large infrastructure projects to be selected in call for proposals and being considered as operations of strategic importance. Their importance will be highlighted throughout the programme implementation in communication activities from the start until the closure.

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

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

The Programme supports directly small-scale projects in accordance with Article 24(1)(a) of the Interreg Regulation. Article 26 (Small project funds) will not be applied.

Over the last two programming periods (ENPI, ENI) both small-scale and large-scale projects were popular among beneficiaries in all four countries. Under the ENPI Programme the small projects were mainly used as a tool to introduce cross-border cooperation, whilst large strategic projects were implemented in frame of direct-award procedures. Turning from ENPI to ENI, the small projects got bigger in terms of financial volume and partnerships, and still there was high interest in the implementation of strategic as well as broad and comprehensive sets of cross-border activities as part of large-scale, longer-term projects. Separate open calls were launched for the normal (also included small-scale) and for the Large Infrastructure Projects.

Small scale projects will help to reduce the growing average project size, and offer easier management with fewer administrative burden for less experienced potential beneficiaries of also projects with limited financial volume. Although the available funding for 2021-2027 has decreased compared to the previous period, smaller projects can help to maintain the outreach of the Programme.

Small scale projects should

- promote direct cooperation between citizens and institutions,
- attract new beneficiaries to the cross-border cooperation,
- anchor cooperation in more and unprecedented fields,
- put cooperation on more solid feet owing to diversification,
- and increase the visibility of the programme and thus Interreg in the whole region.

Although especially newcomers and small-sized institutions are invited to implement their cross-border ideas and hence to bring the programme closer to the citizens of the cross-border HU-SK-RO-UA region, the measure should give opportunity to implement small-scale projects under simplified conditions to all potential beneficiaries of the Interreg NEXT Programme. This is also in line with the recommendation of the first phase evaluation of the previous ENI CBC Programme (2014-2020).

Potential beneficiaries can apply for funding of small-scale projects and people-to-people actions in all priorities of the Interreg NEXT Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme, depending on the thematic focus of their cooperation.

Need for a better cooperation and to resolve a number of legal, organizational or other difficulties is evident in the region, so is the importance of people-to-people actions (e.g sports, religious, cultural programmes) in building trust and providing experience for a wide range of stakeholders. While a number of needs could be satisfied by actions under the selected objectives in the framework of the thematic concentration, many cooperation needs do not fit to these objectives. Still, enhancing the cooperation in other fields would be desirable, because potential benefits of it are important, but the projects are small-scale and diverse, so that the volume of them in each topic is not sufficient for a dedicated Specific Objective.

On the basis of the need for an enhanced institutional cooperation in topics not being selected for the thematic concentration of the programme, but are relevant in the areas, especially for the exploration of opportunities for further topics of cooperation, Interreg Specific Objective 1 b (enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and

institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions) is selected, allowing for a wide range of partners (such as different governance players and bodies, municipalities, public institutions, non-governmental/civil organizations) to participate in the cooperation.

The Programme welcomes small scale projects with the following purposes (the list is not exclusive):

- First cooperation actions for newcomers;
- Establishing new governance networks (including new elements of cooperation);
- Testing and seed financing for larger projects;
- Small and targeted pilot actions;
- Capitalisation on the results of other initiatives (incl. know-how transfer and knowledge exchange);
- Awareness raising actions for the general public;
- People-to-people actions, promoting contacts and interaction between people, trust building;
- cross-border inter-municipal cooperations;
- RDI and creation of products with high added-value;
- Capacity building and knowledge transfer related to the cooperation of entrepreneurs and smart specialisation strategies;
- Educational cooperations;
- Minor development of local built infrastructures;
- procurement of small-scale equipments.

In order to maintain the added value and advantages of people-to-people and small-scale projects, the Interreg NEXT Programme keeps supporting of such projects establishing conditions that ensure simplified management of the financing of small projects by the final recipients who are often not used to applying for Union funds.

Beneficiaries of small scale projects shall use SCOs offered by the Programme to the fullest possible extent (in line with with paragraph 25, Preamble, EU Regulation 2021/1059). Real costs shall be possible only if the flat rate option is chosen, regarding categories of costs to which the flat rate is applied (e.g.: up to 20% staff or 40% for all eligible costs other than direct staff costs). This will contribute to more simple reporting, control/audit. According to methodology for indicator, we assume that project size will be around 500.000 euro but final decision will be made by the monitoring committee when approving the call for proposal. The Monitoring Committee will decide, nevertheless, according to methodology for indicator size of the project of limited financial volume might be around maximum 200.000 EUR.

## 7. Implementing provisions

### 7.1 Programme authorities

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

**Table 9**

<b>Programme authorities</b>	<b>Name of the institution [255]</b>	<b>Contact name [200]</b>	<b>E-mail [200]</b>
Managing authority	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary	Mr. Péter Kiss-Parciu Ms. Nikoletta Horváth	<a href="mailto:hathatar@mfa.gov.hu">hathatar@mfa.gov.hu</a> , <a href="mailto:nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu">nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu</a>
National authority (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary	Mr. András Stefanik	Andras.Stefanik@mfa.gov.hu  <a href="mailto:tomas.swiatlowski@mirri.gov.sk">tomas.swiatlowski@mirri.gov.sk</a>

	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of Slovak Republic  Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration of Romania  Secretariat of Cabinet of Ministry of Ukraine	Mr. Tomáš Swiatlowski  Ms. Iulia Hertzog  Mr. Ihor Yaremenko	  <a href="mailto:iulia.hertzog@mdlpa.ro">iulia.hertzog@mdlpa.ro</a>  yaremenko@kmu.gov.ua
Audit authority	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds, Hungary	Mr. Balázs Dencsó dr	<a href="mailto:balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu">balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu</a>
Group of auditors representatives (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds, Hungary  Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of Audit and Control  Romanian Court of Accounts – Audit Authority Unit for European territorial cooperation programmes  Accounting Chamber of Ukraine	Ms. Ágnes Riskó Ms. Piroska Szántó  Ms. Petra Kučák Nétryová Ms. Alena Vidova  Mr. Radu Costin Puia Ms. Marilena Nicoleta Mihai  Mr. Vasyl Nevidomyi Ms. Yulia Myronenko Mr. Dmytro Fastovanov	<a href="mailto:agnes.risko@eutaf.gov.hu">agnes.risko@eutaf.gov.hu</a> <a href="mailto:piroska.szanto@eutaf.gov.hu">piroska.szanto@eutaf.gov.hu</a>  <a href="mailto:petra.kucak.netryova@mfsr.sk">petra.kucak.netryova@mfsr.sk</a> <a href="mailto:alena.vidova@mfsr.sk">alena.vidova@mfsr.sk</a>  <a href="mailto:radu.puia@rcc.ro">radu.puia@rcc.ro</a> <a href="mailto:marilena.mihai@rcc.ro">marilena.mihai@rcc.ro</a>  <a href="mailto:Nevidomyi_VI@rp.gov.ua">Nevidomyi_VI@rp.gov.ua</a> <a href="mailto:Myronenko_YP@rp.gov.ua">Myronenko_YP@rp.gov.ua</a> <a href="mailto:Fastovanov_DI@rp.gov.ua">Fastovanov_DI@rp.gov.ua</a>
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary	Mr. Péter Kiss-Parciu Ms. Nikoletta Horváth	<a href="mailto:hathatar@mfa.gov.hu">hathatar@mfa.gov.hu</a> , <a href="mailto:nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu">nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu</a>

## 7.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

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

Partner countries agreed to set up the Joint Secretariat (JS) for the INTERREG NEXT Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Programme 2021-2027 on the basis of the existing JTS of the ENI HU-SK-RO-UA. According to this decision, the JS will be set up within the framework of the Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit Ltd. (SZPO). The JS will be functionally independent within the organizational structures of SZPO; nevertheless the Company will ensure necessary back office support to the smooth operation as well as horizontal services for the successful implementation of the Programme (e.g. coordination of the development and operation of the monitoring system of the Programme, regulatory, legal, professional, procurement, financial and audit coordination support).

The JS will work in close cooperation with the MA related to programme coordination and implementation and provide support to the National Authorities. The MA and JS will be set up in a system securing their cooperation on one hand, and their independence from national structures on the other. The JS will also assist the MC in carrying out their respective functions and tasks (inter alia organizing the MC meetings including the preparation and delivery of documents, assisting the decision-making process, ensuring the follow-up). Moreover, the JS will provide information on funding opportunities to applicants, assist the process of partner search and project development, manage the application process, support the process of assessing and selecting operations, and will assist beneficiaries in implementing their operations. Additionally, the JS will prepare programme level documents (e.g. guidelines for applicants and beneficiaries, reports to be submitted by the MA to the European Commission after approval of the MC), coordinate evaluations performed during the implementation of the Programme and will perform information and promotion activities.

The number and qualification of staff shall correspond to the tasks defined above. The JS shall have staff taking into account the programme partnership. The staff members shall be selected in agreement of the Partner Countries. A selection committee composed of one representative of each Partner country and of the representative of SZPO as hosting institution shall decide on the person of the head of JS. The JS members shall be selected by a committee composed of one representative of each Partner country, of the head of JS and of a representative of SZPO. The staff of the JS will be employed by SZPO.

The JS will be located in Budapest, Hungary with JS staff in Nyíregyháza, Hungary. Branch offices will be established in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine.

The national authority of Ukraine shall be identified as the contact point for the managing authority (the 'contact point'). If the national authority of Ukraine delegates the tasks of the contact point to another institution, it should inform the Commission and the managing authority.

The overall structure and work of the JS will be coordinated by the head of JS, directly supported by the following staff members:

- Deputy head of JS
- Programme managers
- Communication manager – role fulfilled by other staff member(s) or a full time employee
- Financial managers – role fulfilled by other staff member(s) or a full time employee

The JS will be financed from the Technical Assistance of the Programme. Detailed rules of the financial management of the programme authorities will be laid down in TA agreement approved by the MC

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

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

### 7.3.1 General rules of liabilities between Member States and Partner Country

Each Member State/Partner Country is responsible for preventing, detecting and correcting irregularities according to relevant national and European legislation in force.

Without prejudice to the Member State's/Partner country's responsibility as per Article 52 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity - or when the Managing Authority is entitled to withdraw from the Subsidy Contract and to demand the repayment of the EU contribution in full or in part – is recovered from the lead partner. Partners shall repay to the lead partner any amounts unduly paid.

If the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from other partners or where the Managing Authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner, the Member State/Partner country on whose territory the partner concerned is located or, in the case of an EGTC, is registered shall reimburse the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to that partner.

Should the Managing Authority bear any legal expenses for recovery recourse proceedings even if the proceedings are unsuccessful it will be reimbursed by the Member State/Partner country hosting the lead partner responsible for the said procedure.

The Managing Authority is responsible for reimbursing the amounts recovered to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities between the Member States and the Partner Country.

The Managing Authority will reimburse the funds to the Union once the amounts are recovered from the lead partner/partner/Member State/Partner Country.

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

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

With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the Managing Authority by a Member State/Partner Country, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the same Interreg programme. The Managing Authority shall then offset with regard to that Member State/Partner Country in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States/Partner Countries set out in the Interreg programme in the event of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission.

Member States and Partner Country agree that neither the lead partner nor the programme's Managing Authority will be obliged to recover an amount unduly paid that does not exceed EUR 250, not including interest, in contribution from union funds to an operation cumulatively in an accounting year.

### **7.3.2 Rules on apportionment of liabilities**

The Member States/Partner Country will bear liability as follows:

- *Irregularities concerning lead or sole partner or partners:*

Member State/Partner Country bears liability for repayment of unduly paid amount as described in 7.3.1. unless it proves that sole partner or partner(s) already transferred the irregular amount to the lead partner located on the territory of the other Member State/Partner Country.

Member State/Partner Country bears liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by the lead or sole partner or partners located on its territory.

- *Irregularities of the joint management bodies:*

In case of irregularities that result from the actions and decisions made by the Managing Authority, the body carrying out the accounting function and/or the Joint Secretariat, liability towards the European Commission and the Monitoring Committee is borne by the Member State hosting the Managing Authority, the body carrying out the accounting function and the Joint Secretariat.

- *Systemic irregularity – at national level:*

In case a systemic error is found by the European Commission or the Audit Authority, which can be clearly connected to the Member State/Partner Country, the Member State/Partner Country concerned shall be solely liable for the repayment.

- *Systemic irregularity – at programme level:*

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

- *Financial correction at programme level:*

If financial correction is established at programme level by the European Commission, the liability is determined by the Managing Authority, Audit Authority and the body carrying out the accounting functions. As general rule the Member State/Partner Country shall be liable for the payment of such a correction. Member State and Partner Country shall pay a share of the correction, which is proportional to the amounts found by the Audit Authority to be wrongfully validated by the Member State/Partner Country.

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

Member State/Partner Country shall report on irregularities in accordance with the criteria for determining the cases of irregularity to be reported, the data to be provided and the format for reporting set out in the Regulation (EU) 1060/2021. Irregularities shall be reported by the Member State/Partner Country in which the expenditure is paid by the lead partner or beneficiary implementing the project. Specific procedure in this respect will be part of the description of the programme management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 69 (12) of the Regulation (EU) 1060/2021.

If financial correction is established by the Member State, Article 103 of CPR shall apply.

As regards Article 88 of CPR, the Managing Authority shall take due care of the provisions on repayment made to the budget of the Union and interest due any delay.

Further details on arrangements might be regulated in other programme related documents.

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

*Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)*

Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

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

## **APPENDICES**

Map 1: Map of the programme area

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates not applicable

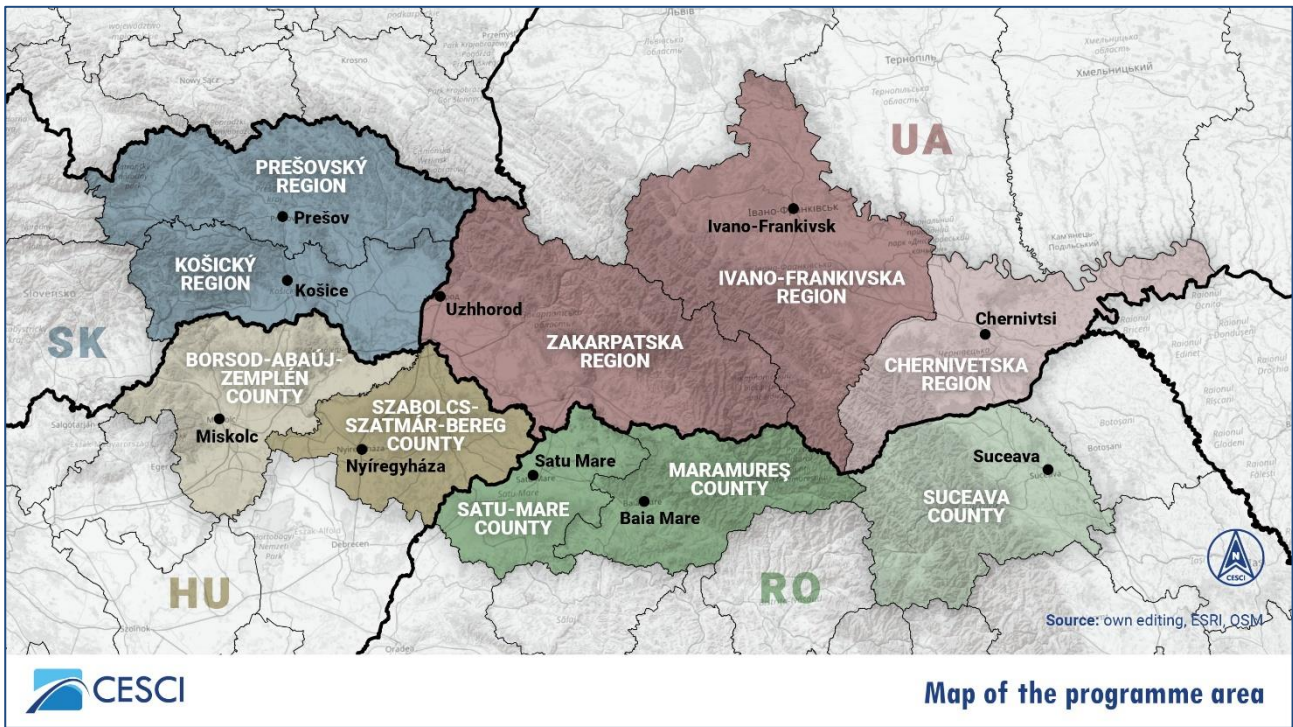
Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs not applicable

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



**Map 1**

Map of the programme area



## ***Appendix 1***

### **Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates**

not applicable

### **Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission**

(Article 94 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR))

Date of submitting the proposal	

This Appendix is not required when EU-level simplified cost options established by the delegated act referred to in Article 94(4) of CPR are used.

**A. Summary of the main elements**

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the simplified cost option will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of simplified cost option (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the simplified cost option
				Code <sup>(1)</sup>	Description	Code <sup>(2)</sup>	Description			

<sup>(1)</sup> This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I CPR.

<sup>(2)</sup> This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.

**B. Details by type of operation (to be completed for every type of operation)**

**Did the managing authority receive support from an external company to set out the simplified costs below?**

**If so, please specify which external company:** Yes/No – Name of external company

1.1. Description of the operation type including the timeline for implementation <sup>(1)</sup>	
1.2 Specific objective	
1.3 Indicator triggering reimbursement <sup>(2)</sup>	
1.4 Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	
1.5 Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	
1.6 Amount per unit of measurement or percentage (for flat rates) of the simplified cost option	
1.7 Categories of costs covered by the unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	

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<sup>(1)</sup> Envisaged starting date of the selection of operations and envisaged final date of their completion (ref. Article 63(5) of CPR).

<sup>(2)</sup> For operations encompassing several simplified cost options covering different categories of costs, different projects or successive phases of an operation, the fields 1.3 to 1.11 need to be filled in for each indicator triggering reimbursement.

1.8 Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation? (Y/N)	
1.9 Adjustment(s) method <sup>(3)</sup>	
1.10 Verification of the achievement of the units delivered - describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the units delivered - describe what will be checked and by whom during management verifications - describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store the relevant data/documents	
1.11 Possible perverse incentives, mitigating measures <sup>(4)</sup> and the estimated level of risk (high/medium/low)	
1.12 Total amount (national and EU) expected to be reimbursed by the Commission on this basis	

### C: Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates\*

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data; where the data are stored; cut-off dates; validation, etc.):

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 88(2) of CPR is relevant to the type of operation:

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission.

<sup>(3)</sup> If applicable, indicate the frequency and timing of the adjustment and a clear reference to a specific indicator (including a link to the website where this indicator is published, if applicable).

<sup>(4)</sup> Are there any potential negative implications on the quality of the supported operations and, if so, what measures (such as quality assurance) will be taken to offset this risk?

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate;

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5. Assessment of the audit authority or authorities of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data:

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## *Appendix 2*

### **Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs**

### **Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission**

### **not applicable**

(Article 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR))

Date of submitting the proposal	

This Appendix is not required when amounts for EU-level financing not linked to costs established by the delegated act referred to in Article 95(4) of CPR are used.

**A. Summary of the main elements**

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	<i>The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs</i>	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	indicator		Unit of measurement for the <u>conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission</u>	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary or beneficiaries
				<u>Code</u> <sup>(1)</sup>	Description		<u>Code</u> <sup>(2)</sup>	Description		

<sup>(1)</sup> This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and Annex IV to the EMFAF Regulation.

<sup>(2)</sup> This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.



**B. Details by type of operation (to be completed for every type of operation)**

1.1. Description of the operation type			
1.2 Specific objective			
1.3 Conditions to be fulfilled or results to be achieved			
1.4 Deadline for fulfilment of conditions or results to be achieved			
1.5 Unit of measurement for conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission			
1.6 Intermediate deliverables (if applicable) triggering reimbursement by the Commission with schedule for reimbursements	Intermediate deliverables	Envisaged date	Amounts (in EUR)

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1.7 Total amount (including Union and national funding)	
1.8 Adjustment(s) method	
<p>1.9 Verification of the achievement of the result or condition (and where relevant, the intermediate deliverables)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the result or condition (and where relevant, each of the intermediate deliverables)</li> <li>- describe how management verifications (including on-the-spot) will be carried out, and by whom</li> <li>- describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store relevant data/documents</li> </ul>	
1.10 Use of grants in the form of financing not linked to costs/ Does the grant provided by Member State to beneficiaries take the form of financing not linked to costs? [Y/N]	
<p>1.11 Arrangements to ensure the audit trail</p> <p>Please list the body(ies) responsible for these arrangements.</p>	

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### Appendix 3

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

**not applicable**

*Text field [2 000]*

Having drawn the conclusion, that the method of direct award meant high risk for the HUSKROUA ENPI CBC Programme 2007-2013, it was decided to apply call for proposals for the selection of large infrastructure projects. Those projects, once selected, will be considered as operations of strategic importance.

The indicative fields of intervention that might benefit are among others under Priority 1 SO iv) prevention of disaster and emergency situation: joint actions aimed to reduce the impact of climate change and human threats on nature: technical preparation of common infrastructure development projects and implementation of common interest infrastructure development projects and under Priority 1 SO vii) sustainable development of environment: joint interventions for reconstruction/protection, restoration or revitalization of natural habitats, aimed to protect and restore local and regional ecosystems, improving biodiversity including development of specific mechanism.

These selected fields of interventions might also create a possible linkage with the results of the implemented projects of the 2014-2020 programming period.

The indicative timeframe by taking into account the quadrilateral character of the programme and the method of selection through call for proposals is as follows: launching call for proposals Q3 of 2023, evaluation Q1-2 of 2024, contracting Q3-4 of 2024, starts of implementation Q4 of 2024 with a provisional 36 months implementation period.

As far as the method of selection concerned, a separate call procedure may be designed (so-called restricted call) with a possibility of using two phases (submission of a concept note in the first phase, then formulating the full project proposal in the second phase), or a joint call with dedicated lot.

*(Disclaimer: the monitoring committee shall approve the call for proposal documents and the evaluation and selection criteria, therefore the final scope of the themes and individual operations of strategic importance will be known and final valid after the selection.)*