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Strand	Strand A: CB Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (ETC, IPA III CBC, NDICI-CBC)

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

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

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

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

1.2 Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learned 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)

1.2.1 Common challenges and investment needs

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

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

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

1.2.1.1 Conclusions related to the general demographic context

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

In the last 10 years, the PA has consistently recorded a decrease in population, with Timiș being a

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

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

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

1.2.1.2 Conclusions on human capital and availability of basic social services

General human capital development indicators

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

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

Although social assistance stands in the realm of a typical national policy level of governance, common challenges related to human capital development identified in the PA, corroborated with demographic trends and settlements' concentration patterns, underline territorial vulnerabilities and specific target groups, that can be addressed through joint actions in the field of healthcare and people-to-people actions, whilst the multidimensional character of disadvantage in certain areas can be approached by mainstreaming internal socioeconomic cohesion of the PA into all future joint interventions. In particular, the risk of poverty or social exclusion is higher in case of people with low educational level, children, households with more than two children, elderly people, and, in general, Roma population, homeless

people, disabled people and rural population. Specific dimensions of vulnerability include: low participation in education; low access to the labour market and / or low wage (especially affecting under-qualified workers); low access to basic services (including health-care), especially in rural areas; inappropriate housing conditions (such as overcrowded households and slums in marginalised urban areas).

Health-care infrastructure and services

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

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

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

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

Cross-border cooperation and investments in the field of health, beside and beyond typical infrastructure, focussing on exchange of experience, joint trainings, resilient, modern, well-managed and performant health institutions, offering personalised health services, towards excellence and standard procedures, shall thus be considered a high priority in the next programming period.

1.2.1.3 Conclusions on the economic development

Overall economic performance

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

There is an economic performance imbalance in the region, which still did not manage to catch up to

national levels. The PA now records a lesser share of national GDP in 6 out of the 8 counties compared to 2009, pointing to a stagnating attractiveness level. Furthermore, while the Hungarian counties make up 10.51% of the population and 10.40% of the national Hungarian GDP, in Romania the population represents 18.70% of the total, yet the region only produces 10.33% of the national GDP (2018), although the gap may be partly due to the way turnover is reported in Romania (at headquarter level, often in Bucharest). In terms of GDP per capita, the northern part of the PA (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) records values still a little over a quarter of the EU-27 average, and even half that at national level.

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

1.2.1.4 Conclusions on tourism sector development and cultural assets

Tourism sector development

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

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

Cultural capital

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

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

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

1.2.1.5 Conclusions on the environmental protection and capital

Overall framework

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

PA landscape and climate change

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

Renewable energy

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

Natural resources

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

1.2.1.6 Conclusions on governance and cooperation

Local governance and centre of the decision-making process

There are commonalities in the way the multi-level administrative structure of the two states is organized, where NUTS 3 and LAU 2 levels are the most relevant in terms of competencies. There are similar patterns in the implementation of vertical governance coordination, with the use of public authority associations and federations, which are involved to a general large degree in promoting local development. However, there is a generally high level of territorial fragmentation at administrative unit level (albeit the border area in Hungary is less fragmented than the national average) and although the countries have a similar administrative structure, the NUTS 3 units in Hungary also have delegated functions in the field of regional development strategies, whilst in Romania these are coordinated by Regional Development Agencies (which, however, are not public administrations, but NGOs of public interest). Additionally, many local administrations in rural areas (such as parts of Arad, Bihor, Hajdú-Bihar counties) may face reduced administrative capacity and/or resources for implementing cooperation, whilst larger urban centres are typically more experienced and endowed with proper administrative capacity to manage complex investment projects with larger budgets in both countries. The quality of Government Index performance on the lower comparative scale with the rest of Europe, for all NUTS 2 regions involved (places 155-193/202, 2017) indicates that the PA is a lagging region, especially in terms of quality of government services, with existing disparities between the Hungarian regions and the Romanian ones. All these administrative capacity disparities across the PA can potentially affect the capacity of potential beneficiaries to access cooperation funds and to modernise public services to the benefit of cross-border communities. In this context, economies of scale for services' planning and delivery, peer-to-peer exchange, joint analysis of barriers to cooperation, capacity building activities can be pursued through cooperation under the Programme, for better territorial coverage and an increased quality and innovation of cross-border governance.

Formal and informal cooperation

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

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

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

- The large number of priorities covered by the programme and the limited matching of the priorities of the eight counties led to a less focused concentration of the funds. For the next programming period, **a more focused concentration of the funds would support and improve the potential to produce visible and perceptible impacts in the programme area.**
- In terms of Programme effectiveness, the Evaluation proposes an **earlier launching of the calls for proposals as well as more simplified systems for project evaluation, contracting and monitoring** that would improve the Programme effectiveness.
- The **sustainability of the cross-border** cooperation depends firstly on the capacity and experience of the beneficiaries but also on a proper monitoring system that should timely depict possible Programme evolutions and external factors and take the right measures in due time.

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

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

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

- i. Interventions in the field of health and social infrastructure concentrated more than half funds available for restricted calls and nearly one third of those available for contracting under open calls (42% on total share for both types of calls).
- ii. Interventions in the field of sustainable transport have absorbed less than initially planned, especially for projects of strategic importance, where all funds initially allocated to Ip 7c have been reallocated to other measures, whilst the allocations to Ip7b were decreased (as a result the share of Ip7 on total funds available for contracting on total has decreased to 9% from the initial 16%).
- iii. Interventions in the field of employment friendly growth, especially under open calls, where they had been initially granted high share of allocated funds, have absorbed less funds than planned (the share of Ip8b on total funds available for contracting for all types of calls has decreased to 17%, from the initial 29%).
- iv. On the other hand, measures aiming at valorising natural and cultural resources absorbed more funds than initially planned and were thus finally allocated 22% of ERDF available for contracting (overall, both restricted and open calls), whilst allocations to water management have been decreased to 2%.
- v. Interventions in the field of risk prevention (funded only under open calls) also absorbed more than initially planned and finally received an increase of funds (from 9 to 13% total funds available for open calls, representing 6% on the total programme available ERDF funds).
- vi. Finally, people-to-people interventions funded under Ip 11, only through open calls, absorbed around 4% of ERDF available under open calls, representing 2% of total, as initially planned.

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

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

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

- The **Programme intervention logics** shall ensure a closer link between the needs identified, the expected changes and the related monitoring and performance framework. In this respect, the concentration of resources on key challenges and common potentials allows, itself, to reinforce "ex ante" the intervention logics, as it ensures that only interventions with the highest possible impact and cross-

border character are actually envisaged for funding;

- Where **data gaps** or identifiable barriers do exist, these shall be solved before planning any investment, in order to ensure that the proposed interventions are both relevant to needs and are able to produce expected results on these, better quantified, needs. Linking soft measures to investment measures (when applicable) is thus a key instrument to reach both projects' and programme success;
- Reinforcing **potential beneficiaries' capacities** to think strategically at cross-border level and to maintain their partnership relations for a common goal is also a key issue to be solved directly through the Programme, by promoting a larger range of soft measures in support of building capacities, promoting exchanges and strengthening institutional relations, towards higher sustainability of cross-border interventions;
- The concentration in the allocation of resources and priority identification shall pursue the pattern of **funds' attractiveness** to potential beneficiaries, corroborated with **identified needs**. In this respect, the experience of the current programming period has suggested that great stakeholders' interest and high cross-border relevance, providing cascading, direct and indirect effects on territories and communities, are attributed to the following fields: **cooperation in health and social infrastructure; cooperation in risk prevention and management; cooperation in the valorisation of natural and cultural resources, in close connection with tourism; strengthening cross-border strategic planning capacities and people-to-people exchanges as foundations for more structured and strategic cooperation.**

1.2.3 Lessons learnt from the EUSDR

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

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

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

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

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

As concerns outcomes, lessons learnt thus suggest that EUSDR projects have been effective¹ in developing tools, contributing to increase technical capacities, contributing to EU policies and developing new or improved services / products / training. However, there is room for improving the outcomes in

terms of developing new funding concepts (i.e. encompassing the complementarity of funds and funding instruments), common standards and to bring effective changes in national policies.

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

The Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme will thus reinforce the delivery of the EUSDR by embedding the priority actions planned in the macro-region strategy into the Programme intervention logics (detailed measures to be funded) and projects’ selection criteria, whilst tackling all main weaknesses observed in the delivery of the macro-strategy by: promoting higher policy relevance and complementarity of funds; promoting, from one side, higher involvement of the national governance and decision-making level, especially from the perspective of assessing and solving barriers to cooperation; promoting, from the other side, higher mobilisation of cross-border communities and territorial actors, in order to consolidate the legitimisation of joint actions bottom-up, and based on evidence.

1.2.4 Relevance

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

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

The recommendations related to governance and decision-making processes are also strongly connected

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

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

- Both countries have a vision on their **territorial and spatial development strategy**, which puts great accent on the need to reduce regional disparities and to ensure the sustainable use of natural and land resources;
- Both countries are negotiating the Partnership Agreement with the EU for the next programming period. The available drafts show that, in line with EU development targets for 2030, great accent is put on **digital and green economy and societies**. In this respect, both countries have advanced **integrated plans for energy and climate change** with accent on extending the use of renewable energies and improving the capacity of emergency services to tackle climate changes, unpredictable and extreme conditions;
- Priorities in the **health sector** (from primary health care services and infrastructure, to research and telemedical services) emerge under the draft Operational Programme on Health in Romania, respectively, under the Hungary National Strategy for the Health Sector 2021-2027;
- Equally, both countries have a **long-term vision on tourism development**, with a tourist destination management approach, the extensive use of digital and marketing tools, as well as an increasing capacity to collect and manage data and statistics related to tourism.

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

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

1.2.5 Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

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

The MFF 2021-2027 (amounting to around 1,074 EUR billion) will be combined with a temporary recovery instrument, called Next Generation EU (additional 750 EUR billion resources), mainly allocated to Cohesion, Resilience and Values heading. Key programmes including **Erasmus+**, **EU4Health** and

Horizon Europe, will be reinforced, in line with EU priorities, linked to a more resilient Europe, innovation, research, digital and green economy.

Both Romania and Hungary are negotiating the **Partnership Agreement with the EU** for the next programming period. Further details on complementarities between the Interreg Programme between Romania and Hungary 2021-2027 and other EU programmes, Interreg Programmes and mainstream programmes implemented by each Member State are found in the additional document attached to the IP (*Paper on complementarities and synergies*), as well as under the description of each action.

The relevance of draft mainstream Operational Programmes and other Operational Programmes falling under the Territorial Cooperation objective resides in the need that interventions under the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme shall be **complementary and synergic**, thus boosting a **mutual leverage effect on investments, whilst avoiding overlapping**. In this respect, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Hungary and the Ministry of Investments and European Projects (MIEP) in Romania are responsible for the programmes' coordination and the coordination of the development policy at the MS level. This includes participation in programmes' Monitoring Committee and / or management of relevant national platforms allowing to track these synergies at beneficiary and programme level (as per partnership agreements between Romania/Hungary and the EC).

The proposed priorities for the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme will reinforce the strategy adopted by each MS to implement national and regional priorities, with a specific attention paid to needs and opportunities that can be better addressed through cross-border cooperation, adding value to other ERDF and ESF + interventions funded under MS' operational programmes and will contribute to further translate transnational cooperation programmes and, in particular, the EUSDR and ESPON related programmes into specific interventions tailor-made on the specificities of the Romania - Hungary border area.

1.2.6 Programme Strategy

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

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

- maximising the **concentration of resources on interventions where cross-border cooperation brings added value and the Interreg programme represents the main option for funding;**
- promoting the **higher possible cross-border impact on territorial disparities and communities**, focussing on policy objectives with the possible higher and more direct impacts on the population well-being (i.e. health, environmental protection and green infrastructure), safety (i.e. protection from natural disasters and climate change adaptation strategies) and equal opportunities (i.e. equal access to health services, tailor-made solutions for patients, involving youth, rural population and marginalised communities in cultural activities and in the valorisation of resources for the socio-economic development of the area);
- **bridging territories and communities based on common territorial and intangible assets**, which may create common socio-economic opportunities for the economic recovery (i.e. renewable energies and the opportunity of creating “renewable energy / green communities”, as well as culture and tourism, as fields of common interest capable of leveraging funds and partnerships under a common destination management vision for the PA);
- **promoting people-to-people interventions as foundation for more structured cooperation**, with a demonstrative value for building sustainable and inclusive communities and an open business

environment, which may support in designing tailor-made solutions for future community-led local development initiatives and integrated socio-economic strategies at cross-border level, thus making people-to-people actions “laboratories” for the animation of local communities

• **building the knowledge basis, capacities, joint systems and joint working procedures** as a precondition for projects sustainability and effective results (i.e. soft measures across all selected POs and specific measures under ISO1 on other themes not related to selected POs). Using ISO 1 as a resource to systematise lessons learnt at the end of the programme implementation, drawing lessons on cooperation in different fields, in what concerns: the development of joint solutions, effective cross-border systems and institutional cooperation frameworks throughout the selected POs; the resolution of legal and administrative barriers; the creation of more cohesive local and business communities through people-to-people exchanges and social partners’ joint actions.

The Programme will directly support climate objectives, environmental objectives and biodiversity through the selected intervention fields, mainly from PO 2, but also (to a lesser extent) PO4. In particular, the coefficient calculation method, as per Annex 1, table 1 of CPR allows to anticipate that: 30% of the programme budget allocation will contribute to climate objectives; 34.4% of the programme budget allocation will contribute to environmental objectives and 11.4% will contribute to biodiversity objectives.

From a wider programme management perspective, as guiding principles for delivery during the implementation of the Programme (including in the selection of operations), the Managing Authority will ensure the contribution to the delivery of the European Pillar of Social Rights and related action plan and principles, and the promotion of horizontal principles (art. 9 of CPR), including fundamental rights, equal opportunities, gender mainstreaming, non-discrimination, youth involvement and sustainable development, as well as health-care, inclusion of people with disabilities, childcare and long term care.

In this respect, the programme strategy is based on a direct correlation of planned actions with Agenda 2030 SDGs (as illustrated under the description of each action) and the full compliance with the DNSH principle (as per EC Technical Guidance Note, C(2021) 1054 final.

Additionally, the MA will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support Policy Objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). In this respect, beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria, and, when feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria, nature-based solutions, climate proofing and ‘energy efficiency first principle) and social considerations, whilst innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures respective, the Programme. Specific requirements will be formulated in a later stage, during the programme operational planning, through their integration in the Guidelines for Applicants.

As concerns fundamental rights included in the seven titles of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (as per Article 9 of the CPR), gender mainstreaming, non-discrimination and youth policies, these have been mainstreamed under envisaged actions and targeted groups, during the planning stage, and will be further taken into account during programme implementation, reporting monitoring and evaluation phases, for example through the disaggregation of data on participants to operations, at least at project level, whenever applicable.

Finally, it is confirmed that a proper system ensuring that all exchanges between beneficiaries and all the programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange in accordance with Annex XIV of the CPR, has been set up. In this respect, the Programme will use the JEMS platform..

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 selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>2. 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, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.2. Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001[1], including the sustainability criteria set out therein</p>	<p>P1. Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary</p>	<p>Environmental and ecosystem protection, climate change adaptation, energy transition and the low carbon economy represent vital issues at the core of the European policy for the 2030 time-horizon. Both Romania and Hungary have committed to ambitious targets through their respective National Energy and Climate Plans 2030 in order to reduce GhG emissions, reach RES shares of 30.7% (Romania) and at least 21% (Hungary) and to contribute to the overall European goal of reaching at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. High and very high potential of geothermal district heating (very high – 171-1932 ktoe – in Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Timiș and Bihor), is a distinct endowment of the programme area. While wind energy, large hydropower and, to a degree, biomass energy, are reduced, there is still a high photovoltaic energy potential, with circa two thirds of the territory being suitable for installation of photovoltaic production (Csongrád-Csanád, Békés, Timiș, partly Arad, Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar - 3.30-3.51 kWh/kWp/day). However, although the renewable energy potential is substantial, this potential is not fully exploited.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Considering the high policy support, both at European, Danube Macro-region, central and local level, for the transition to a low-carbon economy, a better understanding and exploitation of existing resources for renewable, alternative energies, is considered a priority for the cross-border area, which may have an important leverage and indirect effect, and generate strong synergies with other components of development, such as the business sector, research and innovation (to be funded under other national and European funds). In this respect, investments in regenerable energies under the Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme may contribute to create a favourable, enabling, environment for further developments of the renewable energy in the area, the creation of green communities or jobs and certainly the improvement of local environment. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.</p>
<p>2. 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, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches</p>	<p>P1. Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary</p>	<p>The cross-border region is characterised by a rich hydrographic network, which is crossing the border almost in its entirety, producing contiguous riparian areas which have a high potential of joint valorisation. Due to the topography and river density, the area is also one of Europe's most prone regions to floods: High flood recurrence is recorded in Hajdú-</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Bihar, Timiș, Arad, Bihor, while very high flood recurrence is a significant risk for the two northernmost counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare. Bihor and Satu Mare have historically been the most affected by flood class 1 events. Landslide susceptibility is relatively limited, throughout the whole cross-border areas (with the exception of Bihor, in the Apuseni Mountains region), with some areas prone to landslides concentrated along rivers. Cross-border disasters and risk management in the area is incipient: although there are some ongoing initiatives in this field, there is still significant room for improvement of coordination, risk prevention and joint response capacity, which substantiates the need for joint investments and future cooperation actions, building on the Water management Convention signed at country level and on the previous experience gained by public administrations involved in relevant initiatives, including at macroregional level (EUSDR). An increased cooperation and capacity of joint risk prevention and response to extreme weather events, mostly generating floods, rural and urban landscape destruction, as well as to other climate change-related phenomena, such as draught and fires, is considered a priority by the majority of stakeholders. Non-intervention or inappropriate (i.e. not coordinated) intervention, may generate high social, economic and environmental costs. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			the operations, and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments
2. 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, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility	RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	P1. Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary	<p>The Programme area is characterized by a plain geomorphology that is favourable to settlement development and agriculture, with a higher landform diversity in the Romanian counties (Oriental and Banat Carpathians and Apuseni Mountains). Landscape diversity overall is moderate, but coherent across the border, which offers no natural impediment to landscape and protected site integration. The PA is thus characterized by a “green border”, generating a high potential for the valorisation of natural resources. The soil biodiversity potential in the area is moderate, with lower potential recorded in the south (Csongrád-Csanád, Timiș) and Hajdú-Bihar, and higher in the eastern parts of the Romanian counties (Apuseni Mountains), however with significant potential to support further development of biodiversity in the border area south of Nyíregyháza, and with exceptional potential in the regions already protected by Natura 2000 classification (Hortobágy in Hungary, Lipovei Hills, Zarand Mountains in Romania).</p> <p>However, the current management of protected sites is hardly coordinated and does not reflect the real cross-border nature of the natural landscapes, whilst deforestation trends may further deteriorate the exposure of the territory to natural hazards and the impact of climate change. An increased level of cooperation in</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>the sustainable management of natural resources, in line with EUSDR action plan for biodiversity and landscape protection, is expected to directly contribute to a more effective protection of these areas and to an increased carbon-storage capacity, with the possible direct contribution to the reduction of the GhG emissions accounting. Non-intervention or inappropriate (i.e. not coordinated) intervention, may generate high social, economic and environmental costs, generating the further deterioration of precious natural heritage, whilst potentially compromising local population safety (notably from the adverse effects of climate change) in the cross-border area. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p>RSO4.5. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care</p>	<p>P2. Cooperation for a more social and cohesive PA between Romania and Hungary</p>	<p>The PA is characterised by generally positive trends in human capital development. However, the PA is still lagging behind the EU level in the performance for several of these indicators, including life expectancy at birth. In particular, this indicator suggests that the quality of life and the health status of population still need to be improved. The uneven distribution of public services is a significant barrier impeding balanced development and internal cohesion. In relation to health infrastructure, the basic endowment</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>in the PA looks still inadequate compared to needs, as suggested by the main relevant indicators, revealing important internal disparities (i.e. the territorial concentration of ambulatories and the number of medics / 1000 inhabitants). An increased resilience of the health sector is considered a high priority at all governance levels. Resilience encompasses infrastructure and endowments, as well as the quality of services, their adaptability to target groups and their capacity to respond to specific challenges , as the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically showed. An increased level of cooperation in the health sector is expected to improve health staff’s skills and the overall health-care system quality, including its capacity to reach target groups most in need. This will be achieved starting from the exchange of experience and best practices, the capitalisation of networks, lessons learnt and previous cooperation, in order to reach a coordinated response. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.</p>
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	P2. Cooperation for a more social and cohesive PA between Romania and Hungary	The PA is endowed with rich natural and cultural heritage, as well as a dense network of local actors already cooperating for the organisation of international cultural events and tourism niches’ development (i.e. religious and rural/eco-tourism) providing the basis for

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>cross-border valorisation in touristic routes. The growth of the tourism sector is demonstrated by the increased accommodation capacities in the PA counties over time (13.45% increase in 10 years). However, occupancy rate is low and very low, with an average of 35-38% in the best performers (Hajdú-Bihar, Bihor) and in Satu Mare and going down to 18% in Csongrád and 19.08% in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Since 2010, tourist overnight stays have generally grown, except in Satu Mare (-19%, 2010-2018), with a significant 135% increase in Csongrád-Csanád and remarkable increases in Békés (83%), Timiș (77%) and Bihor (72%). However, overnight stays have decreased, on average from 2.78 nights per stay to 2.41 (2010-2018). Disparities in overnight stays have been higher in Romania, with an actual increase in Timiș (+4%), and a 44% decrease in Bihor. The cross-border area is thus still not able to attract and retain high flows of tourists, but many local and county strategies put great accent on touristic resources and potentials in their territories, in close connection with traditional economic sectors such as local agriculture and food production, which makes tourism a relevant sector for the diversification of local economies, especially rural and marginalised areas. However, cross-border cooperation is needed and would provide high added value, in order to fully exploit the local potential, through a strategic destination management approach, which shall be able to consolidate</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			existing tourist flows, to the benefit of a larger possible area of intervention in the cross-border region. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.1. Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands)	P3. A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation	There is still need to improve potential beneficiaries' capacities (especially smaller local public administrations, without being limited to) to design results-oriented projects and to consolidate cross-border partnerships. Additionally, trainings, joint events, peer-to-peer exchanges are needed to build capacities and institutional relations able to boost the potential impact of interventions on both the territorial cohesion and the cooperation dimension. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale, does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.2. 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 (strands A, C, D and, where appropriate, strand B)	P3. A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation	The Programme should improve the understanding and knowledge basis of barriers to cooperation, as well as of relevant cross-border patterns, flows, quality of public services, characteristics of specific target groups. In general, there is the need to increase stakeholders' capacities to think strategically on common objectives, based on well-defined common opportunities and challenges and an

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			improved understanding of processes and phenomena at cross-border level (i.e. labour market flows, transports and connectivity and others), especially in view to mitigate the border effects and overcoming barriers to cooperation. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale, does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.3. Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions (strands A, D and, where appropriate, strand B)	P3. A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation	Based on an increasing trend of territorial disparities between rural and urban areas, between larger urban centres and minor urban centres, which is reflected in a still limited capacity of some areas to provide quality infrastructure and services, people-to-people actions represent an opportunity. P2P are one solution to build trust, through mutual learning, exchange and mutual support for the realisation of a variety of socio-economic actions with high potential to bridge communities, with low access to main public services especially in scattered settlements, as well as to animate the social interaction or business community. Projects will be financed through grants. No financial instrument will thus be applied, as the nature of the operations, and their relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

2. Priorities

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

2.1. Priority: P1 - Cooperation for a green and more resilient cross-border area between Romania and Hungary

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

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.2. Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001[1], including the sustainability criteria set out therein

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

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

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

Both Romania and Hungary have committed to ambitious targets through their respective National Energy and Climate Plans 2030 in order to reduce GhG emissions, reach RES shares of 30.7% (Romania) and at least 21% (Hungary) and to contribute to the overall European goal of reaching at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030 (further reinforced by the EU Green New Deal target towards EU Climate neutrality by 2050). The majority of local administrations in the PA has already developed or are in the process of developing their local plans towards Energy and Climate Change targets 2030, in line with Agenda 2030 SDGs 7 and 11. The development of RES is also one of EUSDR priority (PA2), including specific actions to further explore the sustainable use of biomass, solar energy, geothermal, hydropower and wind power to increase the energy independency and to promote and support multipurpose cross border RES utilization projects. Renewable energy projects will be supported under MS mainstream programmes (i.e. OPSD and ROPs in Romania, as well as KEHOP Plus and TOP Plus in Hungary). Coordination and complementarities with these programmes will be closely monitored and ensured by national mechanisms, including dedicated national platforms and / or the work of MC.

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

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

1.1. Encourage cross-border project generation related to the spread of sustainable RES usage

1.2. Mapping renewable energies at micro-level, assess barriers and drafting joint strategies for coordinated actions in the energy market.

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

2.1. Best-practice sharing, exchange of experience, joint capacity development for better understanding the advantages of RES utilization tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups (political-legislative, technical, public, youth and women, etc.)

2.2. Best-practice sharing, exchange of experience, joint capacity development for uptake of renewable energy solutions tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups (political-legislative, technical, public, youth and women etc.)

Cluster action 3. Other structural and non-structural joint actions

3.1. Projects of renewable energies on the high geothermal / photovoltaic / other renewable resources potential of the PA (joint solutions)

3.2. Joint initiatives connected with the New European Bauhaus (i.e. community and stakeholders' participation, co-development of solutions for the best energy-mix in the cross-border area, etc)

All projects envisaging structural and nonstructural measures (with or without investments in infrastructure) are expected to develop and test joint solutions to tackle common problems or to valorise common territorial assets. The joint solutions are then expected to be taken up or up-scaled, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperate beyond project duration. All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention. Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF DNSH technical guidance. In particular, the envisaged actions are expected to directly contribute to the environmental objectives emerging from SEA, by contributing to the adaptation of the PA to climate change through joint initiatives aimed at promoting the transition towards a low-carbon economy, including through the reduction of GES based on the widest use of renewable energies. Planned actions are expected to positively contribute to the protection of environmental assets, such as air, soil, water, population health, and others relevant.

Expected change:

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

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies

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

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P1	RSO2.2	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	3
P1	RSO2.2	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	3
P1	RSO2.2	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	288
P1	RSO2.2	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	15

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P1	RSO2.2	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021-2029	3.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P1	RSO2.2	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	6.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P1	RSO2.2	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	28.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P1	RSO2.2	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	3.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.2	ERDF	048. Renewable energy: solar	11,181,235.00
P1	RSO2.2	ERDF	052. Other renewable energy (including geothermal energy)	11,181,235.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.2	ERDF	01. Grant	22,362,470.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.2	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	22,362,470.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches

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

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

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

As stated in the European Climate Law (COM(2020) 80 final) “*Climate change is by its very nature a trans-boundary challenge that cannot be solved by national or local action alone*”. The European Climate Law is in line with EU Green New Deal reaffirming the Commission’s ambition to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and with Agenda 2030 targets, in particular with SDG 13 on Climate Action and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Risk management (PA5), in particular, is an action of utmost importance for transnational cooperation at MRS, under EUSDR. The coordination of the Environmental Risks Priority Area (PA5) is managed by Hungary and Romania. The main focus of the work is to address the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan. Flood risk management is also a significant target of the priority area under the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan, including the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities. However, cross-border disasters and risk management in the PA area is incipient: although there are some ongoing initiatives in this field, there is still significant room for improvement of coordination, risk prevention and joint response capacity, which substantiates the need for joint investments and future cooperation actions, in line with EUSDR PA 5, and (in the specific field of water and floods’ management), with EU Water Directive, and the bilateral Water Convention in force between the Romanian and the Hungarian states. Additionally, operations under this action will be in line with disaster and risk management plans developed by both MS (in charge of the Ministry of Interiors and related institutions in both MS). In this respect, risk prevention and climate change adaptation strategies will be supported under MS mainstream programmes (i.e.. OPSD in Romania, as well as KEHOP Plus in Hungary). Coordination and complementarities will be ensured through the work of MC and/or relevant national platforms.)

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

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

1.1. Update rivers’ flood risk management plans (including contributing to the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP), if applicable)

1.2 Support the improvement of joint forecasting and nowcasting (including in relation with storms, floods and droughts)

- 1.3. Promoting partnerships between academic research and youth NGOs activating in the field of environment
- 1.4. Supporting the monitoring and survey of different environmental and human related risks (storms, floods, droughts, fires and other human related risks)
- 1.5. Harmonising climate change adaptation (CCA) strategies and action plans to improve international collaboration and coordinate activities in the Danube Region
- 1.6. Exploring direct effects of climate change and implement mitigation and adaptation measures in environmental risk management plans (joint strategies)

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Increase the preparedness and resilience of communities against storms, floods, fires and droughts (information and awareness raising events), including youth involvement and gender mainstreaming in civil protection joint actions
- 2.2. Providing support for joint risk assessment (e.g. with identification of hazards, assessing consequences and probabilities, characterization of risks and uncertainties) at cross-border level and related capacity building and exchange of experience
- 2.3. Development institutional capacities (ex. joint actions) and procedures for better preparedness of disaster management (e.g. related to storms, floods, droughts, fires and human-related hazards)
- 2.4. Improve cooperation with regard to the use of climate change data and projections from Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and its Climate Data Store (CDS), including capacity building and exchange of experience in these fields

Cluster action 3. Other structural and non-structural joint actions

- 3.1. Implement structural and non-structural measures related to joint storms / flood / fires / droughts' risk management, (joint solutions)
- 3.2. Joint solutions related to improved preparedness and alert systems
- 3.3. Identification of innovative joint solutions to support disaster management (IT tools, VR, mobile apps, etc.)
- 3.4. Strengthening resiliency of national/regional/county authorities, through a harmonised and standardised approach (joint solutions)

All projects envisaging structural and nonstructural measures are expected to develop joint solutions to tackle common problems or to valorise common territorial assets. The joint solutions are then expected to be taken up or up-scaled, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperate beyond project duration. All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention.

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

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF DNSH technical guidance. In particular, the envisaged actions are expected to directly contribute to the environmental objectives emerging from SEA, by contributing to the adaptation of the PA to climate change and to the delivery of measures reducing the impact of climate change in the area.

Expected change:

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

Potential beneficiaries:

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

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P1	RSO2.4	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	144
P1	RSO2.4	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	1
P1	RSO2.4	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	7
P1	RSO2.4	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	2

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P1	RSO2.4	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021-2029	1.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P1	RSO2.4	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	4.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P1	RSO2.4	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	2.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P1	RSO2.4	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	14.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

- cooperating partners, that will be directly targeted by the actions which may envisage joint capacity development activities, events and exchange of experience in the fields of action and will thus directly benefit of improved capacities to develop and implement joint actions in the PA;
- the PA population living in the areas of implementation and local public administrations, that will benefit from improved risk management and emergency services and infrastructure, after project closure and will thus be better protected from climate and non-climate change related disasters;
- women and children, disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs from the PA, that will benefit from gender sensitive, family-friendly and inclusive emergency services and civil protection;
- young people from the PA, that will be considered as a special target group to be involved in disaster management, emergency response and civil protection actions, both as volunteers and as future professionals in these fields (with a possible positive impact on tackling youth unemployment);
- other potential cooperating partners / organisations in the PA that may further replicate the joint solutions, by taking up lessons learnt, new joint working procedures and systems, as well as contributing to the future sustainability of the action by signing new institutional cooperation agreements in the fields of action or other fields (i.e. biodiversity protection, river management, education in schools, public awareness raising campaigns, employment and professional training, youth policies, gender equality, etc).

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.4	ERDF	059. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	2,104,703.00
P1	RSO2.4	ERDF	060. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	5,261,758.00
P1	RSO2.4	ERDF	058. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	3,157,055.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.4	ERDF	01. Grant	10,523,516.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.4	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	10,523,516.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.7. 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)

Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

The EU's Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (in line with Agenda 2030 SDG 15) sets out the priorities and a long-term action plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems by 2030, being a core part of the European Green New Deal and having a direct contribution to the green recovery after COVID-19 pandemic, within National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) components related to biodiversity protection, water management and green transition, where the case. Among EU's Biodiversity Strategy priority actions, the following could be mentioned: launching an EU nature restoration plan (by 2021), which will become binding; introducing measures to enable the necessary transformative change (notably, a new governance setting ensuring better implementation and tracking progress, improving knowledge, financing and investments, better respecting nature in public and business decision-making). Biodiversity is also a Priority of the EUSDR, notably Priority Area 06 "To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils". Among the EUSDR targets for the next period, the following could be mentioned: improve management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas through transnational cooperation and capacity building; strengthen the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region and covered by EU nature legislation; maintain and restore Green and Blue Infrastructure elements through integrated spatial development and conservation planning; to improve and/or maintain the soil quality in the Danube Region. Biodiversity and water protection will be supported under MS mainstream programmes (i.e.. OPSD and ROPs in Romania, as well as KEHOP Plus in Hungary). Coordination and complementarities with these programmes will be closely monitored and ensured by national mechanisms, including dedicated national platforms and / or the work of MC.

Natural endowments of the PA are rich and diverse, ranging from floodplain-specific landscapes to spa heritage, natural reservations, Karst areas rich in caves, RAMSAR wetland areas, and including a UNESCO world Heritage site, Hortobágy National Park (Hungary). However, there is the need to improve cooperation in managing the Natura 2000 sites, as well as of joint investments and a coordinated action for the development of green infrastructure along the green border (including buffer zones). Additionally, with respect to the quality of environmental factors, the water bodies in the Romanian PA are evaluated as being good and transitioning to „medium” towards the border, whilst a significant amount of river sections in the Hungarian side has a quality status considered „poor” or „bad” (eg. Létai-ér, Kösely, Körös) by the EEA under parameters of the Water Framework Directive, especially around Szeged city. Water pollution thus represents a vulnerability in the area, which could be addressed through joint actions for the protection of natural heritage and risk prevention.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

1.1 Develop a joint / cross-border Masterplan of border Natura2000 areas or sensible areas to focus on the identification of biodiversity hotspots, the common

setting of conservation objectives, identifying priority sites for restoration, and measures for mainstreaming the biodiversity

- 1.2. Foster joint basin wide management planning on specific issues (e.g. ice on rivers, joint water protection and improvement of water quality)
- 1.3 Support operative flood management planning on transboundary watersheds and the harmonization of available assets (joint strategies)
- 1.4. Develop and/or implement joint conservation action plans and/or management plans for endangered umbrella species of Natura2000 protected areas
- 1.5. Develop and/or implement joint conservation action plans and/or management plans focused on certain species conservation aspects
- 1.6. Promoting initiatives connected with the New European Bauhaus (e.g. community participation in the identification of public areas suitable for the establishment of green infrastructure, and their design)

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Joint capacity building and awareness raising events among local communities and institutions on biodiversity conservation and protected areas
- 2.2. Capacity building, training and awareness raising among local communities and institutions related to the sustainable use of blue and green infrastructure
- 2.3. Exchange of experience and joint capacity building among institutions on topics related to environment strategic assessment
- 2.4 Exchange of experience and joint capacity building among local stakeholders on the definition and implications of integrating the ecosystem approach in local strategic planning documents

Cluster action 3. Other structural and non-structural joint actions

- 3.1. Develop and apply the most appropriate methods / procedures / tools for the joint prevention and control of IAS and management of their priority pathways in the border areas (joint solutions)
- 3.2. Joint measures for restoration of the invaded ecosystems in the cross-border area (joint solutions)
- 3.3. Joint protocols for the preservation and restoration of biodiversity and / or establishment / improvement of green infrastructure
- 3.4. Construction of exemplary, permanent green and recreational facilities, including cycling infrastructure
- 3.5. Promote sustainable joint floodplain management through blue and green infrastructure (e.g. small nature-based water retention measures)
- 3.6. Promote the improvement of water quality on both sides of the border through small scale blue infrastructure
- 3.7 Other measures aiming at improving ecosystem services (especially regulatory, maintenance and recreational services)

All projects envisaging structural and nonstructural measures are expected to develop and test joint solutions to tackle common problems or to valorise common territorial assets. The joint solutions are then expected to be taken up or up-scaled, which will allow to demonstrate that the organisations part of the project intend to further cooperate beyond project duration. All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value.

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

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF DNSH technical

guidance. In particular, the envisaged actions are expected to directly contribute to the environmental objectives emerging from SEA, by contributing to a more effective protection and conservation of biodiversity, natural resources, soil and water, population health, cultural aspects, and other relevant environmental assets.

Expected change:

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

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- National/Natural Parks administrations
- Environmental protection institutions
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental organisation including youth organisations activating in relevant fields
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euro regions
- Museums, libraries, theatres
- Churches
- Offices of Cultural Heritage
- Social partners
- EGTC
- Disaster management and emergency response organizations
- Fire services
- Water management authorities

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P1	RSO2.7	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	3
P1	RSO2.7	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	240
P1	RSO2.7	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	10
P1	RSO2.7	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	2

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P1	RSO2.7	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021-2029	2.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P1	RSO2.7	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	6.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P1	RSO2.7	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	24.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P1	RSO2.7	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	3.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.7	ERDF	079. Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	4,735,582.00
P1	RSO2.7	ERDF	064. Water management and water resource conservation (including river basin management, specific climate change adaptation measures, reuse, leakage reduction)	1,578,528.00
P1	RSO2.7	ERDF	083. Cycling infrastructure	4,209,406.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.7	ERDF	01. Grant	10,523,516.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P1	RSO2.7	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	10,523,516.00

2.1. Priority: P2 - Cooperation for a more social and cohesive PA between Romania and Hungary

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

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.5. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

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

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

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

As stated in the 3rd Report on the implementation of MRS (COM(2020) 578 final), “in the current exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent economic crisis, cooperation among countries and regions is needed more than ever. The crisis has economic, fiscal and social consequences that cannot be tackled by any single country alone.” The COVID-19 crisis has especially shown that there is space to improve and reinforce the EU MSs cooperation in the field of health, as acknowledged under the EC Communication on “Building a European Health Union: Reinforcing the EU’s resilience for cross-border health threats” (COM/2020/724 final): “The COVID-19 public health crisis has highlighted that the EU and Member States must do more regarding preparedness and response planning for epidemics and other serious cross-border health threats. While structures and mechanisms set up at EU level as part of the Decision on serious cross-border health threats facilitated the exchange of information on the evolution of the pandemic and supported specific national measures taken, they could do little to trigger a timely common EU level response and ensure coherent risk communication”. In particular, in the field of preparedness, and response planning, the Commission calls MSs, decentralised agencies and the ECDC to promote targeted actions concerning, for instance: reorganising hospital networks with flexible capacity for surge in demand; the cross-border transport and treatment of patients during health emergencies; sufficient availability of primary care structures; good integration of all levels of health and social care; availability of sufficient and up-skilled healthcare staff who can be redeployed to new roles in case of emergency; deployment and financial coverage of eHealth tools (including telemedicine). In this context, the future ERDF and ESF + funded programmes (ex. Health OP in Romania, EFOP Plus and DIMOP Plus in Hungary) as well as the MS National Recovery and Resilience Plans (components C12 and C.7.13) will include large investments and soft interventions (ex. professional development of health-care staff) in the field of health, which will be fully complementary with and mutually reinforcing cross-border cooperation initiatives in this field. Coordination with mainstream programmes will be ensured by national mechanisms, including dedicated national platforms and / or the work of MC. Additionally, policies and actions in the health sector directly contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030 SDGs 3, 5 and 10. Cross-border cooperation and investments in the field of health, beside and beyond typical infrastructure, focussing on exchange of experience, joint trainings, resilient, modern, well-managed and performant health institutions, offering personalised health services, towards excellence and standard procedures, shall thus be considered a high priority in the next programming period.

The PA is endowed with a well-developed health-care infrastructure and services with performance indicators similar to the European ones, especially in

counties hosting university centres. However, the distribution of public health functions is significantly denser in the Hungarian counties and intra-regional disparities in health infrastructure are present between the more-developed counties of Timiș, Bihor, Csongrád-Csanád and Hajdú-Bihar, and the other counties in the north (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) and center of the region (Arad, Békés). Timișoara is one of first five most important university centres for medicine in Romania, and Oradea (capital of Bihor County), Debrecen (Hajdú-Bihar), Szeged (from Csongrád-Csanád) and Nyíregyháza (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) have a medicine university or faculty, which is also reflected in the high number of medics in the more developed counties. Considering the challenges of some human capital indicators, the overall status of population health (which is not fully mapped), as well as recent challenges deriving from unprecedented health crisis and the need to ensure a resilient, modern and coordinated EU health system, the current endowment of health infrastructure and, above all, the functionality and the emergency-response capacity of health services do not seem adequate to emerging needs.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

- 1.1 Analysis of trends, needs, standards and barriers to cooperation for health-care services in the PA (including health status of population)
- 1.2 Developing (transnational/cross-border) Action Plans and development strategies in the field of health (including joint response and civil protection mobilisation)

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1 Joint capacity building and exchange of experience for public employees and civil society in the field of health-care services
- 2.2 Networks to exchange good practices, peer learning in the field of health-care services

Cluster action 3. Other structural and non-structural joint actions

- 3.1. Investment in infrastructure, equipment, IT software /hardware, support of eGovernance in the field of health
- 3.2. Joint demonstrative/ innovative projects in the field of health, including exploring the opportunities for cross-border treatment, and (where possible) contributing to the reduction of the cross-border obstacles (simplify administrative procedures) relating to the health-oriented services.

All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives, contributing to the attainment of targets related to ERDF type indicators, and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention. Investments in infrastructure and equipment are eligible and will be considered as the means to the obtainment of better cooperation, not as a purpose of the project itself. All projects shall comply with the de-institutionalisation strategies of the respective Member States and the relevant EU policy and legal frameworks for upholding human rights obligations, namely the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

The types of actions 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.

Expected change:

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

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices/agencies
- Public health care institutions – hospitals and clinics, social institutions
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including women's and youth organisations and civil protection organisations
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Micro regional associations
- Regional and county development agencies
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- Social partners
- EGTC

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P2	RSO4.5	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	3
P2	RSO4.5	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	8
P2	RSO4.5	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	22
P2	RSO4.5	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	528

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P2	RSO4.5	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	53.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P2	RSO4.5	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	3.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P2	RSO4.5	RCR73	Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities	users/year	0.00	2021-2029	32,476.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P2	RSO4.5	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	6.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	128. Health infrastructure	20,257,767.00
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	129. Health equipment	9,208,076.00
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	131. Digitalisation in health care	1,841,615.00
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	132. Critical equipment and supplies necessary to address emergency situation	5,524,846.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	01. Grant	36,832,304.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.5	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	36,832,304.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

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

Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

Tourism and culture have been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as acknowledged by main EU bodies and international organisations (UNESCO, UNWTO) on several occasions. There is a wide debate regarding the opportunities for the recovery of both tourism and cultural sector, focusing on the need to increase resilience, reaching new audiences, digitalise cultural heritage, create new partnerships, routes and synergies between sectors. Culture and tourism are also an important priority of the EUSDR Action Plan (PA 3), envisaging, among the others: to support the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system dedicated to tourism, able to provide complete and comparable statistical data in all EUSDR states; to develop new and support existing Cultural Routes and others. Additionally, actions in the fields of tourism and culture are considered priorities under dedicated sector strategies of PA local authorities. , Tourism and culture will be financed by the future ERDF and ESF + funded programmes (ex. OPSD, ROPs West and North West in Romania, EFOP Plus, DIMOP Plus and TOP Plus in Hungary) as well as the MS National Recovery and Resilience Plans (Components C11 and C Settlements). They will also contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030 SDG 11 and will be in line with the Romanian Tourism Investment Master Plan and Hungarian National Tourism Development Strategy 2030. Coordination with mainstream programmes will be ensured by national mechanisms, including dedicated national platforms and/or the work of MC.

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

In terms of cultural capital, there are common elements of potential in the form of shared cultural heritage (such as architectural art nouveau heritage, as well as religious and rural heritage) which can represent a collaboration point and an opportunity to promote the area's joint strengths. Intangible cultural heritage elements and contemporary cultural values have the potential to actively contribute to developing a long-term preservation instrument of the common cultural heritage of the whole target area. Set-up and cooperation of cross-border clusters and cultural hubs has the potential of being developed through joint cooperation in the field of culture and tourism, as means for the socio-economic development of the cross-border area, oriented towards the green and digital transition of the tourism sector, as well as the social inclusion and social innovation, taking into account also the need to actively involve rural settlements in

order to ensure the balanced development and the cohesion of the region.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

- 1.1. Identification of possibilities for making the tourism offer sustainable or creating new sustainable tourism products of public interest (i.e. analysis of trends, mapping resources, assessing barriers to cooperation)
- 1.2. Identification and mapping of natural and cultural heritage, and / or development of joint promotion and conservation strategies (in line with the European Quality principles for EU-funded Interventions with potential impact upon Cultural Heritage)
- 1.3. Mapping of needs and possibilities for digitised cultural heritage and drafting joint strategies

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Territorial marketing initiatives on local resources and traditions
- 2.2. Capacity building and exchange of experience among cross-border actors, including in support of green and digital transformation, resilience and sustainability needs
- 2.3. Involving local authorities and communities to build up intercultural and transcultural ties with different partners (skills development, educational contents and cultural initiatives, joint events etc.)

Cluster action 3. Other structural and non-structural joint actions

- 3.1. Improving the interpretation / adopting innovative methods for joint territorial marketing through “Story telling models” (“Living history” and “Living heritage”)
- 3.2. Development of sustainable joint tourism offers and products incl. investments, embedded into joint tourism strategies for local development
- 3.3. Joint actions for innovative solutions and the creation of thematic routes for the protection and valorisation of cultural / rural / natural / religious heritage / ecotourism.
- 3.4. Promoting joint initiatives connected with the New European Bauhaus (i.e. using arts and culture for social inclusion, enriching spaces with digital cultural heritage, bottom-up social innovation initiatives, etc)

All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives, contributing to the attainment of targets related to ERDF type indicators, and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention. The Programme might also contribute to create synergies and complementarities between cross-border actions in the field of tourism and culture, social entrepreneurship interventions (RSO 4.3) and integrated territorial interventions in both urban and rural areas (RSO 5.1 and 5.2) that will be funded under ERDF / ESF + programmes in both MSs (including in the neighboring areas), whenever relevant, to boost the tangible and long-term impact on local communities and economies, in line with “Transition Pathway for Tourism”.

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

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF DNSH technical guidance. In particular, the envisaged actions are expected to directly contribute to the environmental objectives emerging from SEA, by contributing to the sustainable valorisation of natural and cultural resources.

Expected change:

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

Potential beneficiaries:

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

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P2	RSO4.6	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	528
P2	RSO4.6	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	cultural and tourism sites	0	10
P2	RSO4.6	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	22
P2	RSO4.6	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	10

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P2	RSO4.6	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	visitors/year	0.00	2021-2029	15,710.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A
P2	RSO4.6	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	8.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P2	RSO4.6	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	53.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P2	RSO4.6	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	4.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.6	ERDF	166. Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	14,732,922.00
P2	RSO4.6	ERDF	165. Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	9,208,076.00
P2	RSO4.6	ERDF	167. Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	12,891,307.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.6	ERDF	01. Grant	36,832,305.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P2	RSO4.6	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	36,832,305.00

2.1. Priority: P3 - A more sustainable, community-based and effective cross-border cooperation

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

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.1. Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands)

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

Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

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

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

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

- 1.1. Cross-border studies on barriers to cooperation
- 1.2. Lessons learnt from previous cooperation experiences and capitalization of cooperation results
- 1.3. Standards and legislation mapping
- 1.4. Drafting joint actions plans / strategies / institutional agreements linked to topics not covered under PO 2 and PO 4
- 1.5 Cross-border studies on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives, especially focused on mapping capacities and institutional resources

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Joint actions on how to tackle barriers to cooperation
- 2.2. Joint actions, events and exchange of experience on cross-border strategic planning, project development and joint response capacity
- 2.3. Joint actions aiming to tackle barriers and promote an increased joint response capacity
- 2.4. Joint actions on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives focussed on policy / strategy / multiple funds coordination systems, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at cross-border level

ISO 1 interventions may have a cross-cutting approach (i.e. trainings and peer exchange on “cross-border strategic thinking”, analysis of cross-border public services quality standards / barriers to cooperation) or a sector approach (which, in this case, shall envisage subjects connected with POs not selected, such as building strategies and capacities related to innovation clusters, mapping cross-border value chains, and others). All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention (i.e. filling an important capacity gap in the CB area).

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

The types of actions 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.

Expected change:

- Increased understanding of cross-border exchanges and increased capacity to plan effective joint actions leading to an increased number and quality of joint strategies.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations, authorities and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices

- Management organisations of Euroregions
- EGTC
- Regional and county development agencies
- Chambers of commerce and social partners
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including cultural, sport, youth and women's organisations
- Churches
- Governmental Offices located in the counties

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P3	ISO6.1	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	48
P3	ISO6.1	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	2
P3	ISO6.1	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	1

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P3	ISO6.1	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	2.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.1	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	5.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.1	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	1.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.1	ERDF	171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	2,884,276.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.1	ERDF	01. Grant	2,884,276.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.1	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	2,884,276.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.2. 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 (strands A, C, D and, where appropriate, strand B)

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

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

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

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

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

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

1.1. Cross-border studies on barriers to cooperation

- 1.2. Lessons learnt from previous cooperation experiences and capitalization of cooperation results
- 1.3. Standards and legislation mapping
- 1.4. Drafting joint actions plans / strategies / institutional agreements linked to topics not covered under PO 2 and PO 4
- 1.5. Cross-border studies on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives, mainly focused on filling data gaps and better understanding barriers to cooperation

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Joint actions, events and exchange of experience on how to tackle barriers to cooperation
- 2.2. Joint actions on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives focussed on policy / strategy / multiple funds coordination systems, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at cross-border level

ISO 1 interventions may have a cross-cutting approach (i.e. analysis of cross-border public services quality standards / barriers to cooperation) or a sector approach (which, in this case, shall envisage subjects connected with POs not selected, such as building strategies and capacities related to innovation clusters, mapping cross-border value chains, analysing cross-border traffic flows, and others). All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value. Additionally, operations of strategic importance should have a high impact on programme objectives and a maximal contribution to the horizontal principles applicable to the field of intervention (i.e. solving barriers to cooperation or filling an important cross-border data gap to further substantiate joint strategies).

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

The types of actions 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.

Expected change:

- Increased understanding of barriers to cooperation and definition of possible solutions with the involvement of the adequate governance level

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations, authorities and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- EGTC
- Regional and county development agencies

- Chambers of commerce and social partners
- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including cultural, sport, youth and women's organisations
- Churches
- Governmental Offices located in the counties

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P3	ISO6.2	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	48
P3	ISO6.2	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	2
P3	ISO6.2	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	1

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P3	ISO6.2	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	2.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.2	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	5.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.2	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	1.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.2	ERDF	171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	2,884,276.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.2	ERDF	01. Grant	2,884,276.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.2	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	2,884,276.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.3. Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions (strands A, D and, where appropriate, strand B)

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

Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

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

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

Rationale and joint intervention needs and opportunities:

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

There are commonalities in the way the multi-level administrative structure of the two states is organized, where NUTS 3 and LAU 2 levels are the most relevant in terms of competencies, after the central government institutions. There are similar patterns in the implementation of vertical governance coordination, with the use of public authority associations and federations, which are involved to a general large degree in promoting local development. Existing administrative capacity disparities across the PA can potentially affect the capacity of potential beneficiaries to access cooperation funds and to modernise public services to the benefit of cross-border communities. In this context, economies of scale for services' planning and delivery, peer-to-peer exchange, joint analysis of barriers to cooperation, capacity building activities can be pursued through cooperation under the Programme, for better territorial coverage and an increased quality and innovation of cross-border governance. The area is also characterised by a long history of informal cooperation, or expressed willingness for cooperation, through twinning initiatives, the constitution of Euroregions and the establishment of EGTCs. Twinning is a typical model applied along the border including the non-standardized and non-institutionalised cooperation of the neighbouring regional, large urban centres, as well as smaller settlements. On the other hand, intercommunity and voluntary associations of public administrations are mainly dependent from bottom-up financing and, for the same reason, the CSO sector is relatively weak. Similarly, although EGTCs represent a growing cooperation reality of the PA, their financial and human resources capacities are differentiated and also depend on top-down financing. In general terms, the analysis showed that the community interaction (exchanges, connections) in the PA is not fully understood, which suggests there is the need to invest more in people-to-people actions which may enable the mobilisation of local communities, increasing their capacities to express shared needs and to propose joint solutions to common community problems, under a truly bottom-up approach.

Examples of actions supported (non-exhaustive list):

Cluster action 1. Planning and data

- 1.1. Small-scale cross-border studies on barriers to cooperation
- 1.2. Drafting joint small-scale actions plans / strategies
- 1.3. Small-scale studies on fields not covered under PO2 and PO4 selected objectives
- 1.4. Lessons learnt from previous cooperation experiences

Cluster action 2. Capacity building

- 2.1. Exchange of experience, peer exchanges and participation in small-scale joint events
- 2.2. Community initiatives connected with the New European Bauhaus (i.e. participation of local communities in the co-design of sustainable and inclusive solutions for the renovation of public spaces)
- 2.3. Other people-to-people actions, promoting trust and cooperation among communities (i.e. small-scale cultural and educational initiatives)

ISO 1 interventions may have a cross-cutting approach or a sector approach. All types of actions will include soft measures capable of boosting cooperation and joint strategic thinking with high cross-border added value.

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

The types of actions 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.

Expected change:

- Increased people-to-people actions and cross-border cooperation in community initiatives pave the way to future, more structured, community-led interventions.

Potential beneficiaries:

- Local and county governments / administrations, authorities and their institutions
- National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices
- Management organisations of Euroregions
- EGTC
- Regional and county development agencies
- Chambers of commerce and social partners

- Education institutions (from any level of education), research institutions
- Non-governmental, non-profit organisation, including cultural, sport, youth and women's organisations
- Churches
- Governmental Offices located in the counties

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

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

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

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

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
P3	ISO6.3	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	70
P3	ISO6.3	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	1680
P3	ISO6.3	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	6

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
P3	ISO6.3	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021-2029	6.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.3	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021-2029	168.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	Double counting to be avoided
P3	ISO6.3	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021-2029	3.00	Programme monitoring system / survey	N/A

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

The main target groups of this specific objective are:

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

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

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

N/A

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

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

N/A

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

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

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.3	ERDF	171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	8,701,282.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.3	ERDF	01. Grant	8,701,282.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
P3	ISO6.3	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	8,701,282.00

3. Financing plan

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

3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

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

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF		24,044,693.00	24,430,924.00	24,824,877.00	25,226,711.00	20,903,374.00	21,321,441.00	140,752,020.00
Total		24,044,693.00	24,430,924.00	24,824,877.00	25,226,711.00	20,903,374.00	21,321,441.00	140,752,020.00

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)

Table 8

Policy objective	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
2	P1	ERDF	Total	46,448,167.00	43,409,502.00	3,038,665.00	11,612,042.00	10,450,838.00	1,161,204.00	58,060,209.00	79.9999996555%	0.00
4	P2	ERDF	Total	78,821,131.00	73,664,609.00	5,156,522.00	19,705,283.00	17,734,755.00	1,970,528.00	98,526,414.00	79.9999997970%	0.00
6	P3	ERDF	Total	15,482,722.00	14,469,834.00	1,012,888.00	3,870,680.00	3,483,612.00	387,068.00	19,353,402.00	80.0000020668%	0.00
	Total	ERDF		140,752,020.00	131,543,945.00	9,208,075.00	35,188,005.00	31,669,205.00	3,518,800.00	175,940,025.00	80.0000000000%	0.00
	Grand total			140,752,020.00	131,543,945.00	9,208,075.00	35,188,005.00	31,669,205.00	3,518,800.00	175,940,025.00	80.0000000000%	0.00

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

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

Programme preparation

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

The Programming Committee fully respects the multi-level governance principle and includes representatives from all relevant categories of stakeholders as mentioned under CPR art. 8, notably: a) urban and other public authorities; b) economic and social partners; c) relevant bodies representing civil society, environmental partners, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination; d) research organisations and universities.

Consultations during programme preparation

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

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

- 2 preparatory meetings with PC members on Written Procedure related to Territorial Analysis (January, 2021), respectively on 2nd PC meeting- selection of POs (June, 2021);
- Peer- to-peer event with Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia on strategic projects (February, 2021);
- online TIA workshop MA/NA/SZPO and JS (February, 2021);
- online interviews with central level institutions/relevant stakeholders with regional development related competences and experience in managing ESIF/national programmes especially focused on the concept and procedures related to strategic projects (January-February, 2021);
- 2 rounds of consultations - 4 online workshops (125 participants)- with national/regional/local authorities in both MSs on scenario for selecting POs and related SOs (April, 2021). *The outcomes of the consultations held in relation with the definition of the programme priorities and selection of specific objectives are presented in the detail in the TIA Paper (supporting document underlying the programme strategy) and they were used to substantiate the proposals for the selection of POs.*
- 2nd PC meeting for selecting of the POs and related specific objectives to be financed and approving IP-sections 1.1, 1,2 and 1.3.
- online survey on potential applicants in relation to lessons learnt from current programming period and project ideas for the future (details on identified partners, results and indicators) (August-September 2021). *The survey provided ground for the identification of programme indicators and for the performance framework methodology.*
- 3rd PC meeting (15th September 2021) and national consultations on the concept and methodology for projects of strategic importance (October – December 2021).
- Public consultations on the programme and SEA procedure (i.e. publication on current programme website, formal consultations with the environmental authorities in each MS, SEA working groups established and activated in Romania between November 2021 and February 2022, direct emailing, etc).

All documents submitted for consultations with stakeholders were published on the programme website, and were accompanied by the centralisation of the comments received and the way these will be taken into account in the finalisation of documents. Written consultations with the PC members have followed the rules of procedures of the Committee, allowing sufficient time to members (usually 10 working days, or 5 working days in case of special procedures, duly justified) for sending feedback. Public consultation for Interreg Programme and draft SEA report have also followed the principles of transparency and good governance, and has been conducted in conformity with the MS national laws (minimum 30 days for SEA and same for IP).

Role of programme partners in implementation, monitoring and evaluation

In accordance with Article 38 of Regulation (EU) No 1060/2021, the MSs will set up a MC within 3 months of the notification of the approval by the Commission of the CP. MC composition will ensure a balanced representation of the relevant MSs authorities and intermediate bodies (when applicable) and, through a transparent process, of representatives of the partners referred to in Article 29 of Regulation (EU) No 1059/2021) and Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 1060/2021 and will carry out the functions laid down in Article 30 of Regulation (EU) No 1059/2021. The MSs intend to ensure close cooperation between partners in both MSs and with the private and other sectors. The composition of the MC shall be ensured by the MSs through nomination for the official setup. The most vulnerable and marginalised communities will be duly represented in the MC. Role of members will be specified in the Rules of Procedure.

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

The Programme authorities will ensure that the principle of separation of functions is adequately implemented, in line with the Commission Notice on Guidance on the avoidance and management of conflicts of interest under the Financial Regulation (2021/C 121/01), in particular for what concerns the functions related to the generation and/or preparation of applications and their assessment and/or selection. Details will be provided in relevant programme documents (e.g. MOU/MOI, DMCS, MC RoP, internal manuals, etc)

Additionally, the programme bodies will ensure that all stages related to programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of investments in infrastructure and services, will respect horizontal principles, related to independent living, non-segregation and non-discrimination in line with the UNCRPD and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

The composition of the MC will help monitoring and avoiding double funding: some MC members are, at the same time, representatives of local public authorities/administrations, responsible for the regional development of the area. Being aware of the operations/investments in the region, planned to be financed under other national and/or Interreg programmes, the MC members and/or national platform will be able to identify such projects, in order to avoid double financing. Furthermore, specific requirements will be in place (applicants/beneficiaries declarations and FLC relevant requirements).

With reference to Article 40 of Regulation (EU) No 1060/2021, by approving the methodology and criteria used for the selection of operations as well as providing recommendation on measures to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries, the MC is responsible to approve documentations related to calls for proposals and implementation.

Selecting of operations will be carried out through assessment with the involvement of external evaluators relevant for the field of interventions, from both sides of the border, working in mixed pairs (1 RO and 1 HU), to ensure the territorial, legal and holistic embeddedness and synergies with the national and local state of play.

The MC will approve the budget of TA beneficiaries and can monitor their financial and professional progress.

Capacity building of partners

The Programme structures will support partners' capacity building in all programme delivery phases (programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), by ensuring full support, participation and permanent information on programme intervention logics, rules and procedures. In particular, programme partners have been extensively involved in the programming phase, which has contributed to raise awareness and to build capacities and understanding on the Programme approach, objectives and priorities. During programme implementation, partners will be permanently supported by the JS, Info Points and helpdesks established with the purpose of providing updated information and guidance on how to access and successfully implement available funds. Additionally, capacity building schemes for partners and a clear focus on the added value of the partnerships (both for the Programme and the individual partners) and joint actions will be promoted as a cross-cutting cluster action.

As concerns capacity building of Programme bodies, Programme management structures will seek capacity building opportunities, such as peer-to-peer, trainings, study-visits, external expertise, etc, to be funded under TA funds, EC initiatives and other sources. In addition to that, development of administrative capacity in key programme bodies will be ensured in line with Border Orientation Paper para 93. Details will be provided (e.g. in the MOU/MOI, DMCS, etc.)

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

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

Principles:

The Programme's ambition is to make communication an integral part of the working procedures, at all levels, throughout the project / programme cycles, based on the following main principles: Transparency and consistency; Flexibility; Focus on partners; Attention to horizontal principles; Interaction and synergy with other programmes, between projects and the Programme, and between the projects, to improve quality and focus on the capitalisation of results.

Audience:

The internal target groups consist of programme bodies, organisations and groups involved in the governance of the Programme. The external target groups are all other stakeholders, including:

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

A detailed list of thematic stakeholders is indicated under the description of actions, where potential applicants / partners are presented indicatively.

Objectives:

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

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

Tools and channels:

- Visual identity (Interreg umbrella brand increases visibility and aids synergies with other programmes)
- Online communication (programme website, linked to the single website portal providing access to all programmes of the MS, as requested by Article 46(b) CPR, programme reference on web portals of the participating MS), as a main tool to communicate, Facebook, as it proved successful, and other relevant social media, such as Instagram, which can evolve depending on new IT developments, newsflashes/newsletters, direct emails)
- Public events (kick-off event, any kind of conference, campaign or other larger-scale event which is targeted at a wider audience, participation in multiplier events, cooperation with other Interreg programmes and Interact, others)
- Targeted events (internal meetings and trainings, information events, beneficiary trainings, thematic seminars etc.)
- Publications and promotional materials (any kind of printed or printable digital product i.e. leaflets, brochures, albums, audio-visual productions, others). The programme has an eco-friendly publications

policy. Thus, a preference will be given to eco-friendly materials and printing solutions such as recycled paper. Printed materials on paper will be produced with sustainability in mind

- Media work (press releases, organisation of press conferences around major events, others)

Annual communication plans will include further details on the implementation of tool, channels, as well as on messages and content.

Monitoring and evaluation

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

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

The data will come from JS internal statistics, website analytics and specific tracking tools for social media. Special attention will be devoted to monitoring and publicity of operations of strategic importance (ref: art 36. 4 (e) Interreg Regulation), through: the publication on the programme website and social media channels updated projects' factsheets and briefs, including information on progress in implementation; the organisation of communication events, involving the EC and the responsible authorities and partners.

Budget and resources

Communication is a shared horizontal task of the MA, JS, NA, IPs, the MC, and of the projects, as well. Implementation of the communication measures will be supported by all programme bodies, the JS and the IPs in particular. Additionally, the MA will designate a communication officer (ref: Art. 36((1) Interreg Regulation). The communication budget will be at least 0.3 percent of the total programme budget.

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

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

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

Partners of the small-scale projects will be detailed under dedicated calls for proposals, launched for each specific objective / PO and selected Interreg Specific Objective, including people-to-people actions. Among others the aim is to attract newcomers and small sized institutions to start cooperating in cross border level to build up partnership and a more connected social network across the border. The measures can give opportunity to implement small scale projects under simplified conditions being in line with impact evaluation's recommendations.

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

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

Whilst the exact size of the small-scale projects will be established by decision of the MC, it is anticipated that projects with smaller size (ca. 230.000) can be also foreseen.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

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

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Managing authority	Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration	Dan BĂLĂNESCU	Head of Managing Authority	dan.balanescu@mdlpa.ro
Audit authority	Audit Authority within the Romanian Court of Accounts	Lucian Dan VLĂDESCU	President	dan.vladescu@rcc.ro
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	KISS-PARCIU Péter	Deputy State Secretary	hathatar@mfa.gov.hu
Group of auditors representatives	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds	DENCSŐ Balázs	Director General	balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration	Dan BĂLĂNESCU	Head of Managing Authority	dan.balanescu@mdlpa.ro

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

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

In accordance with Article 46 (2) of Regulation (EU) 1059/2021, the Managing Authority (MA), after consultation with the Member States, sets up a Joint Secretariat (JS) assisting the MA and the Monitoring Committee (MC) in carrying out their respective functions.

For a smooth transition to the next programming period, the implementation structures will act as anchors for a successful implementation. Therefore, building on existing strengths, the JS for 2021-2027 Interreg VI-A Romania - Hungary Programme, is set up on the basis of the existing JS of the Interreg V-A Romania - Hungary Programme.

The JS will be set up within the framework of the Oradea Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation (BRECO), located in the Programme Area. The structural and implementation arrangements within the hosting organisation will be kept.

The JS will be financed from the Technical Assistance of the Programme. Taking into account the good programme partnership approach, all JS members have been selected in a transparent way with the involvement of both Member States and are bilingual/trilingual, possessing representative linguistic competence and relevant programme area knowledge. Additional staff will be selected respecting the same principles.

The JS will work in close cooperation with the MA assisting in all programme coordination and implementation tasks and supporting the MC in monitoring the implementation of the Programme. Furthermore, the JS will provide support to potential beneficiaries by providing them information about funding opportunities and will assist all beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations.

For the successful implementation of the Programme, the JS will coordinate with the Programme Authorities (see section 7.1) and the bodies carrying out management and control and audit tasks, as follows:

- Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration in Romania;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary;
- Info Points, hosted in Hungary, by the Széchenyi Programme Office (SzPO);
- First Level Control Unit in Romania, hosted by Oradea Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation (BRECO);
- First Level Control Unit in Hungary, hosted by the Széchenyi Programme Office (SzPO).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beneficiaries shall repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed with the lead partner and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the partners. The Programme shall provide the partners a template of the Partnership Agreement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1

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(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 CPR

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

Appendix 1

B. Details by type of operation

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 is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc):

--

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) 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:

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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:

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

A. Summary of the main elements

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

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

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

B. Details by type of operation

1. Timely and efficient response in case of emergency situations in cross border area (SO2.4, MIA, coverage SM, TM, AR, BH, SZSZB)
2. RENEW: Renewable Energy Works Well in the Romanian-Hungarian Cross Border Area (SO2.2, Hajdú-Bihar CC, coverage HB, BH)
3. Green Cross-Border Region (SO2.2, Szabolcs Szatmár Bereg CC, coverage SM, SZSZB)
4. Innovative Surgical Unit and Emergency Hospitals (SO4.5, Arad CC, coverage AR, BK, TM, SM, BH)
5. Development of health infrastructure in Békés and Arad counties (SO4.5, Békés CC, coverage AR, BK)
6. Resilient, integrated and accessible cross-border health services (SO4.5, Timiș CC, coverage TM, CSCS, SM, BH)
7. Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Cultural Living Lab (SO4.6, Bihor CC, coverage BH, AR, SM, TM, HB)
8. CultuRO-Hub (SO4.6, Satu Mare CC, coverage SM, SZSZB)
9. Integrated cultural and touristic routes in the cross-border area (SO4.6, Timiș CC, coverage TM, CSCS)
10. Szeged-Timisoara Dream railway (ISO1, Csongrád-Csanád CC, coverage CSCS, TM)
MSs need commitment (e.g. letter, strategy, legislation) on the need for the investment covered by the feasibility study to be financed from the programme prior to approval of this particular OSI project (details to be agreed with the EC).
11. Together for a safer area (ISO1, MIA, coverage BH, AR, CSCS)

The indicative timeline for OSI implementation is 2024-2027. The allocation for OSI is up to 50% ERDF. The procedure shall ensure a balanced impact through funding in PA. The inclusion in Appendix 3 does not automatically determine OSI selection for funding, as projects shall be compliant with all selection criteria established by MC, in line with the dispositions included in Article 22 of Interreg Regulation, such as: CBC relevance and impact (supporting documents uploaded into SFC – Other docs); value for money; projects' maturity (Feasibility Study(FS)/equivalents upon submission; Technical documentation/equivalents upon contracting); beneficiaries' capacity to implement activities. Specific implementation conditions and deadlines will be set for OSIs (submission – max. 6 months from Call launch; contracting – max. 6 months from selection, no later than December 2024; financial progress – min. 25% in 2 years after signing the Subsidy Contract). The deadline for releasing the OSI pre-allocated funding is no later than December 2026.

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Map of Programme Area	Map of Programme Area	27 Oct 2022	2021TC16RFCB042	Ares(2022)7955545	Map of Programme Area	17 Nov 2022	BALANESCU, Dan
Programme snapshot 2021TC16RFCB042 1.1	Snapshot of data before send	17 Nov 2022		Ares(2022)7955545	Programme_snapshot_2021TC16RFCB042_1.1_en.pdf	17 Nov 2022	BALANESCU, Dan