

**Interreg**  
AUSTRIA – HUNGARY



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# APPLICATION MANUAL

**Interreg Austria-Hungary 2021-2027**

**Version 1.0, 21 June 2023**



## INDEX

<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 PROJECTS IN INTERREG AT-HU 2021-2027</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Types of projects	5
2.2 Basic project features	5
2.2.1 Who can apply for funding in the Programme?	5
2.2.2 Where shall project partners come from?	6
2.2.3 Cross-border character and basic partnership requirements	7
2.3 What kinds of projects are eligible for funding?	8
2.3.1 Project topics	8
2.3.2 Project financial size and funding	9
2.3.3 Cross-border cooperation criteria	12
2.4 Project duration	12
<b>3 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Relevance of the project idea	15
3.2 Building a partnership	15
3.2.1 Composition	15
3.2.2 Tasks and responsibilities of the partnership	16
3.2.3 Partnership agreement	16
3.3 Identifying target groups, stakeholder involvement	17
3.4 Project intervention logic and indicators	17
3.5 Drawing up the work plan	20
3.5.1 Structuring by work packages and activities	20
3.5.2 Time plan	21
3.6 Project management, communication and other horizontal issues	21
3.6.1 Project management and coordination	22
3.6.2 Communication and visibility	22
3.6.3 Horizontal principles	24
3.7 Planning the budget	25
3.7.1 Use of the euro	26
3.7.2 Expenditures	26
3.7.3 Financing	27
3.7.4 Liquidity during implementation	28
3.8 What makes a good project?	28
3.9 Where can I turn for help?	29
<b>4 COMPILING THE APPLICATION</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1 Jems: the online application and project-monitoring system	30
4.2 Filling in the application form	30
4.3 Submitting the application	30



<b>5 PROJECT ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1 Administrative and eligibility assessment	33
5.2 Quality assessment	33
<b>6 FUNDING DECISION</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7 CONTRACTING</b>	<b>36</b>
7.1 Concluding the partnership agreement	36
7.2 ERDF subsidy contract	36
7.3 Financing contracts	37
<b>8 COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>38</b>
8.1 Complaints related to the project selection process	39
8.2 Complaints related to project implementation, based on provisions in the subsidy contract	39
8.3 Complaint related to controls and audits	39
<b>9 ANNEXES</b>	<b>41</b>
Annex I: Checklist for the annexes of the application form	42
Annex II: Templates of the obligatory annexes	43
<b>10 Versions of the application manual</b>	<b>44</b>



## 1 INTRODUCTION

The current manual of the Interreg Austria-Hungary 2021-2027 Programme (hereinafter referred to as Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 or the Programme) has the purpose to lead you through the project development process and the steps of preparing an application for funding. In addition, potential applicants will get an introduction to the processes of project assessment and decision-making on funding of projects.

This document is to be interpreted in the context of further manuals, including comprehensive information on eligibility of expenditures, indicators, communication and implementation of projects. Where appropriate, mutual cross-references to other documents – the primary source of the information – are also included.

Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 offers a [set of manuals](#), as follows:

<b>PART 1:</b>	<b>Application Manual</b> – general information on the application process and in its Annexes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Checklist</b> for the annexes of the application form</li> <li>• <b>Templates of the obligatory annexes</b> to the application form</li> </ul>
<b>PART 2</b>	<b>Jems Manual</b> – how to fill in the application form
<b>PART 3:</b>	<b>Indicator Manual</b> – essential to align your project’s main outputs and results to the programme indicators
<b>PART 4:</b>	<b>Selection Criteria and Methodology</b> – how the applications will be assessed
<b>PART 5</b>	<b>Eligibility Manual</b> – contains all the IMPORTANT information on the eligibility of expenditures
<b>PART 6</b>	<b>Communication Manual</b> – about the rules of the proper and effective communication
<b>PART 7</b>	<b>Implementation Manual</b> – about contracting, reporting, modifications, etc.

Some manuals may be published at a later stage of the programme implementation.



## 2 PROJECTS IN INTERREG AT-HU 2021-2027

Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 supports bilateral projects of partnerships composed of public and private organisations that want to cooperate across the border and find solutions to common challenges of the Austria-Hungary programme region.

An Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 project should implement cooperation actions which generally include data collection and know-how exchange, the development and implementation of strategies, action plans, joint solutions, pilot actions, trainings, awareness raising and alike. Project activities should lead to outputs and results defined in line with the programme indicators – for more details see the Indicator Manual (Part 3 of the Manuals). Concrete, visible and sustainable results are consequences of the direct project outputs that lead to an improvement of the initial situation.

This chapter presents the general requirements and main features applicable to all projects funded by Interreg AT-HU2021-2027.

### 2.1 Types of projects

In the frame of the Programme project holders can apply for funding with two types of projects:

- standard project
- small-scale project

In addition to standard projects direct support to small-scale projects is offered in accordance with Article 24(1)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (the Interreg Regulation). In the context of Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 this means projects of a limited financial volume (minimum EUR 25 000 but not more than EUR 200 000 total costs), partnership (max. 3 partners) and duration (18 months) with certain further simplifications in the application and implementation processes.

In the following sections (where it is not written otherwise), the main characteristics/expectations related to both project types will be explained, with special attention on the cases where different rules are applied to the standard and the small-scale projects.

### 2.2 Basic project features

#### 2.2.1 Who can apply for funding in the Programme?

Applicants must have legal personality. The following organisations are eligible for funding:

- National, regional and local **public bodies**;
- **Public equivalent bodies** (or bodies governed by public law) – for the definition see the text box;
- **Non-profit organisations**;
- **Other institutions**, that are carrying out activities in the public interest on the level of the project (e.g. cluster organisations, centres for economic development, universities, education and research institutions);
- **Private organisations**, including private companies, having legal personality.



Public equivalent bodies or bodies governed by public law are defined in Article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement and have all of the following characteristics:

- (a) they are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
- (b) they have legal personality; and
- (c) they are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law

In accordance with the definition in Article 2 (16) of Regulation 1303/2013 any European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) established in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 also falls under this category.

**Private persons, political parties and sole proprietorships are NOT ELIGIBLE for funding.**

### 2.2.2 Where shall project partners come from?

As a basic principle, the Programme supports cooperation between project partners **located in the programme area**.

Partners located outside the programme area that have **legally defined competences or field of functions for certain parts of the eligible area** (called "assimilated partners" in the Interreg AT-HU 2014-2020 Programme) are considered to be inside the programme area (e.g. a line ministry).

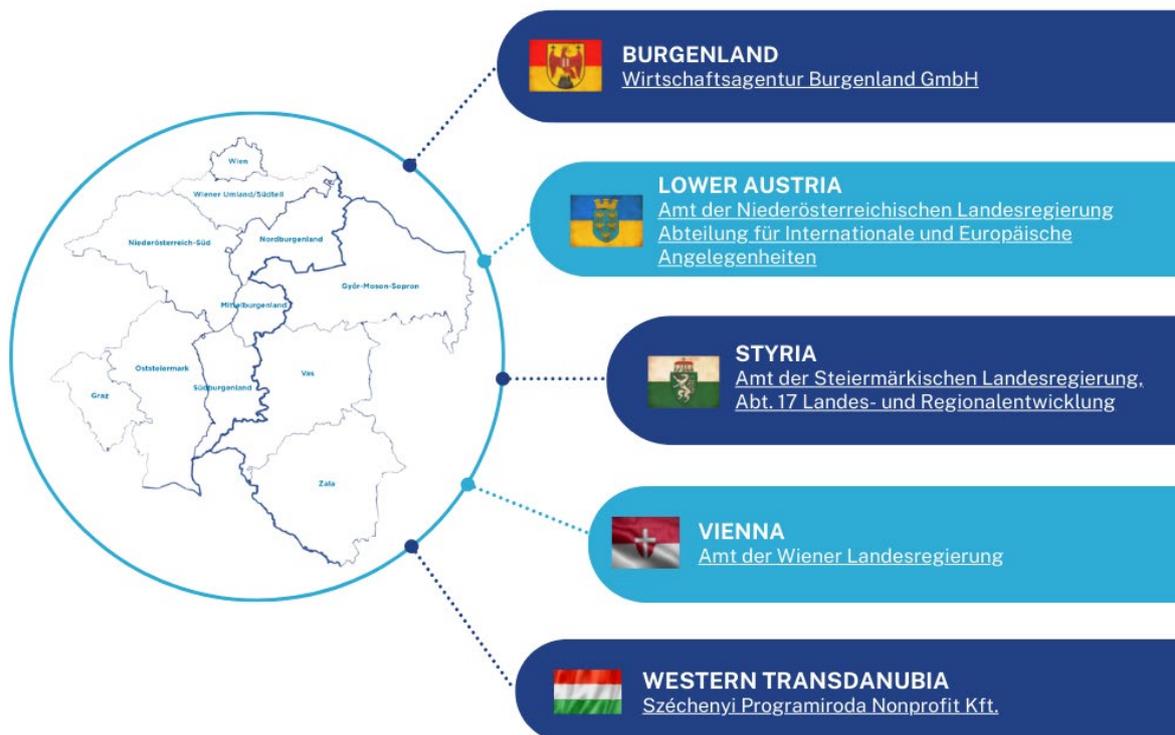
The involvement of **partners outside the programme area** other than those that have legally defined competences or field of functions for certain parts of the programme area is only possible in exceptional and duly justified cases if that partner is needed to achieve the goals of the project.

#### *Specific geographic rule for the partnership in small-scale projects*

Small-scale projects shall only involve partners located in the programme area and/or such that have legally defined competences or field of function for certain parts of the area.



Chart 1: Map of the programme area with contact to the participating regions



**Activities** shall serve the benefit of the programme area and contribute to the successful delivery of the programme objectives (independent whether they are implemented in the programme area or outside of it).

### 2.2.3 Cross-border character and basic partnership requirements

The minimum requirement for the constitution of the project partnership is to have at least one Austrian and one Hungarian partner. The number of project partners in standard projects is not limited, but it is strongly advised to keep the size of partnership focused and easy to handle in line with its thematic and geographic coverage.

#### Specific rule for the size of partnership in small-scale projects

The number of project partners in small-scale projects is **limited to three** (including the lead partner).

One of the project partners has to be appointed as **lead partner**.

The lead partner organisation

- must be located in the programme area or – if outside – have legally defined competences or field of functions for certain parts of the eligible area (see in section 2.2),
- coordinates the project development and submits the project application to the Joint Secretariat via Jems,
- is the exclusive contract partner of the Managing Authority in the ERDF subsidy contract (hereunder referred to as the subsidy contract),
- is responsible for the proper implementation and management of the project in compliance with the programme rules,



- carries out all the tasks defined in the subsidy contract,
- represents the partnership and acts as its contact point to the programme bodies.

All project partners have to play an active role in the project. Furthermore, they have to have the adequate *legal, financial and operative capacity* to participate in the Programme.

The lead partner in its lead partner declaration and all project partners in the partnership agreement commit to the participation in the project (see the templates in the annexes of this manual).

If questions concerning the eligibility of any project partner arise, the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority have the right to request further documentation and certificates – besides the obligatory annexes of the application – to clarify the status of the partner in question.

### 2.3 What kinds of projects are eligible for funding?

#### 2.3.1 Project topics

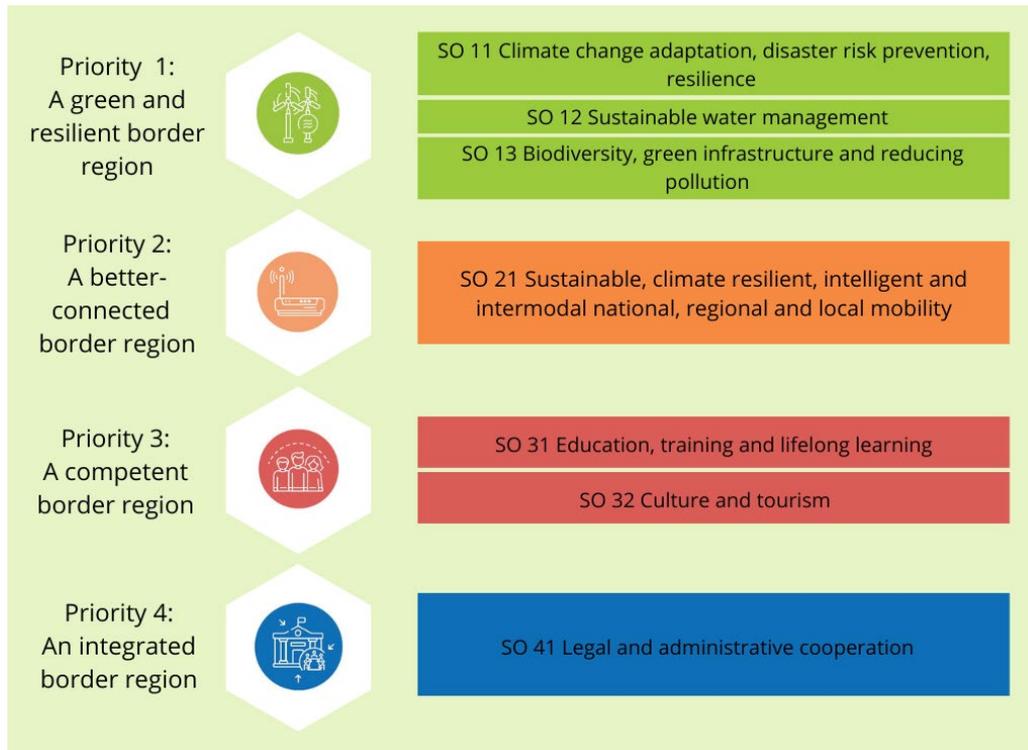
The project and each element of its work plan (inter alia overall objective and project specific objectives, activities, deliverables, outputs and results) must be in line with the thematic priorities and programme specific objectives set out in the Interreg Programme (IP) – the main document of the Programme – approved by the European Commission. Furthermore, the project partner have to take into account the horizontal principles of sustainable development, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and equality between men and women.

Project activities shall be designed to contribute to the achievement of project-level and, through this, programme level targets.

Further detailed information on the Programme's objectives (including types of actions and indicative actions within the priorities and programme specific objectives) can be found in the IP, downloadable on the [programme website](#) and in the factsheets [here](#).



Chart 2: Priorities in Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027



### 2.3.2 Project financial size and funding

For the financing of projects EUR 49 561 200 is available in the Programme from the sources of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The total budget of the Programme, including national financing contributions and the funds available for the Programme’s technical implementation, is **EUR 61 951 500**. The Programme’s financing plan in the IP (chapter 3) is divided into four thematic priorities.

Projects may receive a maximum co-financing of 80 % from the ERDF for the financing of their activities. The ERDF contribution to partners might be reduced if the project or parts of its measures are subject to state aid provisions (see section 3.11 in the Eligibility Manual).

Concerning the size of the project budget the following factors shall be considered:

1. from the project perspective, applicants shall ensure that the financial size of the project truly reflects the activities foreseen in the work plan and that it is based on the principles of sound financial management;
2. from the programme perspective, projects financed in a certain priority shall be able to produce sufficient contribution to the output and result indicator targets in that priority, and fit into the financial framework of the programme.

Therefore, the programme imposes certain limitations on the size of the project budget, that is detailed in the following table. Prior consultation with the regional coordinators is strongly recommended when developing the project budget.



Table 1: Limitations on the size of the project budget

<b>BUDGET LIMITATIONS</b>		
Limitations	Small-scale projects	Standard projects
Minimum total costs	≥ 25.000 Euro	> 200.000 Euro
Maximum total costs	≤ 200.000 Euro	≤ 3.000.000 Euro
Maximum ERDF funding	≤ 160.000 Euro	≤ 2.400.000 Euro

The Monitoring Committee is responsible among others for the efficient use of the available funds, thus it reserves the right to reduce a project's proposed budget if it contains elements that are not in line with the Programme's or the project's targets, or are otherwise ineligible.

When designing the size of the project budget, please consider the programme target values for average project size and number in the different priorities and specific objectives, and the programme target values for output and result indicators. The programme shall allocate funding to various project so that these target values will be reached at programme closure. For details about output and result indicators, please see the Indicator Manual!



Table 2: Programme target values

Priority	Specific objective	Available ERDF for projects (€)	Number of stand-ard projects	Avg. partner per stand-ard project	Avg. ERDF per stand-ard project (€)	Number of small-scale projects	Avg. partner per small-scale project	Avg. ERDF per small-scale project (€)	Output indicator	Output indicator target value	Result indicator	Result indicator target value		
PRIORITY1 A green and resilient border region	SO11: Climate change adaptation	19 169 319	8	3	800 000	2	2	150 000	RCO87	26	RCR84	18		
									RCO83	5	RCR79	3		
									RCO116	7	RCR104	3		
									RCO81	279	RCR85	84		
	SO12: Sustainable water		7	3		800 000	2		2	150 000	RCO87	23	RCR84	23
											RCO83	5	RCR79	4
											RCO116	6	RCR104	5
	SO13: Nature protection and biodiversity		8	3		800 000	2		2	150 000	RCO87	26	RCR84	18
											RCO83	5	RCR79	3
											RCO116	7	RCR104	5
											RCO81	207	RCR85	62
	PRIORITY2 A better connected border		SO21: Sustainable transport	4 100 117		5	4		800 000	1	2	150 000	RCO87	21
RCO83		2			RCR79			1						
RCO116		4			RCR104			3						
RCO81		207			RCR85			62						
PRIORITY3 A competent border region	SO31: Education and training infrastructure	15 697 856	11	4	600 000	2	2	150 000	RCO87	46	RCR84	23		
									RCO116	9	RCR104	6		
									RCO81	275	RCR85	192		
									RCO85	110	RCR81	88		
	SO32: Culture and sustainable tourism		12	4		600 000	9		2	150 000	RCO87	60	RCR84	30
											RCO83	11	RCR79	5
											RCO116	13	RCR104	9
											RCO85	216	RCR81	108
PRIORITY4 An integrated border region	SO41: Legal and administrative cooperation	6 851 587	9	3	600 000	9	2	150 000	RCO87	39	RCR84	27		
									RCO83	9	RCR79	5		
									RCO116	11	RCR104	8		
									RCO81	169	RCR85	152		
		45 818 879	60	208	-	27	54	-	-	-	-	-		



### 2.3.3 Cross-border cooperation criteria

The Programme supports only those projects that require bilateral cooperation to achieve their objectives. According to Article 23 (4) of the Interreg Regulation, cooperation must fulfil at least three of the four cooperation criteria, as described below:

Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of Interreg operations, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both, thereof.

**Table 3: Cooperation criteria**

Joint development	Joint implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All partners (actively) contribute to the project development.</li> <li>The partners jointly define the details of the project implementation (joint development of objectives, outputs, results and deliverables, budget, time plan, responsibility for work packages and tasks to achieve the objectives).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the subsidy contract, the lead partner is fully responsible for the implementation of the project, while each partner is specifically responsible for its own project part.</li> <li>At least one of the work packages of the project will be carried out with the active contribution of several partners in cross-border cooperation.</li> </ul>
Joint staffing	Joint financing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All project partners employ suitably qualified staff to carry out the project related tasks (external services are not included).</li> <li>The project staff will carry out their activities in accordance with their responsibilities, in cooperation with the other staff working on the task or work package and will ensure a continuous exchange of information.</li> <li>If possible, functions within the partnership should not be duplicated. In particular, supervisory function should be appointed only once at project level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partner budgets are in line with the partners' roles and the budget breakdown reflects the partners' responsibilities.</li> <li>All project partners (except strategic partners) contribute to the project funding (budget and national contribution).</li> <li>The lead partner is responsible for the administration and reporting towards the programme bodies as well as the distribution of the funds to the partners</li> </ul>

## 2.4 Project duration

The earliest starting date for project implementation is the opening date of the call (27 July 2023) and the latest possible end date of a project (incl. the deadline to settle all invoices) is 31 December 2028.

Further detailed rules on time-wise eligibility are set out in section 3.5 of the Eligibility Manual (Part 4 of the Manuals). Please read carefully the information contained therein, in particular the relationship between the start of the project and the submission of the proposal, and between the closure of the project and the eligibility of invoices.

When planning the timing of the project, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

- The duration of the project must be planned in such a way that sufficient and realistic time for the project implementation is available. It is suggested to include some contingency.



- It shall be ensured that financial and human resources are available not only until the end of the project activities in the strict sense, but also until the administrative/financial closure.
- Particularly in the case of projects stretching over several years, care must be taken that the funding is used to produce cross-border added value and not to finance the operating costs of some institutions.
- The Monitoring Committee reserves the right to require a mid-term evaluation as a condition of approval for projects lasting more than three years. These mid-term evaluations must be carried out by independent experts and financed from the project budget. The Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat may set up a database of experts for the purpose of mid-term evaluation. The results of the evaluation shall be communicated to the Monitoring Committee, which may, if appropriate, refuse further funding of the project on this basis.
- Work packages, the implementation periods for the activities, and the delivery periods (of deliverables, outputs and results) help to plan the project over time and serve as a benchmark during implementation. Deviation from these periods does not in itself require to submit an application for project modification or have a direct impact on the eligibility of expenditure, although reports must include background information and justification for divergence from the plan. The prolongation of the project should only take place in exceptional cases, and if it is needed and it is subject to approval by the Managing Authority.

### ***Specific rule on the duration of small-scale projects***

The project duration of small-scale projects is limited to a **maximum of 18 months**.

Please also take note of the following conditions, which may affect the start of the project and thus the eligibility period for costs:

- If the project or part of its measures are subject to state aid provisions, implementation cannot start until approval has been given, confirmation of general eligibility has been issued or the subsidy contract has been signed.
- When planning the start and end of the activities take into consideration the circumstances of all project partners in the project with regard to mandatory provisions of public procurement law or national laws that have to be observed in case of national co-financing from public funds.



### 3 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, we describe the key steps in project development, the concepts involved and what makes a good project.

Project development is a complex and time-consuming task. Preparing for a project requires careful consideration of a wide range of factors, so we recommend that you take sufficient time to prepare your project. Problems not solved during project development can follow the project throughout its life cycle, consuming valuable resources and jeopardizing project implementation. If partners can resolve problems before submitting a proposal, they will have fewer difficulties during implementation.

It is important to distinguish between project development and filling in the application form.

Project development is primarily about planning the content and elaborating the details of implementation. During project development, time should also be taken to study the application form in order to take account of its structure in the conceptual design, so that the content of the proposal can be more concretely formulated. However, the form should only be filled in in the light of a mature concept.

Project development should be carried out in close cooperation of the partners, with continuous check and assessment of the progress made.

Regional coordinators should be consulted at all stages of project development.

**Chart 3: Project development process**





### 3.1 Relevance of the project idea

A project must always be set up to achieve certain objectives and to meet the justified, reasonable and well explained needs of a target group. Therefore your project has to address common territorial challenges (incl. legal, administrative physical or perceived border obstacles) or a joint asset of the programme area.

In order to be eligible for funding, the objectives of the project must be in line with the objectives of the funding program (see Chapter 2 of the IP), that were set up on the basis of an analysis of the border region's characteristics, current situation, strengths, challenges and opportunities (Chapter 1 of the IP). Common territorial challenges and assets of the programme region are addressed by the Programme through funding provided to the relevant initiatives.

Thus, once the basic project idea has been established, one of the first tasks is to check its relevance to the Programme's intervention logic. The [programme website](#) summarises the relevant and essential elements of the thematic areas of the Programme.

Coherence of the project and synergies with existing or new strategies and plans, including macro-regional strategies, for Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 especially the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), should be ensured, with special focus on those addressing environmental issues. For projects intending to produce joint strategies and action plans this is of particular relevance.

It shall be also considered how the project can build on the results of previous relevant projects, makes use of available knowledge, builds on existing results and practices and how it can be coordinated with any parallel initiatives. Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 wants to put particular emphasis on using knowledge and skills gained in environmental topics (especially by public authorities). Having an overview of other initiatives, past and present, regional coordinators can provide particular support in this respect.

### 3.2 Building a partnership

The implementation of a project idea needs collaborative partners and a close partnership, therefore all partners should already be involved in the preparation phase. The active participation of all partners is important, as their joint work will not only contribute to the achievement of the project results, but also to the development of the Austrian-Hungarian border region and a more intense cooperation in general.

The expectations about the partnership and the individual partners are described in the section 2.2 of this manual.

#### 3.2.1 Composition

The partnership should be designed to ensure the involvement of relevant and interested stakeholders, either directly by the participating partners or through them. It is desirable that Austrian and Hungarian partners complement each other in terms of both territory and competence.

In an optimally composed partnership, the contribution of all partners is essential to achieve the project objectives and expected results.

In cases where an organisation with expertise wishes to participate in the project but does not require funding, it is possible to involve it as a **strategic partner** without a budget.



### **Specific rule for the partnership in small-scale projects**

The option to involve **strategic partners** is **not available** for small-scale projects.

The system of cooperation criteria is described in section 2.2.3. These criteria reflect the closeness of cooperation between the partners. The more of the four cooperation criteria (joint planning, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing) are met, the stronger the cooperation and the stronger the cross-border dimension is. The criteria are also strongly interlinked: joint implementation usually is preceded by joint design and supported by the human and/or financial resources of all partners.

### **3.2.2 Tasks and responsibilities of the partnership**

In successful projects all partners play a defined and active role in the partnership. In compliance with their role, partner organisations shall have proven competence and/or experience in the thematic field concerned, as well as sufficient capacity to implement the project (financial-, human resources, etc.). The partnership shall be balanced with respect to levels, sectors, territory, consisting of partners that complement each other. The distribution of tasks should be clear and logical.

During implementation, partners are responsible for organising, implementing and pre-financing their own activities according to an agreed division of tasks, as well as for the reporting about content and financial implementation. The lead partner coordinates all these activities and prepares project-level content and financial reports to the Programme, receives the funding and distributes it to the partners according to their financial share. Towards the Programme the lead partner bears overall responsibility for whole project.

### **3.2.3 Partnership agreement**

The roles and responsibilities of the lead partner and the partners are set out in detail in the partnership agreement. The partnership agreement shall ensure that the rights and obligations of the lead partner under the subsidy contract can be delegated to the partners in accordance with their role in the project.

The partnership agreement shall be drawn up by the lead partner on the basis of the template provided and submitted as an annex to the application<sup>1</sup>. The template includes the minimum requirements for the partnership agreement and can only be supplemented. It is not permitted to add points of agreement that contradict its provisions.

#### **Attention!**

Preparing an agreement is a time-consuming legal task. The time needed for the partners to sign the partnership agreement must also be taken into account. We recommend that you inquire in advance about the time required by each partner. The lead partner must ensure timely preparation of the agreement.

<sup>1</sup> The signed partnership agreement is a mandatory annex from the date when the template by the programme becomes available (expected for the second submission round).



### 3.3 Identifying target groups, stakeholder involvement

The partnership must identify the target groups that will benefit from the achievements of the project, and any other stakeholders who may have an influence on the project's implementation. Although it is fine that the project partners themselves also enjoy the benefits of the project achievements, ideally the target group should be broader and involve other actors.

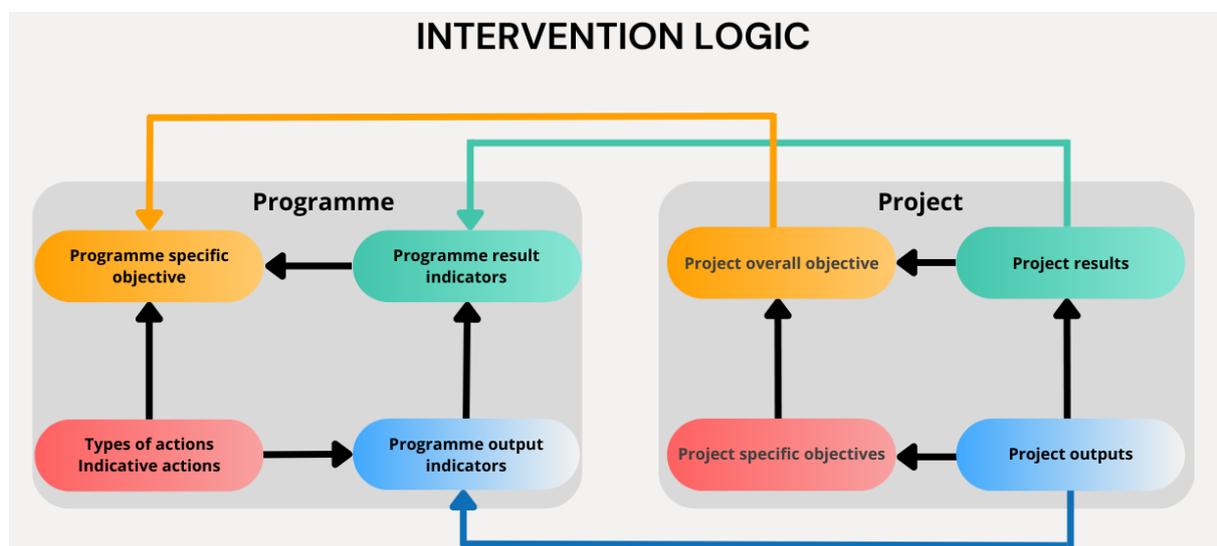
The Programme offers in the application form pre-defined target groups, but the applicants should give further details according to the specificities of the project about who and in what way will benefit from the project. In order for the project to be successful, the target groups and other stakeholders shall be involved as far as possible already in the project development phase, so that it is ensured, the project meets their real needs. During project implementation, the partners will have to report about how and to which extent the target groups have been reached.

### 3.4 Project intervention logic and indicators

Only those applications will be selected for funding that can realistically and successfully contribute to the programme targets. Therefore, it is particularly important for applicants to understand the intervention logic of the Programme and design their projects in compliance with it.

The system of programme- and project objectives and their interrelation are referred to as the "intervention logic". The links between the project's and the Programme's intervention logic are illustrated in the chart below:

**Chart 4: Intervention logic of the Programme and the projects**



It is essential that the project **overall objective supports the achievement of the programme specific objectives** as well as **project outputs and results contribute to the achievement of output and result indicator targets of the Programme**. The relevance of the project is based on these links; they should therefore be at the heart of project development. Also take good care of the proper quantification of the planned project outputs and results, so that the project can make clear and sufficient contribution to the achievement of programme output and result indicators. For these matters, please be sure to follow the guidance in the Programme's Indicator Manual.



In the next paragraphs you will find more details about how the project's objectives shall be designed in order to ensure the proper link to the programme targets and the contribution of project achievements to the programme targets.

The Programme has defined 4 thematic **priorities** and 1-3 **programme specific objectives** in each. The **types of action** and the **indicative actions** listed in the IP are examples that are derived from these specific objectives. They together provide the thematic framework for the support by the Programme.

In order for the programme targets to be measurable, programme output and result indicators are set up for each specific objective – please refer to the Indicator Manual, available for download on the programme homepage. The achievement of the **programme output indicators** is directly dependent on the outputs of the supported projects, just like the achievement of **programme result indicators** depend on the realisation of the project results.

To begin with, each project must **select a programme specific objective** that the project contributes to.

The **project overall objective** provides the general context for what the project is trying to achieve, and aligns with a selected programme specific objective. It relates to the strategic aspects of the project.

The **project specific objectives** (one specific objective per work package) are the targets that the project holders aim to achieve during the implementation, at the latest by the end of the project. They should be specific, measurable, achievable (realistic) and support the achievement of the project's overall objective. In operational terms, each project specific objective should be translated into a dedicated work package.

The proposed **outputs** represent important achievements of the supported project (respectively of the work package they are linked to), and they shall contribute to the work package's specific objective. They must be designed to contribute to the achievement of the output indicators predefined in the Programme. In addition, project outputs are the basis for the achievement of project results. When defining the outputs, take into account the expectations set out in the Indicator Manual (available on the programme website).

The selection of output indicator RCO87 (Organisations cooperating across borders) is compulsory. Standard projects must select at least one further output indicator.

The expected project **results** are the immediate advantages of carrying out the project, with particular reference to the effects/benefit of using the project outputs for the target groups. The expected result describes the change the project is aiming for by the end of the project or shortly thereafter. Its achievement is usually more exposed to external factors than in the case of outputs. Expected results should be defined in such a way that their achievement contributes to the achievement of the result indicators defined at programme level. When defining the project results, take into account the expectations set out in the Indicator Manual (available on the programme website).

Applicants shall define at least one project result. The selection of result indicator RCR84 (Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion) is compulsory. Standard projects must select at least one further result indicator, linked to the selected output indicator.

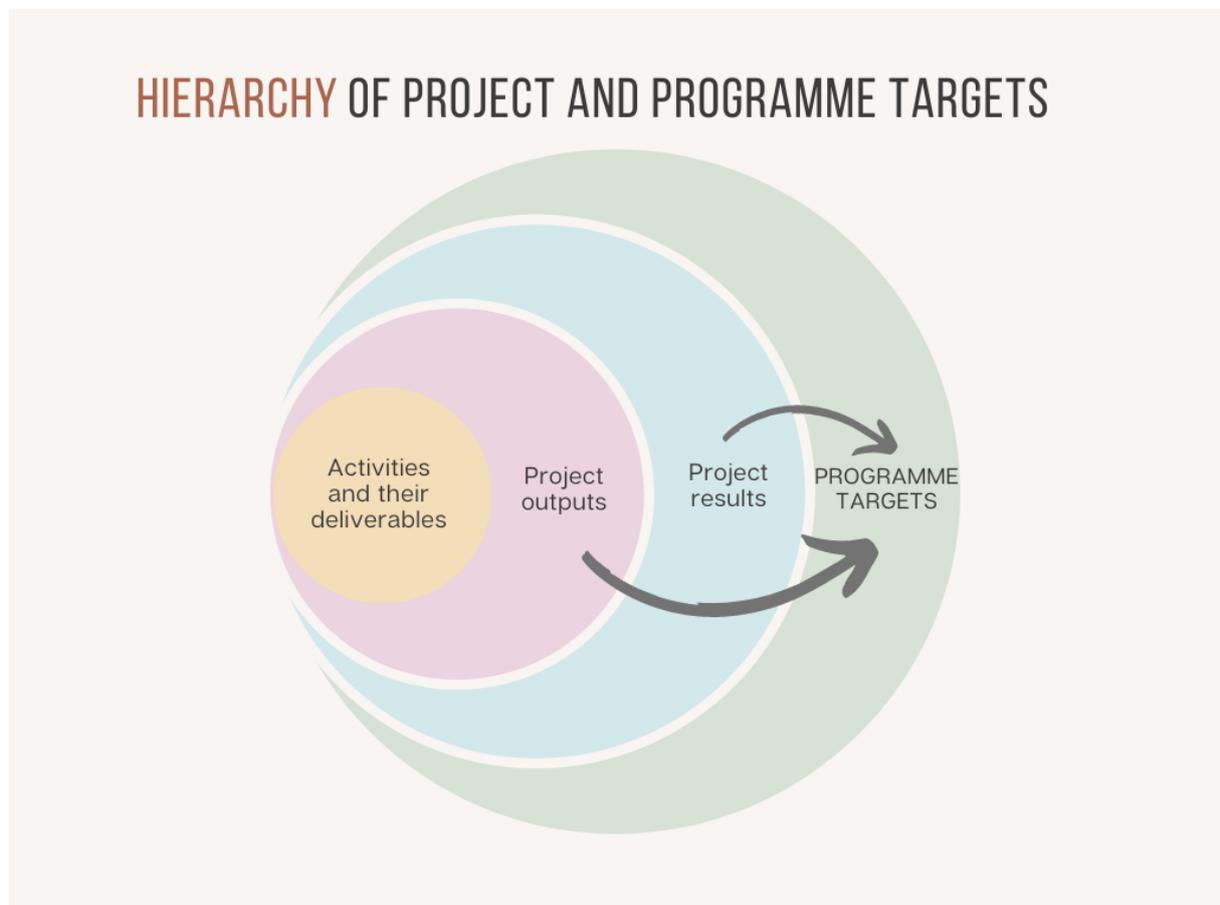


As far as the **quantification** of project outputs and results is concerned, please be realistic as far as possible and avoid over-ambitious targets. Both over- and under-achievements need to be explained at project closure, but serious under-achievements may also result in financial consequences, if the project has not achieved the goals for which it was approved.

Activities within the work packages shall be implemented with the target to achieve certain **deliverables**. Deliverables are not directly linked to the programme targets; they may nevertheless represent some important outcomes of the project that are not measured by output indicators. While the project specific objectives, outputs and results are directly linked to the programme targets, activities and deliverables are not, therefore there is certain flexibility during project implementation, as to what activities and deliverables are used to achieve the main goals of the project.

The following figure illustrates the complexities of the intervention logic from a slightly different perspective. This perspective of subordinate objectives helps to better understand the hierarchy of indicators.

**Chart 5: Hierarchy of programme and project targets**



When designing your project, define the overall and specific objective(s) of your project, the outputs and deliverables of the activities as well as the expected results of the project, bearing in mind the logic described above and in a way that reflects the objectives set at programme level.

Already in the project development phase, think about the durability and transferability of the outputs and deliverables: the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable



contribution to solving the challenges targeted, and ideally the outcomes of the project are applicable and replicable by other organisations, regions and/or countries outside of the actual project partnership.

### 3.5 Drawing up the work plan

The work plan shall be built on the project's objectives. Tasks are to be broken down into work packages and activities, with assigned (indicative) delivery periods. The time required for the implementation of the activities and any reserve time give the expected duration of the project.

#### 3.5.1 Structuring by work packages and activities

When preparing the work plan, you should group the activities around the project specific objectives. Closely linked activities together form work packages. Each activity must have a deliverable – activities should not be implemented just for their own sake.

Communication activities are not separated in a dedicated work package, but can be part of any work package; they support the achievement of the communication objective, which contributes to the achievement of the project specific objective of the work package.

Outputs are linked to the work packages. At least one output must be defined in each project, but it is not necessary for each work package to have an output. The selection of output indicator RCO87 (Organisations cooperating across borders) is compulsory. Standard projects must select at least one further output indicator. The number of outputs depends on the type and complexity of the project, but it is not recommended to define more than three outputs per project.

If the project includes investment elements, these shall be listed in the work packages, under the “Investments” tab. It may be important to clarify a common misunderstanding: not only investments in infrastructure (related to the budget category infrastructure and works) are included, but also the purchase of equipment with the aim to set up a service or a working environment can be considered as investment. Please note that investments in Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 should have a pilot nature or should have to be directly linked to a pilot action.

In case the project involves investments, detailed information shall be provided about their investment’s justification, cross-border relevance, who’s benefitting, the investment’s pilot nature (if relevant) and expected use, location, risks, ownership and maintenance issues. For investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, please ensure that an assessment of expected impacts of climate change is carried out<sup>2</sup>.

Related to infrastructural investments – but also in cases where only planning is concerned – Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 encourages project holders to consider the values of the New Bauhaus initiative (sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion)<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> In line with Article 22(4)(j) of the Interreg Regulation

<sup>3</sup> [https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en)



#### *Specific rule for small-scale projects related to infrastructure and works*

Small-scale projects must not include investment in infrastructure and works (or costs in the respective category)

Technical requirements and permissions (e.g. building permits) for the investment according to the respective national requirements should also be listed, and submitted as an annex to the application, if possible – otherwise it should be indicated when they are expected to be available.

The work package structure of the project is determined by its content and complexity. The project can be built along one single specific objective and a set of related activities (one single work package), or it can be structured by setting up several parallel work packages as required. Building the project around several specific objectives and their linked work packages may be useful for the design and implementation of more complex initiatives. Please, bear in mind that standard projects shall not have more than five work packages.

#### *Specific rule on the work plan of small-scale projects*

Small-scale projects must include only **one** single **work package**, with **one project specific objective**.

### 3.5.2 Time plan

Concerning requirements for the timing of projects see section 2.4 of this manual, and section 3.5 of the Eligibility Manual.

At submission projects are defined by their duration: start and end dates are added to the supplementary information about projects in the course of contracting. The duration of the project shall be estimated **in months**.

The Programme applies standard reporting periods of 6 months. The number of periods for a project is defined by dividing the project duration in months by six. If the duration of a project in months cannot be divided by six, the last period is shorter.

Activities and work packages are defined on the timeline by the periods in which they start and end. Similarly, the deliverables and outputs are linked to the period in which they are delivered. Activities, deliverables and outputs shall be in a logical time-sequence.

Regular reporting about the progress of the project is expected by each partner separately and by the lead partner about the project as a whole, following each period. Financial reporting is by default also linked to the reporting periods, however the Programme allows certain flexibility in this, if substantial expenditure occurs in mid-period, or if only minor or no expenditures occur during some of the periods. More details about this will be available in the Implementation Manual.

### 3.6 Project management, communication and other horizontal issues

Effective management and coordination procedures as well as good communication are integral parts of project implementation, their proper planning is crucial.



### 3.6.1 Project management and coordination

Responsibility for the project throughout its lifecycle rests with the lead partner. That is why the partners must agree early on who will take on the role of lead partner and the responsibilities that go with it! The lead partner is responsible for the management of the project from submission of the application through technical implementation to administrative-financial closure, including reporting obligations at project level.

The coordination of each work package may be shared between the partners, and all partners should actively participate in their implementation (albeit to varying degrees), but the lead partner is ultimately responsible for the project activities, results and financial implementation vis-à-vis the Programme. The subsidy contract will be concluded between the Managing Authority of the Programme and the lead partner, who will act on behalf of the entire partnership and bear the legal and financial responsibility for the obligations arising from the application. In this context, it should be noted that the rights and obligations of the partners between themselves are governed by the partnership agreement (see in section 3.2.3).

Compliance with the stringent requirements for the lead partner must also be demonstrated in the application, at the partner motivation and contribution section. The ideal lead partner will have a broad range of professional experience, including specific knowledge and competences relevant to the objectives of the project. In addition, the lead partner will have experience in project management (preferably in previous EU-funded and international cooperation projects, although this should not impose limitations on the involvement of new applicants in the Programme) and adequate human, financial and infrastructural capacity to ensure a smooth implementation. Project partners should also be able to demonstrate their appropriate competences and available capacities.

A contact person shall be appointed for each partner who is responsible for contact between partners (and vis-à-vis the Programme, if needed) and has the appropriate language skills. The language of internal communication may be German or Hungarian, depending on the choice of the partnership, and in some cases English (however, the application must always be filled in German and Hungarian).

If the lead partner is not able to fully assume the professional or management tasks, external experts may be involved to ensure the quality of the project implementation.

#### **Attention!**

Project coordination, quality management, general approach to financial management and reporting need to be described in the Section C.7 of the application form, but they are not linked to activities and deliverables in a dedicated management work package.

### 3.6.2 Communication and visibility

#### *3.6.2.1 General obligations*

The communication and visibility obligations of projects are governed in the Articles 47 and 50, as well as Annex IX of the Common Provisions Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/1060) and Article 36 of the Interreg Regulation.

Please note that all projects implemented in the Programme must comply with the communication and visibility provisions of these regulations, such as:



- Acknowledgement of European Union funding must be ensured by beneficiaries on their printed material and online pages;
- Reference to the emblem of the European Union (flag)<sup>4</sup>;
- Reference to the funding from Interreg.

The use of the programme logo or the combined programme-project logo derived from the previous one automatically complies with the above requirements. More details about the communication rules specific to the Programme (inter alia the specificities to logo use, infrastructure projects, events, project publications, promotion materials, information boards and websites, etc.) are set out in the Communication Manual within the Implementation Manual, to be published on the [programme webpage](#).

### 3.6.2.2 *Communication in the work plan*

Project communication is supposed to contribute to the achievement of project specific objectives, therefore in the application form the relevant communication objectives and activities have to be defined as part of the thematic work packages.

**Communication objectives** aim at changes in the target audience's knowledge, belief or behaviour. To achieve a project specific objective, partners may need to accomplish one or more communication objectives. For example, to limit pollution in a city (overall objective), the specific objective of a work package is to increase the share of public transport in (project specific objective). For this, it may be needed to: 1) convince commuters to take the bus instead of their private car (communication objective 1); 2) convince local politicians to put in place specific measures to reduce car traffic in the city centre (objective 2), etc.

The information and publicity work should be an integral part of the project work plan, supporting the activities and the quality of the project by drawing the attention of specific target groups to the project's achievements. Think about the specificities of the target groups at different levels (e.g. partner organisations, regions, sectors, national/EU level) and adapt your measures and activities to them. Following are some suggestions for the aspects to set up a proper communication plan:

- **Who** is the **target** group (audience) of the communication work, what do you want to achieve?
- **How** to best reach the target group, which channels should be used? (e.g. electronic or print media, website or newsletter, social media, networking, events or conferences, personal contacts, etc.)
- **What type** of information and promotion material should be prepared for each group? In what **language**? **When** (at start-up, implementation or final stage of the project)? Consider the environment and minimise the carbon footprint of the project! For example, use the print media only to the necessary extent, and avoid the production of unnecessary and unsustainable promotion material and giveaways.
- **Who** is **responsible** for the communication – what are the responsibilities of each partner?
- How much **time** is needed for each of the planned actions and what are the costs involved?

---

<sup>4</sup> Reference to the specific fund (i.e. ERDF) is not needed.



While the communication objectives and linked activities are integral parts of the work plan, the general approach to communication should be described in the section of the application form about project management.

### 3.6.3 Horizontal principles

Horizontal principles:

- equal opportunities and non-discrimination,
- equality between men and women,
- environment protection and sustainable development

should, to the possible extent, be integrated in your project activities, outputs and results, thus ensuring their respect.

Projects have to respect the fundamental rights<sup>5</sup> as well as the horizontal principles of equal opportunity, gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance to Article 9 of the Common Provisions Regulation, during all phases of the project lifecycle, i.e. from its design and preparation to its implementation and reporting. In particular, it has to be ensured that equality between women and men is taken into account and promoted throughout the project life cycle.

Projects have to describe their specific contributions to horizontal principles in the application form. This will then be assessed for quality and, in case of project selection, monitored by the Programme. Any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation has to be prevented. Accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account.

Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 puts specific emphasis on environment protection and sustainable development. Therefore, it is suggested in general, that projects should follow an “environmental sustainability by design” approach. This means that environmental or broader sustainability considerations including human health effects shall not be treated as “after-thoughts” but be integrated from the beginning into all activities, as far as possible. Projects should ideally contribute to the regeneration of the environment and ecosystem functions and services, foster climate neutrality and support the sustainable management and enhancement of cultural landscapes.

Please specify which possible effects (positive, neutral or negative) your project will likely have on the environment, by considering among others the following aspects: water, soil, air and climate, population and human health, fauna, flora and biodiversity, cultural heritage and landscape. This is particularly relevant in case of pilot investments.

Concerning sustainable development and environment protection the Programme recommends applicants to consider the following aspects:

#### **Project content and synergies:**

- Coherence and synergies with strategies and plans addressing environmental issues, as well as using/building on related available knowledge shall be specifically addressed in the section of the AF about project relevance (see 3.1 in the manual).

---

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in compliance with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060



- Ensure sustainable collaboration between public institutions, research organisations and relevant stakeholders addressing environmental issues through new or revitalised cooperation networks.

### **Stakeholder and public involvement:**

- Involvement of relevant stakeholders on both sides of the border that address environmental issues, especially those that are or will be involved in the implementation of joint strategies, plans and actions, and/or who will likely be affected by them.
- Involvement of small communities in the context of environmental protection.
- Communities in both countries that are active in promoting sustainable development should be considered to foster collaboration and share knowledge and good practices (e.g. communities promoting creative, sustainable, smart and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, communities promoting eco-innovation etc.).
- Involvement of civil society in participatory decision-making processes should be given priority.

### **Implementing provisions:**

- Application of Green Public Procurement (GPP) practices, when feasible. Information about the possibilities to use GPP requirements can be found on the website of the European Commission<sup>6</sup>.
- Minimize the project's carbon footprint, such as:
  - using and sharing digital documents to the largest extent possible,
  - organising conferences and events in a sustainable way (e.g. by combining different meetings in one place, reducing printing and using recyclable materials, using video conference facilities, etc.), without compromising the quality and effectiveness of the planned activities related to them and the collaboration and networking between stakeholders in the programme area,
  - avoiding the distribution of unnecessary and unsustainable materials during project implementation (e.g. unnecessary and unsustainable promotional materials and giveaways),
  - implementing activities with limited use of energy and natural resources,
  - giving preference to environmentally-friendly mobility options (in particular for short travel distances),
  - considering resource efficiency and the use of renewable energy at all levels,
  - making use of regional supply chains (reducing supply chain length and CO2 emissions).

For further information on the main environmental protection objectives and their interlinkages with the programme strategy, please refer also to the programme strategic environmental assessment (SEA) available at the [programme website](#).

## **3.7 Planning the budget**

After defining the targets and the activities needed to achieve them, the linked costs shall be estimated and the financial resources allocated for each partner and together on the project level. A thorough and careful budgeting ensures the secure financial basis for project, that adequate liquidity is available and that financial risks are kept to a minimum.

---

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu\\_gpp\\_criteria\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm)



Further support for budget planning is provided in the Eligibility Manual, with detailed rules on the general eligibility of expenditure, with the description of possible budget composition of a project, and also with detailed rules per cost categories.

### **Attention!**

The budget must be defined partner by partner in the "Partners overview/LP or PP/Budget and Co-financing" sections in the Jems monitoring system.

### **3.7.1 Use of the euro**

The budget of the project must be defined in euro. Consequently, costs that are foreseen to be incurred in other currencies, such as HUF in Hungary, should also be budgeted in euro.

In line with the Article 38(5) of the Interreg Regulation, "expenditure paid in another currency shall be converted into euro by each beneficiary coming from countries which have not adopted the euro as their currency using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission"<sup>7</sup> in the month during which that expenditure was submitted for verification. The conversion is carried out automatically in the Programme monitoring system during the partner level reporting. Please also refer to section 3.8 of the Eligibility Manual!

### **Attention!**

The rule of the Interreg Regulation is implemented in the Jems monitoring system so that during implementation

- Hungarian beneficiaries (coming from a country which has NOT adopted the euro as its currency) shall record the expenditure incurred in HUF (or any currency other than euro) in the original currency to their financial report, and then it is converted automatically in the system to euro.
- if Austrian beneficiaries (coming from a country which has adopted the euro as its currency) had expenditure in HUF (or any currency other than euro) it would need to be first converted to euro according to national rules, and only then it should be recorded in the monitoring system.

### **3.7.2 Expenditures**

The budget must be in line with the work plan and planned in a cost-effective, economic and efficient manner. For limitations on the size of the project budget, see section 2.3.2

Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027 uses an extended selection of simplified cost options (SCOs), including lump sum financing for preparation costs, unit costs for staff financing, and flat rate financing available practically in all cost categories. More details are available in the Eligibility Manual.

The budget should be set per partner and per cost category, but should also be allocated to reporting periods on an indicative basis. If a budget item is related to an investment, it needs to be indicated by selecting one of the investments already recorded in the work

<sup>7</sup> The monthly exchange rates of the European Commission are published on [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)



packages – the list of investments is available in a drop-down menu. This multi-dimensional approach to budget planning requires great care.

After the outline of the project and the activities per work packages are set up, each partner shall prepare its own budget, which is then summarised at project level. The lead partner is responsible for ensuring that the budget is proportionate to the project activities, expected results and the role of each partner.

It is strongly advised to consult the Eligibility Manual throughout the setup of the budget. Especially the eligibility rules new to the programme compared to the previous period (mainly, but not exclusively SCOs, most specifically the application of unit costs for the financing of staff expenditure) may require special attention of the applicants.

### **Specific rule on the budget of small-scale projects**

While defining the budget of a small-scale project the **extensive use of SCOs** is mandatory (see details in sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the Eligibility Manual).

Please also note that the Programme does not support investments in infrastructure and works in small-scale projects.

### **3.7.3 Financing**

In addition to the expenditure side, **the resources of the budget** must be identified. Maximum 80 % of the partner's eligible costs as non-repayable grant from the ERDF must be supplemented by at least 20 % national financial contribution (either public or private, own resources or third-party financing).

The availability of the full project financing must be documented:

- If the co-financing of the Programme is supplemented partly or fully by own resources, the partner concerned must submit an own resource declaration as an annex to the application.
- Availability of a financial contribution from a third-party must be proven by a declaration of financial contribution, submitted as an annex to the application.
- If a financial commitment (own contribution or third-party funding) from a municipality or (in Hungary) a multi-purpose association, etc. is bound to a board decision or an equivalent document, a copy of this must also be attached.

A template for the declaration on the availability of the financial contribution is [downloadable](#) from the programme webpage.

#### **Attention!**

Finding the financing institution(s) and securing a contribution may be a time-consuming task, so it is worth contacting potential contributors at an early stage of project development. It is especially advisable to consult the regional coordinators about project financing.

For Hungarian project holders the Hungarian government provides national contribution to the co-financing by the Programme. The (automatic) government contribution is in general



35 % of the partner's verified total eligible costs. The remaining minimum 5 % of the partner's budget must be provided by the applicant organisation from its own resources or from third-party contributions (public or private). For certain organisations defined in the relevant national legislation<sup>8</sup>, the government contribution is maximum 40 % of the partner's budget.

In Austria public contribution may come from regional sources or from the federal line ministries, but other public and private sources may also be considered. It is recommended to consult the regional coordinators on the composition of the funding at the project preparation stage.

For specific rules regarding maximum public funding in case of state aid, see section 3.11 in the Eligibility Manual.

For more information on the composition of project funding and how to avoid double funding, please refer to section 2.3.2 of this manual and section 3.2 of the Eligibility Manual.

### 3.7.4 Liquidity during implementation

Partners should get prepared for the pre-financing of the project (ensuring liquidity) already at the project development phase.

#### **Attention!**

The implementation of the project needs to be pre-financed by the partners, as the ERDF funds will be paid only after reports have been processed. Take into account the time needed until the funds are disbursed!

The processing of the reports involves several steps. Partner level reports are verified and the declared expenditure is certified by national controllers. The lead partner uses the partners' progress reports to compile the report on project level and includes the certified expenditure for the project level financial reporting. After processing by the other programme institutions (Joint Secretariat, Managing Authority), the ERDF part is transferred to the account of the lead partner.

Care must be taken that financial reports include only eligible expenditure with all necessary documentation in order to ensure smooth control and certification process, and are submitted on time to be included in the upcoming project level report. Delays in the reporting (partner or project level) or in the control process may prolong the need for pre-financing, thus partners should carefully assess their pre-financing capacity and build up reserves for liquidity, particularly if they are involved in several pre-financed projects.

## 3.8 What makes a good project?

There is no universal recipe that will magically produce a successful application. Designing a good project is a complex task that depends on many factors. However, if you want to increase the chances of your application being selected by the Monitoring Committee and of your project being successfully implemented, we recommend to regularly assess your

<sup>8</sup> Hungarian Government Decree 241/2023 (VI.20.) on the implementation of cross-border Interreg Programmes in the programming period 2021-2027



idea against the selection criteria during the planning phase, and to use them as a comprehensive checklist before finalising the application. For the details please refer to Part 4 of the Manuals, the Selection Criteria and Methodology.

### 3.9 Where can I turn for help?

The programme institutions are available to applicants at all stages of the project cycle. In accordance with the division of tasks within the Programme, please contact the regional coordinators mainly for questions concerning content and project specific funding. Technical questions concerning the rules, forms, procedures, monitoring system (Jems) etc. of the Programme can be addressed to the Joint Secretariat (and the Managing Authority).

Prior consultation with the regional coordinators will help avoid design errors. Consulting them is considered in the project evaluation/selection process (see the Selection Criteria) as an asset. Regional coordinators will also assist beneficiaries with content-related issues during project implementation.

The contact details of the Managing Authority, the Joint Secretariat, the regional coordinators of the four Austrian provinces and the Western Transdanubian Region can be found on the programme website (<https://interreg-athu.eu/en/contact/>).

**(Ongoing) consultation with the regional coordinators is strongly recommended.**



## 4 COMPILING THE APPLICATION

### 4.1 Jems: the online application and project-monitoring system

Jems (Joint Electronic Monitoring System) is an online application and monitoring system, successor of the first such initiative eMS, developed by the Interact Programme<sup>9</sup> (an inter-regional EU wide programme, supporting EU cooperation programmes). Like many other Interreg programmes, Interreg AT-HU has chosen Jems in order to provide a standardised, applicant-friendly and easy to use interface for project and programme monitoring.

Jems can be accessed via standard web browsers like Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge or Mozilla Firefox (recent versions). For working in Jems, it is recommended to use a PC or notebook rather than mobile devices. Please follow this link: <http://jems.interreg-athu.eu>.

The system supports projects throughout the entire cycle, from submission through project selection, reporting, modifications until project closure.

For more information on how to use the Jems system and how to fill in the application form, please refer to the Jems Manual (Part 2 of the Manuals).

### 4.2 Filling in the application form

Once you have the project set up according to the steps as proposed in section 3, you can fill in the application form. Pouring the project into the format of the application form, however, there are a few points to bear in mind.

Please try to be as detailed and **precise** as possible, but as **brief** and to the point as possible. Take into account the character limits in Jems. Ensure that the German and Hungarian texts of the application are completed in all cases and that the translation is accurate. Involve your partner from the other side of the border in checking the translation!

The planning of the project does not start by filling in the application, but it should not be postponed to the last minute either. Ensure that you have **time to cross-check the content** of the application with your partners and the regional coordinators concerned once it is complete.

Do not forget to collect the full set of **required annexes** for your project and ensure that the necessary signatures are obtained in due time. Scan and upload the annexes in legible quality, taking care of the size of the documents. A list of the required annexes can be found in the Annex of this manual. For information on the formal requirements, please also refer to the Selection Criteria and Methodology.

For details on how to fill in the application form, please refer to the Jems Manual, concerning content requirements sections 2 and 3 above.

### 4.3 Submitting the application

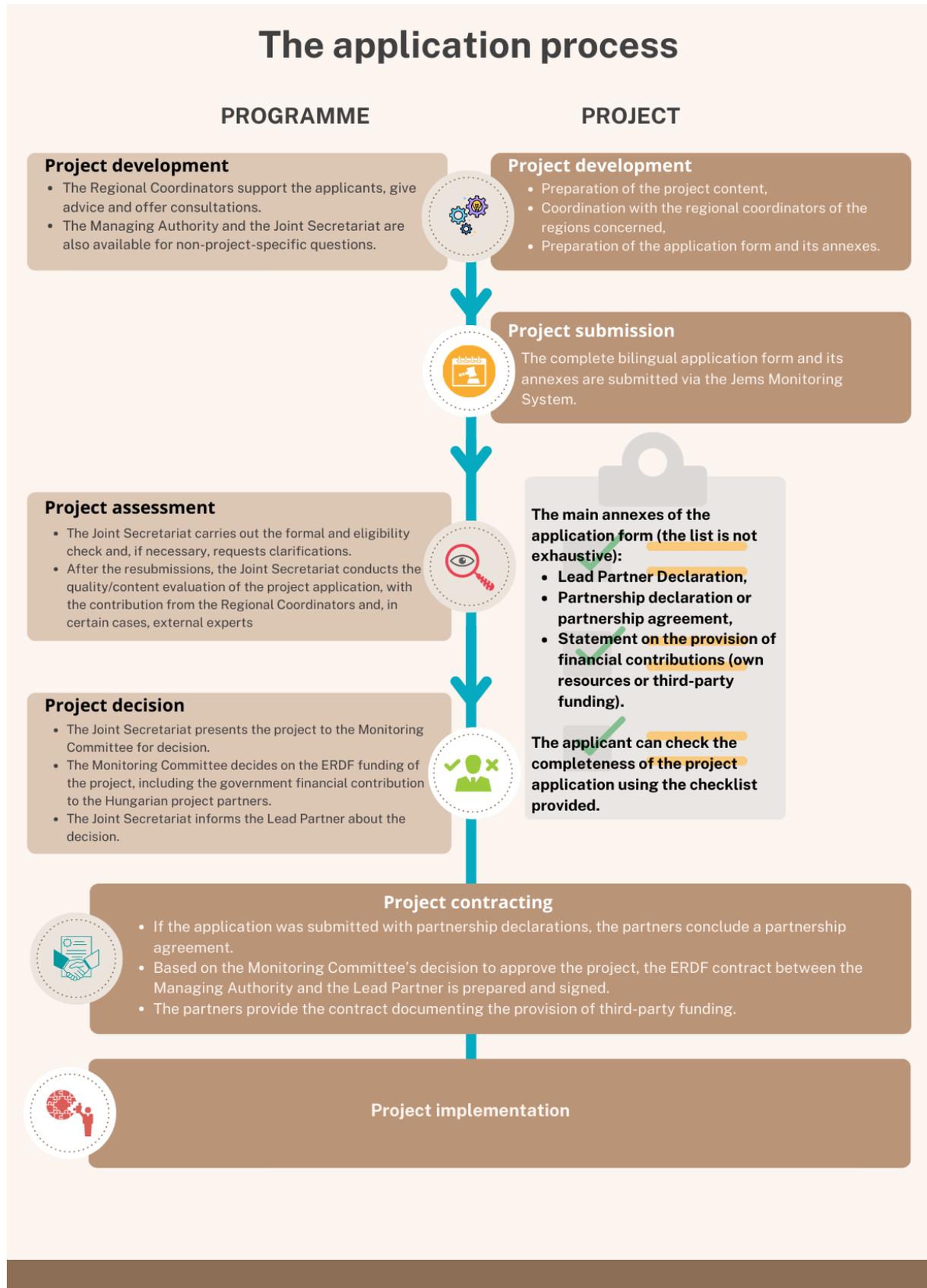
Applications to the Programme can **be submitted only via** the **Jems** online system. The application (including annexes) is submitted by the lead partner.

---

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the Interact Jems initiative, please visit this page: [www.interact-eu.net/#o=jems](http://www.interact-eu.net/#o=jems).



Chart 6: The application process



Once the application form has been filled in, please cross-check the project and make any necessary corrections before submission. Do not forget to **upload** the collected, completed and scanned **attachments!** Jems performs pre-submission checks that prevent applicants



to submit applications with obvious formal and administrative errors; however, not all possible errors can be subject of automatic controls by the system.

After the application form is submitted, the application phase is closed and the form cannot be further edited. After you have successfully submitted your application, it's status is changed from "Draft" to "Submitted", which is visible on the project overview page.

In Interreg AT-HU 2021-2027, applications can be **submitted continuously** throughout the programme period, i.e. there are no fixed deadlines for submission. Applications are selected by the Monitoring Committee, which meets approximately twice a year. In order to allow sufficient time for the assessment, projects can be normally proposed for decision if they are received by the Joint Secretariat **10 weeks before the meeting of the Monitoring Committee**. Any deviation from this deadline, and the date by which the Monitoring Committee will discuss the proposals received at its next meeting, will be published on the website. Applications received thereafter will be discussed at the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee. Information on the forthcoming Monitoring Committee meeting is available on the programme website.



## 5 PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Once the lead partner has submitted the proposal to the Joint Secretariat via the electronic monitoring system, the project evaluation starts. The assessment is carried out by the Joint Secretariat (which may involve external experts in certain cases). The first step is to check if the administrative and eligibility criteria are met, followed by the quality assessment of the project's content. The criteria and checklists are set out in the document on Selection Criteria and Methodology.

### 5.1 Administrative and eligibility assessment

During the administrative and eligibility assessment (also called formal assessment), the Joint Secretariat will check the administrative completeness of the application (including the availability of the annexes to be submitted) and the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria.

If, during the assessment, the Joint Secretariat finds that any of the administrative or eligibility criteria are not met, the applicant will receive a letter with a request for clarification and completion of missing documents. If the formal/eligibility criteria are not met within the deadline for amendment, the project cannot be submitted for decision to the Monitoring Committee.

For more details about the administrative and eligibility assessment, please refer to the Selection Criteria and Methodology.

Please note that if in the course of formal assessment, the Joint Secretariat finds out that some part of the application form has not been sufficiently filled in to enable proper quality assessment (for example, but not exclusively, concerning specifications of the budget items), they may ask for added information to be submitted in the clarification round. The content of the application is, however, not checked during the formal assessment (refer to B.4 in the Selection Criteria and Methodology).

### 5.2 Quality assessment

The Joint Secretariat performs a quality assessment of all formally compliant applications and produces a non-binding recommendation to support the decision to be taken by the Monitoring Committee. The Joint Secretariat may, if necessary, involve external experts in the assessment. The Monitoring Committee's decision may differ from the Joint Secretariat's recommendation.

For more details about the quality assessment, please refer to the Selection Criteria and Methodology.



## 6 FUNDING DECISION

After the quality assessment is completed, the Joint Secretariat presents all projects that meet the administrative and eligibility criteria to the Monitoring Committee for a decision.

The Monitoring Committee meets usually twice a year. It decides on the approval of the projects and on the ERDF co-financing in euro. According to the related national legislation, the government contribution to Hungarian partners (see section 3.7.3) is provided without further tendering, thus the decision of the Monitoring Committee is also applicable to that part of the budget.

The Monitoring Committee takes its decisions by consensus, which means that all Austrian and Hungarian voting members participating in the meeting must agree to support each project.

After the minutes of the meeting are approved, the Managing Authority formally notifies the lead partner in writing of the decision to **approve**, **approve with conditions**, **reject**, **postpone** the application or to put it on the **reserve list**.

The reasons for the decision of the Monitoring Committee, especially in the case of rejection of applications, as well as the conditions related to the project are recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and the applicant is informed in writing.

If the project is approved with conditions, these may need to be fulfilled

1. until contracting – in this case the Joint Secretariat controls the fulfilment of the conditions before the contract is issued,
2. or during project implementation – in this case the fulfilment of the conditions is subject to reporting during project implementation, and controlled by the relevant bodies accordingly.

Typical conditions may concern the activities, the related time plan, the partnership or the budget, but may vary project by project.

The Monitoring Committee specifically defines conditions so that their fulfilment can be clearly checked. For example, if the condition concerns a budget cut, it is clearly defined how much (in euro or in percentage) the budget shall be decreased, if the total project or certain partner(s), or if specific budget items are concerned, etc. This may happen if (on the basis of the assessment by the JS) the Monitoring Committee sees the budget or some parts of it disproportionate or based on the provided specifications not in compliance with the market prices (using the general price levels in similar projects or internet research, etc.). In the latter case, concerning specific budget items, the Monitoring Committee may give the Joint Secretariat a mandate to request from the project holder proper justification in the course of contracting and make necessary reductions accordingly.

The Monitoring Committee may postpone the decision on an application if it finds the objectives of the project in principle worth supporting, but sees the application not sufficiently developed/prepared. In such cases, the applicant may resubmit a revised application in accordance with the Monitoring Committee's recommendations within one year of the original decision.

An application will be placed on the reserve list if the Monitoring Committee finds the objectives of the project in principle worth supporting but it cannot be funded due to lack of programme financial resources.



The Monitoring Committee's funding decision ensures the ERDF funding. On this basis, third-party contributions that were documented in advance by financing declarations shall be committed in contractual form.



## 7 CONTRACTING

### 7.1 Concluding the partnership agreement

The partnership agreement ensures that the rights and obligations of the lead partner under the subsidy contract can be assigned to the partners in accordance with their role in the project (see also above in section 3.2.3).

If the partnership agreement has already been signed according to the template provided and submitted as an annex to the application, it comes into force once the project has been approved. In certain cases, however, the partnership agreement may need to be amended, for example on the basis of a conditional approval by the Monitoring Committee. If this becomes necessary, amendments to the partnership agreement must be done as soon as possible but in any case before the subsidy contract is signed. If the partnership agreement is amended during the lifetime of the project, the programme bodies must be informed immediately. The partnership agreement shall not contain provisions contrary to the subsidy contract.

### 7.2 ERDF subsidy contract

The ERDF subsidy contract is concluded between the Managing Authority and the lead partner.

Prior to the conclusion of the contract, the Managing Authority must ensure that the national controllers verifying the eligibility and regularity of the expenditure declared by each partner are duly assigned to the partners.

During contract preparation the project holder(s) and the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority, with the involvement of the regional coordinators, review the approved project, discuss the requirements by the programme in order to enable proper and efficient project implementation, clarify the way conditions for approval (if applicable) have to be fulfilled and may implement minor adaptations in the project based on a mandate by the Monitoring Committee.

In the contracting phase, it needs to be ensured that the user who created the application in Jems hands over the project to the user who will represent the lead partner during implementation. This may be necessary, for example, if the user creating the application was an external consultant. User rights may need to be reviewed and updated before project implementation to allow access for partner level reporting and to perform tasks of the lead partner (modifications, project level reports). For this, see the project privileges section in Jems application form.

The subsidy contract is produced based on the data recorded in the approved application form. Further information required for the contract or for project implementation is recorded in Jems during the contracting phase. Such supplementary information includes:

- start and end date of the project,
- project management related details,
- bank details,
- location and person responsible for storing documents,
- intervention codes (for statistical purposes at programme level),
- user assignment per partner,
- national control assignment per partner,



- etc.

The subject matter of the contract is at all times the application approved by the Monitoring Committee and its valid modifications (recorded and approved in Jems), including annexes submitted as part of the application and stored in Jems.

### **7.3 Financing contracts**

The documents proving the commitment of national funds must be submitted to the responsible national controller together with the first financial reports of the partners, but at the latest before the first ERDF payment by the Programme to the lead partner. If the commitment is not made by this deadline, the funding decision shall be annulled and no expenditure may be claimed. Any modification or termination of these contracts shall be notified without delay by the project partner concerned to the Managing Authority and the responsible national controller.



## 8 COMPLAINTS

In accordance with Article 69 (7) of the Common Provisions Regulation, a procedure for examination of complaints is set up by the Programme. A complaint can be lodged against decisions taken by programme bodies in relation to project applicants or beneficiaries during the project lifecycle. Depending on the implementation phase concerned and the administrative body a complaint is lodged against, different procedures apply. Thus, different cases for complaints can be specified as follows:

1. complaints related to the project selection process,
  - a. complaints against a formal and eligibility decision,
  - b. complaints against the Monitoring Committee's decision,
2. complaints related to the project implementation, based on provisions in the subsidy contract,
3. complaints related to controls and audits.

Other complaints that do not fall under one of the described categories are considered as beyond the influence of the Programme, and thus might be lodged against the body or institution responsible.

It is only the lead partner who is entitled to file a complaint, and thus acts on behalf of all partners.

Complaints must be sent in writing within 14 days after information about the decision concerned is received. The lead partner shall clearly specify the failures or mistakes that have happened and include clear references to the relevant programme documents (Inter-reg Programme, Application Manual, Eligibility Manual, Implementation Manual incl. Communication Guide, etc.).

If a complaint includes an incomplete description of a case that does not allow for a thorough assessment by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat or another competent body to be involved, further information may be requested at any time of the procedure. If the information requested is not provided within the period of time as specified by the requesting authority/body (at least 3 working days) the case shall be closed without further investigation.

In general, prior to filing a complaint, the lead partner is strongly recommended to request additional technical or legal information. Experience has shown that technical exchange on this level between the lead partner and the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat has brought a quick clarification of the concerned cases minimising administrative burden. Such request of information interrupts the deadline for submitting a complaint until the day of the reply by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat.

All complaints related to the three specified cases have to be submitted to the Joint Secretariat who acts on behalf of the Managing Authority. If the Managing Authority is not directly concerned by the complaint, it will discuss the case with the relevant programme bodies. The complaint is examined by Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat – if relevant, in discussion with the programme body concerned – on the basis of the information brought forward by the lead partner, considering if the complaint is justified or not. The Managing Authority may consult the Monitoring Committee during examination of the complaint. In any case, the Monitoring Committee is informed about all complaints filed to the Managing Authority and on the decision taken.



### 8.1 Complaints related to the project selection process

Complaints may be made if failures during the project selection process of an application affecting the funding decision are suspected. Failures mean that the project assessment did not comply with the selection criteria and/or the procedures laid down in the Interreg Programme or the Application Manual. Also technical mistakes may occur resulting in an incomplete or wrong assessment. If a project is not selected for funding as a consequence of such failures, the lead partner has the right to file a complaint. More concrete, two sub-cases for complaints against the project selection process can be defined:

- complaints against the application of the administrative and eligibility criteria and thus the result of the assessment (as follows, called "complaint against eligibility decision")
- complaints against the Monitoring Committee's decision (as follows, called "complaint against funding decision")

If a complaint against an eligibility decision is considered justified, the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat will review the project application and the related section of the assessment, subject to the complaint. Following this a different eligibility decision may be taken. The final decision on the complaint is communicated by the Managing Authority to the lead partner in writing. This decision will be final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings within the Programme if the complaint is based on the same ground.

In case of a complaint against the funding decision, the assessment of the project application and the related decision by the Monitoring Committee cannot be revised. However, the lead partner may request further information and details from the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat on the assessment performed and the reasons for rejecting the project application.

### 8.2 Complaints related to project implementation, based on provisions in the subsidy contract

The lead partner, on behalf of the partnership, may file complaints against acts, omissions and/or decisions of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat on any issue covered by the subsidy contract. Such complaints are examined by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat on the basis of information brought forward by the lead partner. The Managing Authority will inform the lead partner as soon as possible, whether the Managing Authority is competent to investigate and decide on the issue or if the case is beyond its sphere of competence.

In general, the subsidy contract stipulates that the contracting parties use their best endeavours to resolve any disputes eventually arising from the contract amicably. However, if no agreement on the application of the subsidy contract provision or their interpretation can be found, the LP is entitled to address the competent court under consideration of the rules as laid down in the subsidy contract and related to Austrian national law.

### 8.3 Complaint related to controls and audits

The lead partner, on behalf of the partnership, may file complaints against acts, omissions and/or decisions of control and audit bodies, being responsible control bodies, programme



auditors or auditors from any other national or EU institution. Such complaints are examined by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat on the basis of information brought forward by the lead partner, in close cooperation with the body concerned.



## 9 ANNEXES

<b>Annex I:</b>	Checklist for the annexes of the application form
<b>Annex II</b>	Templates for the annexes of the application form: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Checklist to the annexes of the application form (including optional annexes without a template)</li><li>2. Lead Partner Declaration / Partner Declaration</li><li>3. Partnership Agreement</li><li>4. Financing Contribution (applicable both for own resources and third-party financing)</li><li>5. De-Minimis Declaration</li></ol>



## Annex I: Checklist for the annexes of the application form

### Obligatory annexes

*Obligatory annexes must be signed by the authorised signatory, scanned and attached to the electronic AF and be submitted by the deadline. In case the applicant uses electronic signature, the file bearing electronic signature shall be submitted.*

1. lead partner and partner declarations according to the programme's template
2. partnership agreement<sup>10</sup>
3. declaration about national contribution(s) (issued by the partner organisation in case of own resources and/or by the financing organisation in case of third-party contribution)<sup>11,12</sup>
4. de-minimis declaration<sup>13</sup>

### Supporting documents to projects where the staff flat rate is applied

5. declaration of the relevant institution about the number of employees covered by social insurance<sup>14</sup>

### Supporting documents to projects including investment in infrastructure and works:<sup>15</sup>

6. proof of property/rights of use<sup>16</sup>
7. plans that enable a proper cost calculation, incl. division of infrastructure costs between programmes/projects, if applicable
8. in case of investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, proof that an assessment of expected impacts of climate change has been carried out, or if not, it is ensured that it will be documented until ERDF contracting, but not later than 6 months after the approval by the MC

### Further – optional – annexes to be submitted upon request of the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat:

9. Annual report(s)
10. Registry / foundation documents

*The application form, the lead partner declaration, and partnership agreement must be filled in and submitted in bilingual format (German and Hungarian). Other documents must be submitted in the native language of the partner concerned. If additional documents, studies (e.g. feasibility studies) are attached, they must include an executive summary in English.*

<sup>10</sup> The signed partnership agreement is a mandatory annex from the date when the template by the programme becomes available (expected for the second submission round).

<sup>11</sup> If the financial commitment of a municipality, or (in Hungary) of a multi-purpose association is bound to a municipality resolution or to a similar document by national legislation, this must be also attached.

<sup>12</sup> No declaration is needed about the Hungarian government contribution.

<sup>13</sup> In exceptional cases, if a partner has not submitted the de-minimis declaration, the project can be considered as formally compliant under the condition that the partner concerned does not receive de-minimis support for the submitted project.

<sup>14</sup> In Hungary: issued by the Kormányhivatal Családtámogatási és Társadalombiztosítási Főosztály, Egészségbiztosítási Osztály.

In Austria: issued by the Krankenkasse.

<sup>15</sup> Not applicable in the case of small-scale projects.

<sup>16</sup> Depending on the ownership/rental conditions the proof of ownership/usage rights includes:

- Copies of land registry about the construction sites as listed in the application.
- If the construction site is not the property of the respective project partner, additionally the written agreement of the owner (acc. land registry) about the rental or the transfer of usage rights to the project partner. In case of institutional ownership, the documentation must be clearly compliant with the internal authorization procedures (e.g. attach municipal resolution, where relevant). Rights of use after project closure in compliance with article 65 of Regulation (EU) 1060/2021 must be also proven.



## Annex II: Templates of the obligatory annexes



## 10 Versions of the application manual

Version number	Date	Content of the update
<b>1.0</b>	21.06.2023	-