

INTERREG IPA CBC Romania - Serbia Programme 2021 - 2027

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ANNEX

TEMPLATE FOR INTERREG PROGRAMMES¹

CCI	[15 characters]
Title	INTERREG IPA CBC Romania - Serbia Programme 2021 - 2027
Version	I
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	
Eligible until	
Commission decision number	
Commission decision date	
Programme amending decision number	[20]
Programme amending decision entry into force date	
NUTS regions covered by the programme	
Strand	A

1. Programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1 Programme area

The programme area for the programming period 2021-2027 includes three counties of Romania and six districts of the Republic of Serbia.

One important fact is that the programme area is at the centre of the European Danube Macro Region and it partially overlaps with the European Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region, where Serbia participates with its entire territory. The two partner countries include a large share of the Danube river basin, their total surface representing 10% of the basin in Serbia and 29% in Romania.

The total area is 40.596 sqkm. (53,1 % in Romania/ 46,9% in Serbia), including the Romanian counties Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți, and the Serbian districts (Severnobanatski, Srednjobanatski, Južnbanatski, Braničevski, Borski and Podunavski).

¹ Without prejudice to further alignment in relation to the outcome of interinstitutional negotiations on the articles of the CPR and the fund-specific regulations. Alignments on the external Interreg programmes still to follow.

The programme area is split in two NUTS2 regions in Romania, and two NUTS2 regions in Serbia.

In Serbia, three Banat districts belong to the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, an administrative entity classified as NUTS2 statistical region according to the Decree on Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 109/2009 and 46/2010), which has revised the territorial statistical units in Serbia according to the EU criteria. The Braničevski, Borski and Podunavski districts belong to the NUTS2 statistical region of Southern and Eastern Serbia.

In Romania, Mehedinți County belongs to the Development Region South West. The two counties of Caraș-Severin and Timiș belong to the Development Region West.

Country	NUTS 3 units or equivalent:	Administrative status	Capital city / Seats of districts
România	Timiș	County	Timișoara
	Caraș-Severin	County	Reșița
	Mehedinți	County	Drobeta Turnu-Severin
Republic of Serbia	Severnobanatski	District	Kikinda
	Srednjobanatski	District	Zrenjanin
	Južnobanatski	District	Pančevo
	Braničevski	District	Požarevac
	Borski	District	Bor
	Podunavski	District	Smederevo

The programme territory in the Republic of Serbia represents 20.8% of the country, a larger share than in Romania, where the three counties represent just 9% of the national territory. A population of roughly 2.2 million lives in the programme area.

The length of the border in the territory covered by the programme area between Romania and the Republic of Serbia is 548 km, out of which 235 km (42,8%) on the Danube River. The length of the border in the programme area represents 26% of the external borders of the Republic of Serbia, and 17% of the external borders of Romania". Along this common border there are 8 road border crossings, 2 railroad crossings and 1 fluvial crossing. Also, there are 6 fluvial ports in Serbia, and 3 on the Romanian shore.

The geography of the region is complex and heterogeneous.

The Banat Plains extend in the North in the Serbian Districts and Timiș County. Moving to South-East, transition hills between the plains and mountains lead to the center occupied by the Southern Carpathians range, with Banat Mountains, Țarcu-Godeanu Mountains and Cernei Mountains and elevations between 600 and 2100 meters in Caraș Severin district. The Danube flows in the South Banat plains, at the border with the Braničevski district and it reaches the border between Romania and Serbia in the vicinity of Baziaș in Romania. In Romania, Timiș, Cerna, Caraș and Nera rivers cross the counties, some of them through spectacular valleys and gorges. Also

it is worth to mention the Bega channel, connected to the Rhine - Danube network, which has benefited from EU financing in the previous programming period.

Between the southern Carpathian Mountains and the north-western foothills of the Balkan Mountains, the Danube flows through the Iron Gates gorges (Iron Gates is another name of Đerdapska klisura and it is stretching from Golubac to Simska klisura, 98 km. The Đerdap / Portile de Fier water gate is half on Romanian and half on Serbian side). The Romanian side of the gorge comprises the Portile de Fier natural park, whereas the Serbian part comprises the Đerdap national park. In the South East there is the Western end of the Southern Carpathians. In the Borski district there are Veliki Krš, Mali Krš and Stol mountains, dominated by karst formations, and are collectively known as "Gornjanski kras". In Romania there are the Mehedinți Mountains with heights of up to 1500 m. The heights decrease towards the South East, passing through the hills to a high plain to the Western end of the Romanian Plain.

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

1. Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities, joint investment needs

The main joint challenges at the level of the programme area can be analysed in the following main fields: **socio-economic development, mobility, energy, natural and cultural resources, risks of environmental catastrophes.**

During the programming process the territorial analysis has been drafted as a joint effort of the programme bodies, stakeholders and joint programming group. Also, a general SWOT of the programme area and a SWOT per each Policy Objective (including ISO2) were elaborated. The main conclusions of the territorial analysis and the SWOT analyses are presented hereinafter.

Social and demographic structure and dynamics

Both eligible areas are predominantly rural and some regions are remote rural, while facing challenges such as the decreasing population, due to migration (either working or living in the EU or going to larger municipalities/ urban poles in the country) or simply aging of inhabitants. While experiencing a negative demographic trend and an unequal distribution of the population, in the programme area there are several ethnic groups, the majority of them belonging to Hungarians, Roma and Germans, as well as refugees and internally displaced people.

Economic structure and dynamics

By increasing the support for business development, identification of economic sectors with potential for CBC, increasing cooperation with universities and R&D institutions, further developing on strong sectors or resources (i.e. agriculture, manufacture, renewable energy) and increasing awareness for the investment opportunities, the strong dualism in economic development and availability and employment opportunities can be lowered.

The labour market

Given the same strong dualism, also found in and in close relationship with economic development, solutions can be found in: support for employment creation for the young population and disadvantaged groups, promotion of social entrepreneurship, innovation and models of PPP, increased cooperation between education institutions and employers, development and support of SMEs creation in areas with high unemployment rates, increased access to local employment opportunities for people in remote areas.

Health

The distribution of medical personnel is strictly related to the distribution of medical units, as result, over 80% of medical personnel is located in the urban area. In addition, in rural and remote areas the health care infrastructure is poorly developed. Main challenges in the programme area are related to improving accessibility to health care services for the population in the deprived/rural areas and for disadvantaged groups, for people with disabilities, for the elderly, children and adults who use drugs, internally displaced persons and minorities; establishment and management of emergency services, preventive health care services and campaigns; effective vaccination coverage; strengthening the effectiveness of health systems in order to reduce premature mortality; improving time effective care; improvement in the quality of care for life-threatening conditions and cancer management (screening programmes and effective and timely care); progress in the development of community-based mental health services and progress regarding nutrition and physical activity.

The remarkable outputs and results created by the projects implemented during 2014-2020 in the health care sector can be capitalized in the next period, while there is also the possibility to develop new projects focused on the most important challenges (e.g access to health care in remote areas, improve the existent infrastructure, new and performing medical equipment, timely and effective care).

Joint schemes, cross-border partnerships in the field of social protection and health through jointly developed and/or implemented tools and services, as well as pooling of resources and developing an integrated specialization system for health care centres can be considered as addressing the challenges of the border area.

Public Transport and ICT infrastructures

In the field of public transport and regional ICT connectivity, the programme area is being confronted with issues such as poor local transport infrastructure and services. Road density is very poor and there is a need for improvement in terms of accessibility to rural and remote areas, as well as improvement in terms of the speed of public transport services, to reduce the loss of traffic and raise the chances for tourism and trade. One of the main targets for the future is creating a modern, multi-modal, safe transport infrastructure network. Developing mobile payment in public transport can also be taken into consideration for the future and would make a positive impact on passengers, especially the young.

In terms of digital connectivity, both countries possess broadband connections, but there are still problems with the digital connection when it comes to rural and remote areas. For the future period, free WIFI zones are considered to be of great help when it comes to boosting the attractiveness of the programme area, which will also lead to improved tourism and can also improve the daily life of the population in the border area.

Environmental resources and infrastructure

Prevention and disaster protection mechanisms, administrative response capacity and interoperability at the local level still need improvement.

All fields of environmental resources and infrastructure should be further financed, from air pollution, environment protection and sustainable use of natural resources, waste and waste water treatment to risk management and use of renewable energy. Raising awareness of the population and local stakeholders on the importance of environmental protection and the development and implementation of joint plans for environmental risks could increase the overall positive impact of funding.

Tourism

Tourism plays an important role for the economy of the programme area, hence a stronger cross-border cooperation is key for various kinds of tourism, considering the potential for development of the programme area. There are natural resources, cultural and historical assets which should be exploited in order to ensure a much better visibility for tourists. Developing sustainable eco-tourism and business tourism has the capacity of attracting visitors in the programme area, taking into consideration that there is a strong necessity for improving the poor infrastructure, in terms of public transport and existing accommodation, as well as delivering proper services. The programme area is also valuable for its thermal and wellness assets which improve the attractiveness of the region and can develop sustainable tourism through coordinated actions and the establishment of networks with local partners and tourism industry.

Considering the specificities of the border area, the development of tourism must become more strategic as approach, due to its economic and social weight. As tourism in the programme border area is not just about the trip but also about culture, traditions, gastronomy, traditional arts and crafts, regional products, nature, etc., complementary actions must be thought in order to connect big cities in the border area, which are mostly targeted for city breaks with their natural and historical surroundings (e.g. touristic offers for short break packages in the region).

It is also essential to develop sustainable tourism that preserves the identity of the border region and its common resources, its natural and cultural heritage. The diversity and authenticity of the border region, the commitment of local communities, makes it easy to put accent on the tourism in the rural areas of the region, on the nature and active tourism, city breaks in the main cities, with links to nearby territories.

The year 2021 is extremely important for the city of Timisoara, which will be the capital of culture, a chance which will improve its visibility and awareness on the natural and cultural assets that it has to offer.

Education, research and innovation

There is a strong need to focus on the technical and vocational skills of the people and ways to improve these skills, in order to have a system adapted to the labour market and improve the results and effectiveness of education. Also, in the next programming period, minorities and disadvantaged groups should be given more access to the educational system; joint education schemes, digitized tools and methods can be used in order to provide access to education to those in remote areas or with limited access. The focus should also be on developing a sustainable cultural and educational environment. Taking into consideration the low financial

support offered for research and innovation, the focus should be on entering into clusters, networks and developing an entrepreneurship education in order to support the innovation development and improve the existing framework in the field.

The reality faced during the programming process, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought to light many challenges, such as the public health challenge that quickly became the most drastic economic crisis in its history.

Even if each country in Europe created its own responses, the risk of an imbalanced recovery, and widening disparities, is clearer than ever. One can do better, be secure and thrive, only if its neighbours do as well, thus coordination between the health care and emergency situations systems is requiring immediate action.

We belong together culturally and historically and the EU budget is designed for cohesion, convergence and solidarity and can only be implemented in close cooperation with social partners, civil society and other stakeholders.

The Programme area challenges, with aging population, outdated health care system and lack of digitalization across all areas of economy and society, can bring additional risks related to social security with possible spill over effects in the life of the border communities.

It is now more relevant than ever to build more resilient health and education systems, which in the long run likely will trigger permanent and structural changes in societal and economic life.

2. GENERAL SWOT OF THE PROGRAMME AREA

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Corridors X, IV and VII and vicinity of international airports; ➤ Variety of landscapes, geo and bio diversity; ➤ Natural resources (World Heritage natural sites, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, thermal spring, forests, waters, mineral resources); ➤ Rich cultural and historical/ archaeological heritage; ➤ Favourable conditions for agriculture in the valleys, as well as for agro/food industry; ➤ Presence of tertiary education institutions; ➤ Relatively good coverage of primary education, social and primary health service networks; ➤ Regional and local involvement for investing in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor internal connectivity within the border area; ➤ Large areas exposed to environmental and climate change risks; ➤ Low awareness of the population regarding nature and environment protection; ➤ The geography of the eligible area is complex and heterogeneous; ➤ Most underdeveloped areas deep rural-urban divide; ➤ Low economic viability of agricultural holdings; ➤ High unemployment and skills mismatch in the labour market; ➤ Poor access to education and health care services for disadvantaged groups; ➤ Low number of joint plans for environmental risks and low coordinated risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common approaches to increase employability in perspective sectors and foster cross-border labour mobility; ➤ Strengthening cooperation links between SMEs, education, research and students; ➤ Great potential for developing new rural economies (diversification and modernization, start-ups in rural areas); ➤ Increased demand for sustainable tourism and organic products; ➤ Valorisation of natural and cultural resources; ➤ Great potential to valorise the industrial heritage elements; ➤ Attracting and diverting existing tourist/travel flows to discover the programme area tourist offers; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demographic trend is negative in most areas; ➤ Migration flows directed outside of the programme area, specially of young active people; ➤ Population ageing especially in the rural areas; ➤ Continuation of the refugee/migration crisis; ➤ Further increase of population at risk of poverty and exclusion; ➤ Persistence of high unemployment rates. ➤ Climate change leading to increased extreme events risks, leading to loss of biodiversity and landscapes (river pollution, wild fires, floods); ➤ High incidence of natural and man-made hazards; ➤ Weak institutional and administrative capacity at local/regional level;

<p>joint risk management and emergency preparedness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local and regional support for implementing joint measures to preserve biodiversity, valuable landscapes and cultural/historical/architectural heritage; ➤ Strong cross-border cooperation links built since the External Borders Initiative Programme (2003); ➤ High potential for various types of tourism based on thermal and wellness natural and historical resources and on cultural activities; ➤ The area is in the core of the Danube basin and of the European Danube macro-region. ➤ Common actions in order to increase the competitiveness of local industries. 	<p>management and emergency preparedness actions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public utility services for waste management and wastewater treatment underdeveloped; ➤ Tourism potentials unaddressed, lack of competitive products, low standard accommodation infrastructure, lack of coordinated touristic offers and services; ➤ High number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion; ➤ Language barriers, weak capacity for project generation and development and co-financing; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social innovation and new cross-border cooperation models for improving social, cultural and health services and inclusion of the disadvantaged groups; ➤ Existing new approaches for joint risk management and emergency preparedness actions; ➤ Global movement for implementing joint measures to preserve biodiversity, valuable landscapes and urban/architectural heritage; ➤ Common actions at EU level to raise awareness on the importance of environment protection; ➤ EU support for social inclusive growth and for cohesion overall; ➤ Growing social and cultural ties between RO and SR with integration in the macro regional framework EU Danube region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Relative attractiveness of metropolitan areas, growing faster than other zones of the programme area; ➤ Marginalization of remote areas due to accelerated urbanization inside the programme area; ➤ Uncertainties in the global and national economic scenario leading to decline of investments (national and FDI).
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A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Relatively well-preserved nature and landscape; ➤ Rich geo and bio diversity; ➤ Autochthonous breeds and plants; ➤ Large number of protected areas and landscapes; ➤ Urban areas mainly covered with public utility services; ➤ Rich in natural resources; ➤ High quality potential on both, natural and cultural assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor condition of water supply networks, insufficient quantities delivered in certain periods; ➤ Insufficient sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure; ➤ Lack of awareness of the population on environmental threats and lack of knowledge of environmental friendly industries; ➤ Landfills or uncontrolled dumps for waste treatment ➤ Low level of monitoring on air, water, soil; ➤ Large share of area exposed to erosion; ➤ Low level of coordinated risk management; ➤ Underperforming environmental infrastructure; ➤ Environmental hotspots and risks, mostly due to mining; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raising awareness of the population on the importance of protecting bio-diversity; ➤ Joint development of nature protection plans and measures for the border areas including establishment of Natura 2000 areas; ➤ Development of public utility service (waste management, waste water treatment, with the emphasis on the 5R-Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle); ➤ Joint monitoring of main rivers; ➤ Joint risk prevention and management; ➤ Sustainable use of natural resources; ➤ Use of renewable energy sources (bio mass, hot/ thermal springs, wind, solar energy, use of cleaner fuels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loss of traditional landscapes due to plant succession and decline of agriculture in remote areas; ➤ Endangered biodiversity due to further pollution of rivers; ➤ Insufficient control on the use of natural resources; ➤ Strong climate changes; ➤ Lack of finance for investment in public service, infrastructure and risk management.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raising awareness among business sector representatives/industries on the importance of accepting and applying principles of circular economy ➤ Promoting actions that reduce carbon footprint and improve overall environmental performance 	
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A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Slight increase in the employment rates; ➤ Active employment measures provided at national level; ➤ Existence of basic educational, social and healthcare networks; ➤ Experience in EU programmes (Erasmus, EaSI, Europe for citizens, EU Health and others); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Population unequally distributed; ➤ Large majority of territories are rural; ➤ Low urbanization level; ➤ High unemployment and strong dualism in employment rates; ➤ Poor accessibility of social and health services in remote regions; ➤ Higher unemployment rates among young active population in the rural areas; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support to employment creation among the young population; ➤ Cooperation in promotion of social innovation to increase social inclusion; ➤ Promotion of social entrepreneurship, innovation and models of PPP; ➤ Promotion of equal opportunities and access to labour market; more employment opportunities for women in deprived and rural areas, young 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emigration and migration of the young and educated; ➤ Increasing disparities due to employment opportunities and migration; ➤ Aging of the population; ➤ Low density of the population; ➤ Low higher education attendance rates; ➤ Further social exclusion of the young;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good investment examples financed through previous CBC projects; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vulnerable groups - elderly, victims of violence, population at rural areas, Roma - problems with social inclusion; ➤ Low higher education attendance rates; ➤ Lack of practical experience and low mobility of the workforce; ➤ Low level of involvement of the young in society; ➤ Dropouts from education system; ➤ Lack of coordination between labour market and the educational system; ➤ Little focus on vocational education, entrepreneurship and on the development of skills; ➤ Poor use of digitised tools and methods; ➤ Low access to education for minorities and disadvantaged groups; 	<p>people, other disadvantaged social groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase cooperation between education institutions and employers; ➤ Increase access to employment opportunities for people in remote areas, including creation of opportunities for self-employment (start-ups in agriculture and tourism, networking/clustering, education for new skills generation and/or vocational trainings) ➤ Potential attractiveness of the Romanian local market for labour forces from the other side of the border, or investment of Romanian companies in Serbia and boosting employment rate in Serbia; ➤ Increase cross-border cooperation and networking in key areas affecting the young (employment, education, cultural cooperation, social inclusion); ➤ Availability of digitised tools and methods for education; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Youth policies are not high in the local, regional and national agenda ; ➤ Lack of funding for high quality infrastructure and equipment; ➤ Lack of interest of medical personnel for rural/remote areas; ➤ Extremely old medical health care infrastructure; ➤ Disparities in accessibility to health care services due to growth of private health care services.
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	<p>➤ Low distribution of medical infrastructure and personnel in the rural area;</p>	<p>➤ Modern tools of communication to facilitate cross-border know-how in this domain;</p> <p>➤ Creation of support environment to develop youth talents & entrepreneurship (start-up initiatives, co-working);</p> <p>➤ Improved accessibility to health care services;</p> <p>➤ Improved medical equipment;</p> <p>➤ Improved time effective public health care infrastructure;</p> <p>➤ Developing cross-border partnerships in the field of social protection and health through jointly developed and/or implemented tools and services;</p> <p>➤ Pooling of resources and developing an integrated specialisation system for health care centres;</p>	
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A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Studies and strategies elaborated through previous CBC projects (capitalisation); ➤ Good promotion instrument developed through previous CBC projects; ➤ Geographical position for tourism; ➤ Numerous natural, historical and cultural heritage sites; ➤ Thermal and wellness tourism are a great asset for the Romanian eligible area; ➤ Length of stay of tourists in few municipalities is above the average; ➤ Increase of foreign tourist arrivals; ➤ Increase of touristic accommodation capacity; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programme area not marketed as tourist destination; ➤ Low quality of tourism infrastructure (e.g. hotels, resorts, entertainment facilities); ➤ Poor touristic guidance/interpretation infrastructure; ➤ Low "digital demand" regarding tourism in both countries (visibility in the online community); ➤ Lack of connection with the European Greenways; ➤ Lack of competitive tourism products; ➤ Low competences for product development and marketing; ➤ Low level of information on tourism trends, support measures; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National and regional tourism strategies; ➤ The development of innovative promotion instruments (e.g. web-sites, apps); ➤ The area is in the core of the Danube basin and of the European Danube macro region; ➤ Identification of cross-border tourism potentials through existing strategies and implemented CBC projects; ➤ Joint tourism products newly developed; ➤ Established tourism promotion activities; ➤ Potential of the eligible area to become a cross-border health touristic destination; ➤ Potential for the development of eco-tourism; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continuation of the refugee crisis, migration; ➤ Lack of financial support for infrastructure projects; ➤ Legal issues regarding the property rights for land and buildings.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Relatively good accessibility of the area from other countries; ➤ Large number of industrial heritage elements that can be reconverted and given back to the community; ➤ Timisoara and Novi Sad- key actors for celebrating the European Cultural Capital 2021, with events taking place also in Kikinda, Pančevo, Vršac, Zrenjanin; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of networks with local partners and tourism industry to prepare and certify the quality of travel products; ➤ Poor development of quality labels for excellence in touristic services; ➤ Poor internal accessibility in some parts, poor condition of road infrastructure within the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Potential for the development of tourism along Bega Channel; ➤ Potential for development of cultural tourism, sport tourism (bicycle routes, hiking routes etc) ➤ Large number of public space to be used by the community (after regeneration). 	
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A safer and more secure Europe

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Migration management and protection of migrants programmes available at national level; ➤ EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to external borders; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor quality of cross-border access infrastructure; ➤ Not all border-crossing points are permanent; ➤ Combined land and fluvial border - need for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovative solutions that utilise state-of-the-art technologies and large-scale IT systems to improve interoperability, security, convenience, waiting times and cost-effectiveness; ➤ Reduce vulnerability of the external borders based on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continuation of the refugee crisis and increased migration; ➤ Increase of border-crossing volume vs. number of crossing points and capacity;

<p>➤ Several agreements signed by Romania and Serbia in the field of fighting the organized crime, drugs trafficking and international terrorism.</p>	<p>more diverse equipment and border protection activities.</p>	<p>comprehensive situational awareness, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Effective border control and migration management;➤ Strengthening of institutional capacities for improvement of public services.	<p>➤ Lack of financial capacities to ensure co-financing.</p>
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3. Complementarities and synergies with other forms of support

The Programme supports the strategic orientations set out in the Western Balkan Strategy and builds upon three out of its six Flagships initiatives, as follows: **Initiative to enhance support for socio-economic development** (especially for research and innovation, support to the social sector, education and health), **Initiative to support reconciliation and good neighbourly relations** (especially for support in education, culture and youth) and **Initiative to reinforce engagement on security and migration** (especially for cooperation on border security and migration management).

Moreover, the entire strategic framework regulating EU relations with IPA countries has been considered while designing the Programme. Thus, a special attention was given to the *Conclusions of the Western Balkans summit in Poznan* (especially for fields as education, research & innovation and security), *Communication on the EU Enlargement Policy* (especially for fundamental rights in terms of social exclusion, marginalisation & discrimination, migration), *Sofia Declaration & Sofia Priority Agenda* (especially for cultural and social development, security challenges, migration and border management) and *Green Agenda for the Western Balkans* (especially for fighting climate change, protecting the environment and to unlock the economic potential of the green, low carbon and circular economy in the region), whilst building on synergies and complementarity with other forms of support, including potential contribution to reaching the objectives of the EUSDR and EUSAIR.

Despite single programmes' efforts, more impact is created by pulling together resources from EU as well as from other donors for creating synergies and complementarities. For building capacities and effective response to the needs of the border area communities, especially in the fields of creating a safer and secure Europe or a greener Europe, which are cross-cutting and cross-border challenges, increased coordination of the actions is needed.

In this sense, complementarity with the actions supported by the Internal Security Fund for intensifying cross-border joint operations, such as joint patrols, or with those aimed at strengthening capabilities through training activities and taking-up new technologies, are a constant concern. Moreover, synergy is sought with the actions supported by the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF) aimed at facilitating and ensuring uniformity between border and customs control to make external border stronger. Also, for actions related to migration countering increased cooperation between the partner countries in the programme and complementarity with the interventions financed through Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) is needed.

Special Measure on Migration Management, IPA Multi-beneficiary programmes, EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, EU Civil Protection Mechanism are just a few instruments to be taken into account for building synergies at the level of the proposed actions and increase the on-the-ground cooperation between partner institutions from the two countries.

At national level in Romania, the Programme must create complementarities and synergies with the Regional Operational Programmes West and South-West, Sustainable Development Programme, Mitigating Poverty and Health Programmes, in the areas of health, education, energy efficiency, biodiversity and climate change risks, tourism and cultural heritage.

Whereas it is clear that in order to deliver on the above-mentioned, adequate funding is crucial, and the CBC Programmes need to coordinate and complement with other EU funded programmes and other donors' contribution, there is also a need for thematic

concentration and realistic expectations in terms of what can be achieved with EU funding in CBC context.

4. Lessons learned from past experience

The 2014-2020 Romania-Serbia Interreg IPA CBC Programme strategy focused on the key challenges of the border region and the responses that are available to address problems that exist, namely:

- Overcoming specific issues related to the connectedness of the region, both internally between the border regions, and crucially also externally between the border region and neighbouring areas;
- Tackling the lack of competitiveness which is a common issue affecting the economy of the border area as a whole, with negative impacts in both the Romanian and Serbian border areas. This includes issues such as entrepreneurship and business activity, innovation, and levels of investment
- Addressing key issues of rural development which are characteristic of the regions on both sides of the border, and which would benefit from joint cross-border action in relation to key areas such as (inter alia) agriculture, rural tourism development, and specific labour market challenges in rural areas.
- Dealing with the significant common challenges in the environment and in specific aspects of local/regional preparedness in relation to cross-border emergency situations
- Overcoming the border as a perceived “division”, and promoting greater cooperation and contact between regions and communities on both sides of the border. These issues were tackled through 4 priorities:
 - PA 1: Employment promotion and services strengthening for an inclusive growth
 - PA 2: Environmental protection and risk management
 - PA 3: Sustainable mobility and accessibility
 - PA 4: Attractiveness for sustainable tourism

According to the feedback from the stakeholders, the Programme’s Strategy was still consistent in 2019 with the socio-economic environment of the cross-border area and both the logic of intervention and needs remain valid. After the assessment considering the structural and economic changes in the programme implementation period, the assumptions of the SWOT analysis have largely remained the same, marked by the economic downturn.

The results of the three calls for projects carried out during the 2014-2020 programme implementation proved that the target groups generated a large number of projects addressing all priorities. In total, 64 projects, including 2 strategic projects were contracted and financed.

Good results obtained can be capitalized by the creation of clusters (medicine can be a domain) that will generate projects with higher impact and added value.

According to the interim evaluation report carried out in 2019, the Programme had a smooth implementation with a low risk of de-commitment and high probability to achieve the majority of objectives in terms of output indicators. Moreover, the evaluation revealed that the interest in applying for funding within the 2021-2027 programme is very high both from the beneficiaries and applicants. The fields of

intervention for which a high interest to cooperate was expressed are education and environment.

The 2014-2020 Programme produced positive results in the area in terms of tangible improvement in the quality of life of people. However, the needs identified by the programme in this area are still valid and confirmed.

Also, the actions taken to reduce administrative burden, in particular due to the eMS system (which had a high level of accessibility and user friendliness for the beneficiaries and potential applicants and it increased the level of simplification and transparency across the entire monitoring procedural workflow) and the introduction of simplified cost options proved to be efficient.

However, based on the information gathered during the Programme interim Evaluation, a wider adoption of simplified costs options would facilitate a more effective implementation of the Programme and projects.

The beneficiaries still encountered issues in project preparation (e.g. identifying the partner, defining the budget and framing the activity) and implementation (e.g. co-financing, public procurement and contracts execution). More support can be provided during the application phase for helping applicants in identifying the proper project partner.

Based on the lessons learnt in the previous programming period and on the interim evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme, a series of actions shall be taken into consideration for 2021-2027:

- A database for capitalization has been created on the Programme website and beneficiaries have been invited from the consultation stage for post 2020 (October-November 2019) to find relevant outputs and results which can be replicated and/or built upon; in this respect, 2014-2020 technical assistance funds shall also be used for preparing the 2021-2027 programme, including for capitalization activities. Dedicated thematic events (eg. health, tourism, emergency situations, culture) shall be organized with the scope of disseminating outputs and results from the already financed projects. The thematic workshops will aim at establishing new partnerships and network and generate new project ideas.
- The Programme will use the Standard Application Form developed by INTERACT (HIT working group) for all Interreg programmes. The aspects regarding horizontal issues will be included in a more extensive manner in the Applicant Guide and in the info-days organized when opening the calls for proposals.
- A wide consultation process, observing the code of conduct, will be done in the context of setting-up the JMC, in the programme area and at national level, and shall envisage a balanced participation of stakeholders, representing social, economic, educational, cultural or touristic areas. The selection process for the social partners, NGOs as members in the JMC will consider also their experience in cross-border projects/ programmes.
- More support shall be provided to the applicants in identifying the proper project partner through the organization of partner search fora; also partner search facility will be available on the programme website.

- More specific support for the beneficiaries related to public procurement will be delivered through trainings, as they were organized in the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Training sessions on state-aid, control and financial management will be carried out after the launch of the calls for proposals and also during the implementation period of the projects (especially for financial management and control).
- Respect of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination will be better emphasized during the implementation of projects, through the implementation procedures (Applicant Guides, the foreseen declarations).
- Off-the-shelf SCOs and lump sums for project preparation and project closure are intended to be used to the largest extent.
- More resources could be allocated to the communication channels that proved to be the most effective in reaching the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, with a stronger focus on social media.

5. Coordination with the macro-regional strategies (EUSDR and EUSAIR)

The future IPA CBC cooperation programme with participation of Romanian and Serbian regions is closely linked to the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the 'European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region' (EUSAIR).

The programme aims at embedding innovative cooperation actions and approaches across regions, also in complementarity with the above mentioned macro-regional strategies.

The programme area is at the centre of the European Danube Macro-Region and it partially overlaps with the European Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region, where Serbia participates with its entire territory. The two partner countries include a large share of the Danube river basin, their total surface representing 10% of the basin in Serbia and 29% in Romania.

In relation to the macro-regional strategies, the entire programme area can be considered a functional area.

Common pillars of both EUSDR and EUSAIR are to be embedded within programme's priorities, namely the one related to green and sustainable energy, environmental protection, biodiversity and natural habitats, strengthening the institutional capacity and cooperation, border management and security, but also related to culture and tourism, promoting common cultural and touristic values, sustainable and responsible tourism.

A wide range of cooperation networks between national, regional and local-authorities, but also between other organisations such as NGOs, research funding organisations and academic institutions, business sector associations and environmental groups, has been established. These networks and institutions have played an important role in previous cross-border cooperation programmes, as during 2007-2013 programming period a thematic call dedicated to EUSDR was launched and Romania-Serbia was the first territorial cooperation programme to finance projects dedicated exclusively to the EU Strategy for Danube Region. During 2014-2020, 8,85 mil.(EU funds) for 17 projects were dedicated exclusively to tourism and culture, whilst all the projects financed under the Programme contributed to EUSDR implementation.

Following the Cross-Border orientation paper issued for Romania-Serbia Interreg IPA CBC programme in October 2019 and after the selection of Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives which will receive financing in the next programming, the programme authorities have been in constantly active in order to ensure a better coordination between MRS and the Programme. Thus, a consultation process was initiated in order to reach a close coordinative approach with the NCs and PACs of the macro-regional strategies relevant for the Programme area (EUSDR and EUSAIR) in order to identify the common strategic objectives and to achieve a pro-active overall coordination with the macro-regional strategies and relevant stakeholders. This process was meant to generate complementarities and identify possibilities of cooperation in terms of coordinated projects and/ or joint macro-regional actions creating a cumulative effect.

Only through a coordinated action between Interreg programmes in the region and the macro-regional structures and stakeholders projects can exploit all opportunities for pooling resources needed for addressing common challenges like environmental threats, migration, etc.

The EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR)

The Programme shall seek to create synergies and complementarities with EUSAIR and to contribute directly to the implementation of the Macro- Regional Strategy for Danube Region. Moreover, it shall seek to promote complementarities with other projects implemented within the EUSDR and EUSAIR framework and may also contribute to facilitate the exchange of experience and the transfer of expertise between relevant EUSDR and EUSAIR stakeholders.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provides an overall framework for parts of Central and South East Europe area aiming at fostering integration and integrative development. The Danube Region covers 14 countries (Germany, Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). Thus, the Danube Region encompasses the entire Programme area, whilst all projects to be financed contribute in a way and in a certain proportion to the achievement of EUSDR objectives.

The Strategy's four pillars (Connecting the Danube Region, Protecting the environment in the Danube Region, Building prosperity in the Danube Region and Strengthening the Danube Region) are all addressed by the Priorities and objectives of the Programme. It is accompanied by a "recently revised EUSDR" Action Plan breaking down eleven Priority Areas into actions and project examples. The proposed list of the strategic actions was taken into account in the Programme strategy.

The relations between the programme area and the Danube Region can be analysed in the following main fields: mobility, energy, environment, risks, and socio-economic development.

In all these fields of interaction challenges and opportunities can be identified, according to the scale of the phenomena, local, regional or international, and according to the main driving factors, like the global environmental changes or the international tourism markets for example.

In some areas a strong interdependency between the programme area and the larger Danube region can be identified. These areas are dominated by international and interregional factors, with impacts that largely overcome the regional dimension. Some

examples: reduction and prevention of pollution of land, water and air by industrial and urban sources, control and mitigation of environmental risks, development of the integration of the European Transport Networks. In these areas the action of the project partners should be focused on the integration of the local actions with the strategies at the level of Danube region.

In other areas, interventions do not entirely depend, but can benefit from cooperation at the larger Danube regional level. Among these areas, the preservation of environmental resources, biodiversity, landscape; development of renewable energy sources; increase of tourism; reduction of localized pollution sources; promotion of smart innovation initiatives can be mentioned as potential beneficiary of the cross-border cooperation actions.

During its implementation, the programme can develop specific project assessment criteria to encourage projects that support the priorities of the EUSDR (e.g. budget earmarking, specific calls for EUSDR, allocation of extra points to projects contributing to macro-regional targets and actions).

The EU Strategy for Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is a macro-regional strategy which provides an overall framework for Adriatic-Ionian Region countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia) and stakeholders.

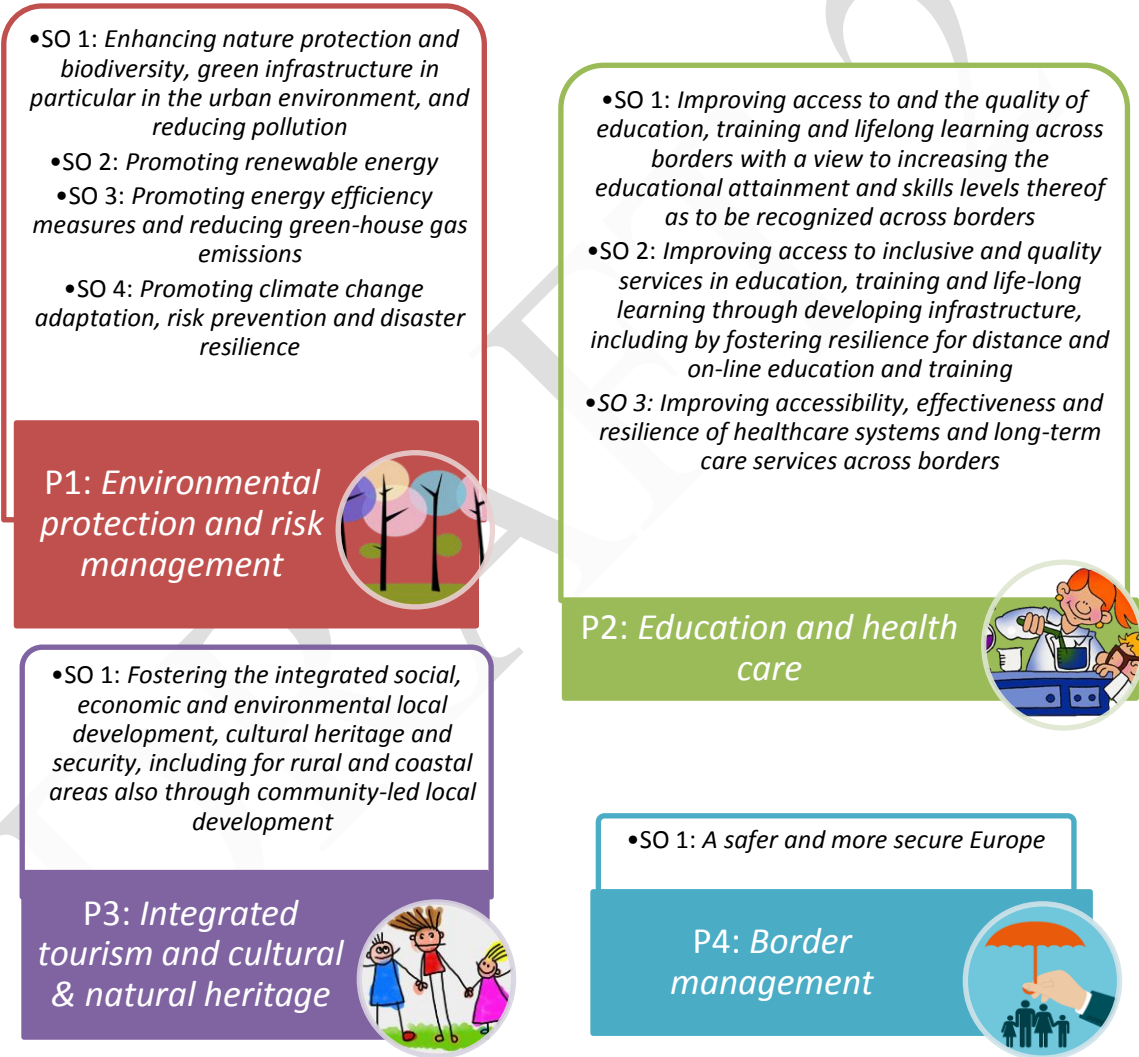
The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, and it addresses common challenges and opportunities in four thematic areas/ pillars:

1. Blue Growth
2. Connecting the Region
3. Environmental Quality
4. Sustainable Tourism

The Action Plan of the Strategy should be implemented by mobilising and aligning all available EU, international, national and private funding of relevance for the four pillars and the specific topics identified under each pillar. Thus, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund as well as Horizon 2020, which targets Blue Growth as one of its focus areas for RTD, can lend key support to implementation of actions and projects under Pillar 1. Of high relevance for Pillar 2, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) 2014-2020 supports the development of high-performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the field of transport, energy and digital services. The Facility focuses on projects with high EU added value, such as building missing cross-border links and removing bottlenecks along main trans-European transport corridors. The CEF creates significant leverage and attracts additional public and private funding through the use of innovative financial instruments, notably EU project bonds. CEF financing for actions in pre-accession countries can be granted if these actions are necessary for implementing projects of common interest. CEF coordination with the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme as well as with the Cohesion and Structural Funds will be central. The Commission has proposed that important parts of the budget of the ESIF for 2014-2020 be dedicated to projects related to energy, transport and ICT infrastructure. As for Pillar 3, funds under the

LIFE programme are open also to non-Member States. This programme explicitly mentions cross-border actions and includes mitigation as well as an adaptation pillar. Pillar 4 may, among others, benefit from the COSME programme for SMEs. Opportunities to generate stronger strategic synergies between EUSAIR and national-level EU-programming, regional or sector initiatives include the integration of EUSAIR priorities in the framework of large impact projects with multiplier effects and/ or coordinated projects. Several programmes can contribute to the funding of these coordinated projects and thus the effects will be multiplied and the impact of the EU funding on the ground will be more visible.

6. The architecture of Interreg IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme 2021-2027



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

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>1. A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management</p>	<p>1. <i>Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment, and reducing pollution</i></p>	<p>1.Environmental protection and risk management</p>	<p>Investments in the fields of environmental protection and risk management are based on the needs of the programme area, such as: underperforming environmental infrastructure, environmental hotspots and risks, lack of awareness of the population on environmental threats and lack of knowledge about environmental friendly solutions, etc. Building on the already existing potential of the border area, namely: well preserved nature and landscape, rich biodiversity, large number of protected areas and landscapes, investments in environmental protection and risk prevention and mitigation are an absolute pre-requisite for creating better living conditions for the people in the border area and a sustainable economic development. The proposed interventions are meant to alleviate the risks regarding loss of ecosystems, endangered biodiversity due to further pollution, strong climate changes. Clean energy is key to a sustainable future. Solutions developed through joint pilot actions in renewable energy and consumption of energy in a sustainable way will reduce the environmental impact and protect the health of the population in the border area, contributing at the same time to an economic sustainable development. Moreover, implementation of measures dedicated to reduction of pollution and protection of the biodiversity will improve the protection of nature for the benefit of people and of the economy. Prevention, mitigation and disaster protection mechanisms need improvement in order to keep the pace with current challenges and fast climate changes. Raising awareness of the local stakeholders on the importance of environmental protection and on the benefits these actions have on their direct living conditions, could increase the overall positive impact of funding. Special attention will be given to education, training and access to information in order to raise awareness and foster participation in environment and climate issues amongst young people living in rural and remote areas.</p>
	<p>2. <i>Promoting renewable energy</i></p>		
	<p>3. <i>Promoting energy efficiency measures and reducing green-house gas emissions</i></p>		
	<p>4. <i>Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience</i></p>		
<p>2. A more social Europe implementing the European</p>	<p>1. <i>Improving access to and the quality of education, training and</i></p>	<p>2. Education and healthcare</p>	<p>Investments in infrastructure and services for education, skills and health care are based on the needs of the programme area, such as: poor accessibility to social and health care services in remote regions, old medical health care</p>

<p>Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p><i>lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders</i></p> <p><i>2.Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</i></p> <p><i>3.Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders</i></p>		<p>infrastructure, high unemployment rates among young active population in the rural areas, vulnerable groups, poor social inclusion. Special attention will be dedicated to digital education and trainings to improve the overall level of digital skills and competences and to investments in facilitating access to ICT devices, especially for young people in rural and remote areas. The actions and measures are meant to tackle the lack of coordination between labour market and the educational system, the low attendance rates in higher education, the lack of practical experience and the poor focus on vocational education, entrepreneurship and on the development of skills. There is a strong need to focus on the vocational and technical skills of the people in order to have a system adapted to the labour market and to improve the results and effectiveness of education. The results created by the projects implemented during 2014-2020 in the health care sector can be capitalized, with a focus on the most important challenges (e.g access to health care in remote areas, improve the existent infrastructure, performing medical equipment, timely and effective care). Implementation of measures in the fields of health care and long-term care services will tackle the issues related to an aging population but also will ensure a better quality of life for the people and increase effectiveness of the systems and services dedicated to reducing premature mortality, improvement of care for life-threatening conditions and cancer management (screening and effective and timely care) and progress in the development of community-based mental health services. Measures will be taken for improving the monitoring capacity for cross-border health threats.</p>
	<p><i>4.Enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (newly introduced by EC in May 2020 and under discussions with the COM if it will be kept, pending the outcomes of the PO5 negotiations)</i></p>		

<p>3.A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives</p>	<p><i>1.Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development</i></p>	<p>3.Integrated tourism and cultural & natural heritage</p>	<p>Sustainability is key for the tourism of tomorrow. Conservation of biodiversity, respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, securing the social welfare and economic security of the host communities, and sustainable use of environmental resources need to be the pillars of the new model of tourism.</p> <p>This crisis is an opportunity to place stronger emphasis on tourism strategies to coordinate action across all stakeholders. Integrating a circular economy model in the complete tourism value chain, involving producers, distributors, consumers, and environmental protection agencies is crucial. The transition to resource-efficient and low carbon tourism operation is necessary, while keeping a strong focus on resilience and competitiveness of the sector.</p> <p>Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries and EU is responsible for an increase of 10% in GDP and 27 million direct and indirect jobs, across all EU member states.</p> <p>The investments and measures to be implemented are based on the needs of the programme area, such as: low "digital demand" regarding tourism in both countries, lack of competitive tourism products and low competences for product development and marketing and are building on the strengths of the region, as excellent geographical position for tourism; numerous natural, historical and cultural heritage sites and great thermal and wellness assets.</p> <p>At local level, tourism can contribute to the reactivation of the local economy based on local resources, to generating new jobs and social capital, to exercise a "carryover effect" in other sectors, to contribute to territorial development and, therefore, to fix population (facing the demographic challenge)².Sustainable tourism is considering the economic, social and environmental impact while addressing the needs of both tourist industry and hosting communities³.</p> <p>The proposed measures are exploiting the high potential of the area as a health tourist destination, with an extraordinary capability for the development of eco-tourism, cultural tourism, sport tourism, will lead not only to a sustainable economic growth in the area but also to environmental development.</p> <p>While all measures related to tourism and culture, as an integrated approach can lead to economic development, the particularity of regeneration and security of public spaces, in the scope of inclusion in the community's cultural life and touristic circuit, could be treated separately, as this is also contributing to both economic and environmental development and urban development. In this scope, an inventory of all of public spaces, cultural, natural</p>
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² EPICAH, Interreg Europe, *tourism postcovid in Europe*

³ 'host community' refers to a group of people who share a common identity, such as geographical location, class, and ethnic background. They may also share a special interest, such as a concern about the destruction of native flora and fauna.

			and industrial has been done at the level of the programme area and specific measures/interventions are foreseen for these in the post-2020 period.
4. A safer and more secure Europe	1. A safer and more secure Europe	4.Border management	<p>EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to external borders will help reduce vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders. Also, external border programmes are aimed at preparing the candidate and pre-candidate countries for their EU membership, including by helping setting up systems and procedures in preparing the perspective of future internal borders.</p> <p>The need for financing of the Interreg specific objective 2 derives from the specificities of the Programme area, where the length of the border in the territory covered by the programme is 548 km, out of which 235 km (42,8%) on the Danube River, thus representing 1% of the entire EU external border. Along this common border there are 8 road border crossings, 2 railroad crossings and 1 fluvial crossing.</p> <p>With over 4 million persons and 1.5 million freight transport means crossing the border each year, the Programme needs to set up priorities and measures dedicated to border crossing management and mobility.</p> <p>Moreover, global migration and its related challenges, such as insecurity and instability are shaping a new and rapidly evolving world and these dynamics will affect Europe quite significantly. According to Frontex, the Western Balkans continue to be hit by irregular migration to reach Western Europe. Serbia as the central route of the Western Balkans is a main passage point in that respect. However, the borders between Serbia and Romania experienced a lesser influx of migrants in 2018 compared to other borders.</p> <p>However, due to the limited tools and budget of a CBC programme, the migration itself cannot be solved or even managed by an IPA CBC programme. The Programme can address capability gaps relating to EU external borders identified by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and by EU customs.</p> <p>Also, the Programme can support the upscaling of border crossing point's infrastructures that can help the setting-up the Integrated Border Management (IBM) on EU's external borders, in order to support EU policies on integrated border management so as to strengthen security of EU external borders and to protect supply chains.</p> <p>A special attention should be given to the quality of cross-border access infrastructure and to the need of ensuring state-of-the-art technologies and up-to-date IT systems to improve interoperability, security and border protection activities.</p>

			The use of modern solutions and equipment will reduce the vulnerability of the external borders, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders and effective border control and migration management.
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2. Priorities

2.1. Priority: Environmental protection and risk management

2.1.1 Specific objective: Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment, and reducing pollution

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

The programme area benefits from the existence of a vast area of national natural parks, with both touristic and environmental value. But special attention needs to be paid to protecting these areas and the existing biodiversity.

The economic profile of the programme area, with large mining exploitations, creates environmental hotspots of intense soil and air pollution. Also, the decline of the industrial activity leads to the growth of abandoned industrial sites and contaminated areas. These brown fields pose a significant threat to human health, flora and fauna without the possibility to reclaim the areas in the short term, hence the need to invest in measures for rehabilitating/decontaminating the land and giving it back to the community or to nature.

In addition, the lack of awareness of the population regarding the environmental threats, together with insufficient waste and waste water management infrastructure leads to landfills and uncontrolled waste dump. For example, “in Serbia only 12% of the population is connected to urban wastewater treatment (status 2017). In Romania, almost half of the population is connected to collective wastewater systems with strong disparities between urban and rural areas”⁴. This is why the programme promotes investing in measures for rehabilitating the land of industrial sites, old or illegal landfill sites, contaminated areas and giving them back to the community for social, economic or housing activities or simply restoring it into natural sites.

The low level of monitoring of soil, water and air pollution diminishes the level of population awareness regarding the real level of pollution in their communities. This is why the programme invests in actions and measures for raising awareness regarding the importance of protecting the environment and responsible behaviour.

⁴ Cross-border Orientation Paper for IPA CBC cooperation programme with participation of regions from Romania and Serbia, Regio D1, version 2 October 2019

Although the urban centres located in the programme area are not major ones, their carbon footprint is still significant due to the use of highly polluting cars, non-sustainable heating systems, together with insufficient energy efficiency measures. This is the reason why the programme proposes this specific objective, for funding investments in green infrastructure mainly in urban areas and for funding raising awareness measures of the resident population. This concept of “green infrastructure” is a relatively new one and special attention will be paid to promoting it and to developing pilot solutions that can be replicated later on. The most common structures that will be targeted are: parks, tree-lined avenues, green roofs, open spaces, playing fields, agricultural land and woodland inside towns, biodiversity-rich parks etc.

The programme proposes measures like:

- *Investments in the field of natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, including technologies for environmental protection;*
- *Implementation of measures for reducing pollution and raising awareness (e.g waste collection and treatment, cycling lanes, sorting and 5R measures);*
- *Investments in activities dedicated to the control of pollution and rehabilitation of rivers and brownfields;*
- *Investments in activities dedicated to rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land;*
- *Investments in air quality measures;*
- *Investments in the field of environmental protection (e.g urban green areas);*
- *Investments in green infrastructure mainly in urban areas (e.g storm-water management, sustainable drainage systems, green streets, green roofs, permeable/porous paving, natural cooling of buildings, recycling systems, subsurface detention, cisterns and rain barrels and blue and/or green infrastructure).*
- *Joint strategies and action plans tackling the issue of pollution, nature protection and biodiversity protection.*
- *Testing of new tools, instruments, experiments, transfer of solutions between relevant stakeholders and increasing the cross-border cooperation in the field of biodiversity, nature protection, green infrastructure and reducing pollution.*

All the measures proposed have the potential to contribute to Pillar II “Protecting the Environment” of the EUSDR and also to Pillar III “Environmental Quality” of the EUSAIR.

2.1.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Environmental protection and risk management	Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	<i>RCO 36</i>	<i>Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change</i>	<i>hectares</i>		
		<i>RCO 38</i>	<i>Surface area of rehabilitated land supported</i>	<i>hectares</i>		
		<i>RCO 84</i>	<i>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</i>	<i>pilot actions</i>		
		<i>RCO 81</i>	<i>Participations in joint actions across borders</i>	<i>participations</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Environmental protection and risk management	Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	<i>RCR 95</i>	<i>Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 52</i>	<i>Rehabilitated land used for green areas, social housing, economic or other uses</i>	<i>hectares</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 104</i>	<i>Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations</i>	<i>solutions</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 85</i>	<i>Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion</i>	<i>participations</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.1.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment, and reducing pollution*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities & private entities dealing with environmental management & protection
- Scientists & researchers
- Environmental educators and environmental organisations

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

Not applicable

2.1.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.1.2. Specific objective: Promoting renewable energy

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

Environmental responsibility is essential for a sustainable development and since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the European Union has made significant progress towards delivering the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU has thus embarked on a transition towards a low-carbon, climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy.

The EU's 2030 Climate and Energy Framework sets out the objectives of: a 40 % cut in greenhouse gas emissions; a 32 % share of energy from renewable sources; and a 32.5 % improvement in energy efficiency, compared to 1990 levels. The aim of the EU's 'Energy Union' is to diversify Europe's energy sources and ensure energy security, create a fully-integrated internal energy market, improve energy efficiency, cut emissions and support research and innovation in low-carbon and clean energy technologies.

In 2017 renewable energy represented 17.5 % of energy consumed and in 2018 it represented 18.9 % of energy consumed in the EU, on a path to the 2020 target of 20 %, while the nuclear plants generated around 25 % of the electricity produced.

In 2018, renewable energy accounted for 21.1 % of total energy use for heating and cooling in the EU. This is a significant increase from 11.7 % in 2004. Increases in industrial sectors, services and households (building sector) contributed to this growth.

Oil remains the most important energy source for the European economy, whilst wind power is the most important renewable source of electricity.

Growth in renewable energies, which are clean, inexhaustible and they produce neither greenhouse gases nor polluting emissions, is vital for combating climate change and limiting its effects.

The programme area benefits from the existence of vast sources of renewable energy sources (bio mass, hot/ thermal springs, wind, solar energy, etc.). However, special attention needs to be paid to the sustainable use of these natural resources.

The transition to an energy system based on renewable technologies will have very positive economic consequences, such as sustainable development, increase in wellbeing and in employment.

The programme proposes measures like:

- *Solutions developed through joint pilot actions in renewable energy (e.g wind, solar, biomass, geothermal), including smart grids and ICT systems and related storage;*

All the measures proposed have the potential to contribute to Pillar II "Protecting the Environment" of the EUSDR and also to Pillar III "Environmental Quality" of the EUSAIR.

2.1.2.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Environmental protection and risk management</i>	<i>Promoting renewable energy</i>	<i>RCO 84</i>	<i>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</i>	<i>Pilot actions</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Environmental protection and risk management</i>	<i>Promoting renewable energy</i>	<i>RCR 104</i>	<i>Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations</i>	<i>Solutions</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.2.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Promoting renewable energy*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities & private entities impacted by renewable energy use

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

Not applicable

2.1.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.1.3. Specific objective: Promoting energy efficiency measures and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

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

Energy efficiency is one of the most cost-effective ways to reach the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement and the European Union's climate and energy objectives. Buildings represent the largest economic potential for energy efficiency and investments need to move towards the construction of zero emissions, efficient and resilient buildings. As energy consumption in buildings is responsible for 40% of the European Union's primary energy demand and 36% of EU's CO₂ emissions improving energy efficiency is the cheapest and often the most immediate way to reduce the use of fossil fuels and a very effective way to cut emissions.

Energy efficiency's potential is well-established by a IEA report, World Energy Outlook 2017, which showed that when combined with other measures, efficiency could realize over 40% of the carbon emissions reductions required to meet global climate change mitigation goals, the largest single contribution.

Building designers should look into optimizing building efficiency and then incorporate renewable energy technologies, leading to the creation of zero-energy buildings. Changes in existing buildings can also be made to reduce energy usage and costs. These may include small steps, such as choosing LED light bulbs and energy efficient appliances, or larger efforts such as upgrading insulation and weatherization.

The investments boost local economies by stimulating local innovative industries, constructors, manufactures and energy service companies, while energy efficiency retrofits create sustainable jobs: according to the 2030 Climate and Energy package

impact assessment, they will create up to two million jobs by 2020 and an additional 2 million by 2030. By their nature, these jobs will be local.

Energy efficiency investments have proven to be lucrative for building owners, as they ensure long-term financial benefits through reduced energy bills.

By cutting down the energy bills of individual households, the investments can reduce energy poverty.

The retrofits can bring important advantages in terms of higher productivity rates, learning abilities and better health conditions, by upgrading thermal comfort and air quality.

The programme proposes measures like:

- *Investments in energy efficiency measures;*
- *Promotion of energy efficiency measures and initiatives for reducing green-house gas emissions;*
- *Investment in measures for reducing green-house emissions*

All the measures proposed have the potential to contribute to Pillar II “Protecting the Environment” of the EUSDR and also to Pillar III “Environmental Quality” of the EUSAIR.

2.1.3.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Environmental protection and risk management	Promoting energy efficiency measures and reducing green-house gas emissions	<i>RCO 84</i>	<i>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</i>	<i>Pilot actions</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Environmental protection and risk management	Promoting energy efficiency measures and reducing green-house gas	<i>RCR 104</i>	<i>Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations</i>	<i>Solutions</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

	<i>emissions</i>								
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2.1.3.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Promoting energy efficiency measures and reducing green-house gas emissions*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities impacted by energy efficiency measures

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

Not applicable

2.1.3.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.1.3.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.1.4. Specific objective: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience

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

Climate change will increasingly impact the quality of lives and pose challenges in sector such as tourism and agriculture, as 7 % of the Union's population lives in flood-prone areas and 9 % lives in areas where there are over 120 days a year without rain.

As natural disasters are not just unavoidable interruptions to development to be dealt with through rapid delivery of emergency response but are the direct result of unmanaged and unmitigated risks, special attention should be given to strategies that aim to decrease vulnerability and exposure.

Responses to natural disasters and climate change effects can be designed and implemented in ways that protect people's life and also address on short and longer term, issues as poverty and inequality.

Climate change needs a broader approach to reduce risks, as this is now understood to be the result of human activities since the Industrial Revolution. Use of fossil fuels, deforestation correlated with increase in greenhouse gases and many other direct and indirect activities which affect almost every aspect of human life and the ecosystems on which it depends, leads to heat being trapped in the atmosphere, rising temperatures, water level rise and irregular rainfall patterns. These changes resulted in increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and the efforts to reduce their impacts are known as climate change adaptation.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation share common concerns, such as reducing the vulnerability of communities and achieving sustainable development.

The Programme can play an important role in supporting risk prevention efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change and it can support adaptation measures and disaster resilience at local, regional and cross-border level.

Investments can address disaster resilience and disaster management systems and also measures to address the 'knowledge gap' such as the necessary academic research, studies and reports, strategy development, ICT support or awareness and education measures.

The cross-border area faces numerous challenges when it comes to facing the climate change with its very often manifestations. These phenomena know no borders and a cross-border approach is the most effective one.

The geographical characteristics of the area (Danube River with its tributary rivers, flat and sometimes marshy terrain in the north), make the programme area prone to flooding and land sliding.

The fact that the programme area is predominantly rural gives rise to other types of risks: intense deforestation and non-sustainable agricultural exploitation creating the perfect conditions for landslides.

The programme proposes measures like:

- *Restoration of natural areas (e.g. forests, river banks) to prevent floods and land-slides;*

- *Afforestation and reforestation of the areas vulnerable to floods and landslides;*
- *Development and implementation of measures related to adaptation to climate change;*
- *Measures related to prevention and management of climate related risks, like: fires, storms, drought;*
- *Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (i.e. earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (e.g. technological accidents), civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures.*
- *Development and implementation of awareness measures and training products in the field of environment and emergency preparedness, including for children/ youth to respond to emergency situations;*
- *Implementing joint works for flood prevention on Danube River, its tributary rivers and Danube basin;*
- *Joint strategies and action plans for preventing natural risks and for enhancing climate change adaptation;*
- *Development and implementation of awareness measures in the field of climate change;*

Regular projects could be complemented by strategic projects, which will have a bigger impact at cross-border level and will involve relevant stakeholders. During the programming process, discussions about strategic projects in this field were carried out and real interest has been shown for projects aiming at increasing safety and protection of the population, improving and enhancing the intervention capacity of the professional emergency services and local communities in the border area, enhancing euroregional smart specialization in order to strengthen joint capacity of institutions, citizens, professional and volunteer intervention, staff preparedness for tackling various types of risks within emergency situations or setting up the adequate follow up actions for joint interoperability in case of major disasters.

All the measures proposed have the potential to contribute to Pillar II “Protecting the Environment” of the EUSDR and also to Pillar III “Environmental Quality” of the EUSAIR.

2.1.4.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Environmental protection and risk management</i>	<i>Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organisations</i>		
		<i>RCO 81</i>	<i>Participations in joint actions across borders</i>	<i>participations</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Environmental protection and risk management	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0			Project statistics	
		RCR 85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participants	0			project statistics	

2.1.4.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public and private authorities impacted by climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience
- Scientists & researchers
- Environmental educators and environmental organisations

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

Not applicable

2.1.4.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.1.4.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2. Priority: Education and healthcare

2.2.1 Specific objective: Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders

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

There is a strong link between the investment in education and the socio-economic development of an area and measures tackling this field are crucial in breaking the cycle of disadvantage. The programme proposes a dual approach of the educational field: one dedicated to investment in soft measures, like: capacity building, best practices exchange, joint working procedures (implemented through this specific objective, namely 2.1. *Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders*) and one dedicated to investment in infrastructure and purchase of equipment (implemented through the specific objective 2.2. *Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training*)

The measures proposed for this specific objective aim at improving the access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders, through projects that dedicate less than 50% of their budget to investment in infrastructure or equipment purchase. The focus will be more on enhancing the cooperation across borders between education providers so that successful projects can be replicated across the programme area.

Special attention will be paid to measures that will lead to improving the overall digital skills and competences (for both students and teachers/trainers) in order to facilitate carrying out adequate education activities even in extraordinary conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic. The target population will be mainly young people in remote and rural or disadvantaged areas and these types of measures will reduce to some degree the inequalities that exist between the educational system in the urban, highly developed centres and the education system in the remote/rural or poor urban centres. Developing special working procedures, educational instruments and tools that work well online could be useful and could lead to a new approach toward an education system that is no longer tied to a physical classroom and can grant access to education and training to everyone, regardless of their geographical position.

The territorial analysis of the programme area revealed that there is a strong need to invest in measures that bridge the labour market demands with the education system. Pilot training courses for the development of newly required technical skills are highly encouraged.

Investment in joint events, trainings across borders will aim at lowering the discrepancies between different educational facilities. Young people will enter into contact with other education systems, other requirements and would facilitate their later adaptation to a cross-border labour market. Also, by educating the younger generation in the spirit of good cooperation will pave the road for future strong cooperation relations between the border areas.

The programme proposes actions like:

- Elaboration of working procedures, joint platforms, joint events for online education and training;
- Measures for developing highly technical skills and competences;
- Joint measures for improving the link between the labour market and the education and training system;
- Exchange of best practice or guidelines in the field of improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders;
- Development and implementation of joint actions to support adaptation of youth to market needs (e.g digital skills).

It is expected that the financed actions will contribute to Pillar III of EUSDR “Building prosperity”, Priority area “People and skills”.

2.2.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
		[5]		[255]	[200]	[200]

<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organizations</i>		
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Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>organizations</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.2.1.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities and private entities dealing with education and training;
- Schools and other educational facilities;

- Scientists & researchers

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

Not applicable

2.2.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2.2 Specific objective: Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

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

The measures proposed for this specific objective aim at improving the access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders, through projects that dedicate more than 50% of their budget to investment in infrastructure or equipment purchase. The focus will be more on investments in building or renovating educational facilities (classrooms, laboratories, training rooms etc.) and on endowment of these facilities with high-tech equipment.

Special attention will be paid to investments in educational facilities dedicated to the development of technical skills and digital competences. Also, for supporting distance and on-line education and training, actions related to endowment will be targeted.

In order to promote an educational and training system adapted to the labour market, the programme will tackle investments in laboratories that will allow the gain of practical experience.

The programme proposes actions like:

- *Investments in endowment of educational and training facilities;*
- *Investments in joint IT solutions that will facilitate on-line education and training;*
- *Investments in infrastructure and services for training, including technical and vocational and life-long learning;*

It is expected that the financed actions will contribute to Pillar III of EUSDR “Building prosperity”, Priority area “People and skills”.

2.2.2.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organisations</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>organisations</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

	<i>for distance and on-line education and training</i>								
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2.2.2.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities and private entities dealing with education and training;
- Schools and other educational facilities;
- Scientists & researchers

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

Not applicable

2.2.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2.3 Specific objective: Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders

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

The programme area has a long tradition of cooperation in this field and the programme intends to capitalise on the results obtained within the previous programming period, since there are still many opportunities to be developed when it comes to the healthcare system.

Improving the accessibility to healthcare services is very important for the population, especially in remote or rural areas while being closely linked to the need to improve the existent infrastructure or to help develop a new, hygienic and better one.

Having new and performing medical equipment would definitely improve the health care services offered to the population and would lead to prevention, when it comes to health challenges, to a time effective care and prevention of early mortality.

Following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the need for improving public health surveillance became more stringent than ever. The programme will support measures that will help the development, implementation and evaluation of the healthcare actions across border and the collection and consistency of useful health data. Also, special attention will be paid to developing joint systems and procedures for dealing with cross-border health threats.

The programme proposes actions like:

- Implementation of measures for improving accessibility and effectiveness of healthcare and long-term social care services across borders;
- Development and implementation of actions to support digitalization in healthcare and health mobile assets;
- Development and implementation of measures to improve accessibility effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services.
- Investments in building/renovation/endowment of healthcare facilities (including laboratories);
- Purchase of high-tech equipment for supporting telemedicine services;
- Investment in improving healthcare and long-term care services for the elderly;

- Elaboration of joint working procedures, joint platforms, joint strategies for tackling cross-border threats;
- Know-how exchange and capacity building activities (joint trainings, conferences, workshops)

Regular projects could be complemented by strategic projects or large infrastructure projects, that will have a bigger impact at cross-border level and will involve relevant stakeholders. During the programming process, discussions about strategic projects/large infrastructure projects in this field were carried out and real interest has been shown for projects aiming at tackling specific health issues in the border area, together with measures supporting mobile health care services, harmonised diagnostic methods and treatments.

It is expected that the financed actions will contribute to Pillar III of EUSDR “Building prosperity”, Priority area “People and skills”.

2.1.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>Organisations</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Education and health care</i>	<i>Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>Organisations</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.1.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities and private entities dealing with healthcare and long-term care services
- Hospitals, clinics and other healthcare and long-term care facilities
- Scientists & researchers

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

Not applicable

2.1.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.3. Priority: Integrated tourism and cultural & natural heritage

2.3.1 Specific objective: Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development

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

Starting with 2007-2013 programming period “territorial cohesion” concept has been introduced and this meant that the socio-economic development discrepancies between countries and regions will be tackled with the aim of diminishing them. The need to work across borders in projects is justified not only by the needs and benefit of actors at national, regional and local levels, but also by the transnational/transregional effects of such projects.

And for these coordinated actions to be effective, they need to be applied not as a one size fits all solution, but adapted to the specificities of the territory under discussion.

The scope of identifying the functional area is to increase efficiency of the EU funds interventions and to leave no regions (i.e districts or counties) behind. As the programme area regions are traditionally functionally interconnected to one *another*, *it is only natural that these would evolve into developing more integrated cross-border cooperation projects*. Given the wide variety of interdependencies existing at the level of the programme area, we can state that it represents a “multi-thematic challenges” functional area.

As tourism plays an important role also for the economy of the programme area, which is strongly inter-linked with common cultural and historical assets, the investments and measures to be implemented are based on the needs of the programme area (such as: low “digital demand” regarding tourism in both countries, lack of competitive tourism products and low competences for product development and marketing) and are building on the strengths of the region: excellent geographical position for tourism, numerous natural, historical and cultural heritage sites and great thermal and wellness assets.

The tourism sector is seen as a key element in the future Cross-Border Programme, as the border areas are facing very similar issues, both in relation to current challenges, but also to the nature of the under-exploited potential. This sector brings a significant benefit of providing a stimulus for the creation of small-scale businesses, offering potential for creation of a larger number of tourism-related SMEs and thus, providing a broader-based and potentially more sustainable source of employment in the border area.

Defining the Programme area, as a functional area for tourism and culture aims at ensuring an integrated approach in tourism development, in terms of synergies with the sectoral policies related to tourism.

Also, promoting the Programme area as an integrated touristic destination means that not only the urban growth poles will benefit from investments and tourists’ attention

but also the surrounding areas, which in fact will lead towards the extension of the tourist areas and seasons, a reduction of tourism concentration in the major cities from the Programme area and use of sustainable approaches in tourism planning and management.

Since the tourism development in the Programme area is evolving around big sized/medium cities, the gap between urban and peri-urban/rural areas is deepened and the development opportunities of integrated functional regions are limited.

The integrated approach aims at increasing, integrating and diversifying the touristic destinations in the Programme area, while increasing accessibility and visibility of less developed tourist areas, still “off the map” for many national and international tourists.

While all measures related to tourism and culture, as an integrated approach, can lead to economic development, the particularity of regeneration and security of public spaces, with the scope of including them in the community’s cultural life and touristic circuit, could be treated separately, as this is also contributing to both economic and environmental development and urban development.

The programme proposes actions like:

- *Development and implementation of measures to develop and promote tourism assets and services;*
- *Development and implementation of measures to protect, develop and promote natural heritage and eco-tourism;*
- *Development and implementation of measures to protect, develop and promote cultural heritage and cultural services;*
- *Investments in physical regeneration and security of public spaces, in the scope of their inclusion in the touristic and/ or cultural circuit;*

It is expected that the financed actions will contribute to Pillar III of EUSDR “Building prosperity”, Priority area “People and skills” and Pillar IV of EUSAIR “Sustainable tourism”.

2.3.1.2 Indicators

Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(ii), Article 17(9)(c)(iii)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measureme nt unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Integrate d tourism and cultural &</i>	<i>Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural</i>	<i>RC O 77</i>	<i>Number of cultural and tourism sites supported</i>	<i>Cultural and tourism sites</i>		

<i>natural heritage</i>	<i>heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development</i>	<i>RC O 83</i>	<i>Strategies and action plans jointly developed</i>	<i>Strategy /action plan</i>		
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Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Integrated tourism and cultural & natural heritage</i>	<i>Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development</i>	<i>RCR 77</i>	<i>Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported</i>	<i>Visitors per year</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 79</i>	<i>Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations</i>	<i>Strategies/action plans</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.3.1.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public and private authorities impacted by integrated social, economic and environmental development

- Public and private authorities involved with the protection of cultural and natural heritage
- Touristic organisations

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

Not applicable

2.3.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.4. Priority: Border management

2.4.1 Specific objective: A safer and more secure Europe

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

EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to external borders will help reduce vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders. Also, external border programmes are aimed at preparing the candidate and pre-candidate countries for their EU membership, including by helping setting up systems and procedures in preparing the perspective of future internal borders.

The need for financing of the Interreg specific objective 2 derives from the specificities of the Programme area, where the length of the border in the territory covered by the programme is 548 km, out of which 235 km (42,8%) on the Danube River, thus

representing 1% of the entire EU external border. Along this common border there are 8 road border crossings, 2 railroad crossings and 1 fluvial crossing.

With over 4 million persons and 1.5 million freight transport means crossing the border each year, the Programme needs to set up priorities and measures dedicated to border crossing management and mobility.

Moreover, global migration and its related challenges, such as insecurity and instability are shaping a new and rapidly evolving world and these dynamics will affect Europe quite significantly. According to Frontex, the Western Balkans continue to be hit by irregular migration to reach Western Europe. Serbia as the central route of the Western Balkans is a main passage point in that respect. However, the borders between Serbia and Romania experienced a lesser influx of migrants in 2018 compared to other borders.

However, due to the limited tools and budget of a CBC programme, the migration itself cannot be solved or even managed by an IPA CBC programme. The Programme can address capability gaps relating to EU external borders identified by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and by EU customs.

Also, the Programme can support the upscaling of border crossing point's infrastructures that can help the setting-up the Integrated Border Management (IBM) on EU's external borders, in order to support EU policies on integrated border management so as to strengthen security of EU external borders and to protect supply chains.

A special attention should be given to the quality of cross-border access infrastructure and to the need of ensuring state-of-the-art technologies and up-to-date IT systems to improve interoperability, security and border protection activities.

The use of modern solutions and equipment will reduce the vulnerability of the external borders, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders and effective border control and migration management.

In the context of COVID 19 pandemic, the programme can contribute to maintaining the "green lanes for goods and essential services" and to increasing efficiency in checks and health screening.

The programme proposes actions like:

- *Development and implementation of innovative solutions that utilize state-of-the-art technologies and large-scale IT systems to improve interoperability, security, convenience, waiting times and cost-effectiveness;*
- *Development and implementation of measures to reduce vulnerability of the border and guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning border management;*
- *Investments in infrastructure and equipment for effective border surveillance, control and migration management;*
- *Development and implementation of measures for strengthening of institutional capacities for improvement of services in the field of border management.*
- *Developing common policies and strategies in the field of border management;*

- *Sharing experiences, guidelines and procedures for improving assessment, prevention, preparedness and response in case of pandemics and emerging infectious diseases;*
- *Joint trainings of border police personnel, as well as exchange of best practices and know-how on specific areas of activity.*

2.4.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Border management	A safer and more secure Europe	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organisations</i>		
		<i>RCO 85</i>	<i>Participations in joint training schemes</i>	<i>participation</i>		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Border management	A safer and more secure Europe	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders 6-12 months after project completion</i>	<i>organisations</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 81</i>	<i>Completion of joint training schemes</i>	<i>participants</i>	<i>0</i>			<i>project statistics</i>	

2.4.1.3 The main target groups

The target groups of the Programme are individuals/ organisations that live and/ or work in the programme area. As the Programme plans interventions at multiple levels, there is more than one target group and the description of the existing situation and of the needs of the border area must emphasize target groups' challenges and opportunities.

The **direct target group** includes individuals/ organisations targeted in an unmediated way with the project activities, and among whom the proposed effect will be achieved.

The **indirect target group** includes individuals in the general environment of the direct target group. They contribute to the project's success within the direct target group as they play an important intermediary role.

The main target groups for the specific objective *A safer and more secure Europe*, are:

- Population living in the eligible area and local communities.
- Public authorities impacted by border management activities

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

Not applicable

2.4.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.4.1.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

3. Financing plan

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
<i>ERDF</i> <i>(territorial cooperation goal)</i>								
<i>ERDF</i> <i>programmed under Article</i>								

<u>17(3)</u> <u>(Investments</u> <u>for Jobs and</u> <u>Growth goal)</u>									
IPA III CBC ⁵									
Neighbourhood CBC ⁶									
IPA III ⁷									
NDICI ⁸									
OCTP Greenland ⁹									
OCTP ¹⁰									
Interreg Funds ¹¹									
Total									

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

⁵ Component 1 Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁶ Component 1 Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁷ Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C

⁸ Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C

⁹ Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C

¹⁰ Components 3 and 4 Interreg C and D

¹¹ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C

Table 8*

PO No or TA	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total or public)	EU contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
						National public (c)	National private (d)			
	Priority 1	ERDF ⁷								
		IPA III CBC ¹²								
		Neighbourhood CBC ¹³								
		IPA III ¹⁴								
		NDICI ¹⁵								
		OCTP Greenland ¹⁶								
		OCTP ¹⁷								
		Interreg Funds ¹⁸								
	Priority 2	(funds as above)								
	Total	All funds								
		ERDF								
		IPA III CBC								
		Neighbourhood CBC								
		IPA III								
		NDICI								
		OCTP Greenland								
		OCTP								
		Interreg Funds								
	Total	All funds								

⁷ **When ERDF resources correspond to amounts programmed in accordance with Article 17(3), it shall be specified.**

¹² **Component 1 Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation**

¹³ **Component 1 Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation**

¹⁴ **Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C**

¹⁵ **Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C**

¹⁶ **Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C**

¹⁷ **Components 3 and 4 Interreg C and D**

¹⁸ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under **Components 2 and 4 Interreg B and C**

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

Whilst acknowledging all the needs and challenges at the level of the programme area, as part of the programming process and in line with a bottom-up approach, a wide consultation process took place, building on the multi-level governance approach, involving public & civil society actors at all stages of the process. Also, all documents related to programming (e.g draft territorial analysis, Cross-Border Orientation Paper, etc.) were published on the programme website and made available to the public since the very beginning, throughout the entire programming process.

This consultation process led to the finalisation of the 2021-2027 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Romania and Serbia which is the result of a joint programming effort of the relevant national, regional and local Romanian and Serbian authorities, represented in the Joint Working Group for Programming.

The **programming process** was launched in **October 2018** by gathering statistical data at the level of the programme area and by the identification of the relevant local and regional strategies to be addressed in the next programming period. The programming process continued by developing the instruments needed for **capitalization** at the level of the programme (database with the outputs and results of all financed projects in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, aggregation of all studies and strategies financed in the previous programming periods on which further investments could be realized and outstanding projects' results which could be replicated and further built in the border area).

Based on the data gathered, the territorial analysis of the programme area was drafted and the first round of stakeholder's consultations took place in November 2019. Based on the bottom-up approach agreed for the programming process, three consultation meetings were organized in Serbia and three in Romania during which the financing needs of the stakeholders were collected by means of direct dialogue and by means of questionnaires.

Moreover, during October-November 2019 a survey took place in the border area with the aim of collecting ideas for simplification of the projects' implementation and financing needs.

In October 2019, the European Commission issued the Cross-Border Orientation Paper, which was published on the Programme website: www.romania-serbia.net together with all other programming documents. The public was also invited to bring their contribution to the programming process, starting with the first draft of territorial analysis, published in October 2019. The participation to all stages of the consultation process was large and very active.

On 4 December 2019 the first meeting of the Joint Working Group for Programming for the 2020-2027 Programme was held. During this meeting the results of the consultation process were presented and it was agreed to collect the strategic projects and large infrastructure projects ideas by means of Concept Notes. This process was launched on 5 December 2019 and lasted until 1 March 2020.

During the JWG meeting on 23 January 2020, the Policy objectives and specific objectives to be included in the Programme were selected.

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

In recent years, the significance of information and communication has become widely recognized by all the actors managing European funded programmes. There is increased consciousness of the need to stimulate awareness of the general public about the impact of the European policies at national level.

Good communication is also crucial for the technical assistance and programme implementation. It is vital to work with relevant stakeholders, applicants, general public and mass media in order to increase the visibility of the programme and of the development opportunities it brings.

Thus, the communication activities will focus on increasing the awareness about the programme, its priority, specific objectives and financing opportunities, on creating communication tools designed to assist the beneficiaries, as well as on promoting the programme results.

In order to achieve its communication purpose, the programme sets out the following objectives for the entire programme period:

- CO1 -to make the programme known, attractive and easily approachable to potential applicants of all priorities and specific objectives of the programme and in all regions of the programme area;;
- CO2-to support beneficiaries in project implementation in a way that enforces result-orientation and ensures efficient implementation, including communication and capitalisation of projects results;
- CO3 -to ensure wide acknowledgement of the programme delivering EU support to develop the programme area.;

Communication activities primarily should be directed to:

- a) potential applicants to ensure that they are properly and in time informed about the opportunities of funding, about calls for proposals and simultaneously to make sure that they understand the selection process and implementation mechanism;
- b) beneficiaries to ensure that all the relevant and necessary information in the implementation process are known.

Information about the programme and the projects results will also be provided to institutions involved in policy-making in fields relevant to priorities of the programme, as well as directly to stakeholders.

The main target groups for communication activities will be:

- Potential and direct beneficiaries: public authorities and institutions, NGOs, public sector and community institutions and organizations, etc. throughout the Programme area.
- Other stakeholders - governmental/ non-governmental actors: decentralized bodies in Serbia and Romania relevant to the bordering regions, national, regional and local authorities and administrations, Municipalities, County Councils, District Administrations, NGOs, Trade associations of the border

regions, Women and youth organizations, Cross-border associations, Cultural, research and scientific organizations, Organizations representing economic and social interests, Stakeholders of mainstream programmes.

- European Union's institutions and bodies,
- National/ regional/local media from both countries,
- General public (citizens),
- Internal public: the staff of the management bodies of the programme (MA, JS, Antenna of JS, NA, FLC, AA, the members and observers of the JMC and the support services within the MPWDA and RO CBC TM).
- Support groups (communication partners)
 - The Information Centers EUROPE DIRECT in Romania;
 - The network of communicators on European funds in Romania;
 - The Interact network of communicators on INTERREG programmes for both countries;
 - Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia and EU Info Centers
 - The information bureaus of the European Parliament in both countries.
- Relevant regional and local mass-media and social media multipliers for informing the general public about the programme

MATRIX: Target groups/ Communication channels/ actions

Target group	Communication Channels / Information and communication measures								
	Events Meetings Workshops Conferences Seminars Training sessions Forums ECD event Press conferences Press visits	Help desk	Information network	Signalling Plates with the Programme logo at the headquarters of the beneficiary	Institutional partnerships	Publications Press releases Manuals Guides	Online Email, Website, Newsletter, Social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn Youtube, Press review,	Mass-media Interviews Shows Press articles	Promotional campaigns TV, radio and online campaigns Press ads Outdoor Campaigns Promotional items
Potential and direct beneficiaries	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other stakeholders governmental/ non-governmental actors	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
European Union institutions and bodies	•			•	•	•	•		•
National/ regional /local media from both countries	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•

General public	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•
Internal public	•		•	•		•	•		•
Support groups	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•

DRAFT 2

Social media outreach

The Programme will use social media for communicating about the implementation of the entire Programme from the very beginning (programming, launch of calls, evaluation, projects` results, etc.), as a way of maximizing the impact of our actions and generating a multi-level effect. Our social media approach regarding the communication of our actions will focus on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and video platforms on the pages previously established in the 2014-2020 period. The Programme will continue to target the general public when organizing events such as European Cooperation Day or when projects` results which are oriented to large groups of people will be promoted (in the case of projects with results in medicine/ research in environmental issues etc.). For European Cooperation Day, a Facebook event page will be created each year in order to share information and invite people directly.

The brand strategy developed by Interact for Interreg programmes will be used and applied to the all visual elements prepared by the programme and projects. MA will implement on the programme level all necessary measures for transition to fully green and digitally communication and support the beneficiaries to implement these measures on the project level.

Planned budget of Communication activities

The activities financed under the communication activities will be related to the use of TA budget for the Programme. The total TA budget for 2021-2027 regarding activities for publicity and information of the Programme is XXX Euro.

Monitoring and evaluation (including relevant indicators)

In line with Article 29 (1), point (e) of the Regulation, the MA/JS will inform the JMC at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the communication and visibility actions; and on its analysis of the results as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year. Also, at the request of the EC, the MA/JS will inform in writing during the review phase on the progress in the implementation of the communication and visibility actions.

The MA, together with the JS and the NA will develop the Communication Strategy (CS) and Annual Communication Plan (CoP). The CS and CoP will be approved by the JMC. Both documents could be revised by the MA based on findings from internal analysis or external recommendations from JMC, AA or external evaluators and revised versions will be approved by JMC.

Annual internal review carried out by the MA will take place in order to assess the achievement of the communication indicators and necessary measures to be taken the following year.

The communication and information measures will be subject to ongoing and ex-post evaluations, based on the indicators and evaluation criteria defined in advance. To carry out the evaluation the MA will establish a plan containing the provisions necessary for collecting and interpreting information regarding the level of Programme`s awareness/knowledge.

The impact evaluation including a qualitative and quantitative research that will take place in 20xx will assess the level of awareness of the general public about the programme

as well as the level of current knowledge of the applicants and potential beneficiaries/relevant stakeholders.

This research will contribute to the fine-tuning of future communication activities and may be operated through:

- surveys conducted by specialized companies
- focus groups,
- interviews

The evaluation will measure to what extent the objectives of visibility and awareness of the programme and the role played by the EU for developing the programme area have been achieved.

In the process of monitoring and evaluation of the communication activities the following relevant indicators will be used:

DRAFT 2

<i>Programme priorities</i>	<i>Communication objectives</i>	<i>Type of activities</i>	<i>Type of indicators</i>	<i>Relevant indicators/Source of data</i>
P1-P4	CO1,CO2,CO3	Organising the events (physical, online or hybrid)	Outputs	No of events for potential applicants / beneficiaries / stakeholders / general public No of participants in the events
			Results	Overall usefulness of the event for attendees (survey)
		Publishing of publications	Outputs	No of publications issued (including online versions) No of readers/No of users who receive the electronic newsletter
			Results	Overall usefulness of the publications for readers (survey) No. of readers who shared the link of the publication with other people (survey and social media metrics/web analytics)
		Mass -media relations	Outputs	Number of press releases, interviews, advertisements in all kinds of mass-media (sum of own data, media monitoring)
			Results	Number of media items mentioning the programme in the analysed sample of EU funds related articles (media monitoring)
		Managing of programme website content	Outputs	No of visits No. of visitors identified by browsers No. of page views (web analytics)
			Results	Conversion rate downloads, registrations form completed, bouncing rate, session length (web analytics) Overall usefulness of the site/page for readers (survey) No. of returning visitors (only for users accepting long term cookies) (web analytics)
		Publishing on social media platforms	Outputs	No. of impressions No. of followers/ subscribers (social media metrics)
			Results	No. of engagement: shares, likes, click-through, comments No of hashtag mentions (social media metrics)

6. Implementing provisions

6.1. Programme authorities

Reference: Article 17(7)(a)

Table 10

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration		
National authority (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	Serbian Ministry of European Integration		
Audit authority	Romanian Audit Authority within the Court of Accounts		
Group of auditors representatives			
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration		

6.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

The Joint Secretariat is located in Timisoara (Romania) and hosted by the Regional Office for Cross-border Cooperation Timisoara for the 2021-2027 programming period, as it was the case during the 2014-2020 and 2007-2013 programming periods, based on the following arguments:

- the experience from both the 2014-2020 and the 2007-2013 programming periods allows for a swift start to the implementation of the new Programme (the preparation and launch of a call for proposals soon after the Programme's approval in order to ensure a high level of absorption);
- the Joint Secretariat within the Regional Office for Cross-border Cooperation Timisoara is an already existing department of an institution with international staff (Romanian and Serbian) with experience in programme implementation;
- the management structures and the working procedures of the JS have been audited during 2014-2020 programming period and only minor changes were made in order to reflect the provisions of the new EU regulations and the lessons learned.

The JS (main office) and FLC staff (for Romanian beneficiaries) working for the previous programme are already trained and experienced. The establishment of the current JS (main office) was based on already gained experience from the Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme (2014-2020).

The number and qualification of JS and FLC staff correspond to the tasks and their selection is done through a public and transparent procedure, ensuring equal opportunities. Staff of

the JS is proficient in English and in at least one of the relevant local languages Romanian or Serbian.

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

According to art...., each partner State shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the beneficiaries located on its territory. In the case of a systematic irregularity, the partner State shall extend its investigation to cover all operations potentially affected. The partner State shall make the financial corrections in connection with individual or systemic irregularities detected in operations or operational programme. Financial correction shall consist of cancelling all or part of the public contribution to an operation or to the operational programme. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the managing authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay the lead beneficiary any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed with the lead beneficiary and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the beneficiaries. The Programme shall provide the beneficiaries a template of the Partnership Agreement.

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

In accordance with article ... the Commission has the right of making financial corrections by cancelling all or part of the Union contribution to the programme and effecting recovery from the partner States in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the management and control systems which have been detected by the Commission or the European Court of Auditors.

In case of any financial corrections by the Commission, the two partner States commit to dividing the amount between the two partner States proportionally with the approved project budgets and performed activities by Romanian and Serbian beneficiaries, affected by the financial correction. In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to random or anomalous irregularities, the two partner States commit to investigate on a case by case basis. The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the partner States' obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

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

Table 11: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

<u>Intended use of Articles 88 and 89</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 88 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>From the adoption programme will make use of financing not linked to costs according to Article 89 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDICES

- Map of the programme area
- Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates
- Union contribution based on Financing not linked to cost

Appendix 1: Map of the programme area

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates¹⁹

Appendix 3 Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

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

Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission

(Article 88 CPR)

Date of submitting the proposal	
Current version	

¹⁹ The Council's partial mandate changed the title of the appendix, linked to CPR Block 6. Without prejudice to further alignment on the outcome of the interinstitutional agreement on CPR Block 6.

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in % (estimate)	Type(s) of operation		Corresponding indicator name(s)		Unit of measurement for the indicator	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Corresponding standard scales of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates
			Code	Description	Code	Description			

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

Did the Managing Authority receive support from an external company to set out the simplified costs below?

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

Types of operation:

1.1. Description of the operation type	
1.2 Specific objective(s) concerned	
1.3 Indicator name ²⁰	
1.4 Unit of measurement for indicator	
1.5 Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	
1.6 Amount	
1.7 Categories of costs covered by unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	
1.8 Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation? (Y/N)	
1.9 Adjustment(s) method	
1.10 Verification of the achievement of the unit of measurement - describe what document(s) will be used to verify the achievement of the unit of measurement - describe what will be checked during management verifications (including on-the-spot), and by whom - describe what the arrangements are to collect and store the data/documents	
1.11 Possible perverse incentives or problems caused by this indicator, how they could be mitigated, and the estimated level of risk	

²⁰ Several complementary indicators (for instance one output indicator and one result indicator) are possible for one type of operation. In these cases, fields 1.3 to 1.11 should be filled in for each indicator.

1.12 Total amount (national and EU) expected to be reimbursed	
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C: Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

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

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation is relevant to the type of operation:

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

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

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

** Justifications on the underlying data, the calculation methodology and resulting rate or amount and related assessment by the audit authority [(in points 1, 3 and 5)] are not required when the simplified cost options submitted in this Appendix are established at Union level [(other policies or through the DA referred to in Article 88(4)].*

Appendix 3: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission

(Article 89 CPR)

Date of submitting the proposal	
Current version	

DRAFT 2

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	<i>The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs</i>	Type(s) of operation	Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved	Corresponding indicator name(s)		Unit of measurement for the indicator	[Envisaged reimbursement to the beneficiaries] ²¹
					Code	Description		
The overall amount covered								

²¹ The Council partial mandate added this column in line with CPR Block 6. Without prejudice to further alignment on the outcome of the interinstitutional agreement on CPR Block 6.

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

Types of operation:

1.1. Description of the operation type			
1.2 Specific objective(s) concerned			
1.3 Conditions to be fulfilled or results to be achieved			
1.4 Deadline for fulfilment of conditions or results to be achieved			
1.5 Indicator definition for deliverables			
1.6 Unit of measurement for indicator for deliverables			
1.7 Intermediate deliverables (if applicable) triggering reimbursement by the Commission with schedule for reimbursements	Intermediate deliverables	Date	Amounts
1.8 Total amount (including EU and national funding)			
1.9 Adjustment(s) method			
1.10 Verification of the achievement of the result or condition (and where relevant, the intermediate deliverables) - describe what document(s) will be used to verify the achievement of the result or condition - describe what will be checked during management verifications (including on-the-spot), and by whom - describe what arrangements there are to collect and store the data/documents			
1.10a Does the grant provided by Member State to beneficiaries take the form of			

financing not linked to costs? [Y/N] ²²	
1.11 Arrangements to ensure the audit trail Please list the body(ies) responsible for these arrangements.	

Appendix 3a

Appendix 3a: List of planned operations of strategic importance *with a timetable* - Article 17(4)

DRAFT 2

²² The Council's partial mandate added point 1.10a, which was amended to improve clarity.