

INTERREG IPA Romania - Serbia Programme 2021 - 2027

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CCI	
Title	INTERREG IPA Romania - Serbia Programme 2021 - 2027
Version	I
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	1.01.2021
Eligible until	31.12.2029
Commission decision number	
Commission decision date	
Programme amending decision number	
Programme amending decision entry into force date	
NUTS regions covered by the programme	NUTS level III regions (or equivalent regions in the non-MS) covered by the cross-border cooperation programme: Romania: Timiș, Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți Serbia: Severnbanatski, Srednjobanatski, Južnbanatski, Braničevski, Borski, Podunavski
Strand	A

1. Joint 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, right in the centre of the European Danube Macro Region, partially overlapping with the European Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region, where Serbia participates with its entire territory. The two participating countries to the programme 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 (**Severnbanatski**, **Srednjobanatski**, **Južnbanatski**, **Braničevski**, **Borski** and **Podunavski**).

The programme area is split in two NUTS2 regions in Romania (West and South West Development Regions), and two NUTS2 regions in Serbia (Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and South-East Serbia).

The programme territory, with a population of roughly 2.2 million, represents 20.8% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia and 9% of the national territory of Romania.

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, representing 26% of the external borders of the Republic of Serbia, and 17% of the external borders of Romania. Along the 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.

From a geographical perspective, the Banat Plains extend in the North in the Serbian Districts and Timiș County. In the South-East, transition hills between the plains and mountains lead to the centre 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.

Between the southern Carpathian Mountains and the north-western foothills of the Balkan Mountains, the Danube flows through the Iron Gates gorges (Đerdapska klisura), comprising the Porțile de Fier and the Đerdap Natural park.

1.2. Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-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 ISO1) 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, as well as the commitment of local communities, make 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 2023 is extremely important for the city of Timisoara, which will be the European 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 produced 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 social and economic life.

Moreover, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and the Internet of Things, can help transform public services by addressing the challenges of digital and sustainable growth. All these are particularly relevant in the context of a fair, green and sustainable post-COVID recovery.

Enabling real-time exchange of information between public authorities, organisations and individuals, with key data collected in a decentralised and synchronised manner, will increase the effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of public service.

From supporting smart and clean energy, P2P energy markets, re-cycling and re-use in circular economy to healthcare and pharmaceuticals, where pharmaceutical provenance and authenticity can be proved and patient-controlled health data can

be ensured in an environment of privacy-preserving health data sharing, the use of new technologies is important and should be fostered.

FUNVAL

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 springs, 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; ➤ Relative attractiveness of

<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 RS with integration in the macro regional framework EU Danube region. 	<p>metropolitan areas, growing faster than other zones of the programme area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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 transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility

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; 	<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/ 	<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"> ➤ Environmental hotspots and risks, mostly due to mining; 	<p>thermal springs, wind, solar energy, use of cleaner fuels);</p> <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 and inclusive 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; ➤ Extremely old medical 	<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 	<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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good investment examples financed through previous CBC projects; ➤ Good 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; ➤ 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 	<p>health care infrastructure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Higher unemployment rates among young active population in the rural areas; ➤ 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 	<p>opportunities for women in deprived and rural areas, young 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); 	<p>of the young;</p> <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 working in rural/remote areas; ➤ Disparities in accessibility to health care services due to growth of private health care services; ➤ Continuation of the refugee crisis, migration; ➤ Lack of financial support for infrastructure projects; ➤ Legal issues regarding the property rights for land and buildings; ➤ Prolonged pandemic with serious effects on all social areas.
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<p>Cultural Capital 2023, with events taking place also in Kikinda, Pančevo, Vršac, Zrenjanin.</p>	<p>tools and methods;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Low access to education for minorities and disadvantaged groups; ➤ Low distribution of medical infrastructure and personnel in the rural area; ➤ 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; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Availability of digitised tools and methods for education; ➤ Modern tools of communication to facilitate cross-border know-how in this domain; ➤ Creation of support environment to develop youth talents & entrepreneurship (start-up initiatives, co-working); ➤ Improved accessibility to health care services; ➤ Improved medical equipment; ➤ Improved time effective public health care infrastructure; ➤ Developing cross-border partnerships in the field of social protection and health through jointly developed and/or implemented tools and services; ➤ Pooling of resources and developing an integrated specialisation system for health care centres; ➤ Existing national and regional tourism strategies; ➤ The development of innovative promotion instruments 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Low level of information on tourism trends, support measures; ➤ 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. 	<p>(e.g. web-sites, apps);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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; ➤ 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 spaces to be used by the community (after regeneration). 	
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A better cooperation governance

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased level of cooperation between organisations from the participating countries to the programme; ➤ EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to capacity building, contribution to the macro-regional/sea-basin strategies and reducing cross-border obstacles - “a better cooperation governance”; ➤ Several agreements signed by Romania and Serbia in the field of fighting the organized crime, drugs trafficking and international terrorism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As an external border the legal and administrative differences and obstacles are more diverse; ➤ Combined land and fluvial border - need for more diverse equipment and border protection activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthening of institutional capacities for improvement of public services; ➤ Innovative solutions that utilise state-of-the-art technologies and large-scale IT systems to improve interoperability, security and cost-effectiveness; ➤ Reduce vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness, guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders; ➤ Reduce the complexity, length and costs of cross-border interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Differences in institutional capacity; ➤ Increasing cross-border obstacles due to continuation of the refugee crisis, increased migration and other current and future challenges; ➤ Lack of financial capacities to ensure co-financing.

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.

The specific objectives set by the programme shall also be pursued in line with the objective of promoting sustainable development, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "do no significant harm" principle.

Thus, 35.5% of the IPA financial allocation of the future programme is dedicated to achieving the climate objectives, as set out in article 6 CPR, Annex I CPR, recital 5 Interreg and 11% of the financial envelope is earmarked to biodiversity pursuant to the ambition set in recital 11 CPR.

Throughout the programme, elements from the Territorial Agenda 2030 and the Leipzig Charter were borrowed, as it proposes a place-based approach and a multi-level governance framework for reaching a high quality of life and for supporting a sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation within the programme area. Hence, through the entire life-cycle of the programme and its projects, elements such as strategic use of public procurement, lifecycle costing criteria, do no significant harm, will be considered.

Moreover, safeguarding the protection of the fundamental rights is both a precondition for obtaining financing and a priority during projects implementation, which will be required to comply with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Ensuring access and opportunities for all, removing barriers to healthcare, education and culture, ensuring availability of timely and quality public services are objectives enshrined in the design of the Programme with sustainability at the core of the Programme interventions.

Also, the New European Bauhaus initiative will guide the implementation of actions, as an element of context, providing opportunities for projects to contribute, by embedding elements such as: *reconnecting with nature, regaining a sense of belonging, prioritising the places and people that need it most and fostering long term, life cycle and integrated thinking in the industrial ecosystem.*

Projects implemented under the programme can contribute with a wide range of solutions, from educational and cultural activities, which play a key role in the shift of paradigm towards new behaviour and values, to implementation of nature-based solutions which address floods, for example, while making the built environment more attractive.

Creating strong connections with nature, embracing sustainability and inclusion while tackling unsustainable use of resources and waste are all attainable goals within the Programme`s priority axes.

Also, integrating 5R measures, implementing solutions for making cities greener and using sustainably sourced nature-based materials and a zero pollution ambition model, throughout the programme, from environmental actions to tourism, are horizontal objectives which can contribute to the New European Bauhaus initiative implementation.

Fostering healthy, sustainable living by improving/ rehabilitating the common spaces to be used by the local community and making use of the cultural assets (heritage, arts, local craft, etc.) and natural assets (landscapes, natural resources, etc.) projects can offer opportunities for connection and social interaction, including for people at risk of exclusion or poverty, the binding element that creates a sense of belonging.

Moreover, an inventory of all of public spaces (cultural, natural and industrial) has been done at the level of the programme area in order to be considered for re-use, regeneration and transformation.

Also, improving equal access to inclusive and quality services for people in small villages, rural and remote areas, is a horizontal aspect already considered within the programme interventions in 2014-2020 and will be continued within the Programme in order to contribute to the New European Bauhaus initiative.

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 participating 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.

In order to ensure efficient and coherent interventions and to respect the principle of sound financial management, actions under the Programme need to be consistent with and be complementary to all other EU funded programmes, whilst avoiding double funding.

The EU financing under the Programme will be complemented by reflows stemming from the programmes and funds prior to 2021 and by the amounts allocated through the MFF, Recovery and Resilience Facility and Economic and Investment Plan in the Western Balkans.

Hence, in all stages of the process, effective coordination in order to safeguard the consistency, coherence, complementarity and synergy among sources of funding shall be considered, in order to achieve maximum of impact and tangible benefits for the citizens in both countries participating to the programme.

Considering this, while the Programme focuses exclusively on the cross-border impact projects, it may be complementary to the actions meant to repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, financed through the Recovery and Resilience Facility and also to the Economic and Investment Plan in the Western Balkans and its related Green Agenda.

While the Recovery and Resilience Facility is a temporary recovery instrument, closely linked to the priorities aimed at long-term sustainable and inclusive recovery that promotes the green and digital transitions, the CBC Programme fosters long lasting partnerships tackling well-defined objectives and addressing challenges with a cross-border dimension. Close articulation between national and regional programmes with the CBC Programme is needed to ensure greater efficiency.

Hence, the support under the Recovery and Resilience Facility shall be additional to the support provided under the Programme, by setting in place the reforms needed to reap the benefits of EU funding, optimise mechanisms for coordination and foster synergies and ensure effective coordination.

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, 72 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.

As a continuation, the Programme has signed the license agreement for the JeMS, developed by INTERACT on 19 May 2021, meant to ensure full functionality for all exchanges between beneficiaries and all the programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange in accordance with Annex XIV of the CPR. Also, using JeMS and the Harmonised Implementation Tools underpinning it, will ensure a higher degree of coordinated approach among the Interreg programmes in the field of horizontal principles during the entire life-cycle of the financed projects (preparation, selection, implementation, monitoring and reporting), pursuant to Article 9 CPR and Article 22 (2) Interreg Regulation.

Moreover, 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 (e.g. health, tourism, emergency situations, culture) have been organized with the scope of disseminating outputs and results from the already financed projects. The thematic workshops organized in October 2020 were aimed at establishing new partnerships and networks 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 MC, 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 MC 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.

- During the implementation of the Programme, the Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support Policy Objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.
- 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, including for people with a migrant background, 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 participating countries to the programme 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), on the 19th of May 2020 in order to identify the common strategic objectives, to achieve a pro-active overall coordination with the macro-regional strategies and relevant stakeholders, to identify coordinated actions between Interreg programmes in the region and the macro-regional structures and stakeholders and to address common challenges like environmental threats and migration.

The consultation process continued within the following MRS coordination and embedding events, which took place on the 23rd of April 2021 and on the 10th of June 2021. The event on the 23rd of April established the Danube Region IPA & NDICI Network in order to facilitate communication, exchange of information and to work closely together, in a coordinated and embedded way. The second event which had as a lead Programme Interreg IPA CBC Romania-Serbia was organised with the support of the Slovakia's EUSDR Presidency, Danube Strategy Point and with the participation of the European Commission and focused more on the programming status and how programmes' authorities and macro-regional strategies representatives can support each in order to maximize the impact of the actions and of the funds in the region. The event in June 2021 focused both on sharing of best practices across the region and identification of synergies between the already identified strategic importance and/ or large infrastructure projects to receive financing in the 2021 - 2027 programmes. In order to ensure coherence and for a more practical approach, representatives of ERDF CBC programmes' authorities were also be invited to join the session.

The Programme was also involved in the 2nd EUSDR Task Force Embedding event organized during the 1st MRS Week, 20 February 2020, 3rd EUSDR Task Force on embedding organized on 22 Jan 2021 and in the meeting of EUSDR National Coordinators with Managing Authorities from the Danube Region - Parallel Thematic Session II organised during the 2020 EUSDR Annual Forum.

This entire 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 Romania-Serbia Programme 2021-2027

•SO 1: enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution;

•SO 2: promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein;

•SO 3: promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

•SO 4: promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches;

P1:
Environmental protection and risk management



•SO 1: improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training;

•SO 2: ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care;

•SO 3: enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation;

P2: Social and economic development



•SO: enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders

P3: Increasing border management capacity



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 transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>1. <i>Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution;</i></p>	<p>1.Environmental protection and risk management</p>	<p>Investments in the fields of environmental protection and preservation of <i>nature protection, biodiversity and green infrastructure</i>, 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.</p> <p>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 for reducing all forms of pollution and for preservation and protection of these areas are meant to alleviate the risks regarding loss of ecosystems, endangered biodiversity due to further pollution and strong climate changes.</p> <p>Also, investments in green infrastructure/ nature based solutions are an absolute pre-requisite for creating better living conditions for the people in the border area, enhancing climate change adaptation and favouring a sustainable economic development.</p> <p>The Programme will take on board the Territorial Agenda 2030 recommendations and promote mitigations and adaptive actions like promoting sustainable land-use, open spaces and public green areas, restoring degraded land, implementing green infrastructure or improving air quality.</p> <p>Moreover, implementation of measures dedicated to reduction of all forms pollution (particularly referring to air and water) and protection of the biodiversity will improve the protection of nature for the benefit of people and of the economy.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the local stakeholders on the importance of environmental protection and on the benefits these actions have on their</p>

			<p>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><i>2. Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein;</i></p>		<p>As Europe's regions need to become more competitive and resilient in the context of major challenges ahead, the increased use of renewable energy has a fundamental role in promoting the security of energy supply, sustainable energy at affordable prices, technological development and innovation, while providing environmental, social and health benefits, especially in rural and isolated areas, in regions or territories with low population density or undergoing partial deindustrialisation.</p> <p>With a renewable energy target of at least 32 % and adequate financing and support meant to ensure the rollout of renewable energy projects, in particular at local level, it can be stated that 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.</p> <p>Moreover, investments in this field are needed in order to strengthen the health and well-being of the citizens in the border area and in order to reduce the economic and infrastructure vulnerability, due to old and polluting industries.</p> <p>Optimal and non-combustible renewable energies not only reduce air pollution, making people less vulnerable to disease but it can help avoid greenhouse gas emissions and protect communities from dangerous effects of climate change. Under the principle of Do No Significant Harm principle, biomass combustion for domestic heating should not be encouraged, especially not in the areas with exceedances of EU limit values for PM and B(a)P.</p> <p>Also, renewable energy is the cheapest source of new power generation for more than two thirds of the world and has no fuel costs and it can reduce the economic burden, especially when coupled with energy-efficiency upgrades.</p>
	<p><i>3.Promoting energy efficiency and reducing green-house gas</i></p>		<p>51 billion tons of greenhouse gases are added in the atmosphere every year,</p>

	<p><i>emissions</i></p>		<p>worldwide. Even though the figure may slightly fluctuate from year to year, it's generally increasing.</p> <p>While farming accounts for 19% and transport sector just around 16% other sectors have a bigger weight, for example production of cement, steel, plastic - 31% and electricity 27% of the emissions of greenhouse gases.</p> <p>Even though electricity is only 27% of the problem, it could represent a bigger part in the long term solution with clean electricity shifting away from burning hydrocarbons, it will be a key stepping stone for the future.</p> <p>While replacing the current energy technologies from the carbon-emitting ones to zero emissions solutions it will be an expensive process in net terms, one must not forget that the prices of fossil fuels don't always reflect the environmental damages they inflict.</p> <p>Investing in energy efficiency is thus not only a very effective way to cut greenhouse gas emissions but also to contribute to European climate target and mitigate the environmental challenges, notably air pollution.</p> <p>Also, these investments boost local economies by stimulating local innovative industries, constructors, manufactures and energy service companies, creating sustainable jobs and long-term economy and financial benefits.</p> <p>Ultimately, investments in energy efficiency shall improve health and living standards by upgrading thermal comfort and air quality and improving indoor climate which leads to higher productivity rates, learning abilities and better health conditions.</p>
	<p><i>4.Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches</i></p>		<p>Prevention, mitigation and disaster protection mechanisms need constant improvement in order to keep the pace with current challenges and fast changing environment due to climate changes.</p> <p>Investments in the fields of climate change adaptation 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.</p> <p>Building on the already existing potential of the border area and capitalising from the already financed actions in the fields of climate change adaptation and risk management, will create a higher cross-border impact of the interventions. Also, following the 2030 Territorial Agenda principles, the</p>

			<p>programme will invest in tailor-made responses, adequate to the territorial context, through pilot actions developed and implemented in projects.</p> <p>The proposed interventions are meant to alleviate the risks and the impact of climate change in the border area and to create preventive measures in the processes of risk prevention and resilience of the area in front of disasters, while where possible, generating additional ecosystems services.</p> <p>Considering the amplifications of the risks and consequences of climate changes, natural and manmade disasters, the use of modern digital technologies (e.g blockchain) and artificial intelligence is a necessity for an integrated management of these processes and alleviating the negative impact events on the health and wellbeing of the population in the border area. Blockchain can support Europe's Green New Deal and Western Balkans Green Agenda through transparency, accountability and traceability of greenhouse gas emissions and simplify carbon trading and climate change cooperation.</p> <p>Special attention will be given to awareness and information measures fostering participation in risk management and climate change issues, amongst the population living in the programme area.</p>
<p>2. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>		<p>2.Social and economic development</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 infrastructure, high unemployment rates among young active population in the rural areas, vulnerable groups, poor social inclusion.</p> <p>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. Moreover, the latest global situation regarding COVID-19</p>

	<p><i>1.Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</i></p>		<p>pandemic have demonstrated the need to adapt the education system, in order to accommodate digital means and the appropriate endowment of users to facilitate delivery of the learning services.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Also, lifelong learning actions are to be considered, as the concept has become of vital importance with the emergence of new technologies that change how we receive and gather information, collaborate with others, and communicate. The main objectives of lifelong education policy are to ensure the availability and competence of the labour force, providing educational opportunities for the entire adult population and strengthening social cohesion and equity. The objectives should support efforts to extend working life, raise the employment rate, improve productivity, implement the conditions for lifelong learning and enhance multiculturalism.</p>
	<p><i>2. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care</i></p>		<p>With a large majority of rural and remote territories, a low distribution or old health care infrastructure and equipment, there is a need to diminish the disparities in accessibility to health care services of the population in the border area.</p> <p>Considering the aging population of the area, there is a constantly increasing need for addressing their needs and improve timely and effective public health care infrastructure, while developing an up to date and accessible system of health care centres and services.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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,</p>

			<p>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.</p> <p>Measures will be taken for improving the monitoring capacity for cross-border health threats.</p>
	<p><i>3.Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</i></p>		<p>Tourism plays an important role for the economies of both countries accounting for nearly 4,6 % of the country's GDP in Romania (direct impact) and more than 16 % of the GDP in Serbia and the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has been significant. There is a serious need to support the restarting of the tourism and culture sector.</p> <p>Integrating a circular economy and zero pollution ambition 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. Sustainability is key for the tourism of tomorrow. Sustainable tourism is considering the economic, social and environmental impact while addressing the needs of both tourist industry and hosting communities</p> <p>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. Eco-tourism should be at the centre.</p> <p>Tourism can also 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)..</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 (including cyclo-tourism, hiking, etc.).</p> <p>While all measures related to tourism and culture 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, should be considered, as this is also contributing to both economic and environmental development and urban development. In this scope, an</p>

			inventory of all of public spaces (cultural, natural and industrial) has been done at the level of the programme area.
3. A better cooperation governance	<i>Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders</i>	3. Increasing border management capacity	<p>EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to building institutional capacity of public authorities and to overcoming of the legal and administrative cooperation obstacles will help improve the cooperation across the border but also to developing proceedings and mechanisms for cooperation and alleviation of obstacles.</p> <p>Considering the context of the external borders, support in capacity building actions 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 countries for their EU membership, including by helping setting up systems and procedures in preparing the perspective of future internal borders.</p> <p>Capitalising on pre-existent interactions and bodies by activating them, including during the crises situations is an excellent opportunity to accelerate necessary changes, particularly in cross-border context, as no effective crisis cooperation is possible in the short term without well-established long-term cooperation.</p> <p>In the EC study “<i>The effects of COVID-19 induced border closures on cross-border regions</i>”, it was recommended that Interreg programmes should support actions aimed at strengthening cross-border governance, through Objective “A better cooperation governance”, even more so in the light of COVID-19 crisis, with clear actions in regards to border management, and not only in the context of crises.</p> <p>Moreover, migration and its related challenges, such as insecurity and instability will continue to affect Europe significantly.</p> <p>The Programme can address capability gaps relating to EU external borders and 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>

2. Priorities

2.1. Priority: Environmental protection and risk management

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

2.1.1.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-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.

While the Programme interventions are not aimed at mining exploitations and related environmental hotspots, the particularity of regeneration and security of public abandoned industrial spaces/ sites and related contaminated land, must be addressed from an environmental perspective, prior of including them in the community's life and/ or touristic circuit.

For this purpose, an inventory of all the industrial sites/ spaces has been done at the level of the programme area and specific measures/ interventions are foreseen.

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, as well as meaningful impacts on water quality. 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"¹.

The programme also promotes investing in measures for rehabilitating the land and buildings of industrial sites, old or illegal landfill sites, contaminated areas and giving

¹ Cross-border Orientation Paper for IPA CBC cooperation programme with participation of regions from Romania and Serbia, Regio D1, version 2 October 2019

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.

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 blue and 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 in this specific objective are: polluted sites, parks, tree-lined avenues, green roofs, open spaces, playing fields, agricultural land and woodland inside towns, biodiversity-rich parks, river restoration including floodplains, protective forests in the mountain areas, etc.

In order to ensure the sustainability of all measures, the focus will be on proposing nature-based solutions² for the conservation of biodiversity, whilst controlling the invasive alien species that could be detrimental to the natural ecosystems.

Considering the ambitious European climate goal and that the programme sets interventions aimed directly at improving the lives of the citizens in the border area, the objectives cannot be achieved without the full involvement of cities and citizens and EU support.

Local authorities have a crucial role in helping their citizens and businesses to realise the benefits, engaging them and bring communities together in a common effort, using for example local strategic planning and synergies.

The programme proposes measures like:

- *Investments in the field of natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, including technologies for environmental protection;*
- *Development and implementation of conservation and protection measures of Natura 2000 sites on the Romanian side and equivalent natural protected areas on the Serbian side;*

² Solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.” (https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/environment/nature-based-solutions_en)

- *Implementation of measures for reducing pollution and raising awareness (e.g. waste prevention, collection and treatment, 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, support to the closure and rehabilitation of substandard and illegal landfill sites;*
- *Investments in measures improving air quality, air quality monitoring (e.g.: air quality monitoring networks) and noise reduction measures;*
- *Investments in green infrastructure mainly in urban areas (e.g. storm-water management, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUSDS), green streets, green roofs, permeable/porous paving, urban forests, natural cooling of buildings, 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.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

2.1.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final (2029) [200]	target
Environmental protection and risk management	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and	<i>RCO 36</i>	<i>Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change</i>	<i>hectares</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	

<i>green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</i>	<i>RCO 38</i>	<i>Surface area of rehabilitated land supported</i>	<i>hectares</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>62</i>
	<i>RCO 84</i>	<i>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</i>	<i>pilot actions</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>
	<i>RCO 81</i>	<i>Participations in joint actions across borders</i>	<i>participations</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>1200</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>Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</i>	<i>RCR 95</i>	<i>Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>1456</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>2020</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 104</i>	<i>Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations</i>	<i>solutions</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>1</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>2020</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.1.3 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 *Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of 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)
1	IPA III	1.1	079 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	2,861,187
1	IPA III	1.1	073 Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land	1,089,338
1	IPA III	1.1	077 Air quality and noise reduction measures	363,113

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.1	01 Grant	4,313,638.00

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.1	33 No territorial targeting	4,313,638.00

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

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 55 % cut in greenhouse gas emissions; a 40 % share of energy from renewable sources; and a 36 % 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 renewable energy sources (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, geothermal).*

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.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

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]
Environmental protection and risk management	Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot actions	1	5

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 renewable energy in	RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2020	1	project	

ent	accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein							statistics	
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2.1.2.3 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 in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein*, 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)
1	IPA III	1.2	047 Renewable	740,971

			energy: wind	
1	IPA III	1.2	048 Renewable energy: solar	1,130,956
1	IPA III	1.2	052 Other renewable energy (including geothermal energy)	2,027,923

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.2	01 Grant	3,899,850.00

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.2	33 No territorial targeting	3,899,850.00

2.1.3. Specific objective: Promoting energy efficiency and reducing green-house 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 down emissions.

Energy efficiency's potential is well-established by an IEA report, World Energy Outlook 2017, which showed that when combined with other measures, energy 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, resource 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 and resource 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 regarding public infrastructure;*
- *Promotion of energy efficiency and resource efficiency measures;*
- *Demonstration projects and initiatives for reducing emissions of green-house gas and air pollutants;*
- *Investment in supporting measures for reducing emissions of green-house gas and air pollutants.*

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.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

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 and reducing green-house gas emissions	<i>RCO 84</i>	<i>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</i>	<i>Pilot actions</i>	1	3

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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>Environmental protection and risk management</i>	<i>Promoting energy efficiency and reducing green-house gas emissions</i>	<i>RCR 104</i>	<i>Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations</i>	<i>Solutions</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.3.3 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 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)
1	IPA III	1.3	044 Energy efficiency renovation or energy efficiency measures regarding public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures	3,631,093.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.3	01 Grant	3,631,093.00

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.3	33 No territorial targeting	3,631,093.00

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

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 sectors 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 also 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 programme will support “the use of the latest digital technologies and climate services to underpin decision-making (for example, remote sensing, smart weather stations, artificial intelligence and high-performance computing)”³.

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. Also, the interventions should propose ecosystem-based approaches related to risk management and adaptation to climate change.

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. Special attention is to be paid to “cross-border water management, the promotion of sustainable water use and the improvement of flood risk and water scarcity and drought management strategies, incorporating future floods and drought risk and arranging timely and reliable exchange of data and early warnings”⁴.

Also, in relation to climate change adaptation, the large number of NATURA 2000 and Natural Protected Areas covering a large part of the programme area triggers the need to implement conservation and restoration actions for the forests included in Natura 2000 sites and Emerald networks. A sustainable forest management would contribute to “stabilising and cooling local climate and regulating hydrological cycles”⁵.

The fact that the programme area is predominantly rural gives rise to other types of risks: intense deforestation and non-sustainable agricultural exploitation, thus 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;*

³ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS -Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, 25.02.2021, page. 5

⁴ CONS Conclusions on Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, 03.06.2021, page.13

⁵ CONS Conclusions on Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, 03.06.2021, page.14

- *Development and implementation of measures such as restoration of Natura 2000 sites on the Romanian side and equivalent natural protected areas on the Serbian side, in relation to climate change impact;*
- *Afforestation and reforestation (e.g. protection forests) of the areas vulnerable to floods and land-slides;*
- *Development and implementation of measures and ecosystem-based approaches 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, preferably with nature-based solutions;*
- *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 large infrastructure projects, which will have a bigger impact at cross-border level, will involve relevant stakeholders and will be aimed 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.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

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 and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organisations</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>15</i>
		<i>RCO 81</i>	<i>Participations in joint actions across borders</i>	<i>participations</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>1361</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 climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>organisations</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>3</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>2020</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.1.4.3 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 and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches* 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)
1	IPA III	1.4	058 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	1,711,197
1	IPA III	1.4	059 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management	8,311,532

			of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	
1	IPA III	1.4	060 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	611,142
1	IPA III	1.4	061 Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (i.e. earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (e.g. technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem	1,588,971

			based approaches	
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Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.4	01 Grant	12,222,842

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	IPA III	1.4	33 No territorial targeting	12,222,842

2.2. Priority: Social and economic development

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

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 comprehensive approach of the educational field, tackling actions that support investment in infrastructure and purchase of equipment. These activities can be combined with investment in soft type of activities, such as: capacity building, best practices exchange, joint working procedures, as long as they are needed in order to ensure the comprehensive approach and to build on the investment activities.

The measures proposed for this specific objective aim at improving the access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders. The focus will be on enhancing the cooperation across borders between education providers so that successful projects can be replicated across the programme area, but also 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 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. Therefore, support will be given 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.

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);*
- *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”.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

2.2.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Social and economic development</i>	<i>Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing accessible 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>organizations</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>30</i>

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Social and economic development</i>	<i>Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>organizations</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.2.1.3 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 equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing accessible 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.

2.2.1.4 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)
2	IPA III	2.1	149 Support for primary to secondary education (excluding infrastructure)	1,081,867
2	IPA III	2.1	150 Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	721,245

2	IPA III	2.1	151 Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	360,623
2	IPA III	2.1	122 Infrastructure for primary and secondary education	2,524,356
2	IPA III	2.1	123 Infrastructure for tertiary education	1,442,489
2	IPA III	2.1	124 Infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning	1,081,865

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.1	01 Grant	7,212,445

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.1	33 No territorial targeting	7,212,445

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

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

The 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:

- *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 across borders;*
- *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 medical threats;*
- *Know-how exchange and capacity building activities (joint trainings, conferences, workshops).*

Regular projects could be complemented by strategic projects and large infrastructure projects, that will have a bigger impact at cross-border level involving relevant stakeholders for the 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”.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

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>Social and economic development</i>	<i>Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care;</i>	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>Organisations</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>29</i>

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
<i>Social and economic development</i>	<i>Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care;</i>	<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>Organisations</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.2.2.3 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 *Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and*

promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care 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.

2.2.2.4 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)
2	IPA III	2.2	128 Health infrastructure	2,472,867
2	IPA III	2.2	129 Health equipment	10,715,756
2	IPA III	2.2	130 Health mobile assets	1,648,578
2	IPA III	2.2	131 Digitalisation in health care	1,648,576

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.2	01 Grant	16,485,777

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.2	33 No territorial targeting	16,485,777

2.2.3 Specific objective: Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

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

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.

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 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 sustainable tourism assets and services;*
- *Development and implementation of measures to protect, develop and promote natural heritage and eco-tourism, sport/ cyclo/ hiking-tourism;*

- *Development and implementation of measures to protect, develop and promote cultural heritage and cultural services;*
- *Investments in physical regeneration of cultural and touristic objectives, in the scope of their inclusion in the touristic and/ or cultural circuit;*
- *Joint actions in the field of development of sustainable touristic and cultural services.*

Regular projects could be complemented by large infrastructure projects, that will have a bigger impact at cross-border level, will involve relevant stakeholders and will aim at investing in infrastructure that connects important touristic sites and contributes to the development of sustainable tourism in the area.

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”.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

2.2.3.2 Indicators

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

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Social and economic development	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RC O 77	<i>Number of cultural and tourism sites supported</i>	<i>Cultural and tourism sites</i>	0	3
		RC O 87	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>Organisations</i>	3	18

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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<i>Social and economic development</i>	<i>Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</i>	<i>RCR 77</i>	<i>Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported</i>	<i>Visitors per year</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>3000</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	
		<i>RCR 84</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>Organisations</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>project statistics</i>	

2.2.3.3 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 the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation* 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.

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

Not applicable

2.2.3.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.2.3.6 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)
2	IPA III	2.3	165 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	3,731,571
2	IPA III	2.3	166 Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	2,487,714
2	IPA III	2.3	167 Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	2,073,095

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.3	01 Grant	8,292,380

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	IPA III	2.3	33 No territorial targeting	8,292,380

2.3. Priority: Increasing border management capacity

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

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

EU support for an Interreg specific objective dedicated to a better cooperation governance, namely to enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders is an opportunity for addressing the institutional capacity of public authorities involved in border management. Such support will help reduce the 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 these types of actions 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 capacity building actions and capability gaps relating to this specific EU external border, 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 measures for strengthening of institutional capacities for improvement of services 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;*
- *Developing common policies and strategies in the field of border management;*
- *Investments in infrastructure and equipment for effective border surveillance, control and migration management;*
- *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.*

Considering the fact that the projects under ISO1 dedicated to building institutional capacity of public authorities involved in border management have a very limited range of adequate applicants with the legal competences of delivering efficient and effective projects in this field, this Priority will be implemented exclusively by a strategic importance project selected by the joint working group during the programming process.

It is expected that the financed activities will contribute to Pillar IV of EUSDR “Strengthening the region”, Priority area 11 “Security”.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

If an operation does not fall under the types of actions defined in the Programme, it cannot be selected for funding.

2.3.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Increasing border management capacity	Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders	<i>RCO 87</i>	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders</i>	<i>organisations</i>	0	5
		<i>RCO 85</i>	<i>Participations in joint training schemes</i>	<i>participations</i>	0	400

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Increasing border management capacity	Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders	RCR 84	<i>Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</i>	<i>organisations</i>	0	2020	2	<i>project statistics</i>	
		RCR 81	<i>Completion of joint training schemes</i>	<i>participants</i>	0	2020	340	<i>project statistics</i>	

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

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

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)
3	IPA III	3.1	171 Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	11,730,000

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	IPA III	3.1	01 Grant	11,730,000

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	IPA III	3.1	33 No territorial targeting	11,730,000

3. Financing plan

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
IPA III CBC[1]	10,030,130	10,230,732	10,435,347	10,644,054	10,856,935	11,074,074	11,295,556	74,566,827

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

FUNDAL

Table 8

Policy Objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total	Co-financing rate	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27 (1)		National public	National private			
					(a1)	(a2)		(b)=(c)+(d)	(c)			
1. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility	Priority 1: Environmental protection and risk management	IPA III CBC[1]	Total	26,474,165	24,067,423	2,406,742	4,671,912	4,048,990	622,922	31,146,077	85.00%	
2. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	Priority 2: Social and economic development	IPA III CBC[1]	Total	35,189,662	31,990,602	3,199,060	6,209,942	5,381,949	827,993	41,399,604	85.00%	
3. A better cooperation governance	Priority 3: Increasing border management capacity	IPA III CBC[1]	Total	12,903,000	11,730,000	1,173,000	2,277,000	1,973,400	303,600	15,180,000	85.00%	
	Total	All funds	Total	74,566,827	67,788,025	6,778,802	13,158,854	11,404,339	1,754,515	87,725,681	85.00%	

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

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.

The large consultation process included both central administration (ministries in both countries, national council for combating discrimination, audit authority) and regional and local authorities (regional development agencies, county councils, local councils/municipalities), other public bodies governed by public law (prefectures, health care institutions, educational, cultural and research institutions, museums), educational institutions and NGOs and religious organizations.

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. In order to ensure a transparent and balanced representation of the civil society in this working group, the Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration carried out a selection process of an NGO. Following the assessment of the submitted proposals, the ACTIVITY Foundation for Human Resources and Sustainable Development became a member of 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 (Zrenjanin, Pozarevac and Bor) and three in Romania (Timișoara, Reșița and Drobeta Turnu-Severin). The stakeholders were asked about the real investment needs in the area and the main aspects of the new European legal framework were presented. Also, a survey was carried out in order to see the relevance of the main conclusions of the territorial analysis and to set up a hierarchy of the specific objectives that could be financed by the future cooperation programme.

The consultation process was carried out for two months (October-November 2019) and was published on the Programme website www.romania-serbia.net and also on the social media. The main specific objectives were therefore identified based on the results of the survey and included in the first draft of the cooperation programme, which was published on the programme website for public consultation on July 30, 2020. All the interested stakeholders were invited to send their observations until September 1, 2020 at the programme email romania-serbia@mlpda.ro. Also, all public interest documents regarding the future programme were published on www.romania-serbia.net website. Press releases posted on the website of the Managing Authority and on the Facebook page of the Programme made all information be more visible and easily accessible for all interested parties.

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 2021-2027 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 second JWG meeting on 23 January 2020, the Policy objectives and specific objectives of the Cooperation Programme were selected. Also, the quality assessment criteria for both **strategic importance projects** and **large infrastructure projects** were approved by the Joint Working Group and published on the Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme website. Moreover, the recommendations of the Programme evaluation made for the 2014-2020 period were discussed and agreed to be put into practice in order to simplify the implementation of the projects in the post-2020 period.

On September 3, 2020 the third meeting of the Joint Working Group for programming of Interreg-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Romania-Serbia Programme 2021-2027, took place in an online format.

During this meeting, the partners that submitted Concept Notes for large infrastructure projects and strategic importance projects had the opportunity to present their project ideas in order to be assessed by the members of the joint working group for programming and selected for financing under the new programme.

Moreover, the methodology for calculating lump sums (for project preparation and project closure) was approved and the timetable for thematic workshops for generating project ideas for the next programming period was agreed. Following this meeting, an action plan for capitalization of the results of the previous programming periods was implemented, by elaborating a database of the most relevant projects, having an important potential for capitalisation. The database was published on the Programme website www.romania-serbia.net and promoted on the social media. Also, four thematic workshops dedicated to the potential beneficiaries took place online in October 2020, and aimed at establishing new partnerships and networks, generating new project ideas

and disseminating outputs and results from the projects already financed by the Interreg-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Romania-Serbia Programme.

During the fourth meeting held on October 7, 2020 The Joint Working Group agreed upon the list of strategic importance projects and large infrastructure projects that could be included for funding in the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Romania - Serbia Programme 2021-2027.

On January 26, 2021, the Joint Working Group for Programming discussed issues related to the requirements of Policy Objective 5 “A Europe closer to its citizens” and the ways in which culture and tourism actions can benefit from funding under specific objective 4.5 of Policy Objective 4 “**A more social and inclusive Europe**”. Concurrently, it was agreed to elaborate a third draft of the Programme, which would include the specific objective 4.5 “Increasing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation”, as well as a timetable for the elaboration of the final version of the programme, which will also include the recommendations of the strategic environmental assessment and to how find the most suitable way for financing of the submitted strategic importance and large infrastructure projects.

The technical assistance funds of the Cooperation Programme shall be used, inter alia, to support the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the beneficiaries, by organizing partner search fora, info days, trainings regarding implementation of projects.

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)

The following general **communication objectives** are considered by taking into account the *communication needs specific for each stage of Programme life cycle* and the *communication needs of each target group*:

1. To support the successful implementation of the programme by ensuring an effective communication system.
2. To increase the knowledge of the potential beneficiaries on the financing opportunities offered by the programme.
3. To support beneficiaries in project implementation in a way that enforces result-orientation and ensures efficiency.
4. To increase public awareness concerning the programme priorities axes and specific objectives, positive impact of EU financial support for the citizens from programme area.
5. To ensure transparency in the use of the IPA III funds and increase the visibility of the RO-RS Programme.

Each communication objective is developed into specific *communication activities*.

The Programme identified the following **target groups** from both countries: beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, governmental and non/governmental actors national and regional, national/regional/local media, EU institutions and bodies, general public (citizens from the Programme area and EU general public), internal support groups, external support groups.

A mix of communication activities is considered, customized to the type of the target group and to each stage of the life cycle of the programme: preparation and adoption of the programme, launching of calls for proposals, selection of projects, implementation of projects, closure of the programme etc.

A dedicated **website** was set-up: www.romania-serbia.net and the section dedicated to 2021-2027 is functional since 2019. All documents related to the programming process were posted for public consultations in this section.

The website will presents all the information required by art. 36 paragraph 2 and 3 of Regulation no.1059/2021, but also additional useful information, proving the Programme commitment towards transparency.

As **social media** was intensively used for promoting the Programme and project results during the programming period 2014-2020, the new programme will to continue this approach. The Programme will encourage the beneficiaries to be more active in promoting their projects on social media, by providing them with specific guidelines for organizing online events or templates for developing infographics, storytelling using visual elements.

Facebook is the most common social media platform used during 2014-2020 period and the most popular social media platform in Romania and Serbia.

Twitter is used by the Programme for important announcements presented in a short and specific message, accompanied by a suggestive image.

YouTube is a frequently used platform and it will use it as well in the future to upload videos and tutorials dedicated to potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries of projects and to ensure live streaming of the organised events.

The following events will be organised:

- **promotion public events** addressing to all target groups (e.g. press conferences for launching of the Programme or presenting the relevant results, European Cooperation Day, outdoor campaigns etc.).
- **events** addressing to potential beneficiaries for elaboration their project idea and application (e.g. info days, trainings, thematic seminars).
- **thematic seminars and trainings** covering topics related to the implementation of the project, project visits, on-line meetings etc.

Short videos will be designed for presenting the programme and its different life cycle stages, for promoting the use of **on-line publications, online communication platforms and networks** and **eco-friendly promotional materials**.

The communication and information measures will be subject to evaluations as part of the Programme evaluations, based on the following main relevant indicators:

- **Events (output indicators):** number of events organised (baseline-66), number of attendees -physical and online (baseline-1980).
- **Website and social media (output indicators):** number of sessions (baseline-180.771), number of page views (baseline-520.465), level of engagement to the posts from programme's website and social media accounts: e.g. average time per session (baseline-3 min.16 sec); number of page views per session (baseline-2.88).

It is estimated that the final targets to be achieved in 2029 for these indicators will be 10% higher than the baseline values calculated based on previous programming period

experience (see above). Sources of data for monitoring and evaluation will be the internal databases from MA and JS, Google Analytics and specific tracking tools for social media platforms.

The total estimated budget foreseen for publicity and information activities to be implemented at programme level is 5% of the IPA funds dedicated to the Technical Assistance.

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

The provisions of the Interreg Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, identify possible financial support from the Programme to four types of projects: *small-scale projects fund, projects of limited financial value, operations of strategic importance and large infrastructure projects.*

Considering these, the Joint Working Group for Programming decided on the support of operations of strategic importance ("strategic importance projects" in the particular case of this Programme), large infrastructure projects and projects of limited financial value.

Having regard to the fact that no definition is provided by the Interreg Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 for the projects of limited financial value, in the context of the Romania-Serbia IPA III Cross-Border Cooperation Programme these projects are defined in close relation to the other two types of projects to be financed and complementing the interventions to be financed under projects of strategic importance and large infrastructure projects.

Hence, in the context of the Programme, projects of limited financial value will have the following characteristics:

- Types of activities: project activities must correspond to the indicators identified for each specific objective, capitalizing, where appropriate, upon previous results and including but not being limited to: pilot actions, innovative solutions, awareness raising, exchange of best practices and transfer of know how.
- Indicative project size: min. 250,000 euro - max. 2,000,000 euro (EU funds). The project size range takes into account the types of projects and financial sizes of projects implemented under two previous IPA CBC Programmes, and aims at encouraging and allowing for the participation of smaller local organizations. Moreover, at the time of the calls for proposals, additional rules may be established considering the specificities of each Specific Objective and indicators' targets.
- Target groups: the target groups shall correspond to the target groups identified for each specific objective.
- Thematic scope: across all Programme priorities and Specific Objectives.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: Article 17(7)(a)

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Development,		

	Public Works and Administration		
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)	Serbian Ministry of European Integration		
Audit authority	Romanian Audit Authority within the Court of Accounts		
Group of auditors representatives	- Romanian Court of Accounts - Audit Authority - Serbian Governmental Audit Office of EU Funds		
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration		

7.2. 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.

Both the JS (main office) and FLC staff (for Romanian beneficiaries) are established in a regional authority, have been working for the previous programme and 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.

The Programme bodies decided to continue financing the Antenna of the Joint Secretariat in Zrenjanin on the Serbian side also for the 2021-2027 programming period, as the JS Antenna staff gained experience during 2014-2020 programme implementation.

The number and qualification of JS Antenna staff corresponds to the tasks and their selection is carried out by the commission composed from NA representatives, through a public and transparent competition procedure, ensuring equal opportunities and promoting equality between men and women. Staff of the JS Antenna will be proficient in English and in Serbian.

The costs of the JS Antenna, including JS Antenna staff, will be supported from the TA budget of the National Authority, in accordance with Programme rules. The JS Antenna staff shall be contracted by the NA, through “Ugovor o delu”.

FLC staff (for Serbian beneficiaries) is established within the Serbian Ministry of Finance shall continue to be financed from TA budget of the Serbian National Authority. The FLC staff working for the previous programmes are already trained and experienced and their number and qualification shall correspond to the tasks and their selection is done through a public and transparent procedure, ensuring equal opportunities.

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

According to art. 103 of Regulation no. 1060/2021 (CPR), each participating country shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the beneficiaries located on its territory.

The participating country 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. In the case of a systematic irregularity, the participating countries in the programme shall extend their investigation to cover all operations potentially affected, case by case.

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 participating countries in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the management and control systems.

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

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

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

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 participating country 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 countries, as laid down in the cooperation programme.

In case a participating country to the programme has not reimbursed the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the respective participating country in the programme. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF or any external financing instrument of the Union to the Programme. The amount recovered shall constitute assigned revenue.

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

With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the managing authority by the participating countries in the programme, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to programmes under the respective external financing instruments of the Union.

The participating countries in the Programme decided that neither the lead beneficiary nor the programme's managing authority is obliged to recover an amount unduly paid that does not exceed EUR 250, not including interest, from any operation in an accounting year, per partner.

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

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

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

Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance - Article 17(3)

The process of collecting Concept Notes for Strategic Importance and Large Infrastructure Projects was conducted during the programming process, between December 2019 and September 2020.

The Joint Working Group for Programming approved the methodology for assessment and selection, the evaluation grids and adopted a Decision for the projects which received the highest score and falls within the financial allocations.

Thus, the list of planned operations of strategic importance comprises the following projects:

1. Together we can beat cancer

Lead partner: Emergency Municipal Clinical Hospital Timișoara

Partners: Health Centre Kladovo; General Hospital Pančevo; Health Centre Veliko Gradište; Emergency County Hospital Drobeta Turnu Severin;

Total Budget (euro): 5,000,000.00

Priority 2: Social and economic development - SO 2: ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care.

Timetable for implementation: 36 months

2. Safer climate within the Romanian-Serbian border area

Lead partner: Territorial Inspectorate of Border Police Timișoara

Partners: Ministry of Interior Republic of Serbia - Border Police Directorate; School for Improvement of Training of Border Police Personnel Drobeta Turnu-Severin; General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police; General Inspectorate of the Romanian Gendarmerie;

Total Budget (euro): 13,800,000.00

Priority 3: Increasing border management capacity - SO 1: enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders.

Timetable for implementation: 36 months

3. Harmonization of cardiovascular diseases management from prevention to heart transplantation in the cross border area

Lead partner: Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Timișoara

Partners: General Hospital Pancevo; General Hospital Vrsac; General Hospital Smederevo.

Total Budget (euro): 5,000,000.00

Priority 2: Social and economic development - SO 2: ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care.

Timetable for implementation: 48 months

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