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## List of Abbreviations

NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
LAU	Local Administrative Units
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
R&D&I	Research, Development and Innovation
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
RDV	Rába-Duna-Vág European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation with Limited Liability
MICE tourism	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions tourism
CP	Cooperation Programme
SPF	Small Project Fund
TAPE	Territorial Action Plan for Employment
MC	Monitoring Committee
IMIS	Integrated Monitoring and Information System
FLC	First Level Control
SO	Specific Objective
PO	Policy Objective
ISO	Interreg Specific Objective
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
EUSDR	The EU Strategy for the Danube Region
CBC	Cross-border Cooperation
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund
PA	Priority Axis/Area
MRS	Macro-regional Strategy
CAP	Common agricultural policy
CEF	The Connecting Europe Facility
rescEU	EU Civil Protection Mechanism
EDEN	The European Destinations of Excellence
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
OP	Operation Programme
PA	Partnership Agreement
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
ESF+	The European Social Fund Plus
CF	Cohesion Fund
JTS	Just Transition Fund
OPSK	Operation Programme Slovakia
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
TJTP	Territorial Just Transition Fund
BOP	Border Orientation Paper
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
DNSH	“do no significant harm”
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
MA	Managing Authority
JS	Joint Secretariat
NEC	National Emission Ceilings Directive
TA	Technical Assistance
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
P2P	Partner-to-Partner
RCO	Common Output Indicators
RCR	Common Result Indicators

ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
ERDF	European Regional and Development Fund
PC	Programming Committee
EC	European Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SZPO	Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC.
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories



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

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### 1.1. Programme area

The border section between Hungary and the Slovak Republic is among the longest in the EU. The total programming region covers 61,496 km<sup>2</sup> (similar size to Latvia) with 8.85 million inhabitants (similar size to Austria). This means that the target area is large enough to have remarkable heterogeneity and differences. The border region spans across as many as 13 distinct territorial units along its internal border stretching a length of more than 650 km. The programming region on the Slovak side covers the following 5 NUTS3 regions (so called 'kraj') giving home to 3.34 million people altogether:

- SK010 - Bratislava region
- SK021 - Trnava region
- SK023 - Nitra region
- SK032 - Banská Bystrica region
- SK042 - Košice region

The programming region on the Hungarian side includes the following 8 NUTS3 regions (so called 'megye' and the capital city of Budapest) in Hungary with 5.45 million residents:

- HU110 - Budapest<sup>1</sup>
- HU120 - Pest county
- HU212 - Komárom-Esztergom county
- HU221 - Győr-Moson-Sopron county
- HU311 - Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county
- HU312 - Heves county<sup>1</sup>
- HU313 - Nógrád county
- HU323 - Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county

### 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.

#### 1.2.1. Territorial challenges

##### Environmental conditions

A major part of the border area belongs to the Pannonian biogeographical and ecological region. The impact of climate change in the region will cause increase in warm temperature extremes, decrease in summer precipitation, increase in water temperature, increase in the risk of forest fires and decrease in economic value of forests. This gives importance to initiatives focused on green infrastructure, and protection of natural heritage and resources. One of the main cohesion elements of the border region is its landscape structure, which does not follow the administrative borders, although, sometimes natural features can define borders between the countries concerned. The programme area incorporates 5 natural geographic macro-regions of the Pannon-Carpathian region, of which The Little Plain (Kisalföld/Malá dunajská kotlina), the Great Plains (Nagyalföld) and the North-Western Carpathians all stretch across the national boundary.

Flood protection is one of the fields of cooperation of high importance since great proportion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Territorial units have no direct physical connection with the state border. Their interests are based on territorial proximity and the experienced border effects.

population is expected to be impacted by riverine floods. The whole programme area belongs to the catchment area of the Danube. Except for the central border areas, almost all bordering catchment and riverside areas (of Nitra, Hron, Ondava, Latorica, Rába, Zagyva, Bodrog, Tisza, or the upper sections of the Danube) have high or extreme flood risk levels. Along these rivers of transboundary nature, disaster management should be developed jointly to avoid severe damages and death tolls.

Apart from the quantity control of water supplies the water quality of cross-border rivers is another main issue between the countries since contamination does not recognise country borders either. The good status of the many cross-border rivers (Danube, Ipeľ, Slaná, Hornád, Bodrog, Tisza) should be maintained through monitoring and prevention. From the point of decreasing pollution and protecting water quality at drinking water sources and their environments, which often also have direct contact with surface water bodies, is another field of potential joint action owing to their cross-border nature. First of all, these sources include the Little Plain (Kisalföld/Malá dunajská kotlina) and the Aggtelek Karst and the Slovak Karst (Slovenský kras). Karst water is particularly vulnerable to pollution; therefore, its protection is primarily important for the sake of long-term water supply. Therefore, the coordinated protection of water quality is essential for preserving the purity of the water bases of cross-border significance.

Cross-border cooperation extends to all areas of water management (protection, regulations, developments, joint EU projects, maintenance of facilities, hydrographic data collection and exchange, forecasting, joint revisions etc.) thanks to, among others, the Hungarian-Slovak Transboundary Water Committee and its subcommittees (e.g. on the Danube, the Tisza, the Ipeľ rivers) and working groups (e.g. water quality) as well as to the Hungarian-Slovak Joint Committee on Environment and Nature Cooperation. Still, obstacles of environmental cooperation in the field of water-related environmental issues to overcome in particular include the differences in existing structures of disaster and emergency management systems.

It is crucial for the border area to identify projects of strategic nature with actions in the field of quality of waters and environmental risks. However, looking at the results of the recent and future bilateral projects, the outputs are predominantly focusing on elaborating feasibility studies, design and construction plans. Therefore, insufficient institutional capacity hinders overcoming project-based cooperation.

While in the EU the share of climate-sensitive renewable energy sources is increasing, the two countries are still failing to switch to a low-carbon energy system. Hungary and Slovakia produce less municipal waste than of the EU average but the share of recycling is still low.

As many as ten national parks are situated within the programme area, of which a high share forms cross-border habitats, ecological corridors under protection. The caves of Aggtelek and the Slovak Karst have been classified as joint natural world heritage sites of the two countries since 1995. Besides landscape protection zones, Natura 2000 and Ramsari areas, numerous smaller, protected sites are situated within the border region highlighting the importance of joint actions in relation to invasive alien species as well as endangered populations.

### **1.2.2. Functional settlement networks**

The border area is rich in existing and emerging cross-border inter-municipality cooperation ties. There are many (potential) functional settlement connections which are cut by the border. In many cases, extensive parts of the urban hinterlands are situated on the other side of the border. Cross-border agglomerations and metropolitan hinterlands (of Bratislava, Budapest, Košice), twin cities (Komárom-Komárno, Esztergom-Štúrovo) and other urban structures have created challenges implying actions to strengthen urban relations. Theoretically numerous smaller and larger cities from Bratislava and Mosonmagyaróvár through Šahy and Balassagyarmat to Sátoraljaújhely and Kráľovský Chlmec could extend their influencing zone and network connections to the other side. The common and complementary urban functions present along the border line provide an opportunity for the cross-border organization of various public services.

When taking into consideration the potential fields of cooperation between the above mentioned urban functional centres, the areas of integrated cross-border planning, transport (construction of cross-border

infrastructure, improved public transport services and other environmentally sound and smart solutions), bilingualism (of services), buffer zone functions (leisure and sport facilities, local products and special services) should be mentioned apart from service developments covering health care, education or other relevant offers.

However, despite that joint and complementary functions are present, in practice, functional urban integration is still missing within the programme area. The still low level of institutionalisation hampers effective cooperation in functional development and coordination of public services in a cross-border context. Initiatives to strengthen cohesion in the urban network are rare (e.g. Pons Danubii and Ister-Granum EGTCs, twinning agreements). Cross-border functional areas of the Hungarian-Slovak borderland are the followings:

#### **1) The cross-border metropolitan agglomeration of Bratislava**

This westernmost border zone is heavily affected by the suburbanization of the Slovak capital. The Slovak metropolis is the urban centre of the whole area, its gravitational zone is developing and creates a more and more extensive area, increasingly crossing the border of the city as well as the state. Since the early 2000s Bratislava's catchment area has been stretching towards Mosonmagyaróvár and Győr embedding a number of small Hungarian villages into the suburb of the Slovak capital city.

#### **2) The joint Danubian border area**

From the west to the east, the first joint functional zone is the Danubian area belonging to the Malá dunajská nížina/Kisalföld landscape. The region is characterized by the Danubian flatland accompanied by small hills. The region gives home to the largest inland island of Europe, composed by Szigetköz and Žitný ostrov which include the most significant ground water reserve of Central Europe. Large parts of this border area enjoy nature protection status. The first level of functional cooperation is determined by these landscape characteristics: the flatland character, the nature protection zones, the need for guarding water reserves, logistics and the potential of green tourism developments.

#### **3) The function deficient hilly region in the east**

The second largest border section includes the valley of the Ipoly/Ipeľ river and the hilly area of Nógrád/Novohrad and Gömör/Gemer. This area representing nearly half of the total Slovak-Hungarian border is characterized by large rural sub-regions with small urban centres with very low density of urban functions. While the landscape defines shared identity-regions (like the Ipoly/Ipeľ valley, Gömör/Gemer region, the cross-border ethnologic region of Palócföld/Územie palócov, the cross-border natural regions of the Novohrad-Nógrád geopark and the Karst) the stronger urban poles providing services across and attracting people and capital from the other side of the border are missing.

#### **4) The cross-border agglomeration of Košice**

The easternmost section of the joint borderland partly belongs to the cross-border agglomeration of Košice. The functional influencing area of the second largest Slovak city is different in various sub-regions. The attraction of Košice is the strongest in its direct neighbourhood, from Moldava nad Bodvou, through the Cserehát region and the Hernád/Hornád valley to the Zemplén/Zemplín hills. The city has weaker influence on Borsod (this situation is expected to change after the inauguration of the M30 highway between Miskolc and the state border) and the Bodrogeköz/Medzibodrožie.

#### **5) The trilateral border area of Slovakia-Hungary-Ukraine**

The easternmost section of the joint borderland stretches from Sátoraljaújhely to the trilateral border point. This area is impacted by several different influences. On the one hand, since the changeover new border crossings opened between Sátoraljaújhely and Slovenské Nové Mesto (2011), Karos and Streda nad Bodrogom (2007), Zemplénagárd and Veľké Trakany (2013), Lácacséke and Pribeník (2011) facilitating cross-border flow along the Hungarian-Slovak border section (the easternmost crossings

mainly serve the transport needs of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county). On the other hand, the border section rather lacks large urban poles animating cross-border flows. At the same time, smaller cities, like Sátoraljaújhely and Sárospatak, Kráľovský Chlmec and Kisvárd, as well as, Nyíregyháza have impacts on the functional integration of this border section too.

### **1.2.3. Transport connections**

Even though the number of border crossings including ferries has increased from 29 to 35 from 2011, decreasing the average distance between passenger crossings from 22.6 to 18.7 km, there are still extensive border areas (especially along the Danube) with limited permeability. Besides, there are only few crossings with higher freight limit than 3.5 t forcing freight traffic to detour what weakens economic cohesion.

Despite of that some road sections (M15-D2, M30-R4) and bridges (Komárom-Komárno, Őrhalom-Vrbovka, Drégelypalánk-Ipeľské Predmostie, Ipolydamásd-Chľaba; as well as, the cycle bridge between Dunakiliti and Dobrohost') and a new ferry connection between Neszmély and Radvaň nad Dunajom are under construction, major bottlenecks and missing links still weaken the territorial cohesion of the borderland. These bottlenecks are identifiable e.g. at the level of national and local roads attached to the new border crossings.

### **1.2.4. Economic challenges**

#### **General economic performance**

The border area is characterised with remarkable regional disparities. The classic east-west divide has persisted in a sense that the most developed part of the border economy consists of the western counties of Trnava and Győr-Moson-Sopron along with outstanding performance of the metropolis areas. These regions, having favourable locations to Western European markets with excellent accessibility and developed business infrastructure, well-performing manufacturing as well as outstanding knowledge and technology-driven sectors, outperform the rest of the programming area. Furthermore, except for Košice region all the regions with a relatively good performance are situated west of Budapest. On the other hand, the border economy incorporates lagging regions, which struggle in catching up effectively. The most extensive areas with low economic output include many districts of Nógrád, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Banská Bystrica region counties in particular, but some least developed micro regions sometimes next to the motors of economy (like cities of Košice, Eger or Hatvan) can also be found in Heves and Košice counties. These areas often suffer from peripheral location, weak entrepreneur sector and business ties with the wider region, monofunctional economic structure and insufficient business infrastructure. Some areas are characterised by formerly collapsed heavy industries with rustbelts, the largest such cross-border rustbelt stretches from Salgótarján and Lučenec to the west of Košice.

Taking into account the European economic processes, it can be said that the Slovak-Hungarian border region has been part of a well-performing "powerhouse" of the EU economy with above average growth rates and potentials. On the European level the westernmost dynamic regions along with the capital cities are having a distinctively more favourable position, partly owing to their proximity to the most developed European economic hubs and axes, in comparison with the eastern regions which are bordered with weakly performing, often underdeveloped peripheries.

#### **Economic structure**

The economic structure has various elements of joint and complementary features as basis for cross-border economic relations. In terms of number of enterprises, apart from 9 LAU1 units in every Hungarian district, agriculture, forestry and fishing accounts for the most numerous firms, the eastern part of the Hungarian programming area. At the same time, agriculture is the most dominant activity in two districts of the Slovak side exclusively. Apart from Budapest, Bratislava County and Pest County agriculture plays more important role in the border economy compared to the programming area as a whole. All regions concerned excluding the aforementioned ones have a more agricultural character than the rest of the country they are situated in. Counties with the most outstanding share of agricultural production include Heves, Nitra, Banská

Bystrica and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg.

Significant spatial differences exist within the programming area in relation to enterprise density. The entrepreneurial life is heavily focusing on the capital city regions: Bratislava and the surrounding county together accounts for slightly more than one-third of all Slovakian enterprises operating in the border region, while in Budapest and Pest County 61.7% of the companies can be found. Large areas struggle from weak density of undertakings; areas with low entrepreneur density include the majority of Košice region and Banská Bystrica region. Agglomerations of large and medium sized enterprises have developed around the capitals as well as along long sections of major transport axes such as the M1 and M3 highway from Hungary and D1 highway and R1 expressway from Slovakia. From the east of the Budapest–Banská Bystrica line the companies with more than 250 employees are less widespread, and their business units are very much concentrating on few sites.

Business relations are heavily dependent on the potentials to take part in transnational value chains. The agglomeration effects and the supplier networks developed around Original Equipment Manufacturers have a major role given that Slovakia and Hungary have become part of a wider automotive production and growth zone in Central Europe, including suppliers from Bratislava and Győr across Esztergom, Hatvan and Eger to Košice and Miskolc. It is expected that the supplier networks and value chains will further expand across the border in relation to both manufacturing and agro-business.

Taking into account Gross Value Added, while some regions, especially the two capital regions, have strong tertiary and quaternary sectors (i.e. financial, insurance, scientific, technical, administrative and support services) and are successful in restructuring the economy, there are also regions with strong industrial base (Trnavský and Nitriansky Regions, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Komárom-Esztergom, Heves, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Counties), and regions which face the challenge of economic shift (e.g. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Banskobistrický Region). Slow economic restructuring can be shown considering deindustrialisation and growth in tertiary sector, especially in market-oriented business services.

The original entrepreneurial generation is ageing, and company succession is not assured. Furthermore, the entrepreneur activity (in terms of GDP produced by enterprises per capita as well as of the number of SMEs per capita) is lower than the EU average, and there are differences on the east and west sides of the analysed area. There is low interest rate in becoming an entrepreneur, weak potentials to grow, shortages of capital and insufficient funds, weak management and business skills, low innovation and efficiency. For SMEs trainings including e-learning activities, information and knowledge sharing, export and selling and trust building are all needed for capacity building for cross-border cooperation and business development.

Considering the enterprises one of the major problems hindering cross-border cooperation is the lack of quality business information which would support networking, business relations including investment, trade, marketing and production. In the programme area, there is almost no information not to mention exact data sources about Hungarian and Slovak companies, SMEs in particular.

The total value of foreign trade was increased by 65.2% from 2007 to 2017 between the two countries. From the point of view of Hungary, Slovakia is 5th on the ranking among the biggest export markets, while 4th among the biggest importers to Hungary. From the perspective of Slovakia, Hungary is the 5th most important customer, and the 8th most important supplier on the foreign trade market. One of the main aims should be to turn the successful domestic suppliers into exporters since the border has a strong separating role in terms of cross-border supply chains.

### **Economic infrastructure**

The border region north and east of Budapest has been suffering from much weaker interconnections with the economic core areas, unfavourable accessibility with outer peripheries, and the lack of well-developed border-crossing infrastructure. In general, while the integration to the wider European network is outstanding towards Western Europe, the North-South transport suffers from insufficient network connections. The central part of the region in particular lacks strong infrastructural interconnections

especially from Šahy to Tornyosnémeti regarding road traffic. Despite of some speedways (e.g. R2 or main road 21) constructed close to the border along that specific section, none of them creates a continuous functioning connection. From Szob–Chľaba to Hidasnémeti–Čaňa the international traffic is very limited regarding rail transport. The aforementioned still-existing bottlenecks and missing north-south transport interconnections hamper the permeability of the border and the accessibility of border regions including both passenger and freight traffic.

There is a need for coordinated complex economic infrastructure development to support synergies through cross-border economic ties (zones and axes include the westernmost part of the border region defined by Bratislava, Győr, Komárom, Nitra and Trnava; Ister-Granum cross-border logistics area around Esztergom and Štúrovo; Hatvan and Lučenec along the M21 and road 71 of Slovakia; Via Carpatia corridor along the M30 and the R4 between Miskolc and Košice; Čierna nad Tisou and Záhony trans-shipment zones) by linking industrial parks and logistics zones in particular. Eastern border areas especially are lagging behind in cross-border economic integration. These, in general, would require extensive development programmes with elements of distinct infrastructure (elimination of bottlenecks and creation of new links regarding border crossings, roads, railways, business infrastructure etc.) to reach a higher level of interconnectedness.

### **Innovation skills**

Taking into account R&D expenditures as share of regional GDP, large territorial disparities have persisted, Budapest and Bratislava region are the only ones whose data are above the national averages of both Hungary and Slovakia. Capital city regions stand out in terms of expenditures, while most of the regions have significantly lower values. With regard to the change in R&D between 2010 and 2016, the already well-performing Budapest and Bratislava region outperformed the rest of the border region resulting in increased regional inequalities in technology production and knowledge industry. Instead of diffusion concentration of knowledge into few centres can hinder successful knowledge transfer.

In spite of some practices (e.g. the Territorial Action Plans for Employment of the Via Carpatia and Ister-Granum EGTCs), there are still insufficient measures in the frames of short supply chains. Economic as well as environmental vulnerability arising from the challenges of the globalised economy and climate change calls for more viable and crisis-proof solutions based on regional territorial capital.

R&D&I should result in more and more social and economic benefits, thus increasing economic competitiveness and improving well-being. Low resilience of the border regions' industry to climate change impacts can be shown. Slow transition to circular economy is observable in a couple of fields. Waste management is a crucial area of underperformance by the border economies. In both countries the shares of recycled packaging waste and municipal waste are falling far from the EU average.

There are shortages of resource efficiency and the eco-innovation performance is weak. Slovakia ranked only 16th, while Hungary 18th on the eco-innovation scoreboard within the EU. Furthermore, untapped potentials weaken the cohesion in relation to many thematic areas of joint interest such as agro-industry (e.g. agro-technologies, bio-food), energy industry (e.g. energy efficiency, renewables), and social innovation.

### **Labour force**

In the labour market the shortages of skilled, qualified labour force have to be tackled. The growth potential in labour-intensive development has been extensively utilised, therefore there is a need for a shift to a more technology and knowledge-intensive growth.

Uncoordinated labour market and educational offers, the mismatch of qualifications and labour needs, job vacancies are of great significance. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative labour shortage is apparent, which both calls for innovative solutions. There are shortages of harmonised supply and demand of regional labour markets across the border.

The defining part of cross-border labour migration along the Slovak-Hungarian border is rather concentrated on certain (micro)regions and dot-like settlements. In the central joint border section from Esztergom to Košice, the cross-border labour mobility is relatively weak in spite of potentials in stronger economic and labour market integration. Cross-border development of labour market integration is hampered by complex soft and hard elements including education and training, labour market information, investment support, transport infrastructure and services etc.

### **1.2.5. Social challenges**

#### **Demographic conditions**

Both countries are going to face the effects of an ageing or even shrinking population. Ageing of the population seems to be irreversible throughout the forecasted period and it will be especially intensive between the 2020 and 2040 period.

Ageing index, meaning the ratio of the number of elderly persons of an age of generally economically inactive (aged 65 and over) to the number of young persons (from 0 to 14), is below the value of 1 in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Bratislava and Košice regions exclusively. Extensive border areas of ageing population can be found in Nitra, Nógrád, Heves, Banská Bystrica and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (e.g. along the river Ipeľ). The longest almost continuous zone across the border stretches from Veľký Meder to Salgótarján.

The demography of the programme area is heavily characterised by the low population retention capacities of extensive border areas: migration of young and active age population to foreign countries, and to western and capital city regions causing depopulation and high share of dependent population including severely aging neighbouring Slovak and Hungarian communities.

#### **Skills indicators (education)**

Skill indicators appear as highly relevant factors for future development of the given region since higher educational level assures an economic activity that is able to produce products with added value, thus generating higher profit rates. However, it was attractive for foreign direct investment, low educational level might appear as a hindrance in terms of creating high value added, knowledge intensive jobs in the region.

A still strong East-West divide should be described in relation to regional disparities in educational attainment: regardless of the border, on the west the proportion of citizens with only basic or no education is much smaller, while those who have tertiary education are more numerous than on the eastern counties.

#### **Unemployment conditions**

Long-term unemployment rate and the disadvantaged districts strongly correlate with each other meaning that for large parts of the border area the social cohesion heavily depends on labour market conditions. Weak inclusiveness of regional labour markets and access to quality employment is reflected in persisting long-term unemployment, east of the Budapest–Nitra line in particular.

There is a strong discrepancy across the eastern part of the programme area especially; due to skill mismatch, the long-term unemployed do not possess the necessary knowledge and skill set to fill the advertised jobs. High unemployment rates often persist among people with low educational attainment.

#### **Poverty conditions**

The most disadvantaged districts are situated along the national boundary in both countries with high proportion of population at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The picture is further complicated by an east-west divide; on the eastern side a bundle of social problems is present in connection with unfavourable health and housing status, unsatisfactory child wellbeing, the shortage of public services and the presence of discrimination. Poverty indicators are substantially generated by multiple factors, like limited amount of foreign direct investments, low level of educational skills, emigration of the young and skilled and the deep-



rooted social and economic poverty conditions of the Roma ethnicity. Moreover, problems of the extensive troubled regions are further generated by inappropriately developed infrastructure including transport network, weaker business environment and lower educational level of some layers of the population, which appear as high demand in case of investments.

### **Health conditions**

It is crucial to improve health conditions in the border region taking into account the deteriorating healthcare systems regarding personnel and territorial coverage in distinct border regions.

There are several areas where the health care institution on the other side of the border can be reached faster than the domestic one (e.g. in relation to Győr or Košice). Best example for already functioning patient flows is the Vaszary Kolos Hospital of Esztergom, a major health care institution with a cross-border service zone of approx. 100,000 clients. The hospital provides an average of 200-250 treatments a year for Slovakian patients. Despite of some positive examples and changes in healthcare provision and patient mobility, untapped potentials regarding hospitals and outpatient care still can be detected.

Commission's findings from the evaluation of the Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare conclude that differences in health systems continue to hinder access to healthcare across borders. In this respect some cross-border health projects have already been implemented thanks to the cooperation programmes so far; nevertheless, these have not resulted in long-term, strategic cooperation, especially they have not resulted integrated cross-border health care systems. At the same time, the functional features of the border region (e.g. cross-border suburbanisation processes, different coverage of health care services) make it increasingly necessary to deepen the coordination of health care services in the long run.

### **People-to-people connections**

Existing bilateral cooperation based on the Government Decree 120/2005. (VI. 28.) supports the fields of culture, education, science, sports and youth between Hungary and Slovakia. It is also amplified by the town twinning relations serving as a frame and basis to improve the understanding and cooperation between the people of the two countries, which is very popular in the programme area. The most twin cities are located close to the border as it is especially the case in central and eastern areas of the Hungarian and Slovakian border area.

Cultural and civil organisations are of great significance owing to their role of inter-connecting the two cultures. This role could be utilized with a joint benefit. Hungarian cultural and civil organizations in Slovakia are located mostly near the border, while the number of Slovak organisations in Hungary is much lower and the spatial distribution is not so concentrated.

It can be said that much more people speak Hungarian language on the Slovakian side than the number of people who speak Slovak on the Hungarian side. According to the census in 2011, people with Hungarian mother tongue represent around 10% of the total population of the Slovak Republic, while people with Slovak mother tongue represent around 0,1% of the total population of Hungary. Both ratios should be improved with a significant shift towards a balanced knowledge of each other's language, at least on a basic level.

According to a comprehensive questionnaire-based survey in terms of traffic across the Mária Valéria bridge between Štúrovo and Esztergom, the most frequent motives of cross-border crossing were the following ones: shopping, labour market and entertainment. Apart from them, various reasons can be named from family and friend visits through tourism purposes to student migration. However, due to lack of data little information is known about the reasons of border crossings as part of people to people interactions.

### **Cross-border cooperation**

The border region has been going through a dynamic opening process during the last decades. As a result,



the social and economic relations have significantly enhanced especially in the western border section. In parallel with the intensification of cross-border interactions, several legal and administrative obstacles have turned up. These obstacles, rooted in the different legal and public administration systems, touches upon mainly the fields of education (recognition of diplomas, unequal vocational education systems), health care (limited movement of ambulance cars across the border, patients immobility), short supply chains (different standards for local products, taxation problems of producers) and of transport (complex standards for public transport) but employment, disaster management, public procurement issues are also affected by the different legal background. All these factors significantly hamper both economic and social interactions on a daily basis.

On national level, the Hungarian-Slovak Intergovernmental Joint Committee has provided the framework of cooperation for territorial and sectoral actors since 2004. Its activity covered several strategic sectors, such as infrastructure, energy trade, in harmony with the EU and regional (V4) policies.

On lower levels, territorial cooperation has a long history in the border region. Hundreds of Hungarian-Slovak twin-town agreements have been set-up since the regime change, which later formed the basis of the euroregions and EGTCs. After the 2000s, euroregions became the most popular form of cooperation, which was changed by inauguration of the EGTC tool. The Slovak-Hungarian is the most frequented border of the EU by EGTCs: since 2008 15 groupings have been established there. In 2020, 3 of them are in dissolution phase, further 2 do not seem to be active while 10 perform at very different levels.

The activity of the Ister-Granum, the Pons Danubii, the Arrabona, the Pontibus, the RDV and the Via Carpatia EGTCs is exemplary, they significantly contribute to the development of their region. The latter two groupings are even in charge of the management of the small project funds within the framework of the SK-HU Interreg V-A Programme that aims to strengthen cross-border social cohesion. The programme area of the small project funds was divided into two parts, the eastern and western sides, the former is managed by the RDV EGTC, while the latter is managed by the Via Carpatia EGTC.

## Culture

The border area is characterised by the cultural relics of the thousand-year co-existence of Slovaks and Hungarians. The Slovak-Hungarian border area is very rich in tangible and intangible heritage elements, many of which are situated along the border. Consequently, a large variety of historical urban centres rich in monuments and other built cultural attractions lie in the border area. Cultural heritage, like castles, museums, sacral monuments are the most numerous attractions on both sides of the border. Castles, palaces and mansions represent common heritage, but also the cult and respect of some historical personalities.

The border regions do not only need the joint promotion of the heritage, but they also need the development of the related infrastructure as well. The overall management of the heritage and its exploitation in the form of creative industry (collection, research, preservation, digitisation, presentation, processing, marketing, ecological and cultural event organisation) is still at an early stage. The cultural diversity provides favourable conditions but heritage management on joint institutional level and regarding long-term cooperation is not widespread.

Cultural and/or natural values of the border region have been utilized for the development of thematic tourist routes. Challenges arise from their maintenance, management as well as their integration to supporting products and services.

## Tourism

Considering overnight stays, there is a potential for further strengthening the cohesion of the border region. There are extensive areas with high number of incoming tourists, which are either situated along the state borders or could be better interconnected including e.g. Bratislava, the microregions of Győr, Sopron, Budapest, the Danube Bend, the Low Tatra Mountains, Banská Štiavnica, Eger and its surroundings, or the Tokaj Wine Region. These areas represent a good basis for tourism developments which would further increase the valorisation of geographical proximity, the connectedness of tourist attractions and the

existence of tourist infrastructure such as accommodation facilities.

Cross-border tourism is a key phenomenon of the border area, however, the extent and magnitude of it varies along the border. Among attraction sites, several receive visitors from the neighbouring country, who are not only leading the chart of all incomers, but on certain days outnumber even the inland tourist traffic (e.g. Füzér Castle or Bořsa Castle). Cross-border tourist flow underlines the potential in creating joint bilingual tourist products, services, information and marketing tools to better boost tourism across the border.

The supply of accommodation services shows a territorially imbalanced pattern on LAU1 level. Particular bordering tourist regions with large variety of facilities as well as areas lacking sufficient capacities (e.g. Gömör-Tornai-karszt/Slovenský kras) can be found. The utilisation of accommodation capacities is to be improved in both countries.

The programme area is rich in technical and industrial heritage, in several cases with high tourism potential; however, some sights are in bad conditions for tourist utilisation. Cultural tourism and related thematic routes have different but high potential across the border region including both urban and rural areas. Incomplete north-south bicycle and trekking trail interconnections horse-riding routes hinder the integration of products and services.

The borderland is rich in endowments favourable for active and/or slow green tourism. It has favourable conditions for thermal, health and wellness tourism. MICE tourism (Meetings, incentives, conferencing, exhibitions) is an emerging subsector of tourism with a special significance in the two capital regions.

In general, the tourism sector of the rural, often peripheral regions perform much weaker, despite their varied natural and cultural assets. With regard to destination management and the development of tourist regions jointly, several connectable and interdependent territories can be identified at the border, of which cooperation areas of the western part of Podunajsko and Szigetköz; Novohrad/Nógrád; Hont and the Danube Bend; Gemer and the Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst, Tokaj-Hegyalja-Zemplén, Dolný Zemplín, among other considerable demarcated areas stand out.

### **1.2.6. Lessons learnt from past experience**

#### **Main findings of the first phase evaluation**

The first phase evaluation of the previous Cooperation Programme (2014-2020) proposed a set of recommendations, most of which are valid for the current Cooperation Programme (2021-2027).

#### **1) Strategic frames of the Programme**

- Clearer and unambiguous rules and timely delivered regulation are necessary from EU level
- Territorial relevance should further be strengthened
- Differentiation between West and East is recommended
- The flexibility for modification of the CP should be increased

#### **2) Programme structure and capacities**

- Compensate missing capacities as soon as possible
- Keep the involvement of the EGTCs in SPF management

#### **3) Communication**

- Keep and enhance the efficient direction
- Improve the beneficiaries' communication capacities
- Simplify project communication and make it more fit-to-purpose
- Promote the best practice examples in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of cross-border aspects of projects

#### **4) Project selection**

- Restrict the thematic scope of the calls
- Strengthen the cross-border character of the projects
- Apply the two-round selection procedure also in other calls than PA3
- Re-design the SME call
- Apply the TAPE model also for other priorities in the next programme
- Keep the Small Project Fund
- Promote the horizontal integration of the projects
- Apply the three-level quality assessment model to the entire programme
- Involve the MC more actively in the selection of the proposals

#### 5) **Project implementation**

- Eliminate the differences between the two (national) financing systems
- Enhance the sustainability of cross-border partnerships and the project results

#### 6) **Performance on programme level**

- Fine-tune the IMIS<sup>2</sup> and train the beneficiaries on the use of it
- Modify the IMIS system with a view to enable its users to import and export data in a more compiled and structured way
- Eliminate or diminish the reasons of delays
- Harmonise the FLC procedures in order to ensure equal treatment
- Involve the beneficiaries in the preparation of the calls
- Consider the implementation of continuously open calls

### **Main findings of the stakeholder consultation**

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

One of the main components of the consultation was an online survey, that was filled out by stakeholders (among others previous applicants, municipalities within a 30 km range of the border, related institutions such as universities, hospitals, EGTCs, etc.). The respondents were asked to identify those difficulties that they perceived as obstacles in terms of participating in the cross-border programme. By far the most popular answer was that the respondents felt they did not have adequate financial background to apply for the cross-border calls as they lacked the required own contribution. The next three most widely shared obstacles are close to each other in representativeness: the lack of information, the not enough relevant thematic calls and the lack of human capacities of the organisation. This last factor is more challenging to be handled on the programming level, while the other three factors could be addressed in the new programme in order to make the calls more accessible to a wider pool of actors.

Lot of respondents mentioned, that the financial framework of the previous cross-border programmes had been designed in a way that had put the Slovakian actors in a highly difficult position: the post-financing system means that the project partners have to pre-finance the incurring costs of the project which is reimbursed only after 10-12 months which is a burden that cannot be handled by smaller organisations.

A large number of further comments expressed the respondents' view on the complexity of the administrative procedures. Some felt that the overly detailed and fixed project descriptions required at the beginning of the application period had been too restrictive especially that their ulterior modification had been either not allowed or highly problematic. Furthermore, the administrative burden was

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<sup>2</sup> Integrated Monitoring and Information System

disproportionate especially with regard to the Small Project Fund which demotivates the local actors from applying.

The respondents of the questionnaire were asked to identify those types of support that would enable them to successfully submit their project ideas in the next programming period:

- The first is that the local stakeholders can only successfully apply if the profile of the calls clearly resonates with their needs and abilities, especially in financial terms.
- The second outcome was that the support is expected at administrative/communicational level. Many respondents felt that they lack the necessary information, thus they need professional authorities that can help them along the whole preparation, application and implementation procedure with timely, helpful and personalized answers.
- The third lesson was that a lot of respondents felt that support should be provided for them in capacity building. Several commentators admitted that they lack a professional project management team or that their employees lack the necessary language skills. These shortages make it difficult or impossible to successfully apply for the calls and consequently need to be addressed.
- The fourth message that came strongly through from the comments was that the stakeholders needed support in establishing working partnerships. They felt that finding the right partner geographically, thematically, professionally and monetarily was highly problematic and thus partner searching data bases and events needed to be provided for them. Furthermore, they would find it helpful if the partnerships could be more flexibly modified should they prove to be dysfunctional.

### 1.2.7. Synergies with international policies

At international level the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its centre are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The chosen SOs of the Programme are expected to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs in the following ways:

Proposed SOs →	PO2 – SO VI	PO2 – SOVII	PO4 – SOI	PO4 – SOII	PO4 – SOV	PO4 – SOVI	ISO1
	Circular economy	Biodiversity and reducing pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere)			+				
Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages)					+		
Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all)				+			
Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all)		+					
Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)			+				
Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable)							
Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns)	+						
Goal 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts)		+					
Goal 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss)		+					
Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels)							+

Proposed SOs →	PO2 – SO VI	PO2 – SOVII	PO4 – SOI	PO4 – SOII	PO4 – SOV	PO4 – SOVI	ISO1
	Circular economy	Biodiversity and reducing pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development)							+

In a more horizontal, cross-cutting way Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) are also addressed by the Programme.

### 1.2.8. Synergies with macro-regional strategies

The EUSDR is one of the four macro-regional strategies targeting the European Territorial Cooperation objective, adopted by the European Commission, and endorsed by the European Council. It provides an integrated framework for strengthening cooperation between nations of 14 countries including both Member States (e.g. Hungary and Slovakia) and non-EU countries covering 112 million people.

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

- the shortlist of the EUSDR actions for ESIF funded programmes, which have been selected by Priority Area Coordinators (aggregated into PAs in the rows), and
- the selected SOs and proposed actions of the concerned Interreg Programme 2021-2027 in Hungary and Slovak Republic (aggregated into SOs in the columns).

With the exception of two cases (PA 1a Waterways Mobility; PA 11 Security), all of the EUSDR’s PAs have synergy with the SOs of the Programme. However, in relation to the ‘PA 1b Rail-Road-Air Mobility’, the ‘PA 7 Knowledge Society’, and the ‘PA 8 Competitiveness of enterprises’ only indirect relations can be observed. In the case of the above described thematic synergies, the Programme can facilitate the implementation of the Danube Strategy’s objectives through the application of one or more of the following tools:

- Specific selection criteria benefiting MRS
- Targeted calls for proposals
- Inclusion of the transnational component
- Joint or synchronised call for proposals
- Complementary projects
- Labelling projects

Proposed SOs →	PO2 – SO VI	PO2 – SOVII	PO4 – SOI	PO4 – SOII	PO4 – SOV	PO4 – SOVI	ISO1
	Circular economy	Biodiversity and reducing pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
EUSDR	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

### 1.2.9. Synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

The main aim of this subchapter is to identify the added value of this Cooperation Programme against other sources of financing; to highlight the complementary and synergy relations; to point out the necessary coordination tasks between the different funding instruments at EU, interregional and national level. In the following table the synergies and complementarities between the selected POs and SOs of the HUSK and the various funding programmes and instruments are summarised.

Proposed SOs →	PO2 - SO VI	PO2 - SOVII	PO4 - SOI	PO4 - SOII	PO4 - SOV	PO4 - SOVI	ISO1
	Circular economy	Biodiversity and reducing pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
LIFE Programme	+	+					
Horizon 2020	+	+			+		
CAP		+				+	
CEF	+					+	
Digital Europe Programme	+			+	+		
Erasmus+	+		+	+			
rescEU		+					
European Pillar of Social Rights (with its action plan)			+	+	+		
Digital Skills and Jobs Platform				+			
Digital Education Action Plan				+			
European Education Area				+			
EU4Health					+		
EDEN						+	
INTERREG VI-A Austria-Hungary		+		+		+	+
INTERREG VI-A Romania-Hungary		+			+	+	+
INTERREG VI-A NEXT Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine		+			+	+	+
INTERREG VI-A Slovakia-Austria		+		+	+	+	+
INTERREG VI-A Slovakia-Czechia		+		+		+	+
INTERREG VI-A Poland-Slovakia		+				+	+
INTERREG Danube Region Programme 2021-2027		+	+	+		+	+
INTERREG Central Europe	+	+	+		+	+	+
INTERREG Europe		+	+	+	+	+	

#### At EU level

With regard to PO2-SOVI, the objective is supported especially by the LIFE Programme and the Horizon

2020 Programme. The former supports the transition to a circular economy, and helps in activities focusing on energy efficiency and small-scale renewable sources. The latter is in accordance with the SO regarding circular industries (low-carbon and clean industry) and circular systems in agriculture, food systems, furthermore considering energy systems and buildings in energy transition. EU's CAP can contribute to the production, processing and marketing of local/regional products through supporting agricultural entrepreneurs. CEF may also be added owing to its support for increased penetration of renewable energy in the energy systems. Furthermore, Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) intends to increase accessibility and broaden the use of supercomputing in areas of environment and industry that is in line with the selected SO's content. Thus, supercomputing can accelerate the increase in renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and the development of circular economy too. Erasmus+ programme is in accordance with the SO in the field of education and training aimed at promoting contributing to testing and modelling complex systems for coordinated energy production and consumption from renewable sources. Complementarity with support from CAP and EAFRD includes cross-border (not national or regional) initiatives that create, maintain and grow local food systems, structures and short supply chains; provide joint branding, labelling and promoting farmers, food producers and of local products; and improve the infrastructural background of public and economic operators responsible for food processing and marketing of products within the programme area.

Taking into account PO2-SOVII, the objective has strong synergetic connection to both Horizon and LIFE Programmes. Horizon Programme supports disaster-resilient societies, environmental observation, furthermore actions related to biodiversity and natural resources. LIFE Programme could support the SO through protection and improvement of air and water quality, and under the sub-programme called 'Nature and Biodiversity' in a broader sense. In addition, rescEU (EU Civil Protection Mechanism) is in connection with the SO taking into account activities in flood protection and disaster management initiatives. It supports intervention capacities of rescue services and the measures necessary for early and effective intervention. Complementarity with support from CAP and EAFRD include measures which encourage sustainable joint cross-border (not national or regional) management of natural resources and climate action: provide biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation, tree-planting and re-grassing; promote agroforestry and activities significantly contributing to prevention of soil degradation and preservation of soil functions; support nature-friendly forest management; enhance cultivation and breeding of native plant and animal species as well as new and innovative forms; supports the increase of biodiversity in agricultural areas.

Considering PO4-SOI, Erasmus+ Programme can be mentioned as a related programme. At EU level, in line with the CBC Programme, it supports mobility of professionals, and most of all, the cooperation among organisations and institutions in education and training as well as youth. The European Pillar of Social Rights has to be mentioned with regard to this SO. PO4-SOI is linked to the principles of 2. gender equality, 3. equal opportunities, 4. active support to employment, 7. inclusion of people with disabilities.

Regarding PO4-SOII, Erasmus+ Programme could support the SO in terms of mobility of students, young people and staff in the educational sector along with policy developments. DIGITAL should also be listed here since it is related to the CBC Programme through activities concerning advanced digital skills and advanced digital technologies in education. The SO is in line with the digitalisation of education and the development of digital tools and learning methods outlined in the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), as well as with the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform. With regard to use of ICT the Council Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education should also be recognized. The SO helps implement the European Education Area. The European Pillar of Social Rights and the related action plan have to be mentioned with regard to this SO. PO4-SOI is linked to the principles of 2. gender equality, 3. equal opportunities, 4. active support to employment, 7. inclusion of people with disabilities. In addition, Council Recommendations on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems and the Council recommendation on early school leaving should also be listed as important policy guidelines for the Programme.



With regard to PO4-SOV, Horizon Europe Programme supports the realisation of the SO through a dedicated package under 'Cluster Health' covering multiple related intervention areas (e.g. infectious diseases, tools, technologies and digital solutions for health and care). DIGITAL has synergies with the SO through ensuring digital technologies across the healthcare sector. The new EU4Health programme among others also aims to tackle cross-border health threats. The European Pillar of Social Rights has to be mentioned with regard to this SO. PO4-SO1 is linked to the principle of 16. health care.

Taking into consideration PO4-SOVI, CAP can contribute to certain developments related to tourism, especially in rural and remote areas. The European Commission supports calls for proposals to promote developments of Cultural Routes that have a transnational or European dimension and are based on cultural heritage. The EDEN initiative supports the activities of the SO through the promotion of sustainable tourism in destinations and the establishment of cooperation and partnership in the given destinations. CEF has synergetic relations with the CBC Programme in relation to cross-border and missing links addressed.

In relation to resolving legal and other obstacles, and to people-to-people actions, the proposed Interreg Specific objectives are the most tailor-made funding opportunities.

### At interregional level

At interregional level the measures of the overlapping or neighbouring INTERREG programmes could also be built up synergies. In the sense of the cross-border cooperation component, the cooperation programmes between the following countries could be relevant: Austria and Hungary, Romania and Hungary, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania and Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland, Slovakia and Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Danube Transnational Programme will support cooperation initiatives on a higher territorial level. With the programmes of the interregional cooperation component, thematic synergies could be built up.

### At national level

First of all, it has to be underlined that the mainstream OPs and nationally financed projects apart from INTERREG programmes could also contribute to the objectives selected in the frames of the CBC programme. At national level the *Country Report Hungary 2019*<sup>3</sup> and the *Country Report Slovakia 2019*<sup>4</sup> are taken into account. In both countries it is important to promote energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable energy. Common points can be found regarding the improvement of energy efficiency in public and residential buildings as well as in waste management, in waste prevention, reuse and recycling in particular. The Hungarian Report supports transition to renewables through joint initiatives under the EUSDR, such as geothermal and biomass. The Slovak Report supports solutions for smart electricity distribution grids and storage. Both documents express the need for improved smart specialisation. Both countries should support sustainable water management. High importance is given to floods and droughts. Access to drinking water and protection of water sources are incorporated in both reports. In both countries the reports suggest more focus on marginalised people and less developed regions. Joint solutions can be found in relation to youth, long-term unemployed and inactive people. Both documents urge the fostering of better access to labour market. Both reports pay attention the crucial role of education; in both countries the improvement of the quality and labour market relevance of education and training and equal access to it are important. The educational integration of young people as well as upskilling and reskilling are common goals. Marginalised and Roma people are mentioned in both documents. Aging people, disadvantaged and Roma people are important beneficiaries of the measures suggested. The fostering of integrated development based on culture as well is supported by the two reports, while tourism regions are mentioned only in the Hungarian one. The Hungary Report expresses the need for support for cooperation activities in a cross-border manner too. It expresses that adequate access to basic services should be provided. For Slovakia the document explicitly advises strengthen the partnership principle intra and inter-

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<sup>3</sup> Including Annex D

<sup>4</sup> Including Annex D

regionally, and investment in capacity building.

In the case of Hungary, the document of “Partnership Agreement for Hungary on the European structural and investment funds” served as the basis for the analysis of synergies. The Partnership Agreement (PA) for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027 sets out the developments for which cohesion funds coming to Hungary from the Union's MFF will be used. The PA is the framework document for the use of the following financial funds in Hungary: the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund+, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund, and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

National programmes co-financed by the Hungarian state budget may also contribute to the objectives of the CBC Programme (e.g. Modern Cities Programme, Hungarian Village Programme, Kisfaludy Programme, Catching-up settlements programme, or National Environmental and Remediation Program, etc.).

In the case of Slovakia, the draft version of the Partnership Agreement served as the basis for the analysis of synergies. This document stated, that the operations financed by the ERDF, the Investment for Growth and Jobs, ESF+, CF, and JTF objectives will be implemented through a single programme, namely the Operational Programme Slovakia, for the period 2021-2027 (OPSK). The OPSK covers all of the five policy objectives of the EU for the years 2021-2027. It also means that almost all of the selected specific objectives of the Cooperation Programme can be accelerated or supplemented by the OPSK as well, however, the cross-border effect can be ensured only by the CP.

The document was prepared in accordance with the approved conceptual and planned documents of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, in compliance with the general provisions of Act No. 364/2004 Coll. on Waters and on the Amendment to the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 372/1990 Coll. on Offences, as amended, and in compliance with the provisions of § 39 of the Water Act, laying down the general conditions for the handling of pollutants and subsequently the Decree of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic No. 200/2018.

The table attached below addresses synergies with the HU mainstream operational programmes and the single SK OP for the period 2021-2027.

	Proposed SOs →	PO2 – SO VI	PO2 – SOVII	PO4 – SOI	PO4 – SOII	PO4 – SOV	PO4 – SOVI	ISO1
		Circular economy	Biodiversity and reduced pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
Hungarian Operational Programmes	Digital Renewal OP Plus	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Human Resources Development OP Plus			+	+	+		
	Economic Development and Innovation OP Plus	+		+	+		+	
	Integrated Transport OP Plus							
	Environmental and	+	+					

		PO2 – SO VI	PO2 – SOVII	PO4 – SOI	PO4 – SOII	PO4 – SOV	PO4 – SOVI	ISO1
	Proposed SOs →	Circular economy	Biodiversity and reduced pollution	Labour markets, employment	Education and lifelong learning	Health care	Culture and tourism	Better cooperation governance
	Energy Efficiency OP Plus							
	Territorial and settlement development OP Plus	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Slovak Operational Programme's priorities	Science, research and innovation	+			+			
	Digital connectivity							+
	Energy efficiency and decarbonisation	+	+					
	Environment	+	+					
	Sustainable urban mobility							
	Transport							
	Adaptable and accessible labour market			+	+	+		
	Youth Guarantee			+	+			
	Active inclusion and available services			+		+		
	Active inclusion of Roma communities			+	+			
	Social innovation and experiments			+	+		+	
	Food and material deprivation							
	Modern regions		+				+	+
Just Transition Fund	+	+	+	+				

As regards RRF in Hungary, it focuses the following thematics being in line with the SOs of our programme:

labour market, education, circular economy, health care, climate change. For Slovakia the RRF includes synergies with climate change, education, health care and labour market,

Resources from various national instruments in Slovakia will also contribute to the fulfilment of the PA of Republic of Slovakia's objectives. However, the existing national support instruments have limited validity, it cannot be confirmed that they will be used throughout the 2021-2027 period.

For both countries, the role of the RRF will be significant in the period till 2026. The national recovery and resilience plans show mostly thematic synergies with the selected specific objectives of the Cooperation Programme due to their highly national and inland focus.

Synergies can be shown with the Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTP) being developed in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Heves County from Hungary, and Košický County from Slovakia to reduce the socio-economic costs of communities highly dependent on fossil fuels and emission-intensive industries. The envisaged developments of the TJTPs will contribute to the achievement of the Programme's objectives in relation to PO2-SOVI (shift to green technologies and circular, green economy, waste management and reduction), PO2-SOVII (reduction of pollution from mining, energy production, and steel industry, revitalisation of industrial and mining sites), PO4-SOI and PO4-SOII (retraining, upskilling, employment programmes, promoting opportunities for vulnerable groups) in particular.

#### **1.2.10. Alignment with Border Orientation Paper (BOP)**

Sets out the key characteristics of the cross-border region between Slovakia and Hungary focusing on sustainable tourism, cultural heritage. It also encourages to strengthen and increase the level of economic and social integration of the border area and thus contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth with a highlight on circular economy. The BOP also outlines social challenges (education, health care, digitisation) in the border region. Those challenges have been tackled in the Interreg Programme through the selected specific objections and actions.

#### **1.2.11. Horizontal principles**

The actions within the Programme, in accordance with point 6 of the preamble and Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, and also in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, will respect the horizontal principles of fundamental rights, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and promoting sustainable development fully in line with the Article 9 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the United Nations sustainable development goals during project preparation, implementation and follow-up period. All actions within the programme will promote the gender equality goals during project preparation, implementation and follow-up period. Actions addressing accessibility to vulnerable groups including Roma and rural people will be supported. Supporting equal access for all regardless gender, age, health and place of residence will be applied. During the programme implementation the selected operations shall be in line with the objectives of the Protocol on Water and Health.

Horizontal principles (respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union) will be assessed. Applicants are encouraged to prepare projects foreseeing specific actions designed to advance and promote the values of the horizontal principles. Furthermore, in line with Article 9 (4) and Recital 10 of CPR, in order to comply with the "do no significant harm" (DNSH) principle, all types of actions defined in chapter 2 have been assessed and the result is that they are compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

Programme will introduce the eligibility and selection criteria for actions envisaged, based on the SEA Directive and the DNSH, in particular where actions are carried out in Natura 2000 sites and where infrastructures are planned. Moreover relevant actions will be financed with full respect of the Natura 2000 network, the Water Framework Directive, the "Habitats" and "Birds" Directives, "Invasive Alien Species" Directives, the Water Framework, Drinking Water and Floods Directives, the Biodiversity, EU Forest

Strategies for 2030 and Transition Pathway for Tourism. During the implementation of the Programme the strategic use of public procurement will be promoted to support POs. Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental and social considerations as well should be incorporated in the procedures.

Programme will also consider to promote the New European Bauhaus initiative and the European quality principles for EU-funded Interventions with potential impact upon Cultural Heritage and the MA/JS will inform the MC about it and provides opportunities how to adjust in the implementation.

For relevant measures, the programme will promote the use of bio-based materials including polluter pays principle and the waste hierarchy principle.

Projects in tourism should consider National Air Pollution Control Programme (Article 6 NEC Directive 2016/2284) and/or the Air Quality and Noise plans and Sustainable Urban Mobility plans.

As regards the support of climate objectives, the Programme plans to reach minimum 30% and for biodiversity objectives 17% of the total ERDF (including TA) as indicated in the codes of dimensions (calculated in ERDF without TA).

SEA has been carried out in both member states in national language according to legislation and the report and annexes (covering all measures expressed during SEA procedures) are appendix of the programme.

**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><b>PO2</b> 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><b>SO(VI)</b> promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy;</p>	<p><b>Priority Axis1</b> Green Cooperations</p>	<p>In both countries there is a shift towards an innovation ecosystem consisting of universities, research institutions, start-ups, SMEs and large enterprises, individuals, public bodies, NGOs and municipalities. Challenges can be tackled by smart specialisation on cross-border level too. Harmonised and joint actions can be envisaged in thematic fields regarded strategic such as agroindustry (e.g. biofood), energy efficiency, renewable resources (e.g. solar, biomass, geothermic energy), green and circular economy (e.g. waste management). Challenges grouped around slow transition to circular economy are reflected in weak eco-innovation performance, as well as in low resilience of the border regions' industry to climate change impacts. Both countries are lagging behind in the field of resource efficiency. Since the challenge concerns both countries, through joint, cross-border cooperation, they can move together towards circular economy and higher resource efficiency.</p> <p>It is worth continuing the initiatives in creating cross-border supply chains. In border areas geographic proximity supports the creation of such chains. Bringing producers, sellers and costumers closer together by supporting the production, processing and market links among them is of great importance, underlined by the recent COVID-19 pandemic too. The majority of the Slovak-Hungarian border areas can build on short (food) supply chains owing to many factors (e.g. the existence of cross-border landscapes, often with organic farming). The supply chains would support not only economic development but serve sustainability (ecological production, packaging and pollution reduction, circular economy goals etc.). Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg- specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p><b>P02</b> 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><b>SO(VII)</b> enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution;</p>	<p><b>Priority Axis1</b> Green cooperations</p>	<p>financial instruments.</p> <p>One of the main cohesion elements of the border region is its landscape structure, which does not follow the administrative borders. The landscape is not only connecting and dividing the countries, but in several cases, it is also the ground for the joint actions in relation to enhancing nature protection, biodiversity and green infrastructure. Potentials lie in the application of functional approach taking into account integrated management of cross-border landscapes, development of cross-border management structures, systematic collection of cross-border data in particular.</p> <p>The whole programme area is part of the Danube water system. Owing to the hydro-geographic location of the two countries, their surface and underground water bodies - including rivers and drinking water sources of high importance, as well as their catchment areas - are having a transboundary character (see tributaries of the Danube and the Tisa such as the Ipoly/Ipel' the Bodrog fed by the Ondava, the Laborec and the Uh, the Sajó/Slaná, the Hernád/Hornád). The upper and lower river sections are places of shared natural values, water habitats as joint potentials, but also represent shared challenges. Due to the transboundary water bodies, joint solutions are required in flood protection and disaster management, improving water quality and remediation of pollution.</p> <p>Owing to the cross-border character of landscapes, habitats and bio-geographic regions, high share of nature protection areas also stretches along and across the border. Special attention should be given to endangered species and alien invasive species as joint threats to biodiversity of shared areas.</p> <p>Possible activities should promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS).</p> <p>Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale does not</p>

			allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.
<p><b>P04</b> a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights;</p>	<p><b>SO(I)</b> enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy;</p>	<p><b>Priority Axis2</b> Social cooperations</p>	<p>Access to quality employment heavily depends on the inclusiveness of the labour markets of the programme area. Unemployment, especially long-term one, and its subsequent consequences are social challenges to be tackled on both sides. Employability of people with low educational attainment living in areas of weak accessibility to employment centres, non-inclusive structure of local economy, educational and employment services is a joint challenge.</p> <p>Typically, the most disadvantaged and high-unemployment regions coincide, where labour market integration is one of the most critical points. High share of the most disadvantaged regions and districts are situated along the national boundary in both countries. In Slovakia, the southern areas are less developed, more poverty-stricken and have worse employment rates than the northern areas from Okres Rimavská Sobota to Okres Trebišov.</p> <p>Similarly, in Hungary's northern regions the social problems are more pronounced (e.g. see the Cserehát region). There is also a strong east-west divide; labour market challenges related to unemployment are more significant on the eastern side where a bundle of social problems is present including access to labour market. To sum up, challenges in these border areas are centred around the intertwined problems of persisting long-term unemployment, high unemployment rate among people with low educational attainment and poor skills, extensive bordering areas with high number and proportion of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.</p> <p>Answers to tackling challenges may include development of integrated labour market services (network of pools of jobs and SMEs), cross-border functional urban areas, and integrated programs targeting population at risk of poverty or social exclusion on cross-border level.</p> <p>Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.</p>



**P04**  
a more social and inclusive  
Europe implementing the  
European Pillar of Social  
Rights;

**SO(II)**  
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;

**Priority Axis2**  
Social cooperations

The two educational systems are largely similar and thus inter-permeable that gives space for cross-border cooperation. Cross-border provision of educational functions, developments based on the joint and complementary features of cross-border functional urban areas have high potential. Cross-border student migration has significantly increased in the last decade along with Slovak citizens participating in the Hungarian public education system. High number of educational stakeholders participates in bilateral and inter-institutional educational cooperation forms in the vicinity of the border.

Educational attainment is one of the most descriptive factors considering the social and spatial inequalities of the programme area. Evidence indicate that social mobility is rather limited on the eastern part of the programme area – both in Slovakia and Hungary – the preservation of the social status for a significant part of young people living in small settlement in the close proximity of the border pose a serious challenge as their educational situation increasingly pushes them to the deprived strata. They face financial and cultural obstacles to high level of education, and their income and status also predicts downward social mobility. The COVID-19 pandemic has also underlined the importance of equal access to educational offers for remote areas lacking sufficient infrastructure and skills to participate in (digital and remote) learning. Thus, the educational portfolios need to be integrated not only due to the outmigration but also because the offer - especially in vocational training - could be more colourful should it be jointly organised. Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

**P04**  
a more social and inclusive  
Europe implementing the  
European Pillar of Social  
Rights;

**SO(V)**  
ensuring equal access  
to health care and  
fostering resilience of  
health systems,  
including primary  
care, and promoting  
the transition from  
institutional to  
family-based and  
community-based  
care;

**Priority Axis2**  
Social cooperations

There is a need for balancing unequal demographic trends in the region by addressing migration, depopulation and the ageing of the society. Growing dependency ratio and ageing call for urgent interventions in improving social conditions by enabling elderly people to take a more active part in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services while satisfying their living and health needs. Support for the development of cross-border social services and silver economy is of great significance. There is a need for promoting the active ageing, alternative care activities, knowledge sharing of professionals, joint strategies to enhance the population retention capacity of the border area, launching tailor-based social services. Potentials lie in supporting cross-border integration of public services and improving accessibility of social care functions across the border. Healthcare cooperation is underlined by challenges of deteriorating healthcare systems regarding personnel and territorial coverage in distinct border regions, untapped potentials in cross-border health care provision regarding hospitals, outpatient care, the need for a more complex and integrated cooperation is preferred on the field of the cross-border emergency services. COVID-19 crisis shows the significance of cross-border health service development, in particular with regard to commuters crossing the border regularly. Better preparedness for treatments related to viruses should be developed. Responses are required especially in relation to cross-border share of available capacities, platforms enabling the cross-border movement and operation of ambulance cars, support of joint surveys, strategies, action plans, purchase of health-care equipment, telemedical and e-health infrastructure, exchange of know-how and capacity building activities. Consequently, there is a need for identification and development of cross-border health care zones around medical centres. Future development can partly rely on already existing solutions (e.g. treatment of Slovaks at the hospital of Esztergom). Grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

**P04**  
a more social and inclusive  
Europe implementing the  
European Pillar of Social  
Rights;

**SO(VI)**  
enhancing the role of  
culture and  
sustainable tourism  
in economic  
development, social  
inclusion and social  
innovation;

**Priority Axis2**  
Social cooperations

The role of culture and tourism in the cohesion and socio-economic life of the border region is stressed by multiple potentials and challenges. The border area is rich in tangible and intangible heritage elements of the co-existing Slovak and Hungarian cultures, many of which are situated along the border. A large variety of historical urban centres rich in monuments and other built cultural attractions like castles, museums, and sacral monuments lie in the border area. Thematic routes with different cultural topics supporting the interconnection of cultural attractions provide a great opportunity for diversifying the offer of border destinations and making the region more attractive. Considering overnight stays, there is a potential for further strengthening the cohesion of the border region. There are extensive areas and numerous sites with growing number of incoming tourists from the neighbouring country too, which are either situated along the state borders or could be better interconnected. The tourism sector of the rural, often peripheral regions performs much weaker, despite their varied natural and cultural heritage and potentials in slow and sustainable tourism packages in the post-pandemic recovery. Lack of interlinked cultural and natural heritage sites by thematic routes and sufficient mobility solutions hinder the capitalization. Cross-border tourist flow underlines the potential in creating joint tourist products, services, information and marketing tools to better boost tourism across the border. Thus, there is a potential in developing joint cross-border tourist destinations. Destination level cooperation gives a good basis for tourism developments which would further increase the valorisation of heritage, the connectedness of such tourist attractions. The territorial actors share the view that tourism is the key topic of the integrated development of the borderland. Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

**IS01**  
a better cooperation  
governance

**Action(b)**  
enhance efficient  
public administration  
by promoting legal  
and administrative  
cooperation and  
cooperation between  
citizens, civil society  
actors and  
institutions, in  
particular with a  
view to resolving  
legal and other  
obstacles in border  
regions (strands A, C,  
D and, where  
appropriate, strand  
B);

**Priority Axis3**  
Institutional  
cooperations

The border region has been going through a dynamic opening process during the last decade. As a result, the social and economic relations have significantly enhanced at functional urban areas. In parallel with it, several legal and administrative obstacles have emerged. These obstacles, rooted in the different legal and public administration systems, cover fields from education (e.g. recognition of certificates), health care (e.g. limited movement of ambulance cars across the border), short supply chains (e.g. taxation problems of producers) and of transport (e.g. complex standards for public transport) but employment, disaster management, public procurement issues are also affected. These factors significantly hamper both economic and social interactions on a daily basis. Stronger cohesion of the border regions and the intensification of interactions require comprehensive monitoring, analysis and elimination of legal as well as administrative obstacles. There is a need for eliminating or mitigating barriers to cross-border mobility and integration on a coordinated level. In overcoming obstacles and promoting cooperation between administrations and civil society actors, certain types of territorial cooperation have a long history in the border region. Hundreds of twin town agreements have been set-up since the regime change and the Slovak-Hungarian border gives home to the most EGTCs in the EU. Instead of developing parallel structures on both sides of the border, there is a need for the strategic utilisation of functional areas to find joint solutions for better governance and service provision in certain thematic fields. As practice shows it is often the missing approach to create long-term, institutionalised, strategic plans and the lack of information dissemination on cross-border life events related to cross-border migration that hinders stronger integration. Cooperation would help tackling cross-border legal and administrative barriers and contribute to the successful realisation of other activities planned within the chosen SOs of the Programme at the same time. Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of their operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

**IS01**  
a better cooperation  
governance

**Action(c)**  
build up mutual trust,  
in particular by  
encouraging people-  
to-people actions  
(strands A, D and,  
where appropriate,  
strand B);

**Priority Axis3**  
Institutional  
cooperations

People-to-people cooperation projects are an important and successful tool in CBC programmes that are designed to initiate and promote grassroots contacts and interaction between people on different sides of the border. P2P is supported by various factors: thousand-year co-existence of Slovaks and Hungarians; existing cooperation initiatives supporting the fields of culture, education, science, sports and youth of the two countries; high density of partnerships regarding town-twinning; high share of Slovak and Hungarian cultural and civil organisations interested in interethnic, intercultural and bilingual interactions; entertainment, leisure, visiting family and friends as important motivations in crossing the border.

Interpersonal, especially cultural cooperation was a very popular topic especially among the applicants of the Small Project Fund calls of the previous programme. Festivals, camps, youth encounters, cultural exchanges are frequent themes of these projects that help building mutual trust and giving space to P2P interactions. The Small Project Fund as a tool has been assessed as very useful by the regional stakeholders, who feel that they could efficiently use this support to attain their goals in the pursuit of territorial development. According to the unanimous opinion of the regional stakeholders, within this SO SPF should be kept. Apart from physical outputs, the related developments form a massive basis for any further and additional cross-border initiative by bringing stakeholders closer together. The biggest added value is its effect on building partnerships, as kind of a horizontal approach too that contributes to all the other designated SOs. Thus, there is a proven need for a larger number of stronger cultural and P2P cooperation projects in order to enhance mutual trust and knowledge between the citizens and to reduce the separating effects of the border.

Under this SO grant will be provided to finance projects, since no financial instrument will be applied. The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

## 2. Priorities

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### 2.1. Title of the priority

#### Priority Axis 1 - Green cooperations

##### 2.1.1. Specific objective

PO2 - SO(VI) - promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

#### *SO1.1 – Promoting transition to a circular and resource efficient economy*

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

###### **Action 1.1.1 – Resource and waste management**

Actions contribute to the economic transformation of the programme area that respects resource constraints and planetary boundaries and increase the competitiveness of the local economy with lower environmental impacts.

###### ***Measure 1.1.1/A): More efficient production***

Measure aims to improve the reuse of raw materials through greater 'industrial symbiosis' (where the waste of some firms is used as a resource for others) and enhance the exchange of information between SMEs on routes to resource efficiency, that can prevent waste, boost innovation and create new markets. The action also aims to support producers to make their products more circular which can be reused, repaired or recycled. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- transfer environmentally sound technologies and know-how on clean technologies and low-waste production;
- research security of supply through sustainable management of environmental resources;
- produce more and greater value products with less input, using resources in a sustainable way and minimising the impacts on the environment;
- improve products' durability, reusability, upgradability and reparability, and increase their energy and resource efficiency;
- increase recycled content in products, while ensuring their performance and safety;
- enable remanufacturing and high-quality recycling;
- incentivise "product-as-a-service" or other models where producers keep the ownership of the product or the responsibility for its performance throughout its lifecycle;
- mobilise the potential of digitalisation of product information.

###### ***Measure 1.1.1/B): Sustainable waste management and waste prevention***

Measure aims to increase the level of solid waste that is re-used or recycled and support initiatives that change the consumption patterns of private and public purchasers. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional cooperation of competent authorities;
- transfer environmentally sound technologies and innovative solutions in waste management;
- improve recovery, reuse and recycling of wastes and their transformation;
- enable treatment, recycling, reusing and disposing of wastes at the source of generation;
- reduce packaging and improve the recyclability of packaging waste;
- raising awareness of the waste prevention and separate waste collection among citizens;
- raising awareness of the change in consumption patterns among citizens and public purchasers.

###### **Action 1.1.2 - Short supply chains**

The selected action contributes to the creation of short supply chains involving food producers, processors and consumers in close geographical and social relations committed to cooperate for local economic development. The proposed actions contribute to broaden opportunities and the knowledge related to short

supply chains with a special view to the contemporary requirements for nutrition, nutrition awareness and state-of-the-art food production. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- improve knowledge and skills required for business development and product development for local food producers and processors;
- create, maintain and grow local food systems, structures and short supply chains;
- provide branding, labelling and promoting farmers, food producers and of local products;
- improve the infrastructural background of public and economic operators responsible for food processing and marketing of products.

### 2.1.3. Indicators

Table 2 Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	enterprises	0	12
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCO02	Enterprises supported by grants	enterprises	0	12
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	events	0	10
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	34

Table 3 Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCR03	Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) introducing product or process innovation	enterprises	nr	2021	12	monitoring system/survey	-
PA1	PO2-SO(VI)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	nr	2021	27	monitoring system/survey	

### 2.1.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the following stakeholders of the programme area:

- productive SMEs;
- waste management organisations;
- agricultural producers (farmers);
- food processing entrepreneurs;
- inhabitants of the border region.

Projects are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- SMEs
- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- waste management organizations
- universities and research organizations
- EGTCs
- non-governmental organizations
- educational organizations

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

Not relevant

### 2.1.6. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

### 2.1.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VI)	075   Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs	1 869 159
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VI)	072   Use of recycled materials as raw materials compliant with the efficiency criteria	3 738 318
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VI)	046   Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures	7 476 636

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VI)	01   Grant	13 084 113

Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VI)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	13 084 113



## 2.2. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 1 - Green cooperations

#### 2.2.1. Specific objective

PO2 - SO(VII) - enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution;

### SO1.2 - Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure

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

##### Action 1.2.1 - Protection and preservation of the natural capital

The selected actions contribute to the protection and preservation of the natural capital that creates the basic conditions for human existence. These conditions include fertile soil, multifunctional forests and productive land. One of the main cohesion elements of the border region is its landscape structure which creates solid ground for joint actions. The selected actions contribute to nature conservation and preservation, improvement of the quality of forests and soil, increasing of the biodiversity on the programme area and the development of green infrastructure.

##### *Measure 1.2.1/A): Nature conservation and preservation*

Wetlands, natural and near-natural forests are vital for biodiversity, society and in combat against the climate change. By conservation of forests and restoration of wetlands the action contributes to reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to the protection of ecosystems critical for safeguarding biodiversity.

Soils are a vital resource, delivering soil functions and many essential ecosystem services such as water and nutrient cycle regulation, food production, providing a physical basis for construction, and providing habitat for various species. The key soil threats are erosion, floods and landslides, loss of soil organic matter, salinization, contamination, compaction, sealing, and loss of soil biodiversity. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- protect and restore natural wetlands, grasslands and shrubs;
- provide biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation, tree-planting and re-grassing;
- promote agroforestry and activities significantly contributing to prevention of soil degradation and preservation of soil functions;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns;
- support nature-friendly forest management.

##### *Measure 1.2.1/B): Biodiversity*

Biodiversity is made up of the diversity of genes, the diversity of species and the diversity of entire ecosystems. The loss of biodiversity is the loss of species and reduction in the productivity and resilience of entire ecosystems. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- encourage the conservation and restocking of native (landscape) climate-resilient species, and habitats;
- support the conservation and protection of the genetic resources of forest tree species;
- enhance cultivation and breeding of native plant and animal species as well as new and innovative forms - e.g. agroforestry;
- ensure the protection of the habitats and breeding grounds of endangered species;
- track, control, and eliminate invasive species;
- supports the increase of biodiversity in agricultural areas (afforestation, shrubbery, deep-sea);
- monitor wildlife migration corridors;
- revitalize habitats and prevent habitat fragmentation;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns;
- increase environmental awareness of habitats and biodiversity and expand the network of

institutions with such educational activities in the natural environment.

***Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure***

Green infrastructure is network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. Proposed actions improve environmental conditions via the development of the network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces therefore improve the citizens' health and quality of life. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that maintain, reconnect and enhance green infrastructure such as

- parks, greenways, river corridors;
- multifunctional farms;
- fish ladders, fish passage, fish sluice on border rivers;
- green walls and roofs;
- reed bed;
- wildlife overpass;
- wildflower verge, sandy grassland;
- beehives;
- hedgerows;
- nest boxes, trays, burrows, bat protection devices.

**Action 1.2.2 - Joint risk management**

The action contributes to increase the cross-border risk-management capacity in the border region and to improve the coordination and reaction capabilities of organisations involved into risk management.

***Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management***

However, flood events are a part of nature, society has become more vulnerable to natural hazards. The proposed actions contribute to the shift from defensive action against hazards to management of the risk and living with floods, bearing in mind that flood prevention should not be limited to flood events. The quality of surface waters has improved over recent decades but still pollution from agriculture, urban and industrial wastewater nevertheless remain significant. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional co-operation of competent authorities;
- restore rivers' natural flood zones in order to reactivate the ability of natural wetlands and floodplains to retain water and alleviate flood impacts;
- build up early warning and forecast systems;
- improve flood protection infrastructure;
- supporting the replacement of small watercourses;
- remove harmful and persistent substances from surface water bodies;
- improve water management and water resource conservation related to flood protection;
- assess tourism potential of water bodies;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns.

***Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management***

In recent years, the EU has seen a wide range of adverse events that caused the devastation of human life, property, the environment and cultural heritage. The action contributes to increase the cross-border disaster risk-management capacity in the border region and to improve the coordination and reaction capabilities of organisations involved in disaster risk management. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional cooperation of competent authorities;
- address extreme weather conditions that pose a serious hydrological threat, extremely

destructive storms, hail, drought with a lack of drinking water;

- monitor and analyse relevant micro pollutants and pollutant (pesticides, pharmaceuticals and their metabolites, industrial pollution) in drinking water;
- improve infrastructural background for provision of water for human consumption (extraction, treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure, efficiency measures, drinking water supply);
- monitor and analyse water quality and quantify significant pressures on surface waters;
- remove harmful and persistent substances from surface water bodies;
- improve infrastructure preventing or eliminating risks posed by natural and man-made hazards;
- enhance the public awareness, preparedness and participation of citizens.

### 2.2.3. Indicators

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA1	PO2-SO(VII)	RC026	Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change	hectares	0	2
PA1	PO2-SO(VII)	RC036	Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change	hectares	0	2
PA1	PO2-SO(VII)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	36

Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA1	PO2-SO(VII)	RCR95	Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure	persons	0	2021	20 000	monitoring system /survey	-
PA1	PO2-SO(VII)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	29	monitoring system /survey	-

### 2.2.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the inhabitants of the border region in particular people living close to cross-border rivers. Projects are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- water management organisations
- national park directorates, natura parks
- nature and environment protection organisations
- non-governmental organizations
- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- universities and research organizations
- educational organizations

- disaster management organisations
- forest management organisations

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

Not relevant

#### 2.2.1. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

#### 2.2.2. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VII)	079   Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	13 084 112 €
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VII)	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)	10 747 664 €
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VII)	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)	4 672 897 €

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VII)	01   Grant	28 504 673

Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA1	ERDF	PO2-SO(VII)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	28 504 673

## 2.3. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 2 – Social cooperations

#### 2.3.1. Specific objective

PO4-SO(I) - enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy;

#### ***SO2.1 - Enhancing access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy***

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

##### **Action 2.1.1 - Social innovations for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups**

The proposed actions contribute to the fulfilment of social needs that are not met or that are met insufficiently, in respect of combating poverty and social exclusion and promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and poverty-preventing social protection. The action supports the development or adaption of social innovations which can be products, services or models addressing unmet social needs more effectively. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional co-operation of competent institutions and authorities via elaboration of cross-border strategies, plans and policies;
- increase the competitiveness of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups on the labour market;
- involve disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in training and life-long learning activities;
- improve working conditions of organizations employing disadvantaged and vulnerable groups;
- develop social enterprises creating social value in an entrepreneurial, market-oriented way;
- design and adapt innovative solutions representing new methods and approaches based on new knowledge, experiences and expertise;
- strengthen social cohesion, inclusion and participation by ensuring access to social, recreational and cultural activities;
- reduce isolation and maintain social networks and contribute to personal fulfilment;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising and educational campaigns.

#### **2.3.3. Indicators**

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA2	PO4- SO(I)	RC0113	Population covered by projects in the framework of integrated actions for socioeconomic inclusion of marginalised communities, low income households and disadvantaged groups	persons	0	200
PA2	PO4- SO(I)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	18

## Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA2	PO4-SO(I)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	14	monitoring system/survey	-

### 2.3.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (e.g. children, ethnic minorities, permanently unemployed people, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, isolated elderly people etc.)

Projects are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- SMEs
- public authorities and institutions
- educational organizations
- non-governmental organizations
- churches

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

Not relevant

### 2.3.6. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

### 2.3.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(I)	163   Promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children	3 271 028

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(I)	01   Grant	3 271 028

## Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(I)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	3 271 028

### 2.4. Title of the priority

#### Priority Axis 2 - Social cooperations

##### 2.4.1. Specific objective

PO4-SO(II) - 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;

#### *SO2.2 - Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education*

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

##### Action 2.2.1 - Inclusive and quality education

The proposed action contributes to investment in education in order to ensure the citizens' right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning that develops their key competences and basic skills. The Programme supports actions eliminating the negative effects of the disruption to the provision of education, training and mobility opportunities for learners, teachers and educators caused by measures taken to tackle the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional co-operation of competent organizations;
- improve monitoring and evaluation systems showing the progress of the schools;
- provide training for school staff and enhance the availability and use of good quality learning tools and resources;
- adapt good practices and resources for introducing collaborative approaches in schools to improve inclusivity and provide equal opportunities;
- prevent early school leaving and to engage early school leavers in education and training;
- develop digital educational tools including those targeting the improvement of digital literacy, new approaches, methodologies;
- upgrade and modernise educational infrastructure, thereby improve the learning environment for students and working conditions for teachers;
- implement prevention programs and awareness raising campaigns of health issues among students and their families (e.g. drug use, cyber dangers, bullying etc.).

##### 2.4.3. Indicators

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA2	PO4- SO(II)	RC067	Classroom capacity of new or modernised education facilities	persons	0	300
PA2	PO4- SO(II)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	18

Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA2	PO4-SO(II)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	14	monitoring system /survey	-

#### 2.4.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the following stakeholders of the programme area:

- students
- teachers, and
- inhabitants of the border region

Projects are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- educational organizations
- non-governmental organizations
- churches
- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- public authorities

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

Not relevant

#### 2.4.6. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

#### 2.4.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(II)	122   Infrastructure for primary and secondary education	2 336 449
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(II)	124   Infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning	934 579

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(II)	01   Grant	3 271 028



### Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(II)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	3 271 028

## 2.5. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 2 - Social cooperations

#### 2.5.1. Specific objective

PO4- SO(V) – ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care;

#### *S02.3 - Ensuring equal access to health care*

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

##### Action 2.3.1 - Family and community-based health care services

The proposed actions improve solidarity between generations in an ageing society creating conditions which enable older people to take better charge of their own lives and to contribute to economy and society, and to live in dignity as full members of society. Large segregated residential institutions cannot ensure person-centred services and appropriate support needed to bring about full inclusion for people with disabilities, mental health problems and older people. The proposed actions eliminate the physical separation of these citizens from communities and families and enable them to participate fully in their community and wider society by the development of family and community-based health care services. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional co-operation of competent organizations and authorities via elaboration of joint policies, strategies and plans;
- promote research and innovation to improve the lives of people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and older people;
- improve services enabling people working outside of health facilities discharging their services at the individual, family or community level;
- promote e-inclusion and e-health and technological and ICT innovations (e.g.: telemedicine);
- introduce innovative therapeutic methodologies in developing motor, sensory and cognitive skills of older adults;
- promote disease prevention and early diagnosis throughout the lifecycle, as well as rehabilitation, leading to active and healthy ageing and independent living;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising and educational campaigns.

##### Action 2.3.2 - Cross-border development of healthcare institutions

The proposed actions facilitate border crossing, that encourages the mobility of patients and health professionals and develop access to high-quality health care services in the cross-border area. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen co-operation of competent organizations and authorities via elaboration of joint policies, strategies, plans, methods and studies;
- promote cross-border health services that enables border crossing mobility of patients and health professionals;
- develop access to high-quality health services through the use of new equipment, shared services and joint facilities in the cross-border area;
- use of telecommunications technology for medical diagnostic, monitoring, and therapeutic purposes;
- promote know-how transfer between relevant organizations particularly in relation to pandemic

crisis and its effects.

### 2.5.3. Indicators

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA2	PO4- SO(V)	RC069	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	persons/year	0	30 000
PA2	PO4- SO(V)	RC014	Public institutions supported to develop digital services, products and processes	public institutions	0	6
PA2	PO4- SO(V)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	32

Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA2	PO4-SO(V)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	26	monitoring system /survey	-

### 2.5.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the following stakeholders of the programme area:

- inhabitants of the border area;
- people with disabilities;
- people with mental health problems;
- older people.

Projects are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- non-governmental organizations
- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- public institutions and authorities
- healthcare institutions
- SMEs
- universities and research organizations
- EGTCs
- educational organizations

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

Not relevant

### 2.5.6. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

## 2.5.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

### Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(V)	159   Measures to enhancing the delivery of family and community-based care services	3 271 028
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(V)	129   Health equipment	3 738 318
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(V)	131   Digitalisation in health care	1 401 869

### Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(V)	01   Grant	8 411 215

### Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(V)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	8 411 215

## 2.6. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 2 - Social cooperations

#### 2.6.1. Specific objective

PO4-SO(VI) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation;

### SO2.4. - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development

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

##### Action 2.4.1 - Preservation of local heritage

Under the influence of processes such as globalization, modernization and urbanisation rural municipalities see their authenticity, the identity, the traditions of places becoming undermined making them less capable to work on the preservation of their local identity. This action enables to rural and small urban areas to sustain and strengthen their local identities. This is mainly carried out in the form of activities concerning place making activities; thereby strongly linking local identity to place identity. The action contributes to the improvement of the life-quality and preservation of local values and traditions. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- valorise cultural, historical and religious heritage sites ensuring its sustainable utilization for community-building and cultural purposes increasing the life-quality of the local community;
- promote “smart and competitive villages” in rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities.

##### Action 2.4.2 - Complex development of tourism destinations

This action is expected to enhance the overall sustainability (i.e. environmental, economic, social) and competitiveness of the regions’ tourism, by providing integrated, interlinked and harmonised touristic offers (e.g., thematic routes, tourist packages etc.). The action is primarily aimed to support eco-, green-, thematic- and MICE (Meetings, incentives, conferencing, exhibitions) tourism which involves visiting natural areas that minimize the environmental impact, sustains the well-being of the local people. The complex tourism experience with supplementary services and easy-to-access digitalized information is expected to contribute to the extension of stay in the region. Moreover, with an integrated approach via Territorial Action Plans built on cooperation among already existing individual developments can support the overall sustainability of recent years’ touristic projects. The action supports among others the following cross-border initiatives:

- protection, renovation, reconstruction and valorisation of cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage sites ensuring its sustainable utilization for tourism;
- development of points of interest attracting visitors in the programme area;
- improve the infrastructural background of tourism destinations (parking places, maintenance infrastructure etc.);
- develop the accessibility of tourism destinations by building of roads and bicycle roads;
- creation of new or development of existing market-based tourism services;
- development of thematic routes, joint tourist packages, harmonizing complex tourist offers;
- digitalisation in tourism services (including green and digital upskilling and reskilling);
- establishing the institutional background for regional tourism coordination etc.

### 2.6.3. Indicators

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA2	PO4- SO(VI)	RC077	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	cultural and tourism sites	0	42
PA2	PO4- SO(VI)	RC058	Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported	km	0	10
PA2	PO4- SO(VI)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	101

Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA2	PO4-SO(VI)	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	visitors/year	0	2021	15 000	monitoring system /survey	-
PA2	PO4- SO(VI)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	81	monitoring system /survey	-

### 2.6.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the following stakeholders of the programme area:

- inhabitants of the programme area;
- inhabitants of small urban areas and rural municipalities;
- visitors including vulnerable groups;
- entrepreneurs in tourism services.

Projects in Action 2.4.1 are expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- destination management organizations
- non-governmental organizations
- churches
- museums and cultural institutions

In case of Action 2.4.2. the Programme is willing to implement territorial action plans with the precondition that territorial action plans shall deal with complex development of cross-border tourism destinations involving the following potential beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- destination management organizations
- non-governmental organizations
- churches
- museums and cultural institutions
- national park directorates and natural parks

- private entrepreneurs and SMEs

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

In case of Action 2.4.1, projects shall be selected via one round open call selection procedure. In case of Action 2.4.2, projects shall be selected via two round selection procedure similar to which was used in the Interreg V-A Programme. In 2013 the programme management bodies started to design a completely new funding method for the purpose to reflect on different territorial needs and challenges and connects the public and private sector in order to create new working places.

The new development and selection procedure was based on a joint cross-border development plan called Territorial Action Plan for Employment (TAPE). The foundation of the Action Plan was a carefully outlined target area. The area was geographically continuous including territories of both member states and had to form coherent geographical, economic and social unit that is suitable to deal with challenges of the labour market or certain clusters of economic activity.

Stakeholders had to precisely identify the needs and possibilities of the target area and design comprehensive operations with an overall objective to create new jobs and enhancing the cross-border labour mobility. Since these operations are difficult to deal within a single project, applicants had to create interrelated group of projects including hard and soft elements. Each TAPE had to contain 3 up to 8 project proposals which were in synergic or complementary relation.

As a result of the two round competitive Call, Programme funded the realisation of 9 different action plans including more than 45 projects around the programme area promoting sustainable and quality employment and cross-border labour mobility.

### **2.6.6. Planned use of financial instruments**

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

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

Dimension 1 – intervention field

<b>Priority no</b>	<b>Fund</b>	<b>Specific objective</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Amount (EUR)</b>
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	158   Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	21 748 369
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	083   Cycling infrastructure	5 607 477
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	165   Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	3 738 318
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	166   Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	14 018 692
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	167   Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	9 345 794

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	01   Grant	54 458 650

Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA2	ERDF	PO4-SO(VI)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	54 458 650

## 2.7. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 3 - Institutional cooperations

#### 2.7.1. Specific objective

ISO1- SO(b) Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions

#### *S03.1 - Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation*

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

##### Action 3.1.1 - Eliminating border obstacles

Stronger integration of the Slovak-Hungarian borderland and the intensification of cross-border interactions (mobility) necessitate the systematic monitoring, analysis and elimination of legal and administrative barriers. The Interreg Specific Objective 1 explicitly favours interventions targeting border obstacles via which the Programme is expected to remarkably improve the implementation conditions of cross-border projects. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- systematically identify the existing obstacles experienced by everyday citizens;
- analyse the legal background of the obstacles;
- create platforms of exchange of the competent authorities;
- elaborate projects addressing the identified obstacles;
- operate permanent help desk collecting and providing information for border people, project owners and authorities on obstacles, solutions and conditions for cross-border mobility.

#### 2.7.3. Indicators

##### Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA3	ISO 1-SOb)	RCO117	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	solutions	0	10

##### Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA3	ISO 1-SOb)	RCR82	Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved	legal or administrative obstacles	0	2021	4	monitoring system /survey	-



#### 2.7.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the inhabitants of the programme area. Projects are expected to be implemented by non-governmental organizations.

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

By taking into consideration the strategic and at the same time the coordinative character of eliminating border obstacles, Action is planned to be financed via coordinative project of strategic importance.

The above-specified actions can be implemented in the whole Programme area as identified in Chapter 1.1.

#### 2.7.6. Planned use of financial instruments

The nature of the operations and the relatively small scale does not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

#### 2.7.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO b)	173   Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	1 401 869

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO b)	01   Grant	1 401 869

Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO b)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	1 401 869

## 2.8. Title of the priority

### Priority Axis 3 - Institutional cooperations

#### 2.8.1. Specific objective

ISO1- SO(c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

### S03.2 - Build up mutual trust

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

##### Action 3.2.1 - Small project fund

This action is expected to contribute to the strengthening of cross-border cooperation by people-to-people actions via Small Project Fund. The overall objective of the Small Project Fund (SPF) is to strengthen social cohesion across the borders by supporting local level cooperation and to establish and improve long-term collaboration between actors on both sides of the border through the support of local/regional projects. The action is expected to create new cross border partnerships and build mutual trust on the level of municipalities, public institutions and citizens as well. The action supports among others the following cross-border initiatives:

- organization of cross-border cultural and sport events for people living in the border area;
- building new partnerships between local governments, public institutions, economic operators via joint study trips, common board meetings, professional conferences etc.;
- organization of exchange programmes and joint camps for children;
- supporting of bilingualism and digitalisation;
- supporting festivals and performances promoting cross-border partnership;
- support common project development and project preparation for the future Interreg Call for Proposals.

#### 2.8.3. Indicators

Output indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID [5]	Indicator	Meas. unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
PA3	ISO 1-SO c)	RC0115	Public events across borders jointly organised	events	10	200
PA3	ISO 1-SO c)	RC087	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	10	288

Result indicators

Pr.	Spec. obj.	ID	Indicator	Meas. unit	Baseline	Ref. year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
PA3	ISO 1-SO c)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2021	230	monitoring system /survey	-

#### 2.8.4. Main target groups

Main target groups of the specific objective are the inhabitants of the programme area. Projects are

expected to be implemented by the following type of beneficiaries (not exhaustive):

- local and territorial municipalities and their budgetary organizations
- EGTCs
- non-governmental organizations
- churches
- educational institutions

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

By taking into account the already existing experience in Small Project Fund management from the 2014-2020 period, the EGTCs will continue the implementation with necessary changes based on lessons learnt.

The above-specified actions can be implemented in the whole Programme area as identified in Chapter 1.1.

### **2.8.6. Planned use of financial instruments**

The nature of the operations and their relatively small scale do not allow the efficient deployment of financial instruments.

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

Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO c)	173   Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	12 149 533

Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO c)	01   Grant	12 149 533

Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA3	ERDF	ISO 1-SO c)	33   Other approaches - No territorial targeting	12 149 533

### 3. Financing plan

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#### 3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

<b>Fund</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>Total</b>
ERDF	0,00	26,307,849	22,391,075	22,752,137	23,120,419	19,158,056	19,541,219	133,270,755
<b>Total</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>26,307,849</b>	<b>22,391,075</b>	<b>22,752,137</b>	<b>23,120,419</b>	<b>19,158,056</b>	<b>19,541,219</b>	<b>133,270,755</b>

(1) Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

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

Table 8

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation on EU support	EU contribution (a)= (a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
<i>PO2 'A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management'</i>	<b>Priority 1</b> Green cooperations	ERDF <sup>(1)</sup>	Total eligible cost	44 500 000	41 588 786	2 911 214	11 125 000	9 025 000	2 100 000	55 625 000	80,0%	-
<i>PO4 'More Social Europe - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights'</i>	<b>Priority 2</b> Social cooperations	ERDF	Total eligible cost	74 270 755	69 411 921	4 858 834	18 567 689	16 127 364	2 440 325	92 838 444	80,0%	-
<i>IS01 'Better cooperation governance'</i>	<b>Priority 3</b> Institutional cooperations	ERDF	Total eligible cost	14 500 000	13 551 402	948 598	3 625 000	3 625 000	0	18 125 000	80,0%	-
<b>Total</b>				<b>133 270 755</b>	<b>124 552 109</b>	<b>8 718 646</b>	<b>33 317 689</b>	<b>28 777 364</b>	<b>4 540 325</b>	<b>166 588 444</b>	<b>80,0%</b>	<b>-</b>

(2) Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

#### **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**

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

In accordance with the multi-level governance principle, the involvement of partners was a central component throughout the development of the Programme. The programming process has been coordinated by the Programming Committee (PC) consisting of relevant ministries and regional, county, and local level organizations from Hungary and Slovak Republic.

##### **From Hungary these include:**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Innovation and Technology<sup>5</sup>, Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit Llc, Győr-Moson-Sopron county, Komárom-Esztergom county, Pest county, Nógrád county, Heves County, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county.

##### **From the Slovak Republic, the institutions involved include:**

Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (in accordance with the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 355/2020 of 4th June 2020 and the Agreement on transition of rights and obligations the role of the Slovakian National Authority for the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic to the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic from the 1st October 2020.), Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava Self-governing Region, Trnava Self-governing Region, Nitra Self-governing Region, Banská Bystrica Self-governing Region and Košice Self-governing Region.

The Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority, as well as the National Authority of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme were also involved in the programming process. The programming process also included advisors that offered valuable input into the programming process. From Hungary the advisor institution was the Secretariat of Danube Regional Strategy while from the Slovak Republic the advisor institution was Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as Central Coordination Body in Slovak Republic.

The key milestones of the programming process were PC meetings with the participation of the PC members, observers and experts drafting the territorial analysis, the expert team drafting Chapter 2 of the programme document as well as strategic environmental assessment experts (SEA experts). The role of the PC – besides steering and strategically coordinating the planning process – was to discuss and approve the major milestones and outputs of the programming process (territorial analysis, SEA, working documents related to the strategy and the content of the draft Interreg Programme).

The desk officer of the EC responsible for the Programme has been involved in the process and has been informed about the status and achievements of the programming through written communication and participation at PC meetings.

Furthermore, from the beginning of the preparation process of the Programme, relevant actors from the programming area have been directly and actively involved in the processes in line with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, along with the valuable contribution of the PC and the JS of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme (built on their local knowledge and experience within the 2014-2020 period).

The involvement based on Code of Conduct has been carried out through a series of workshops, interviews

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<sup>5</sup> is replaced by the Prime Minister's Office as of the 1st of January 2021

and online public consultation in order to gain more information and generate constructive dialogue in various subjects (e.g. identifying local challenges and development needs, concrete actions and project ideas, existing and potential applicants and cooperation networks etc.). Workshops were organised for involvement of the stakeholders in the programming process.

The programming process started in June 2019 initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary as the Managing Authority of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme with the preparation of the territorial analysis of the border region. As a first step it had been carried out using evidence-based information describing territorial processes within the programme region.

With a view to gathering information from the local stakeholders on their thematic preferences, potential project ideas and their opinion on the tools which can be applied by the Programme, an online survey was compiled. The questionnaire had been sent to a wide list of stakeholders; on the one hand the Joint Secretariat disseminated it through their applicants' mailing list; on the other hand a list of relevant stakeholders comprising all the municipalities of the border as well as the related institutions (for example universities, hospitals, EGTCs, etc.) was compiled. These results were analysed (altogether 296 respondents arrived, out of which 184 was filled out in Hungarian and 112 in Slovak language.).

In order to identify the potential thematic fields of the future programme, as well as to get to know the preferences of regional stakeholders on the use of innovative tools, territorial workshops were organised on both sides of the border.

To detail the selected thematic areas with the involvement of sectorial professionals and experts thematic workshops were held (in the topic of heritage management, economic development and social challenges). Due to the COVID pandemic and restrictions introduced the thematic personal workshops could not be held in Slovakia, therefore series of online workshops were launched for professional of the programme area. Altogether six online thematic workshops were held, three in Hungarian and three in Slovak language.

Both the online survey, the territorial and sectoral workshops resulted the territorial analysis which then served a solid base for further work on the selection of policy objectives and shaping the programme document. As for selection of priorities and specific objectives further in-depth interviews were conducted based on predefined questionnaires with the professionals nominated by the relevant ministries and the PC members. The public was informed about the programming process on multiple outlets; mainly on the website of the previous programme and social media channel of Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme.

### **Partners and their roles in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme**

Following relevant EC regulations, relevant partners from both Member States shall be involved in the preparation and implementation of the Programme, including their participation in the Monitoring Committee. The Member States intend to ensure close cooperation between partners in Member States and with the private and other sectors. The composition of the Monitoring Committee shall be agreed by the Member States as follows:

1. the relevant authorities;
2. bodies jointly set up in the whole programme area or covering a part thereof, including EGTCs;
3. representatives of the programme partners referred to in CPR regulation.

The setup will be ensured by nomination of the partner countries and role of all the partners will be specified in the Rules of Procedure. Coordination mechanism can be ensured by the composition of the Monitoring Committee, where national and regional level stakeholders being responsible also for other funds take part moreover during national level consultations with relevant authorities (including once being responsible for other mainstream programmes).

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

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



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

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Communication activities support the successful implementation of the Programme and enhance the engagement of citizens in initiatives of the European Union by promoting and capitalizing the positive impact and added value of the interventions.

### **Objectives**

1. Supporting the successful programme implementation by adequate, timely and accurate communication measures by
  - communicating the funding opportunities towards potential beneficiaries in due time;
  - providing information to beneficiaries how to implement successfully their projects and in communicating it;
  - providing relevant and timely information to the decision makers of the Programme.
2. Ensuring effective and transparent communication among the different programme implementing bodies and with the (potential) beneficiaries by
  - building up an effective communication structure among the programme implementing bodies to ensure flow of information;
  - creating clear, straightforward and understandable guides and documents.
3. Engaging citizens by
  - informing the general public about the activities and results of the Programme through various channels using attractive messages;
  - capitalize on the results from the previous operational programmes between Hungary and Slovakia as well as on other programmes' results (EUSDR, DTP).

### **Output indicators:**

- Objective 1) - Number of professional events  
(*info days, seminars, trainings, workshops, consultations, monitoring committee meetings*)
- Objective 2) - Satisfactory level based on event feedback from relevant questions
- Objective 3) - Number of participants at publicity events and number of social media reaches

**Result indicators** measure the specific changes that will be achieved in response to communication outputs (satisfactory of participants and beneficiaries, communication quality, etc.).

Indicators monitor and evaluate the progress and achievements of the communication activities.

### **Target audiences**

The selected target audiences are mainly the inhabitants and organisations of the programme area. It includes policy and decision makers (programme bodies, government departments and agencies), potential and final beneficiaries (municipalities, public authorities, educational institutions, SMEs, NGOs, associations and foundations, etc.) and the media having a wider reach to the general public, mainly to the population of the border area. EU organizations can also better disseminate the programme's results.

### **Communication channels**

The Programme will use various communication channels applying flexibility when and which one(s) to use in order to reach the highest possible number in the relevant target group. The messages are tailored to the relevant channel and target group according to the goal of the communication activity. The main channels

are the website, social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn are the most frequently used in Hungary and Slovakia), branding, public events (i.e. ceremonial events of the programme, info-days, seminars), online and/or printed publications, audio-visual productions (i.e. short films, image films or teasers of granted projects and also on programme-level) and media relations. The JS is available for consultation for all participants and stakeholders (on the phone, in the office, online or on site) enhances open communication, build trust and contribute to the effective and successful implementation of the Programme. Programme website will be linked to the single website portal of the Member States.

All activities must respect the following **horizontal principles**:

#### **Transparent operation**

Monitoring/programming committee decisions, annual reports, summaries, information on projects is published on the programme's website.

#### **Equal opportunities for everyone**

Information on programme's operations and results are available on programme website accessible in a high contrast version for those with low vision. When organizing an event, the programme prefers locations that meet the technical accessibility standards for reduced mobility. JS assists the guests with disabilities through personal consultations.

#### **Sustainable use of resources**

The Programme will apply a green approach when implementing its communication activities (including promotional materials, event organization, printing, etc.).

#### **Sound financial management**

Cost efficiency will be kept when choosing the appropriate communication activity and the channel to use.

#### **Indicative budget of basic communication and visibility activities**

A sufficient budget will be reserved in each annual budget of Technical Assistance (TA) making up at least 0,3 % of the Programme total budget. The overall indicative actions are the following

- call for proposals ads
- organising Info Days, thematic days, and partner search forums;
- organising the Beneficiary workshops;
- organising Opening and Closing Conference;
- communication promotion materials and events;
- web design, website development and maintenance and other digital channels/tools;
- graphic design services and applications.

Attention will be paid to the operation of strategic importance under Interreg Specific Objective 1. Its importance will be highlighted throughout the programme implementation.

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

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The Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme offers direct support via Small Project Fund in line with Article 25 of the Interreg Regulation.

### **Small projects within programmes between Slovakia and Hungary**

Since the start of the very first cross-border programme between Hungary and Slovakia in 1999, small-scale projects have been one of the most popular interventions in the eligible area.

Mainly due to the limited financial capacity of the programmes and the local actors, the possibility for small scale projects remained a priority, which opened the door for actors with limited capacities to start cooperating in cross-border level.

While in the programming period of 2007-2013 small scale projects were also financed through different type of measures, expert interviews and focus group workshops during the first phase of the programme elaboration revealed a great interest in the level of small organizations from the civil society to take part in cross-border development. Although due to their limited financial and organizational capacity along with the lack of experience in project management, they could hardly compete under the thematically focused priorities of the Programme.

This interest was also supported by regional authorities and the results of the cohesion analysis of the border region. One of the possible ways to enable small communities, NGOs to participate in the Programme was the introduction of the Small Project Fund.

### **Small Project Fund in 2014-2020**

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the Small Project Fund created suitable conditions for the implementation of valuable projects with lower budgets and more practical project settings.

The SPF is a tool within the Cooperation Programme for organizations to implement projects with smaller budget. The minimum amount of grant for an SPF project is 20.000€ and the maximum is 50.000€. The SPF is managed through two umbrella projects implemented by relevant EGTCs; one in the Eastern and one in the Western part of the programming area.

### **Purpose and aim of Small Project Fund in 2021-2027**

Continuation of the Small Project Fund on the Eastern and Western part of the programming area with more focus on people-to-people actions will enable smaller institutions and organisations that have already been beneficiaries of our programme, to take part of it again, but will also enable new actors to be included in the programme and further increase the variety of people and organisations included in cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Slovakia.

Although the available funding for 2021-2027 has been decreased compared to the previous period, small projects can help to maintain the outreach of the Programme.

### **Small projects within the SPF scheme shall**

- promote direct cooperation between citizens and institutions;
- attract new beneficiaries to the cooperation;
- anchor cooperation in more and unprecedented fields;
- put cooperation on more solid feet owing to diversification;
- and increase the visibility of the Programme and hence Interreg in the whole region.

### **Potential target groups**

The wide variety of projects under these priorities can include (but not limited to) activities implemented by:

- civil society organisations;
- non-profit organisations;
- environment and nature protection organisations;
- local governments;
- regional organisations and regionally operated public authorities and their organisations;
- professional organisations;
- educational organisations;
- research organisations;
- local media organisations;
- social work and social care services;
- vocational schools;
- tourist destination management organisations or professional tourist organisations;
- cultural institutions/organisations dealing with culture (e.g. theatres, houses of culture/cultural centres, libraries, museums, galleries, music and art schools, etc.);
- cross-border cooperation organisations;
- other relevant organisations.

### **Implementing provisions**

Compared to the implementing provisions of SPF in the 2014-2020 programming period, more attractive conditions shall be established for small projects in 2021-2027, such as:

- limited project duration (indicative length maximum 18 months);
- use of simpler procedures (e.g. simplified selection process, easier reporting and verification procedures etc.);
- extensive use of financial tools (Simplified Cost Options etc.);
- shifting towards the proportionate management approach, i.e. “downscaling” of implementation provisions and administrative requirements;
- more emphasis on programme objectives and EU values that are promoted directly to local inhabitants.

## 7. Implementing provisions

### 7.1. Programme authorities

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary	Mr Péter Kiss-Parciu Ms Nikoletta Horváth	<a href="mailto:hathatar@mfa.gov.hu">hathatar@mfa.gov.hu</a> <a href="mailto:nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu">nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu</a>
National authority	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary  Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic	Mr Péter Kiss-Parciu Ms Nikoletta Horváth  Mr Tomáš Swiatlowski	<a href="mailto:hathatar@mfa.gov.hu">hathatar@mfa.gov.hu</a> <a href="mailto:nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu">nikoletta.horvath@mfa.gov.hu</a>  <a href="mailto:tomas.swiatlowski@mirri.gov.sk">tomas.swiatlowski@mirri.gov.sk</a>
Audit authority	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds, Hungary	Mr Balázs Dencsó dr	<a href="mailto:balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu">balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu</a>
Group of auditors representatives (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic	Ms Vladimíra Zacharidesová  Ms Petra Kučák Nétryová	<a href="mailto:vladimira.zacharidesova@mfsr.sk">vladimira.zacharidesova@mfsr.sk</a>  <a href="mailto:petra.kucak.netryova@mfsr.sk">petra.kucak.netryova@mfsr.sk</a>
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Hungarian State Treasury	Mr Szabolcs Jakab	<a href="mailto:igazolohatosag@allamkincstar.gov.hu">igazolohatosag@allamkincstar.gov.hu</a>

### 7.2. Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat

During the programming exercise the Member States agreed to set up the JS for the new 2021-27 Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme on the basis of the existing JS of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme. According to this decision, the JS will be set up within the framework of the Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC. (hereinafter referred as SZPO).

The JS will be functionally independent within the organizational structures of SZPO; nevertheless, the Company will ensure necessary back office support to the smooth operation as well as horizontal services for the successful implementation of the Programme (e.g. coordination of the development and operation of the monitoring system of the Programme, regulatory, legal, professional, procurement, financial and audit coordination support).

The JS will work in close cooperation with the MA related to programme coordination and implementation and provide support to the National Authority. The MA and JS will be set up in a system most securing their cooperation on one hand, and their independence from national structures on the other. The JS will also assist the Monitoring Committee (MC) in carrying out their respective functions and tasks (inter alia organizing the MC meetings including the preparation and delivery of documents, assisting the decision-

making process, ensuring the follow-up).

Moreover, the JS will provide information on funding opportunities to applicants, assist the process of partner search and project development, manage the application process, support the process of assessing and selecting operations, and will assist beneficiaries in implementing their operations. Additionally, the JS will prepare programme level documents (e.g. guidelines for applicants and beneficiaries, reports to be submitted by the MA to the European Commission after approval of the MC), coordinate evaluations performed during the implementation of the Programme and will perform information and promotion activities.

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

The JS will be located in Budapest. The overall structure and work of the JS will be coordinated by the head of the JS, directly supported by programme managers. The communication tasks of the JS shall be performed by one or two of the programme managers (programme- and communication managers). The JS and related horizontal services will be financed from the Technical Assistance of the Programme. The overall structure and work of the JS will be coordinated by the head of JS, directly supported by the deputy head of JS, to be nominated from the staff.

Detailed rules of the financial management of the programme authorities by the Member States will be laid down in Memorandum of Understanding.

### **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**

Each Member State is responsible for preventing, detecting and correcting irregularities.

Without prejudice to the Member State's responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities according to Article 52 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity - or when the Managing Authority is entitled to withdraw from the Subsidy Contract and to demand the repayment of the EU contribution in full or in part - is recovered from the Lead Beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay to the Lead Beneficiary any amounts unduly paid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **7.3.1. Rules on apportionment of liabilities**

The Member States will bear liability as follows:

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

Member States bear liability for repayment of unduly paid amount as described in 7.3.1. unless it proves that sole partner or partner(s) already transferred the irregular amount to the lead partner. Member States bear liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by the lead or sole partner or partners located on its territory.

- ***Irregularities of the joint management bodies:***

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

- ***Systemic irregularity – at national level:***

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

- ***Systemic irregularity – at programme level:***

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

- ***Financial correction at programme level:***

If financial correction is established at programme level by the European Commission, the liability is determined by the Managing Authority and the Audit Authority after a consultation with the national authorities. As general rule the Member States shall be liable for the payment of such a correction. Member States shall pay a share of the correction, which is proportional to the amounts found by the Audit Authority to be wrongfully validated by the relevant Member State.

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

Member States shall report on irregularities in accordance with the criteria for determining the cases of

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

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

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

Further details on arrangements might be regulated in memorandum of understanding.



**8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs**  
**Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)**

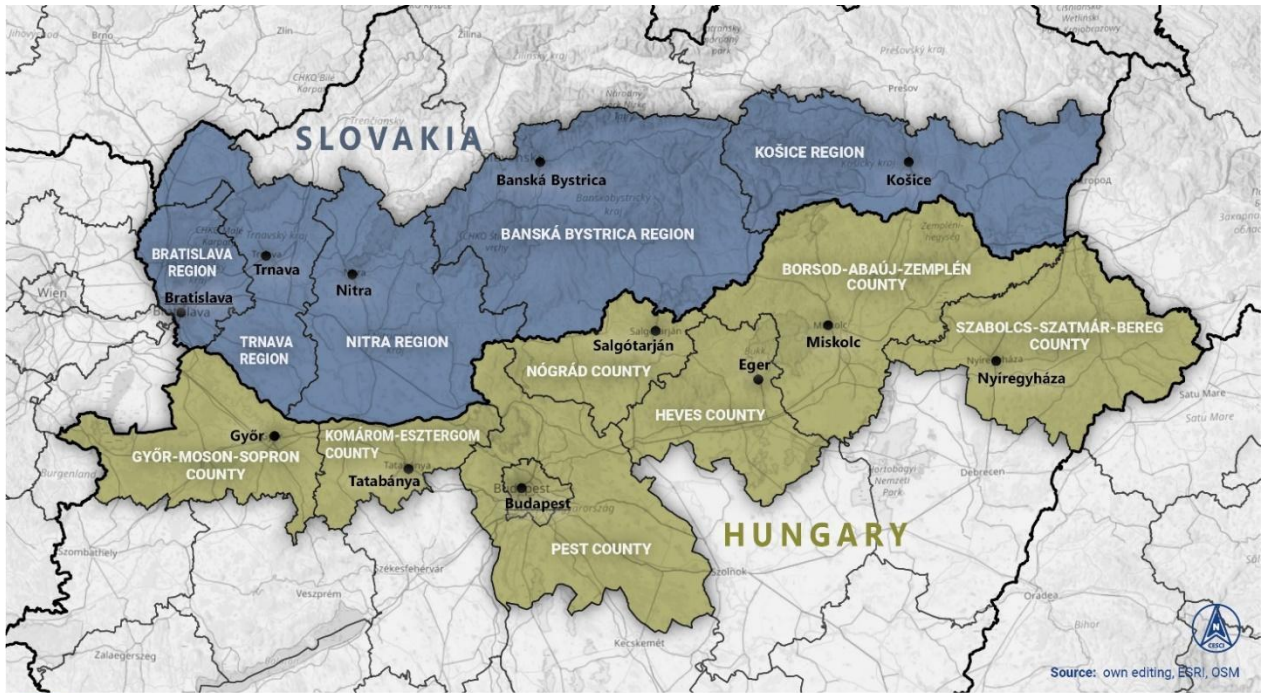
Table 10

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

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

## 9. Map

Map of the programme area



Map of the programme area

## 10. Appendix 3

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

#### Project targeting to eliminate cross-border legal and administrative obstacles

Stronger integration of the Slovak-Hungarian borderland and the intensification of cross-border interactions necessitate the systematic monitoring, analysis and elimination of legal and administrative barriers. The project is implemented under Priority Axis 3 (Institutional cooperations) Interreg Specific objective (Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions).

Existing obstacles can be grouped into four categories:

##### **Systematic obstacles necessitating amendments in legislation**

- cross-border mobility of ambulance cars is prohibited
- local products are not allowed to be sold across the border

##### **Systematic obstacles solvable within the confines of existing legislations**

- cross-border integration of public transport services
- the management of food safety certifications are not harmonised

##### **Ad-hoc obstacles necessitating legal amendments**

- cross-border grazing needs permanent solutions
- cross-border share of water supply, solid and liquid waste management is not evident

##### **Ad-hoc obstacles solvable within the confines of existing legislation**

- foreign residents of the border villages may not participate in the domestic rubbish collection systems
- the procedures related to the citizens' social insurances working in both states are not harmonised

##### **Planned activities of the operations**

This mechanism necessitates:

- stakeholder consultations with border people;
- the analysis of the legal background;
- permanent help desk towards the border citizens;
- the creation and operation of expert groups involving the relevant and competent authorities;
- the development of a best practice compilation based on European experiences;
- initiatives to eliminate the barriers.

The project is financed under SO3.1, starts after the Interreg Programme is approved by the European Commission and the Monitoring Committee approves the OSI (ca. Q1 2023) and lasts until the end date of the programme eligibility period (2029Q4). The indicative budget is around 1,4 m EUR ERDF.