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Interreg Hungary – Slovakia Programme

Close-ended, open competitive call

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Introduction

Interreg Hungary – Slovakia Programme

The Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme is implemented under the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 of the European Union (EU) as part of the Cohesion Policy. The programme aims to relieve administrative and legal barriers at the Hungarian-Slovak border, to build up mutual trust between the citizens of Hungary and Slovakia and to make the border area environmentally friendly, more competitive and inclusive. These objectives are described in the Programme document approved by the European Commission on 3 November 2022. The total allocation of the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) for the projects is 124 552 109 €.

Subject of the call

The Joint Secretariat (JS) of the Programme on behalf of the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade* of Hungary as Managing Authority (MA) and the *Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic* as National Authority (NA) launches a close-ended, open competitive call for proposals (Call) under the following actions:

- Action 1.2.1 – Protection and preservation of the natural capital
- Action 1.2.2 – Joint risk management
- Action 2.4.1 – Preservation of local heritage

Timing

For the present selection procedure application forms must be filled in in English and submitted online via the application module of the Interreg+ monitoring system. Applicants must submit their project proposals by 15 September 2023, 15:00. The one round selection procedure is open to all applicants with legal entity that meets the eligibility criteria.

Applications are evaluated against different quality criteria based on scores. Within the financial framework of the Call, the applications with the highest scores are selected for implementation. The decision on approval is expected in December 2023. The duration for the implementation of a selected project may not exceed 30 months.

Modifications of the Call

The Managing Authority may, in agreement with the National Authority, amend the terms of this Call at any time before the deadline for submission. The amendments shall not affect the eligibility and evaluation criteria. If the terms of the call are amended, the MA may extend the deadline for submission of applications. If applicants have submitted the application before the publication of an amendment, they may not be disadvantaged by the amended conditions. The Managing Authority may, in agreement with the National Authority, decide at any time to cancel the call already published.

Contact

Information about changes or cancellation will be posted on the programme website and on Facebook. Any losses due to cancellation are not compensable. For further information, please contact the JS.

Basic principles

Intervention logic

Applications can be selected if their objectives, outcomes and expected results are logically linked to one of the specific objectives and actions. When preparing project proposals, applicants may follow the steps below:

- 1) identify your local challenges,
- 2) match your objectives with the objectives of the action,
- 3) identify your target groups to be addressed,
- 4) measure the resources needed to sustain your results,
- 5) find partner having similar or common challenges operating on the other side of the border,
- 6) expand the project to include the benefits of cross-border cooperation,
- 7) set up your project activities and set the duration of the implementation,
- 8) work out the budget you need for the successful implementation.

Partnership

All projects must be implemented in a partnership established by at least one Hungarian and one Slovak partner. Partners who do not receive direct financial support may act as partners not receiving fund. The maximum number of project partners is not limited. For each project, applicants shall choose a Lead applicant among themselves who takes responsibility for the successful implementation of the whole project.

Cross-border character

All projects must have a cross-border character and create the potential for a long-term cooperation between the applicants. If the project partners face **similar challenges** or pursue similar objectives, the cross-border character can be achieved through the knowledge and experience transfer and by sharing of good practices and innovative solutions between them. When partners share **common challenges** or have common goals, the cross-border character can be achieved by joint efforts to develop common, cross-border solutions. Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of Interreg operations, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both (at least three cooperation criteria).

Form of finance

The programme offers a non-repayable grant composed of an EU contribution and national co-financing for the selected projects. With the exception of simplified cost categories, partners' expenditures can be reimbursed after the costs have been incurred and paid.

Project durability

Partners involving investment in infrastructure or productive investment must sustain the project results at least five years after the December 31 of the year in which the final payment was made by the programme, or at least three years in the case of SMEs.

Financial framework

Specific objective	Actions	ERDF allocation	Indicative total budget
Priority Axis 1 - Green cooperations		28 504 673 €	
SO1.2 - Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure	Action 1.2.1 - Protection and preservation of the natural capital	13 084 112 €	300.000 € - 1.500.000 €
	Action 1.2.2 - Joint risk management	15 420 561 €	300.000 € - 1.500.000 €
Priority Axis 2 - Social cooperations		21 748 369 €	
SO2.4. - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development	Action 2.4.1 - Preservation of local heritage	21 748 369 €	500.000 € - 2.500.000 €
Total		50 253 042 €	

The Monitoring Committee reserves the right to change the ERDF allocation for the above actions at any time. The indicative project size helps applicants to adapt their project size to the financial framework of the programme. Projects with the total budget less than 200.000 € cannot be supported. The maximum budget of the project is not limited.

Protection and preservation of the natural capital

1. Priority axis:	Green cooperations
1.2 Specific objective:	Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure
1.2.1 Action:	Protection and preservation of the natural capital
<i>1.2.1/A) Measure:</i>	<i>Nature conservation and preservation</i>
<i>1.2.1/B) Measure:</i>	<i>Biodiversity</i>
<i>1.2.1/C) Measure:</i>	<i>Green infrastructure</i>

Objectives

A large part of the border area belongs to the Pannonian biogeographical and ecological region. One of the most important cohesion elements of the border region is its landscape structure, representing its natural capital. Natural capital creates the basic conditions for human existence. These conditions include fertile soils, multifunctional forests, grasslands and agricultural land. The objective of this action is to contribute to the protection and conservation of nature and landscape, the improvement of forest management and soil quality, the promotion of biodiversity and systematic development of green infrastructure in the programme area.

Supported activities

Applicants may submit their applications for the following measures:

Measure 1.2.1/A): Nature conservation and preservation

Wetlands, natural and semi-natural non-forested areas and forests are crucial for biodiversity, society and in the fight against climate change. By conserving forests and restoring wetlands, the action contributes to reducing CO² emissions and protecting ecosystems. Soils are a vital resource that provides soil functions and many important ecosystem services, such as regulating water and nutrient cycling, food production, providing a physical foundation for structures, and providing habitat for various species.

In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- protect and restore natural wetlands, grasslands and shrubs;
- ensure biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation, tree planting and revegetation;
- support nature-friendly forest and grassland management and preservation of traditional landscape;
- promote agroforestry and measures that prevent soil degradation and preserve soil functions;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising campaigns.

Applicants may also propose different initiatives, as long as their activities are in line with the objectives of the measure.

Measure 1.2.1/B): Biodiversity

Biodiversity is composed of the diversity of genes, the diversity of species and the diversity of entire ecosystems. The loss of biodiversity means the loss of species and the reduction of the productivity and resilience of entire ecosystems. In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- promote the conservation and reintroduction of native, climate resilient species and habitats;

- support the conservation and protection of genetic resources of forest tree species;
- promote the cultivation and breeding of native plant and animal species as well as new and innovative forms (e.g. agroforestry);
- ensure the protection of habitats and breeding sites of endangered species;
- detect, control and eradicate invasive species;
- support biodiversity enhancement in agricultural areas;
- identify, monitor and revitalize migration corridors for wildlife;
- revitalise habitats and preventing habitat fragmentation;
- engage local communities through education campaigns;
- raise environmental awareness towards habitats and biodiversity, and
- expand the network of institutions with such educational activities in the natural environment.

Applicants may also propose different initiatives, as long as their activities are in line with the objectives of the measure.

Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure

The proposed action improves citizens' health and quality of life by developing a network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces to manage and provide access to a wide range of ecosystem services, such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- increase the surface of green areas reconnecting the urban, peri urban and rural areas and support the settlements' ventilation processes, promote green corridors, prevent fragmentation of cities, improve ecosystem functions and their services and enhance the surface of biologically active areas in cities;
- increase resilience to climate change and measures to reduce emissions, including revitalisation and creation of green areas and improved water management such as water retention;
- capture and manage rainwater on the site, which promote a network of natural and semi-natural solutions increasing water retention;
- reduce the impact of the urban heat island effect and improve the microclimate in settlements by expanding green areas which contribute to lower temperatures and reduced energy consumption in buildings, e.g., by using collected rainwater to irrigate green roofs and walls;
- involve local communities through education and awareness-raising campaigns.

Applicants may also propose different initiatives, as long as their activities are in line with the objectives of the measure.

Target groups

Applications may be submitted by all organisations with legal personality, as long as their project objectives correspond to the objective of the Action and they have relevant experience in the proposed activities. The main target groups are the following:

- public authorities and public institutions;
- forest management organisations;
- national park directorates;
- nature park organisations;
- nature and environment protection organisations;

- non-governmental organisations;
- local and territorial municipalities and their non-profit or economic organisations;
- European groupings of territorial cooperation;
- universities and research institutions;
- other educational organisations;
- small and medium sized enterprises.

Specific terms and conditions

Definitions

- For the purposes of this call, **Green infrastructure** is a network of natural and semi-natural areas with environmental features providing ecosystem services. The network contains e.g. parks, greenways, river corridors, wildflower strips, hedges, reed belts, sandy grasslands, green walls and roofs, fish ladders, fish passages, wildlife overpasses, multifunctional farms, beehives and bee hotels, etc.

Specific terms

- All projects must involve the local communities into the project implementation through education activities or awareness-raising campaigns.

Compliance with EU policies

Project proposals need to be in line with the corresponding EU policies, with special emphasis on the following strategies:

- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- EU Green Infrastructure Strategy
- European Green Deal
- EU Forest Strategy for 2030
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Main evaluation aspects

The measures serve to group the supported initiatives. All applications submitted for Action 1.2.1 will be evaluated in a single group. The main evaluation aspects represent the main criteria that will be considered in the evaluation. These aspects are the following:

- relevance of the project objectives in relation to the objectives of the action;
- strength and future potential of cross-border cooperation between the partners;
- relevance of the project objectives in relation to the territorial development objectives;
- potential of the project to reach the expected results;
- financial and human guarantees for the sustainability of the project results.

Indicators

Each application must contribute to at least one output indicator and one result indicator. Applicants must agree on the applicable indicators according to their definitions and set their target value in line with the planned outputs and expected project results.

Output indicators

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Definition
RCO26	Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change	hectares	Area of green infrastructure newly built or upgraded significantly in order to enhance adaptation to climate change, for instance by strengthening protection to floods and preventing soil erosion. Green infrastructure typically refers to trees, lawns, hedges, parks, fields, forests, etc. The indicator also covers blue infrastructure such as water elements, like rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, water treatment facilities, etc.
RCO36	Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change	hectares	Surface area of green infrastructure newly built or significantly upgraded for other purposes than adaptation to climate change. Upgrades refer to significant improvements in existing green infrastructures eligible for support. Maintenance is excluded.
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities including project partners and associated organizations, as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application.

Result indicators

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Description
RCR95	Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure	persons	Estimated population living within a 2 km radius from the public green infrastructure built or significantly upgraded in urban areas and supported by the projects.
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after the completion of the supported projects. The organisations are legal entities involved in project implementation, counted within RCO87. The cooperation concept should be interpreted as having a statement that the entities have a formal agreement to continue cooperation, after the end of the supported project. The cooperation agreements may be established during the implementation of the project or within one year after the project completion. The sustained cooperation does not have to cover the same topic as addressed by the completed project.

Joint risk management

1. Priority axis:	Green cooperations
1.2 Specific objective:	Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure
1.2.2 Action:	Joint risk management
<i>1.2.2/A) Measure:</i>	<i>Flood risk and water management</i>
<i>1.2.2/B) Measure:</i>	<i>Disaster risk management</i>

Objectives

The entire programme area is part of the Danube water system. Due to the hydrogeographical position of the two countries, their surface and underground water bodies - including rivers and drinking water sources of great importance as well as their catchment areas - have a transboundary character. The upstream and downstream river sections are places of common natural values, water habitats as shared potentials as well as challenges. Because of the transboundary waters, joint solutions for flood protection and disaster management, water quality improvement and pollution elimination are needed. The intervention contributes to improving flood protection and water management in the border region as well as the coordination and response capacity of the organisations involved in risk management.

Supported activities

Applicants may submit their applications in line with the following measures:

Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management

Although flood events are a part of nature, society has become more vulnerable to natural hazards. The proposed measures target hazard prevention, bearing in mind that flood prevention should not be limited to flood events. The quality of surface waters has improved in recent decades, but pollution from agricultural, municipal and industrial wastewater remains significant. In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- strengthening institutional cooperation between competent authorities;
- improving flood protection infrastructure;
- developing of early warning and forecasting systems;
- improving water resource management related to flood protection;
- supporting the restoration of natural floodplains of rivers in order to retain water and mitigate the effects of floods;
- supporting the restoration of small watercourses;
- monitoring and analysis of water quality on surface waters;
- removing harmful and persistent substances from surface waters;
- assessing the touristic potential of water bodies;
- involving local communities through awareness-raising campaigns.

Applicants may also propose other initiatives, as long as their activities are in line with the objectives of the action or measure.

Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management

In recent years, citizens have experienced a variety of adverse events that have destroyed human lives, property, the environment or cultural heritage. The effects of climate change in the region will lead to an increase in warm temperature extremes, a decrease in summer precipitation, an increase in water temperature, an increase in the risk of forest fires and a decrease in the economic value of forests. The action contributes to increasing the cross-border capacity for disaster risk management in the border region and to improving the coordination and response capacity of organisations involved in disaster risk management. In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- strengthening cross-border cooperation between competent authorities;
- addressing extreme weather conditions that pose a serious hydrological threat (*e.g. extremely destructive storms, flash floods, hail, drought with drinking water shortages*);
- monitoring and analysis of relevant micropollutants and contaminants in drinking water (*e.g. pesticides, pharmaceuticals and their metabolites, industrial pollution*);
- improving the infrastructural background for the provision of water for human consumption (*e.g. abstraction, treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure, drinking water supply*);
- increasing the effective management of forest and vegetation fires caused by extreme weather conditions;
- improving infrastructure to prevent or eliminate risks from natural and man-made hazards;
- increasing public awareness, preparedness and participation.

Applicants may also propose other initiatives, as long as their activities are in line with the objectives of the action or measure.

Target groups

Applications may be submitted by all organisations with legal personality, as long as their project objectives correspond to the objective of the Action and they have relevant experience in the proposed activities. The main target groups are the following:

- public authorities;
- water management organisations;
- disaster management organisations;
- non-governmental organisations;
- local and territorial municipalities and their non-profit or economic organisations;
- European groupings of territorial cooperation;
- universities and research institutions;
- educational organisations.

Specific terms and conditions

Compliance with EU policies

Project proposals need to be in line with the corresponding EU policies, with special emphasis on the following directives:

- Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000, establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy) and the accepted River Basin Management Plans as prescribed by the Directive.

- Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks, whereas the purpose of the directive is to establish a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks, aiming at the reduction of the adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods in the Community.
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Key evaluation aspects

The measures serve to group the funded initiatives, but all applications submitted for Action 1.2.2 will be evaluated in a single selection procedure. The key evaluation aspects represent the main criteria that will be considered in the evaluation. These aspects are the following:

- relevance of the project objectives in relation to the objectives of the action;
- strength and future potential of cross-border cooperation between the partners;
- relevance of the project objectives in relation to the territorial development objectives;
- financial and human guarantees for the sustainability of the project results.

Indicators

Each application must contribute to at least one output indicator and one result indicator. Applicants must agree on the applicable indicators according to their definitions and set their target value in line with the planned outputs and expected project results.

Output indicators

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Description
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities including project partners and associated organizations, as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application.

Result indicator

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Description
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after the completion of the supported projects. The organisations are legal entities involved in project implementation, counted within RCO87. The cooperation concept should be interpreted as having a statement that the entities have a formal agreement to continue cooperation, after the end of the supported project. The cooperation agreements may be established during the implementation of the project or within one year after the project completion. The sustained cooperation does not have to cover the same topic as addressed by the completed project.

Preservation of local heritage

Priority axis:	2 – Social cooperations
Specific objective:	2.4 – Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development
Action:	2.4.1 – Preservation of local heritage

Objectives

The role of cultural heritage and tourism for cohesion and socio-economic life is emphasised by multiple potentials and challenges. The border area is rich in tangible (castles, museums, works of art), intangible (songs, traditions, etc.) and digital (born-digital and digitised) cultural heritage. It includes monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity. Cultural heritage is both the manifestation of cultural diversity passed down from previous generations and a resource for sustainable cultural, social, environmental and economic development.

Under the influence of processes such as globalisation, modernisation and urbanisation, rural communities see their authenticity, place identity and traditions undermined, making them less able to preserve their local identity. The action contributes to maintaining and strengthening the local identity through community-building and placemaking activities. It also improves their resilience by introducing innovative solutions in use of their local heritage.

Supported activities

The action contributes to preserving local values, improving the quality of life, social cohesion and preventing depopulation. In particular, the measure supports the following cross-border initiatives:

- preservation, restoration and renovation of local heritage;
- introduce innovative solutions for the interpretation and use of heritage sites (e.g. historical buildings, engineering works, places and spaces, artefacts of industrial heritage, statues, monuments, memorials and graves, archaeological sites and historic parks, gardens and other designed landscapes) and their intangible aspects;
- ensuring the sustainable use of local heritage sites for tourism, cultural, community-building or other public or mixed (public and private) purposes.

Specific terms and conditions

Definitions

- In the present Call, **local heritage** is any tangible and intangible or digital cultural heritage, which serve to strengthen the cohesion and sense of identity of the local community, to support the sense of belonging of the regional actors by highlighting differences from others, and by creating the collective memory of the community.
 - In the present Call, **tangible cultural heritage** is any physical artefact produced, maintained and transmitted intergenerationally in a society. It includes artistic creations, built heritage such as buildings, monuments, archaeological sites and other physical or tangible products of human creativity that are invested with cultural significance in a society.

- In the present Call, **intangible cultural heritage** means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.
- In the present Call, **sustainable use** means the smooth operation of the promoted sites in the public or/and private interest. The promoted sites must host local citizens or visitors on a regular basis following the development.
- In the present Call, by **intervention on cultural heritage** it is intended any action which impact, or have potential to impact, upon structures, places or sites of heritage interest, causing any physical change or alteration.
- In the present Call, **adaptive reuse** means re-purposing an existing building for a new use. Adaptive reuse may include upgrades, external additions, internal space reorganisation and replacement of essential services and infrastructure, however, the traditional maintenance and continuous survival of cultural heritage elements (be they part of tangible or intangible heritage) must be ensured.

Specific conditions

- Applicants must establish a link between the tangible and intangible heritage. Applicants must use the restoration of tangible heritage as a catalyst for strengthening intangible heritage. Application dealing with intangible cultural heritage only cannot be supported.
- Unused heritage buildings, areas or sites must be re-used adaptively producing cultural, economic, environmental and social benefits.
- Applicants must encourage community participation during and after the implementation, and focus on generating benefits for the local communities.
- During the implementation, partners must mobilise cross-border knowledge transfer and research on the cultural heritage concerned.

Compliance with EU policies

Project proposals need to be in line with the corresponding EU policies, with special emphasis on the following documents:

- Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (2018/C 460/10)
- A New European Agenda for Culture (COM (2018) 267 final)
- European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact upon cultural heritage – ICOMOS (2020)
- New European Bauhaus initiative (2020)
- Leeuwarden Declaration; Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage: Preserving and Enhancing the Values of Our Built Heritage for Future Generations (2018)
- Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2011/711/EU)

Key evaluation aspects

The key evaluation aspects represent the main criteria that will be considered in the evaluation. These aspects are the following:

- strength and future potential of cross-border cooperation between the partners;
- partnership that ensures sustainability of processes of heritage restoration and governance and produce positive impact on local communities (e.g. multi-actor partnerships, local actors);
- relevance of the project objectives in relation to the territorial development objectives, as well as local needs;
- creative and innovative approaches to widen access and engage diverse audiences;
- significance or degree of legal protection of the heritage sites or possible changes in the legal protection of heritage sites as a result of the project;
- financial and human guarantees for the sustainability of the project results that involve local communities;

Target groups

Applications may be submitted by all organisations with legal personality, as long as their project objectives correspond to the objective of the Action and they have relevant experience in the proposed activities. The main target groups are the following:

- local and territorial municipalities and their non-profit or economic organisations;
- European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation;
- museums and other cultural institutions;
- churches;
- non-governmental organizations;
- small and medium-sized enterprises;
- forest management organisations;
- national park directorates;
- nature park organisations

Indicators

Each application must contribute to at least one output indicator and one result indicator. Applicants must agree on the applicable indicators according to their definitions and set their target value in line with the planned outputs and expected project results.

Output indicators

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Description
RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites	sites	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported by the Funds.
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities including project partners and associated organizations, as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application.

Result indicators

ID	Name	Meas. unit	Description
RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	visitors/year	<p>Estimated number of annual visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported. The estimation of the number of visitors should be carried out ex post one year after the completion of the intervention. The baseline of the indicator refers to the estimated annual number of visitors of the supported sites the year before the intervention starts, and it is zero for new cultural and tourism sites.</p> <p>The indicator does not cover natural sites for which an accurate estimation of number of visitors is not feasible.</p>
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	<p>The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after the completion of the supported projects. The organisations are legal entities involved in project implementation, counted within RCO87. The cooperation concept should be interpreted as having a statement that the entities have a formal agreement to continue cooperation, after the end of the supported project. The cooperation agreements may be established during the implementation of the project or within one year after the project completion. The sustained cooperation does not have to cover the same topic as addressed by the completed project.</p>

Classification of the supported activities in terms of state aid

1. The aid measures according to the **Specific objective 1.2. (Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure) in connection with the Measure 1.2.1/B): Biodiversity, Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure, Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management and Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management** do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (“TFEU”) Article 107 (1), since the supported activities do not qualify as economic activities within the meaning of the EU competition law.
2. Furthermore, the aid measures according to the **Specific objective 1.2. (Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure) in connection with Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure, Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management and Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management** do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), because the supported activities affect the funding of infrastructure that is not meant to be commercially exploited according to the Point 203 of the Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2016/C 262/01) (“Commission Notice”), therefore the supported activities do not qualify as economic activities within the meaning of the EU competition law.

In regard to the Point 203 of the Commission Notice the funding of infrastructure that is not meant to be commercially exploited is in principle excluded from the application of the State aid rules. This concerns, for instance, infrastructure that is used for activities that the State normally performs in the exercise of its public powers (for instance, military facilities, air traffic control in airports, lighthouses and other equipment for the needs of general navigation including on inland waterways, flood protection and low water management in the public interest, police and customs) or that is not used for offering goods or services on a market (for instance roads made available for free public use). Such activities are not of an economic nature and consequently fall outside the scope of the State aid rules, as does, accordingly, the public funding of the related infrastructure.

3. The aid measures according to the **Specific objective 1.2. (Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure) in connection with the Measure 1.2.1/A): Nature conservation and preservation and the Specific objective 2.4. (Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development)** do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), because the supported activities related to culture and the preservation of cultural heritage within the meaning of the Point 34 of the Commission Notice can be organized in a non-commercial way, so in some cases these activities are not of an economic nature.

The European Commission considers that public funding of a cultural or heritage conservation activity accessible to the general public free of charge fulfils a purely social and cultural purpose which is non-economic in nature. In the same vein, the fact that visitors of a cultural institution or participants in a cultural or heritage conservation activity, including nature conservation, open to the general public are required to pay a monetary contribution that only covers a fraction of the true costs (maximum 50 %) does not alter the non-economic nature of that activity, as it cannot be considered genuine remuneration for the service provided.

If the above conditions are met, the aid measures do not qualify as state aid according to the TFEU Article 107(1), since the supported activities do not qualify as economic activities within the meaning of the EU competition law.

In contrast, cultural or heritage conservation activities (including nature conservation) predominantly financed by visitor or user fees or by other commercial means (for example, commercial exhibitions, cinemas, commercial music performances and festivals and arts schools predominantly financed from tuition fees) should be qualified as economic in nature. Similarly, heritage conservation or cultural activities benefitting exclusively certain undertakings rather than the general public (for example, the restoration of a historical building used by a private company) should normally be qualified as economic in nature.

As long as the aid measures according to the Specific objective 1.2. (Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure) in connection with the Measure 1.2.1/A): Nature conservation and preservation, Measure 1.2.1/B): Biodiversity, Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure, Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management, Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management and Specific objective 2.4. (Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development) are considered State aid, the aid measures are granted only in line with the provisions of the Government Decree on the implementation of the cross-border Interreg programmes 2021-2027.

Supported activities	Reference to the legal ground	Aid category
Specific objective 1.2. (Protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure) in connection with the Measure 1.2.1/A): Nature conservation and preservation, Measure 1.2.1/B): Biodiversity, Measure 1.2.1/C): Green infrastructure, Measure 1.2.2/A): Flood risk and water management and Measure 1.2.2/B): Disaster risk management	Government Decree on the implementation of the cross-border Interreg programmes 2021-2027 Paragraph 73. Point 2.	GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects GBER 53 Aid for culture and heritage conservation De minimis aid
Specific objective 2.4. (Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development)	Government Decree on the implementation of the cross-border Interreg programmes 2021-2027 Paragraph 73. Point 6	GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects GBER 53 Aid for culture and heritage conservation



		GBER 55 Aid for sport and multi-functional recreational infrastructures GBER 56 Investment aid for local infrastructures De minimis aid
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Eligible criteria

Location requirements

Applicants are eligible if they are registered in any NUTS3 region of Hungary or Slovakia. All project activities must be carried out in or at least have an impact on the programme area. The programme area consists of the following NUTS3 regions:

Hungary

- Győr-Moson-Sopron vármegye
- Komárom-Esztergom vármegye
- Pest vármegye
- Budapest főváros
- Nógrád vármegye
- Heves vármegye
- Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén vármegye
- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg vármegye

Slovak republic

- Bratislavský samosprávny kraj
- Trnavský samosprávny kraj
- Nitriansky samosprávny kraj
- Banskobystrický samosprávny kraj
- Košický samosprávny kraj

Eligible applicants

Depending on legal form, the following organisations are eligible as partners for the programme:

- Public authorities
- Public bodies governed by public law
- Non-profit organisations governed by private law
- Small and medium sized enterprises

Public authorities

Public authorities are generally understood as the national, regional, or local authorities assigned with special competencies and performing tasks in public interest and state-owned companies having portfolio according to national legislation.

Public bodies governed by public law

In order to be considered a public law body/ body governed by public law, the concerned organisation has to comply with Article 2.4 of Directive 2014/24/EU, according to which: ‘bodies governed by public law’ means bodies that have all of the following characteristics:

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

bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Private non-profit body

A private non-profit body (legal entities only – a legal personality is required) in the context of the Programme has to meet the following criteria:

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

Small and medium sized enterprises

An enterprise is considered to be any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form. This includes, in particular, self-employed persons and family businesses engaged in craft or other activities, and partnerships or associations regularly engaged in an economic activity.

Partnership requirements

All projects must be implemented in a partnership established by at least one Hungarian and one Slovak partner. The maximum number of project partners is not limited. In line with the Article 23 (6) Regulation No. 1059/2021 of the Council and the European Parliament, this requirement is automatically fulfilled by the organisations operated in the form of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation type of legal bodies. Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of the projects. In addition, they shall cooperate in the staffing or the financing of projects, or in both as follows (namely, 3 is obligatory):

- **Joint development**
The criterion is fulfilled if the project idea is jointly developed and the Partner declaration is submitted as an Annex to the Application form by each Partner.
- **Joint implementation**
The criterion is fulfilled if each Partner is responsible for at least on core activity.
- **Joint staffing**
The criterion fulfilled if each Partner involve own employee as staff into the project implementation.
- **Joint financing**
The criterion is fulfilled if at least two Partners are financing their project part by the programme.

Lead Partner principle

For each project, applicants choose a Lead applicant who takes responsibility for the successful implementation of the whole project. In case of selected projects, the term Lead Applicant will become Lead Partner. Lead Partner shall bear the responsibilities to represent the whole project towards the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority and Audit Authority. The Lead Partner shall meet the following main requirements (others can be found in the General Terms and Conditions of the Subsidy Contract template and in the Partnership Agreement template):

- assume responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire project (however, each partner bears full responsibility for the appropriate implementation of its own project part);
- lay down the arrangements with the other partners in partnership agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the projects, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- ensure that expenditure presented by all Partners has been incurred in implementing the project and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the Partners;
- is accountable for project reporting and administrative actions on project level.

The Subsidy contract setting out the conditions for the entire project is concluded between the Managing Authority and the Lead Partner. As a result, the Lead Partner is legally responsible for the delivery of the whole project. General tasks of the Lead Partner:

- submission of the Application form;
- ensuring the delivery of the tangible outputs stipulated in the Application form;
- ensuring that all Partners carry out activities in line with the Application form;
- ensuring that all activities are carried out in line with the approved time plan;
- collecting the Partners' claims verified by the relevant body,
- submission of the project reports and applications for reimbursement;
- submission of the project's financial claims;
- receiving payment of the ERDF support and distributing it amongst the partners;
- recovering amounts paid in error to other partners in the project;
- submission of Follow-up reports after the closure of the project.

Partners not receiving financial support

Partnership can be extended with an organisation that is assisting in activities, does not receive funding and, therefore, has no budget in the application form. They essentially participate as professional advisors, observers or indirect beneficiaries.

Eligible activities

The project objectives must be clearly linked to the objectives of the action and the measure. The tasks of the Partner must be grouped into ‘Activities’ that have common tangible outcomes. Applicants can upload and describe their activities in three categories:

- preparatory activities,
- core activities,
- promotional activities.

Preparatory activities

All activities that must be done before the main activities begin are considered preparatory. This includes activities such as the elaboration of the detailed technical documentation, the preparation of implementation studies, public tenders or obtaining the necessary permits.

Core activities

All activities that serve to achieve the main outcomes of the project are considered core activities. These include activities such as the introduction of new services, construction and infrastructure works or the purchase of equipment.

Activities related to investment in infrastructure can only be carried out on land where the partner's property rights are guaranteed. **Property rights may be guaranteed by ownership, land acquisition¹ or by permission to use or operate the property for an indefinite period or for at least 10 years from the end date of the project.**

Promotional activities

All activities related to the promotion (including mandatory visibility measures) of the project are considered promotional activities. This includes the promotion of the visual identity of the Programme and of the European Union, communication activities towards target groups and the general public, as well as marketing activities to involve target groups and ensure the future exploitation of the project results. For more information, please consult the **Guidelines on project promotion** published as part of this call.

Timeframe

Applicants must set the duration of each activity. In doing so, applicants must consider various factors, such as the possible duration of obtaining the building permit, the duration of public tenders, the availability of the required personnel capacities or the organisation's liquidity. **As a general rule the maximum duration for project implementation may not exceed 30 months.**

¹ Only in accordance with point (b) of Article 64(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060

Eligible expenditures

Generally, expenditure is eligible for reimbursement if it is essential for the achievement of the project objectives and outputs and it would not be incurred if the project were not carried out. As a general rule, the expenditure can be reimbursed after it have been incurred and paid by the partner. Furthermore, the programme applies simplified cost option in certain cost categories.

The eligibility period starts on 1 January 2021. The latest possible date for payment of expenditure is 30 calendar days after the end date of the project, but not later than 31 December 2029.

When uploading the application into the Interreg+ application module one of the following flat rate option must be selected by each applicant:

Flat rate option A)

As a general rule, staff costs have to be planned and reimbursed on a flat rate basis. The applicable flat rate is defined as the percentage of direct costs that includes the costs of external services, equipment, and cost of infrastructure and works. This means that all costs other than office and administrative costs and travel expenses are direct costs. The applicable rates at partner level are as follows:

- a) if the Partners direct costs are less than EUR 1,000,000, 20% of the direct costs, but not more than EUR 100,000;
- b) if the Partners direct costs are EUR 1,000,000 or more, 10% of the direct costs, but not more than EUR 150,000.²

Flat rate option B)

In case of Flat rate option B, the staff costs have to be planned and reimbursed as real costs. This option is useful when the Lead Partner/Partner have significant number of internal employees working on project (e.g. internal experts). In this case, all other expenses related to project implementation (except staff costs) are reimbursed as a single cost category on a flat rate basis.

The applicable flat rate at partner level is 40% based on Article 56 of 1060/2021 EC Regulation. (In this case preparation cost, office and administration or travel and accommodation cost are covered within the same flat rate). The Lead Partner/Partner does not have to document that the expenditure related to project implementation (except staff costs) has been incurred and paid.

For more information on eligible expenditures, please consult the Eligibility of expenditures published as part of this call.

² Due to the set ceilings, some partners will not receive exactly 20 or 10% flat rate; however, the % fixed as the ratio of the ceiling amount and the planned direct costs also remains unchanged during the implementation period of the project parts. E.g. if direct cost is EUR 600 000, the flat rate will be 16,66% exactly during the implementation period.

Promotional cost

Each partner is obliged to promote the visual identity of the European Union and the Programme, as well as the funding from the European Regional Development Fund, also must communicate its objectives and results to stakeholders, decision-makers and the public. In addition, partners can use different marketing tools, to reach their target groups and ensure the sustainable use of their project results. Each promotional measure must contain predefined information and visual elements. The cost of all promotional measures (including mandatory) may not exceed 3% of the total budget of the partner.

For more information on promotion expenditures, please consult the Eligibility of expenditures published as part of this call.

Source of finance

The programme offers a non-repayable grant composed of an EU contribution and national co-financing for the selected projects. The total budget of the projects must not be less than 200,000 €. Applicants are recommended to find partners with similar financial capacity in order to have the project budget well-balanced between them (except the partners without budget). The size of the projects is not limited, however, applicants must consider the financial framework of the present call and be aware that Monitoring Committee aims to achieve an optimal balance between the quality, size and number of projects selected.

Actions	ERDF allocation without	Indicative project size
Protection and preservation of the natural capital	13 084 112 €	300.000 € - 1.500.000 €
Joint risk management	15 420 561 €	300.000 € - 1.500.000 €
Preservation of local heritage	21 748 369 €	500.000 € - 2.500.000 €

The projects are financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the central budgets of the Member States and the partners' own resources. The national co-financing rate of the partners depends on their legal form and location. The maximum rate of the EU contribution is 80% of the total budget. Please note that state aid rules must be respected and in case of state aid relevance, the amount of aid granted may differ from the general model described below. As a general rule, the funding rates for eligible applicants are as follows:

Partners registered in Hungary

Type of beneficiary according to national legislation	EU contribution	National co-finance	Own contribution
Central state budgetary organisations	80%	20%	0%
Entirely state-owned companies	80%	20%	0%
Asset management foundation established by the state. Legal entity maintained by such a foundation.	80%	20%	0%
All other beneficiary type except small and medium sized enterprises	80%	15%	5%
Small and medium sized enterprises	80%	15%	5%

Partners registered in Slovakia

Type of beneficiary	EU contribution	National co-finance	Own contribution
Public authorities	80%	20%	0%
Public bodies governed by public law	80%	12%	8%
Non-profit organisations governed by private law	80%	12%	8%
Small and medium sized enterprises	80%	0%	20%

State aid

The notion of state aid

Funds granted by Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia must comply with the state aid rules. According to the TFEU Article 107 (1) state aid is defined as *“any aid granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it affects trade between Member States, be incompatible with the internal market”*. In practical terms, state aid applies when **all five criteria** listed below are met:

- 1) The recipient of the aid is an “undertaking”, which is carrying out an **economic activity** in the context of the project.
- 2) The **aid is granted by the State or through State resources and it is imputable to the State**, which is always the case for any Interreg programme.
- 3) The aid gives an **economic advantage** (a benefit), which an undertaking would not have obtained under normal market conditions.
- 4) The aid is **selectively** favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods or provision of certain services.
- 5) The aid **distorts or threatens to distort competition and affects trade** within the European Union.

Apart from compliance with the aid specific rules, state aid can be granted in consideration of the Chapter I-II of the Commission Regulation (EU) 651/2014³ (hereinafter referred to as: “**GBER**”) and the Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013⁴ (hereinafter referred to as: “**de minimis regulation**”). Comprehensive information on state aid can be found on the [DG Competition website of the European Commission](#), where also a guideline on the notion of state aid is available⁵. Also relevant national or regional authorities may be consulted to obtain more specific information on rules and limitations concerning state aid.

State Aid Assessment and Contractual Conditions

Submitted application forms undergo a specific “State aid assessment” focusing on the five criteria listed above. This is offered for the applicants as part of the application form in the Programme as a self-assessment, with particular attention to the assessment of the status as “undertaking” (Criterion 1) of the partners (i.e. the lead partner or any project partner) and of the existence of an economic advantage for the undertaking (Criterion 3).

Please note, however, that the state aid evaluation is the responsibility of the Member State, and the assessment by the responsible national bodies may overrule the applicants’ self-assessment.

³ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty Text with EEA relevance

⁴ Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid Text with EEA relevance

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/competition-policy/state-aid/legislation/notion-aid_en

The results of the state aid assessment may lead to one or more of the following scenarios:

- a) **No state aid relevance.** In this case, no contractual conditions are set on state aid.
- b) **Risk of state aid that can be removed.** In this case, the MC may approve the project with certain conditions that are included in the subsidy contract in order to eliminate the state aid risks (e.g. wide dissemination, also to competitors, of certain project outputs).
- c) **Direct state aid granted to one or more partners.** In this case, the entire budget allocated to the concerned partner, that is, the direct beneficiary of the project.
- d) **Indirect state aid granted to third parties** outside the project partnership. The direct beneficiary of the Programme does not gain advantage. The partner confers the advantage on the third party, therefore the state aid evaluation must be carried out in the relation between the direct beneficiary and the final beneficiary. A contractual condition setting a threshold to the aid granted to third parties is set.

During the implementation of the project, the MA/JS verifies that the concerned partners fulfil contractual conditions on state aid. Any amendment to the project might be restricted if its activities are assessed as state aid relevant. Furthermore, additional contractual conditions on state aid may be given to projects in case of project amendments assessed as state aid relevant.

For partners receiving additional national public co-financing to their budgets, the aid granting shall comply with the cumulation and aid intensity rules.

Common Provisions

Scope

- 1) This Call for proposal does not apply to:
 - a) - with the exception of the Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project, Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects and De Minimis Aid; - any organisation which, at the time the aid was granted, has not yet fulfilled all its obligations to repay the aid resulting from the Commission's decisions ordering Hungary or Slovakia to recover the aid.
 - b) - with the exception of De minimis aid - undertakings in difficulty;
 - c) aid for production, processing, and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products as defined in Regulation (EU) No. 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1184/2006 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000 under Aid for culture and heritage conservation, Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures, Investment aid for local infrastructures, and De Minimis Aid;
 - d) aid granted in the primary agricultural production sector under Aid for culture and heritage conservation, Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures, Investment aid for local infrastructures, De Minimis Aid;
 - e) aid to an undertaking active in the processing and marketing of agricultural products, if:
 - i) the amount of the aid is fixed on the basis of the price or quantity of such products purchased from primary producers or marketed by the undertakings concerned; or
 - ii) the aid is conditional on being partly or entirely passed on to primary producers;

- f) aid to export-related activities, if directly linked to the quantities exported, to the establishment and operation of a distribution or to other current expenditure linked to the export activity;
- g) aid if it is made conditional on the use of domestic goods instead of imported goods;
- h) aid with conditions that result in a breach of EU law;
- i) Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project, Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects, Aid for culture and heritage conservation, Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures and Investment aid for local infrastructures for uncompetitive coal mines, as covered by Council Decision 2010/787/EU.

Incentive effect

- 1) Aid granted under GBER – with the exception of Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project, Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects, Aid for culture and heritage conservation – may be granted only if the beneficiary has submitted a written application for aid containing the mandatory content elements specified in GBER Article 6(2) before the start of the project.
- 2) Only De minimis aid within the meaning of De minimis Regulation may be granted for costs incurred before the submission of the application for aid.

Cumulation

- 1) In the case of identical or partly identical identifiable eligible costs, aid may be cumulated with other State aid from local, regional, national or Union sources, provided that it does not lead to the maximum aid intensity laid down in the block exemption regulations or in the Commission's approval decision being exceeded.
- 2) Aid may be cumulated with other State aid from local, regional, national or Union sources for different identifiable eligible costs.
- 3) The aid intensity of all aid received for a project, whether financed from Union, national, regional or local sources, shall not exceed the aid intensity or aid amount laid down in the applicable Union State aid rules.
- 4) Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects and De minimis aid that does not have identifiable eligible costs may be cumulated with any other State aid that has identifiable eligible costs. Aid with no identifiable eligible costs may be cumulated with any other State aid with no identifiable eligible costs up to the maximum overall funding ceiling laid down in the block exemption regulations and in the Commission's approval decision.

Aid intensity

In calculating the aid intensity all figures used shall be taken into account before deduction of taxes and duties. The aid paid in several instalments is discounted to the value at the date of the decision to grant aid, using the discount rate.

Miscellaneous

- 1) The beneficiary shall keep all documents and records relating to the aid for a period of 10 years from the date of the decision to grant the aid.
- 2) The aid measures in this Program only be granted in a transparent form, as direct grant.

Specific provisions for different categories of aid

Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project

- 1) In case of Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation projects covered by Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 or Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 the aid intensity shall not exceed the maximum co-financing rate provided for in Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.
 - a. To the extent that they are linked to the cooperation project, the following costs, which shall have the meaning ascribed to them in Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, shall be eligible costs:
 - b. staff costs;
 - c. office and administrative costs;
 - d. travel and accommodation costs;
 - e. external expertise and services costs;
 - f. equipment costs;
 - g. costs for infrastructure and works.
- 2) Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project cannot exceed EUR 2 million per undertaking, per project.

Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects

In case of Aid to undertakings for their participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects covered by Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 the total amount of aid granted to an undertaking per project shall not exceed EUR 20 000.

Aid for culture and heritage conservation

- 1) Aid for culture and heritage conservation may take the form of:
 - a) investment aid, including aid for the construction or upgrade of culture infrastructure;
 - b) operating aid.
- 2) The aid shall be granted for the following cultural purposes and activities:
 - a) museums, archives, libraries, artistic and cultural centres or spaces, theatres, cinemas, opera houses, concert halls, other live performance organisations, film heritage institutions and other similar artistic and cultural infrastructures, organisations and institutions;
 - b) tangible heritage including all forms of movable or immovable cultural heritage and archaeological sites, monuments, historical sites and buildings; natural heritage linked to cultural heritage or if formally recognized as cultural or natural heritage by the competent public authorities of an EU Member State;
 - c) intangible heritage in any form, including folklorist customs and crafts;

- d) art or cultural events and performances, festivals, exhibitions and other similar cultural activities;
 - e) cultural and artistic education activities as well as promotion of the understanding of the importance of protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions through educational and greater public awareness programs, including with the use of new technologies;
 - f) writing, editing, production, distribution, digitisation and publishing of music and literature, including translations. The maximum aid amount shall not exceed either the difference between the eligible costs and the project's discounted revenues or the 70 % of the eligible costs. The revenues shall be deducted from the eligible costs *ex ante* or through a clawback mechanism. The eligible costs shall be the costs for publishing of music and literature, including the authors' fees (copyright costs), translators' fees, editors' fees, other editorial costs (proofreading, correcting, reviewing), layout and pre-press costs and printing or e-publication costs.
- 3) For investment aid, the eligible costs shall be the investment costs in tangible and intangible assets, including:
- a) costs for the construction, upgrade, acquisition, conservation or improvement of infrastructure, if at least 80 % of either the time or the space capacity per year is used for cultural purposes;
 - b) costs for the acquisition, including leasing, transfer of possession or physical relocation of cultural heritage;
 - c) costs for safeguarding, preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including extra costs for storage under appropriate conditions, special tools, materials and costs for documentation, research, digitalisation and publication;
 - d) costs for improving the accessibility of cultural heritage to the public, including costs for digitisation and other new technologies, costs to improve accessibility for persons with special needs (in particular, ramps and lifts for disabled persons, braille indications and hands-on exhibits in museums) and for promoting cultural diversity with respect to presentations, programmes and visitors;
 - e) costs for cultural projects and activities, cooperation and exchange programmes and grants including costs for selection procedures, costs for promotion and costs incurred directly as a result of the project;
- 4) In case of the investment aid, the aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs *ex ante*, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. The operator of the infrastructure is allowed to keep a reasonable profit over the relevant period. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.

Investment aid for culture and heritage conservation cannot exceed EUR 150 million per project.

- 5) For operating aid, the eligible costs shall be the following:
- a) the cultural institution's or heritage site's costs linked to continuous or periodic activities including exhibitions, performances and events and similar cultural activities that occur in the ordinary course of business;
 - b) costs of cultural and artistic education activities as well as promotion of the understanding of the importance of protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions through educational and greater public awareness programs, including with the use of new technologies;

- c) costs of the improvement of public access to the cultural institution or heritage sites and activities including costs of digitisation and of use of new technologies as well as costs of improving accessibility for persons with disabilities;
 - d) operating costs directly relating to the cultural project or activity, such as rent or lease of real estate and cultural venues, travel expenses, materials and supplies directly related to the cultural project or activity, architectural structures for exhibitions and stage sets, loan, lease and depreciation of tools, software and equipment, costs for access rights to copyright works and other related intellectual property rights protected contents, costs for promotion and costs incurred directly as a result of the project or activity; depreciation charges and the costs of financing are only eligible if they have not been covered by investment aid;
 - e) costs for personnel working for the cultural institution or heritage site or for a project;
 - f) costs for advisory and support services provided by outside consultants and service providers, incurred directly as a result of the project.
- 6) In the case of the operating aid, the aid amount shall not exceed what is necessary to cover the operating losses and a reasonable profit over the relevant period. This shall be ensured *ex ante*, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.

Operating aid for culture and heritage conservation cannot exceed EUR 75 million per undertaking per year.

- 7) Aid cannot be granted to press and magazines, whether they are published in print or electronically.

Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures

- 1) Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures may take the form of:
 - a) investment aid, including aid for the construction or upgrade of sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructure;
 - b) operating aid for sport infrastructure;
- 2) Sport infrastructure shall not be used exclusively by a single professional sport user. Use of the sport infrastructure by other professional or non-professional sport users shall annually account for at least 20 % of time capacity. If the infrastructure is used by several users simultaneously, corresponding fractions of time capacity usage shall be calculated.
- 3) Multifunctional recreational infrastructure shall consist of recreational facilities with a multi-functional character offering, in particular, cultural and recreational services with the exception of leisure parks and hotel facilities.
- 4) Access to the sport or multifunctional recreational infrastructures shall be open to several users and be granted on a transparent and non-discriminatory basis. Undertakings which have financed at least 30 % of the investment costs of the infrastructure may be granted preferential access under more favourable conditions, provided those conditions are made publicly available.
- 5) If sport infrastructure is used by professional sport clubs, the pricing conditions for its use are made publicly available.
- 6) Any concession or other entrustment to a third party to construct, upgrade and/or operate the sport or multifunctional recreational infrastructure shall be assigned on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis, having due regard to the applicable procurement rules.

- 7) For investment aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructure the eligible costs shall be the investment costs in tangible and intangible assets.
- 8) In case of the investment aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructure, the aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.

Investment aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures cannot exceed EUR 30 million or the total costs of the project cannot exceed EUR 100 million.

- 9) For operating aid for sport infrastructure the eligible costs shall be the operating costs of the provision of services by the infrastructure. Those operating costs include costs such as personnel costs, materials, contracted services, communications, energy, maintenance, rent, administration, etc., but exclude depreciation charges and the costs of financing if these have been covered by investment aid.
- 10) In case of the operating aid for sport infrastructure, the aid amount shall not exceed the operating losses over the relevant period. This shall be ensured ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.

Operating aid for sport infrastructure cannot exceed EUR 2 million per infrastructure per year.

Investment aid for local infrastructures

- 1) Investment aid for local infrastructures finances the construction or upgrade of local infrastructures which concerns infrastructure that contribute at a local level to improving the business and consumer environment and modernising and developing the industrial base. Investment aid for local infrastructures shall not apply to aid for infrastructures that is covered by other sections of Chapter III of GBER with the exception of Section 1. Investment aid for local infrastructures shall also not apply to airport infrastructure and port infrastructure.
- 2) The infrastructure shall be made available to interested users on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis. The price charged for the use or the sale of the infrastructure shall correspond to market price.
- 3) Any concession or other entrustment to a third party to operate the infrastructure shall be assigned on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis, having due regard to the applicable procurement rules.
- 4) The eligible costs shall be the investment costs in tangible and intangible assets.
- 5) The aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism.
- 6) Dedicated infrastructure shall not be exempted.
- 7) Investment aid for local infrastructures cannot exceed EUR 10 million or the total costs exceeding EUR 20 million for the same infrastructure.

De Minimis Aid

- 1) The gross grant equivalent of de minimis aid granted on the basis of the Commission Regulation 1407/2013/EU (referred to as: De Minimis aid) to one and the same undertaking (“single undertaking”) in Hungary or in Slovakia in the current fiscal year and during the two preceding fiscal years may not exceed the threshold of EUR 200,000, in the case of undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or reward EUR 100,000 taking into account the De Minimis Regulation Article 3(8) and (9).
- 2) With the exception of the provisions of the De minimis Regulation Article 1(2) an aid cannot be granted to an undertaking for the exceptions according to De minimis Regulation Article 1(1).
- 3) De minimis aid shall not be granted to undertaking which performs road freight transport for hire or reward for the acquisition of road freight transport vehicles.
- 4) De minimis aid may be cumulated with the de minimis aid for undertakings providing services of general economic interest granted on the basis of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 360/2012 up to the threshold defined in the Commission Regulation 360/2012/EU. De minimis aid may be cumulated with other de minimis aid granted on the basis of other Commission Regulations on de minimis aid up to the threshold of EUR 200,000 and EUR 100,000 in the case of undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or reward.
- 5) De minimis aid shall not be cumulated with State aid in relation to the same eligible costs or with State aid for the same risk finance measure, if such cumulation would exceed the highest relevant aid intensity or aid amount defined in a block exemption regulation or a decision adopted by the European Commission.
- 6) The beneficiary shall declare – taking into account the rules of the cumulation – on the gross grant equivalent of the de minimis aid granted in Hungary or Slovakia during the current fiscal year and the previous two fiscal years.
- 7) Please note that in Interreg an undertaking may receive de minimis aid from the Partner Country participating in the Programme.
- 8) The de minimis thresholds count per “single undertaking”. In case a project partner is part of a group, the entire group is therefore considered as one single undertaking and the de minimis threshold applies to the entire group. This could be for example the case of a company owning (or controlling) one or more companies, or the different departments of a university.

Horizontal principles

All projects must be implemented in line with horizontal principles on sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women.

Sustainable development

The EU and its Member States are committed to implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The European Green Deal plays an important role in achieving some of these goals. The programme is in line with the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. As the focus is on capacity building, the supported actions should not have a significant negative impact on the environment and are fully compatible with the ‘Do No Significant Harm’ principle and the Programme’s SEA report. These measures should be consistent with the principle of sustainable development.

At project level, this means that all partners must demonstrate how their project is consistent with and contributes to sustainable development. Depending on the project theme, this contribution may be more obvious in the case of PA1 - Green Cooperations, while it may require a more detailed analysis in the case of PA2 - Social Cooperations.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The programme aims to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation at all stages of programme implementation and in particular in access to funding. The programme directly addresses equal opportunities and non-discrimination through various actions in PA2 - Social Cooperations and PA3 - Institutional co-operations.

Beyond this focus, the programme takes up social inclusion as a cross-cutting issue, which means that all applicants must consider the needs of the different target groups at risk of such discrimination, and in particular the requirements to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. Applicants must explain in their application form how their project respects and possibly even strengthens equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Equality between women and men

The Programme shall strive to promote gender equality and prevent any discrimination based on gender at all stages of the implementation of the Programme and in particular in access to funding. The programme takes gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. This means that all applicants must explain in their application form how their project will address and possibly even strengthen gender equality.

Mandatory annexes

Annexes to applications must be uploaded to the programme's online application system.

ANNEX I – Partners' declaration of honour

The partners' declaration of honour must be submitted by each partner on a predefined template published as part of this call. The template must be completed, signed by the legal representative of the applicant organisation, scanned and uploaded in the appropriate folder.

ANNEX II – Specimen of signature

Each partner must submit the specimen of signature of the legally authorised representative(s) uploaded in the appropriate folder.

ANNEX III – CV of the key expert

Each partner must submit the CV of an internal or external expert who have in-depth knowledge of the topic addressed by the project and have provided expert advice on the appropriate development and the future maintenance and use of the project results. CVs must be uploaded in national languages into the appropriate folder.

ANNEX IV – Project part concept

Project description must be submitted by each partner on a predefined template published as part of this call. The description must contain detailed information on the initial situation, the target groups addressed, the expected project results and the future use and sustainability of the project results. The document must be submitted in two language versions in Hungarian and Slovak or in one language version in English and uploaded in the relevant folder.

ANNEX V – Simplified technical documentation

Construction documents must be submitted by each partner making infrastructure investments that include the following:

- a general map showing the affected properties with plot numbers, the location of the proposed structure and its surroundings,
- a photo documentation of the affected properties showing the current state (interior and exterior),
- façade plans for all sides,
- floor plans for all levels,
- a detailed cost calculation, and
- 3D visualisation of the object (if available).

Documents can be prepared in national languages and has to be uploaded in the appropriate folder.

ANNEX VI – Financial report

Private entrepreneurs with double-entry bookkeeping and limited liability companies must submit a financial report on the last closed fiscal year. The document must be uploaded in the appropriate folder in the national languages.

ANNEX VII – De minimis declaration

De minimis declaration must be submitted by each partner on a predefined templates published as part of this call. The template must be completed, signed by the legal representative of the applicant organisation, scanned and uploaded in the appropriate folder.

ANNEX VIII – Test of undertaking in difficulty

Private entrepreneurs with double-entry bookkeeping and limited liability companies must submit the Test of undertaking in difficulty on a predefined templates published as part of this call. The template must be completed, signed by the legal representative of the applicant organisation, scanned and uploaded in the appropriate folder.

Submission procedure

Set of documents

The documents relating to this call for proposals can be downloaded individually or as a single compressed file from the programme's website. The complete set of documents consists of the following:

Ruling documents

- Guide for Applicants – Call for proposals HUSK-2302 (EN/HU/SK)
- Methodology and criteria for selecting operations (EN)
- Assessment grids (EN)
- Subsidy contract template (EN)
- Partnership agreement template (EN)

Templates of annexes

- Annex I – Partner's declaration of honour (EN/HU/SK)
- Annex IV – Project part concept (HU/SK/EN)
- Annex VII – De minimis declaration (HU/SK)
- Annex VIII – Test of undertaking in difficulty (HU/SK)

Guides and manuals

- Draft application form (EN)
- Eligibility of expenditures (EN/HU/SK)
- Guidelines on project promotion (EN/HU/SK)
- User manual to the Interreg+ Application Module (EN)

Application form

Application forms must be filled in in English and submitted online via the application module of the Interreg+ monitoring system. Applicants can access the online application module via the following link:

<https://husk.interregplus.eu/21-27>

The Interreg+ monitoring system will be available from 15/06/2023. Until that time applicants are recommended to use the 'Draft application form' in Excel format to develop their project part and share with their partners. Applications have to be submitted by the Lead Applicants until the following deadline:

Friday, 15 September 2023, 15:00

Technical support

Applicants can contact programme managers at JS by phone or email from 10:00 am until 15:00 on working days. Applicants may also request a personal interview or online consultation before the submission by prior arrangement. The responsible managers can be contacted at the following e-mail addresses or phone numbers:

Action: 1.2.1 – Protection and preservation of the natural capital

Viktória Bančanská | vbancanska@skhu.eu | +36 20 312 4949

Action: 1.2.2 – Joint risk management

Arianna Biriki | abiriki@skhu.eu | +36 30 639 9502

Action: 2.4.1 – Preservation of local heritage

Andrea Hegyháti-Molnár | ahegyhati-molnar@skhu.eu | +36 30 239 1898

General information

Csilla Veres | csveres@skhu.eu | +36 30 297 7118

Silvester Holop | szholop@skhu.eu | +36 30 835 8546

Interreg+ helpdesk

iplussupport@szpi.hu

Selection procedure

Admissibility check

The admissibility check confirms whether applications have been submitted on time and in the prescribed form and whether all the required annexes have been attached to the application. If an application does not meet the formal criteria, Lead applicant is requested by email to complete the missing documents. Lead Applicants have 10 calendar days to complete the missing document. The completion procedure is repeated twice. If the application is not complete after the second completion round, the application will be rejected.

Eligibility check

The eligibility check confirms that the applicants are eligible under the relevant call for proposals and that all the activities described in the application form will be carried out in the programme area. The eligibility check also confirms that the partners will cooperate in development and implementation as well as in staffing or financing, or both. Finally, the evaluation confirms whether the predefined declaration of honour on the exclusion criteria has been signed by the statutory representative of the applying organisation.

Quality assessment

The quality of projects will be assessed against the criteria set out in the quality assessment grids published as part of this call. These criteria include different questions aiming at covering all important aspects of the project. The evaluators will assess the fulfilment of each criterion on the basis of quantitative scores and textual justifications. Scores between 0 and 5 can be given for each criterion based on the evaluator's comment. The criteria may be weighted or unweighted depending on their importance to the overall score. The total score can range from 0 to 100. The assessment is divided into three parts:

- a) strategic assessment,
- b) territorial assessment,
- c) sectoral assessment.

In the strategic assessment, evaluators assess in particular:

- a) the overall objective of the project clearly contributes to the achievement of the priority and the specific objective,
- b) the quality and strength of cross-border cooperation,

In the territorial assessment, evaluators assess in particular whether the project

- a) addresses common territorial challenges of the region,
- b) makes a clear contribution to a wider strategy at regional level and
- c) achieves synergies with regional or local programmes.

In the sectoral assessment, evaluators assess in particular:

- a) the project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme area;
- b) the project's overall objective is in line with the current sectoral trends;
- c) compliance with EU and national policies, EU Strategy for the Danube Region and horizontal principles;

- d) outputs and results are relevant, sustainable and durable; and
- e) activities are feasible and the proposed budget is in line with the sound financial management principles.

For more information on quality assessment criteria, please consult the **Assessment grids** published as part of this call.

State aid check

The objective of the state aid check is to evaluate the conformity of the application with the relevant State aid rules.

For more information, please consult the **Methodology for selection of operations** published as part of this call.

Monitoring Committee decision

The final score is the sum of the average scores from each part of the quality assessment. Two thresholds for the minimum score are applied in the quality assessment. Firstly, if the submitted application does not reach the 60% of the maximum score in the strategic and territorial assessment, the application will not be forwarded to the sectoral assessment. Secondly, if the submitted application does not reach 65% of the maximum score in the quality assessment, the project will be rejected without consideration.

Based on the results of the quality assessment and the thresholds reached by the project proposals, the following decisions can be taken by the monitoring committee in accordance with its Rules of Procedure:

- a) projects proposed for approval
- b) projects proposed for approval with conditions
- c) reserve list
- d) projects proposed for rejection

After the decision of the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority informs the Lead Applicants of the outcome of the quality assessment and the decision of the Monitoring Committee.

Complaint procedure

A complaint can be filed against the decision as part of a fair and transparent procedure. Complaint can be filed against the funding decision regarding the project selection applied to the Lead Partner whose

- a) project application was not selected for programme financing during the project assessment or the selection process, or whose
- b) project application was approved for programme co-financing under conditions set by the Monitoring Committee if the disagreement on the conditions cannot be resolved during the contracting process between the Managing Authority and Lead Partner.

The complaint shall be written in English and can be lodged only against the following criteria:

- a) based on the selection criteria approved by the Monitoring Committee the outcomes of the eligibility or quality assessment of the project application do not correspond to the information provided by the Lead Partner during the project assessment and selection process; and/or
- b) the project assessment and selection process failed to comply with specific procedures laid down in the Call for proposals, Applicant's manual or any other guiding document that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

The complaint should be lodged in writing to the Joint Secretariat within 14 calendar days after the Lead Partner had been officially notified about the results of the project selection process or conditions set by the Monitoring Committee. The complaint should include:

- a) name and address of the Lead Partner;
- b) reference number of the application which is a subject of the complaint;
- c) clearly indicated reasons for the complaint, including listing of all elements of the assessment which are being complaint and/or failures;
- d) signature of the legal representative of the Lead Partner;
- e) any supporting documents.

For more information about the complaint procedure, please consult the **Methodology for selection of operations** published as part of this call.

Contracting procedure

Once the Lead Partners have been notified, each partner of a selected project will be invited to participate in the pre-contracting consultation. The aim of the consultation is to present the decision of the Monitoring Committee to the partners, including possible proposals for improvements, conditions or financial corrections. Programme managers of the JS discuss the project activities, expenditure and indicators with the partners and, in case of shortcomings, make proposals for project modification before contracting. The programme managers also revise the project budget and make proposals for reallocation between budget lines if the principles of sound financial management may be at risk.

For more information on the terms and conditions of the contract, please consult the template for the **Subsidy Contract** the **Partnership Agreement** published as part of this call.

Mandatory documents for contracting

For each project, the subsidy contract for the EU contribution can be signed if the following documents are submitted by all project partners:

Proof of eligibility

Foundation document

Each partner must submit a copy of the organisation's founding document according to its nature (e.g. founding letter, memorandum, articles of association, partnership agreement, etc.).

Certificate

Each partner must provide an authentic certificate of the organisation issued by the registering authority (e.g. ministry, court, tax office, etc.) not older than 30 days.

Declarations on SME qualification

Each SME Partner must submit an SME qualification statement on template provided by the JS. The declaration template must be downloaded, completed, printed and signed by the legal representative(s).

De minimis declaration

Each SME Partner must submit a De minimis declaration on template provided by the JS. The declaration template must be downloaded, completed, printed and signed by the legal representative(s).

Proof of property ownership rights

Any partner making investments in infrastructure must provide one of the following documents for all parcels:

Property deed

If the Partner is the owner of the property, applicants must submit the property deed, which is not older than 90 days at the time of submission.

Long term permission to use or operate

In case the Partner does not own the property, the Beneficiary shall submit

- permission to use or operate the property for an indefinite period or for at least 10 years after the end date of the project,
- declaration of consent of the current owner to the planned investment and
- property deed not older than 90 days at the time of submission.

Documents for the purchase

If the Partners are willing to purchase the property under the project, they must submit the following documents:

- letter of intent to sell or preliminary purchase agreement for the property,
- property deed not older than 90 days at the time of filing, and
- independent appraisal report not older than 90 days at the time of filing.

Permission to build or renovate

Depending on the type of building permit required, the Partner must submit one of the following documents:

Notification

If the investment requires a 'notification of minor construction/rehabilitation works' to the competent authority, the Partner must submit the notification and the official declaration of the competent authority.

Building permission

If the investment requires a building permit issued by the competent building authority, the Partner must provide the copy of the official building permit.

Detailed technical documentation

Depending on the type of building permit required, Partner implementing investment in infrastructure must submit the detailed technical documentation of the development.

The Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat may request further documents for the contracting procedure. The MA may terminate the contracting procedure and withdraw from the subsidy contract if the partner is not able to submit the required documents in due time.

Data protection and processing policy

The controller (hereafter: Data controller) of the data provided in the application is the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. The Data controller processes personal data in accordance with the principles of good faith, fairness and transparency and subject to applicable law and the provisions of this Policy. The Data controller processes personal data only on the basis of the Data Protection and Data Processing Policy and for a specific purpose and does not go beyond that purpose.

If the Data controller intends to use personal data for a purpose other than the original purpose, the Data controller shall inform the data subject of that purpose and use and obtain the data subject's prior and explicit consent (unless there is another legal basis established by the GDPR), and the Data controller shall give the data subject the opportunity to defy the use of the personal data.

The Data controller does not control the personal data provided, the person who provided the personal data is responsible for its appropriateness. The Data controller does not disclose any Personal Data unless the Data controller is entitled and obliged to transfer or forward Personal Data available to the Data controller and duly stored by the Data controller to the competent authority, where the transfer and forwarding of Personal Data is stipulated by a law or a legally binding official order. The Data controller shall not be liable for any such transmission or its consequences.

The Data controller shall ensure the security of personal data, take all technical and organisational measures and establish procedural rules to ensure the protection of personal data collected, stored and processed and to prevent accidental loss, destruction, unauthorised access, use, unauthorised alteration and unauthorised disclosure.