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BESCHLUSS

des Burgenländischen Landtages vom, mit dem die Programme „Slowenien – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 1), „Ungarn – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 2) und „Slowakei – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 3) sowie die zugehörigen Finanztabellen (Beilagen 4-6) zur Kenntnis genommen werden

Der Landtag hat beschlossen:

Die Programme „Slowenien – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 1), „Ungarn – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 2) und „Slowakei – Österreich 2021-2027“ (Beilage 3) sowie die zugehörigen Finanztabellen (Beilagen 4-6) werden zur Kenntnis genommen.

Interreg

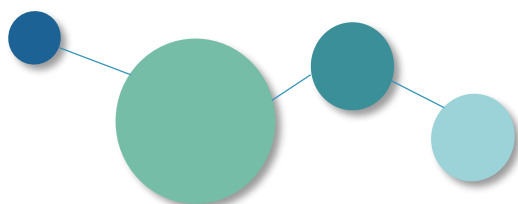


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1. JOINT PROGRAMME STRATEGY: MAIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

1.1 Programme area

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The SI-AT **programme area** of the Slovenia-Austria border region **covers 8 Slovenian NUTS 3 regions** (Gorenjska, Koroška, Savinjska, Podravska, Pomurska, Osrednjeslovenska, Goriška and Zasavska) **and 8 Austrian NUTS 3 regions** (Oststeiermark, West- and Südsteiermark, Graz, Östliche Obersteiermark, Unterkärnten, Klagenfurt-Villach, Oberkärnten and Südburgenland). This territory covers an area of 35,156 km² (SI: 14,130 km², AT: 21,026 km²) and a population of 3.4 million inhabitants (SI: 1,69 million., AT: 1,72 million.). 10 of these NUTS 3 regions (5 regions on each side) are directly bordering regions, the other regions are included due to their functional linkages and importance for the cross-border region. In the region there are 5 important urban agglomerations: Ljubljana, Maribor, Graz, Klagenfurt and Villach.

The border between Slovenia and Austria stretches over 310 km and separates the countries from east to west. The western part of the border crosses sparsely inhabited high mountainous Alpine territory that further towards the east changes into more hilly landscapes, following the river Mura/Mur for about 30 km and ending at the tripoint marker of the Austrian, Hungarian and Slovenian borders.

In terms of nature of physical obstacles, both the high alpine mountain range of Karavanke/Karawanken and the river Mura/Mur represent natural barriers between the Slovenian and Austrian territories with only a few mountain passes, tunnels and bridges (mostly road) connecting both countries.



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

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

1.2.1 Introduction

In the preparation phase of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027 a territorial and socio-economic analysis has been carried out, to create a sound basis for the selection of thematic fields where cross-border cooperation may contribute most to overcome border obstacles and regional disparities. The analysis identified the main joint challenges, needs and potentials of the area, as well as strategically relevant fields of actions for cross-border cooperation with the potential for overcoming border obstacles and territorial disparities, taking into account economic, social, environmental and other relevant aspects. The description of the challenges and needs is structured in compliance with the five ERDF policy objectives and the Interreg specific objective 'Better cooperation governance'. In addition to the territorial and socio-economic analysis the main results of the impact evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme, the main directions of development provided by the relevant strategies and stakeholders have been considered in the discussions of the Programming Task Force (PTF) when preparing the strategic thematic orientations.

1.2.2 Brief synopsis of the territorial analysis related to challenges and intervention needs

The area along the border between Slovenia and Austria is characterised by landscape diversity, of which the most characteristic are: Alpine mountainous areas in the West, a hilly countryside in central parts, and the Pannonian Plain in the East. It is characterised by few larger and densely populated urban agglomerations and diverse rural areas with challenging population trends, especially for smaller municipalities.

Both national territories of the Slovenia-Austria Programme area provide a relatively high socio-economic level in national and EU comparison. However, the region is confronted by several challenges on its path to a more dynamic and especially more integrated and prosperous space. These challenges are predominantly in the fields of:

- Sustainable economic development
- Nature protection, environment and climate change
- Skills and competence development
- Governance and coordination.

In each of these thematic fields, coordination and cooperation across the border might bring new impulses and value added to the region.

1.2.2.1 Sustainable economic development

Competitiveness of the programme area

Until 2020 the regions of the programme area have recorded a substantial economic growth in relation to the EU average. However, regions with urban agglomerations indicate higher levels of GDP per capita. These include

especially the Austrian regions Graz (177 % of the EU average in 2017), Klagenfurt-Villach (147 % of the EU average in 2017) and Östliche Obersteiermark (139 % of the EU average in 2017). Among the Slovenian regions analysed, only the Osrednjeslovenska region is exceeding the EU average (110 % in 2018), whereas all others remain below the EU average of GDP per capita although they are economically stronger than in previous years.

The most important sectors in creation of regional value added are processing industry, production and goods, trade, transport and tourism. The employment rates of the working population aged 20-64 in the programme area are below national averages. Despite the measures adopted by national governments, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected employment. Recovery processes show that in specific sectors (e.g. tourism) qualified workers are even more difficult to find as they left the industry during the pandemic.

Regional economic disparities remain a future challenge of the programme area, especially in the view of the economic and social recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for transition to a climate-neutral, digital and sustainable economy.

The above is of particular importance for the programme area's Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In both Member States (MSs), SMEs play a major role, generating over 60 % of overall value added, which is approximately 5 % above the EU average. The environment for business support is relatively well developed with business zones of regional importance and active thematic-specific clusters well spread over the programme area.

Data for the period 2014-2017 indicate that some regions in the programme area are more characterised by a decline in the number of newly established enterprises (Südburgenland, Klagenfurt-Villach, Pomurska) accompanied by a substantial increase in the number of enterprises that ceased to exist (Unterkärnten, Pomurska, Podravska, Koroška and Osrednjeslovenska). Less dynamic economic activity is of particular concern for the rural areas.

There are needs to increase the capacities of SMEs and support their recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak and their transition to a green and digital economy. The capacity of the business support environment could be strengthened through cross-border cooperation to foster innovation and capacities for more sustainable and resilient businesses.

Research and Innovation (R&I)

Research and Development (R&D) and Innovation are a strong driving force of the development of the programme area's economy. According to the Regional Innovation Scorecard (RIS), all border regions in Austria have an innovation performance above the EU average, while both Slovenian cohesion regions are characterized as a moderate innovator regarding their innovative performance and are below the EU average. In terms of the proportion of GDP in gross expenditure on research and development, the regions of East and West Slovenia and Carinthia show a medium level of R&D intensity (1 %-3 % of GDP), while Burgenland has a low share with only 0.5-1 % of GDP. Only Styria is above the EU target of 3 % of GDP (4.3 %). Despite favourable economic development, the investments in research and innovation have lagged behind in recent years.

The R&D and innovation capacities are concentrated in regional centres and do not reach sufficiently into the periphery and bordering areas. There is a strong regional knowledge base in several fields, such as metal processing, wood processing, agriculture, automotive, ICT. There is a need to strengthen cooperation of the existing R&D actors in the programme area with the business and other sectors, especially with the SMEs. Intensification of cross-border cooperation among actors in the field of R&D would provide the environment for networking of stakeholders and competitiveness of SMEs (establishing new partnerships across the border, entering new markets, etc.).

The regional R&D and smart specialisation strategies indicate some thematical overlapping and common areas. Examples of these thematic fields are: smart mobility, health/medicine/social care, sustainable tourism, technology,

the tourism industry and cultural heritage management, development of new materials and technologies and processes in relation to the circular economy, as well as digitalisation.

Cross-border cooperation might address such common fields. Specific potentials and needs were identified in the development of a circular economy, where the partnerships could address biomass, alternative raw materials, secondary raw materials, functional materials, processes and technologies, as well as circular business models.

Engagement of local and regional businesses in innovation processes and support for the development of new and more sustainable products and services would be an asset. Activities should focus on complementarities in areas where cognitive proximity exists.

Thus, transition to a more sustainable, green and digital economy, increased transfer of R&D benefits to SMEs and a more dynamic economic development in rural areas could be addressed jointly to add value through cooperation.

A low level of cross-border cooperation along the value chain was identified. The potentials for transferring research and innovation results into regional SMEs has not been sufficiently explored, especially in the field of green and circular economy. Overlapping themes of regional and national smart specialisation strategies offer potential for cross-border cooperation. Research and innovation however are considered a cross-cutting topic of this programme and should support all its priorities.

Digitalisation

Digitalisation is transforming the way people work, learn and interact. It brings a variety of advantages for different groups of people and sectors, however it also poses challenges in terms of their ability to use digital technologies and services, including those related to safety of use and protection of consumers. According to the digitalisation economy and society index, Austria is slightly above and Slovenia slightly below the EU average.

Within this programme, digitalisation is recognised as a cross-cutting development need. The main challenges of the programme area relate to the overall increase of digital skills of the population and the integration of digital technology by businesses, especially SMEs, as well as the increased use of digital solutions in the preservation of climate, environment, disaster risk management and nature protection.

Sustainable tourism based on natural and cultural assets

The programme area is rich in natural values and nature protected areas (e.g. Triglav National Park, Hohe Tauern National Park, Biosphere Reserve Nockberge, cross-border UNESCO biosphere reserve on the Mura/Mur river, Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geopark and numerous NATURA 2000 sites), diversity of landscapes and shares a common historical and cultural heritage – largely linked to their long common history over the centuries. The network of cultural institutions, organisations and associations is strong in the area, and they provide a rich cultural life. Regions host a range of different cultural events and festivals celebrating music, regional gastronomy, ethnology, performance and visual arts, etc.

Tourism based on the natural and cultural heritage is one of the important economic activities of the programme area, both in its cities and rural parts, however they face several needs and challenges.

Preserving and maintaining the cultural identity and landscape of the programme area, as well as preserving agriculture, especially in high mountainous areas is a common need. It is frequently a challenge to find the right balance between the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and assets and sustainable (tourism) development.

In many destinations, the increase of visitors is becoming an issue. In sensitive mountainous areas this creates the need for defining carrying capacities and more effective management of visitor flows, including the organisation of rescue and emergency services. Areas offering outdoor products are also more sensitive to seasonality and need to diversify. Climate change is showing its effects in particular in winter tourism and ski centres.

Growth in the number of visits and overnight stays has been recorded for about a decade on both sides until a severe downturn caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. Tourism was one of the hardest hit sectors. Lockdowns, closing of borders and services made tourism virtually impossible. This was especially hard for regions depending on tourism. In the recovery process the changed trends will have to be considered. The overall need for the tourism sector of the programme area is to become safer and more sustainable. To achieve this, skills and competences need to be strengthened and new approaches in product development and management need to be identified and applied.

Several projects addressing valorisation of natural and cultural heritage were supported in previous CBC programmes, many of these products are still rather fragmented. More structured and strategic approaches to the development of sustainable tourism in the programme area are needed.

For effective cross-border tourism, sustainable regional mobility is another challenge that needs to be addressed. There is a need for synchronised timetables for rail and bus connections, adapted to the needs of bikers, linking of the cycling and hiking routes.

The programme area should also invest in the development of the potential within its cultural and creative industry which can complement both sustainable tourism development, as well as the creation of new cultural offers and jobs.

Cross-border cooperation can assist the recovery of the tourism and culture sector, especially regarding acquiring relevant skills and competences, supporting the innovation in product development and the transition to a digital and green tourism sector, addressing the challenges of climate change adaptation and sustainable mobility solutions.

1.2.2.2 Nature protection, environment and climate change

Landscape and biodiversity

The programme area is rich in natural heritage and landscape diversity. The biodiversity is among the highest in the Alps due to the geological composition of the soil and the mixing of the impacts of the climate between the Alps and the Mediterranean. The European watershed between the Adriatic and the Black Sea runs through the programme area. Some areas are designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, national/regional, nature or landscape parks of different IUCN categories. Thus, the region might be a place for learning about sustainable development, where sites are testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.

The Karavanke/Karawanken Geopark is at present the only cross-border UNESCO Global Geopark in the border region. It plays an important and active role in the sustainable economic development of the territory through enhancement of a general image linked to the geological heritage and the development of geotourism.

Water bodies

Slovenia and Austria share the river systems of the Drava/Drau and the Mura/Mur. Approximately 41 % of the water flowing through Slovenia comes from Austria. According to the ecological parameters of the Water Framework Directive, most of the surface water in the measuring points on the border sections is of good quality, while 10 % of

rivers and streams indicate increased values of organic pollutants and composition of biomass. The outflow of river Mura/Mur (taking into consideration the monitoring point in the border town of Gornja Radgona/Bad Radkersburg) is heavily influenced by the upstream dams in Austria, since the river is one of the major sources of electricity in Styria.

Groundwater too is generally of good quality and is crucial for the water supply. The utilization of nitrate and plant protection products continues to decline due to the effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive and changes in agricultural activities under the Common Agricultural Policy.

Both countries implemented several measures and actions for improving the quality of water, but there is still a lack of coordination of actions and policies. Thus, the challenges refer to improved cross-border management of water bodies and their use, mitigation of pressures on water bodies and ecosystem-based adaptation measures.

Climate change

Considering the landscape of the area, recent events and the data related to the change of climate (precipitation, temperatures, river flows, snow cover, etc.) show that the area, especially its western part, is very sensitive to climate change. This is already reflected in the changes of biodiversity, natural habitats, as well as agricultural activities.

The average temperatures in the Alps have risen by 1.8 °C in the last 150 years, which is much higher than the global average of 0.85 °C. Climate models for the Alps and for the programme area predict a rise in temperature of 1.4 °C by 2050 in the best-case scenario and 2.5 °C – 4 °C by the year 2100. It is forecast that the region will face higher temperatures during the winter season, droughts during the summer season and increased precipitation during autumn and spring (+5 % to +10 % for most areas). For limiting the temperature increase to 1.4°C up until 2050, the national and regional governments in Slovenia and Austria have adopted plans for reducing CO₂ emissions. The main elements of these climate plans envisage the reduction of fossil energy sources in traffic, industry and commerce, households and agriculture (e.g. thermal renovation of buildings, strengthening environmental / climate-friendly production processes & technologies, increasing the attractiveness and thus the share of public transport systems, sustainable forestry), the promotion of renewable energy (solar, geothermal, wind, biomass), as well as energy efficiency and the protection of biodiversity and habitats. In all CO₂ reduction plans measures for increasing the awareness about this topic among the population and R&D activities are important.

An increasing number of natural disasters (e.g. storms, avalanches, landslides, floods, droughts, etc.) call for common immediate response mechanisms and actions. In the long run they raise important questions in the fields of spatial planning, development of infrastructure and joint management. These common challenges can be better addressed on a wider (cross-border) regional level, also seeking linkages with other programmes (national and transnational). In order to address the challenges of climate change, action plans and measures are needed both for reducing CO₂ emissions (in accordance with existing Energy and Climate Plans) and for adapting economic and social processes in the regions to better cope with the effects of climate change (Climate Change Adaptation Strategies).

Transport and mobility

The area is characterised by dynamic transport flows. The dynamic development of settlements and related urbanization in connection with polycentric development represent a challenge for public transport. Generally, the public transport is more developed in Austrian than in Slovenian regions. Mobility plans have been devised at different administrative levels. However, there are gaps in attractive public transport services especially in rural regions and across the border. The vicinity of the border and major employment hubs in Austria create an economic opportunity for many Slovenians living close to the border.

New and innovative mobility solutions such as micro-public transport services, new last-mile solutions, commuters' associations, development of e-mobility and the development and promotion of bicycle mobility both for everyday use and tourist purposes are envisaged as possibilities that could be promoted in the future. A notable challenge is also the integration of sustainable accessibility to protected areas and mobility within them, alongside the management of visitor flows.

Circular economy

The circular economy is a holistic cross-sectoral approach that is needed to address important regional and cross-regional challenges that are shared by all regions in the programme area.

The Slovenian government declared the circular economy and green development as one of the national strategic objectives and adopted the Framework Programme for the Transition to a Green Economy (2016), followed by a Roadmap towards a Circular Economy (2018). The Austrian Bioeconomic Strategy (2019) and the Federal Waste Management Plan (2017) define very detailed strategies and measures for reducing waste and encouraging a transition to a circular economy in order to replace fossil resources with renewable materials in as many areas and applications as possible in Austria. The update of the Slovenian waste management plan is still in progress and will (once adopted) form a basis for future priorities and measures in the area of waste and circular economy.

1.2.2.3 Skills and competence development

Recent economic growth resulted in positive employment trends and reduced unemployment, which however have been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. A shortage of skilled workers has been identified in several sectors, such as the processing industry, health and social services, tourism and construction. The programme area is characterised by asymmetric cross-border labour mobility from Slovenia to Austria.

Despite a decrease in unemployment, specific groups of people still find it hard to find or maintain a job: the long-term unemployed, low-skilled and older workers, and the young who often lack work experience. In 2020, unemployment rates of long-term unemployed aged 20-64 years was 28.8 % in Austria and 39.3 % in Slovenia. The unemployment rate of the young aged 15-24 years was 10.1 % in Austria and 13.0% in Slovenia. Both are much higher than unemployment rate of 20-64 years (5.3 % AT and 4.3 % SI). Unemployment rates of those with lowest education levels (ISCED 0-2) were 13.9 % in Austria and 10.9 % in Slovenia, what is also higher than of those with upper secondary levels (ISCED level 3 and 4), which was 5.5 % in Austria and 5.6 % in Slovenia. (Source: Eurostat).

Shortage of jobs for a highly educated workforce in rural areas contributes to migration to big employment centres. Such a brain drain from rural areas makes those even more vulnerable.

Ensuring qualified labour for the existing and future jobs needed by the cooperating regions, intergenerational cooperation and adapting of the work processes for elderly workers is needed. Generating jobs in rural and economically less dynamic areas will be critical for sustaining and increasing their vitality and prosperity. Employment is an important fundament of the quality of life, social inclusion and participation in society. Finding new approaches and solutions that will help activate and increase employability of the long-term unemployed and other groups could be supported by strengthening the capacities for social innovation and social economy, a promising field for triggering future development.

Although the programme area has a relatively well-educated population, some differences exist. The attainment of tertiary education is below the average national levels in rural areas and regions with traditional processing industries and agriculture. Education and training institutions are well developed and support the national and regional smart specialisation topics. However, the access to quality education and training is limited its variety in rural areas. The enhanced shift to distance learning caused by the Covid pandemic opens new opportunities to reduce these inequalities.

The transition to a digital and green economy poses new challenges regarding how to ensure appropriate skills and competencies for future jobs. Integration of skills and knowledge regarding circular economy, nature protection, environmental and climate considerations need to be integrated into education and training at all levels.

Many of the future jobs are not known today. Thus, skills intelligence and forecasting will be critical to support the regions to become more sustainable and competitive. The education and training institutions will need to adapt and upgrade their programmes to new needs. Lifelong learning is expected to become increasingly important, especially for those with a lower level of skills. Insufficient digital skills have been recognised as a key challenge which needs to be addressed horizontally. There is also the need for increased inter-cultural and language learning that would facilitate building of trust and cooperation across the border.

1.2.2.4 Governance and coordination

Slovenia and Austria have different administrative structures. In Austria, there are three main levels – central government, the federal administration of the States and the local level of the municipal administration. In Slovenia there are only two levels of administration – central government and local self-governments at local level.

On the Austrian side, due to a strong federal tradition, many administrative competences are assigned to the federal state level, whereas in Slovenia, administrative competences are more centralized at central government level.

The programme area comprises 599 municipalities, of which a large proportion are rather small-sized and thus with limited capacities for cooperation. Only four cities, Klagenfurt, Graz, Ljubljana and Maribor have a population over 100.000.

These differences in political, legal and administrative framework conditions still hamper cross-border coordination and cooperation on an institutional level and create difficulties for matching competent structures and representatives on both sides of the border.

The dominance of small municipalities with limited resources (personnel, finances, know-how) hinders local administration in getting actively and professionally involved in cross-border projects and activities in addition to their obligatory administrative tasks.

In both countries, several regional and thematic coordination and cooperation structures have been established. These range from area based CLLD/Leader structures and Regional Development Agencies to thematic agencies in the area of energy efficiency, climate change, etc. These agencies have a strong role in intercommunal cooperation and provide strong human capacities for addressing challenges that are beyond the mere local level. These structures have a stronger position on the Austrian side. They also play an important role in the cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Austria.

However, many of these structures only have a mandate to be active in and for their own territory. In the recent programming period, the stakeholders expressed the need to intensify exchange and to create more stable cooperation platforms/structures, bringing together relevant actors across the border. Relevant topics include all EC Policy Objectives.

The EGTC Karavanke/Karawanken Geopark is a widely recognized structure in the middle of the region where 14 municipalities are cooperating across the border. Initiatives for more EGTCs in the region exist, a good example of which is a bilateral conference of mayors in the eastern part of the programme area. There is a need for further coordination and cooperation, both between local administration structures and with the joint involvement of administrative structures and non-governmental institutions in many thematic areas (mobility, natural hazards,

environment and nature protection, climate change mitigation, business support, labour market, education, social services, etc.).

The different administrative systems and also the different languages still represent obstacles for a stronger integration of the region. Both socio-economic activities and cultural orientation of population, businesses and institutions on both sides are predominantly oriented towards the national and regional centres. The potentials for establishing more intense contacts and initiatives across the border have not yet been effectively seized, especially with regard to cooperation at local levels. These factors limit the exploitation of potentials that may arise from a more intense perception of and acting in a larger and integrated space. There is a need to increase people-to-people activities in the programme area.

1.2.3 Lessons learnt

Within the programming period 2014-2020, the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Austria supported 52 projects that cooperated in strengthening cross-border competitiveness, research and innovation, protecting the environment, promoting resource efficiency, enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration.

The analysis carried out within the Impact Evaluation shows that the highest number of partners, lead partners, allocated funds and participating projects was in the regions of Graz (Austria) and Osrednjeslovenska (Slovenia), thus reflecting the absorption capacity of both regions. Furthermore, a certain dominance of project activities is found in the more eastern part of the programme area (especially South-East Styria, Podravska, Pomurska) and around the central towns of the cross-border region (Ljubljana, Graz, Klagenfurt, Villach, Maribor, Murska Sobota, etc.). On the other hand, smaller municipalities on the Slovenian side and those at a greater distance from the border on both sides show less involvement in cross-border cooperation initiatives.

The impact evaluation highlighted several cooperation experiences and future needs. There is a need to better engage in cross-border cooperation actions within the bordering regions, in particular along the border. In the period 2014-2020 it was evident that the highest concentration of ERDF funds was allocated to Osrednjeslovenska and Graz, adjacent regions with the highest absorption capacity. However, looking at the density of project activities, the evaluation showed more dynamic cooperation in the eastern part of the programme area. Activities were relatively less dense in central Slovenia and on the outskirts of the programme area.

There is a common interest in finding arrangements to foster cooperation of actors with small-size projects primarily focusing on building trust and cooperation among people living in the area. Topics for cooperation include culture, school initiatives and sustainable tourism, but also nature conservation initiatives and disaster response. Such projects are believed to make an important contribution to the outreach and visibility of the programme among the general public.

Further efforts should be made to strive for better sustainability of projects and enhancing their networking capacity, thus contributing to better use of available funds and avoiding duplication of common activities. Also, interlinking with other (notably Interreg) programmes should be intensified.

Some cooperation potentials have not yet been sufficiently seized; e.g. regarding civil protection and nature management, there is interest in an exchange in spatial planning; due to the lack of regular exchanges between the regional structures, some of the potentials for cooperation have not yet been analysed and discussed.

1.2.4 Complementarity and synergies with strategies and other funding opportunities (including coherence with macro-regional strategies)

The quality and impact of project results may be significantly greater when the projects are building on the capitalization of results of previous projects and networking with others, i.e. creating synergies. Such scaling up of projects may occur with projects of different scales, funded by regional and national programmes, other Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes or Interreg transnational and other EU funded programmes.

Complementarity and potential synergies of European, national and regional strategies and programmes with the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027 have been taken into account in the programming process. Parts of the programme area overlap with other Interreg cross-border programmes (Austria-Italy, Austria-Hungary, Italy-Slovenia, Slovenia-Hungary and Slovenia-Croatia) and transnational programmes (Alpine Space, Danube and Central Europe). Therefore, an exchange of information was established among MAs/JSs of these programmes, whereas in some cases the experiences and orientations were exchanged by members of the PTF Group who participate in the Programming Committees of other Interreg programmes.

During programming synergies and complementarities also were sought with EU macro-regional strategies (MRSs). The most important MRSs covering the territories analysed are the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The Alpine region is one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe and faces several challenges – economic globalisation requires the territory to distinguish itself as competitive and innovative. Demographic trends, climate change and its effect on biodiversity and living conditions of the inhabitants, as well as energy are key joint challenges to be addressed. The strategy focuses on competitiveness and innovation, environmentally-friendly mobility and sustainable management of energy, natural and cultural resources, and a cross-cutting policy area – governance, including institutional capacity. The Western part of the programme area belongs to the Alps and shares many of the challenges addressed also by EUSALP.

EUSDR covers territories of 14 countries in the basin of the Danube. The territory shares several challenges, comprising environmental threats, insufficient energy connections, uneven socio-economic development, uncoordinated education, R&I systems and shortcomings in safety and security. The strategy and its action plan focus on 4 pillars – Connecting the region, Protecting the Environment, Building prosperity and Strengthening the Region, each of them with several key themes. The eastern part of the Slovenian – Austrian programme area opens up towards the Pannonian basin, however it represents only a tiny territory of EUSDR.

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria is in line with the intervention focus of these two macro-regional strategies as described in Chapter 2 under each Specific Objective. The MA and JS have also taken part in the yearly events of the macro-regional strategies (e.g. EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week) which aimed at embedding the MRS priorities in EU programmes.

It will be even more important to also seek synergies and complementarities during the implementation phase. In the application form project applicants will be requested to describe the coherence and complementarity of their projects with EU, national and regional programmes, as well as with EU macro regional strategies which will be subject to assessment. The exchange of information will be established between the MAs/JSs of these programmes to exclude the risk of double funding and ensure anti-fraud measures as well as to promote synergies between projects and highlight the added value which can be achieved through capitalisation. In addition, the MA/JS will also participate in cross-programme coordination and synergies events in Central and South East Europe organised by INTERACT.

On the Austrian side, the coordination between the various IBW/ERDF Programmes, Macro-Regional Strategies and the Interreg Programmes is invested within ÖROK (the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning). The relevant

platforms regarding this coordination are the Sub-Committee for Regional Economy (UA Regionalwirtschaft) and the ARGE CBC. This coordination platform ensures information exchange about interventions in the various Programmes between the relevant bodies on the Austrian side, the coordinated utilisation of the various funds, the observation of synergies between the individual interventions and Programmes and the avoidance of overlapping.

In general, it is envisaged that the Austrian IBW/ERDF Programme funds interventions with mainly sectoral thematic focus and investments mainly concentrating on the Austrian territory whereas the Interreg Programmes are supporting involvement of and the networking among stakeholders and the coordination of policies and strategies across borders.

In line with the Partnership Agreement for Slovenia the Interreg programmes will focus mainly on challenges and opportunities of border regions and transnational cooperation areas, addressing mainly joint priorities in the field of innovation, green transition to a low-carbon society and circular economy, as well as in cooperation governance. During the elaboration of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027 it was not possible at that time to assess the synergies between the Interreg programme and the Slovenian European cohesion policy programme.

In Slovenia the MAs of cohesion policy programmes are centralised within one institution, i.e. the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy. The MA of IP SI-AT 2021-2027 participates in internal coordination meetings at the highest level on a weekly basis and is a member of the Monitoring Committee of the European cohesion policy Operational Programme. This coordination mechanism is planned to be maintained also in the future.

1.2.5 Programme vision and mission

The programme area between Slovenia and Austria has identified several potentials, needs and challenges expressed by the actors in the programme area that clearly show that the territory is ahead of important transitions that can be jointly addressed. The programme is focusing on a limited number of thematic areas and will pool resources to drive the change and take opportunity for increased level of cooperation capacity, new development and common solutions to challenges identified. The overall aims of the programme are to reduce territorial disparities in the cross-border region, to drive change and take opportunity of new development trends by pooling resources across national borders in order to be better prepared for the future and to alleviate border obstacles to better cooperate across national borders in specific areas.

Based on these aims the following programme vision has been defined, namely: “Together we are safeguarding and developing our common region for the future”, which is underlined with the mission of the programme “Improving coordination and cooperation in the SI-AT border area to reduce border obstacles and unleash the potentials for a resilient and competitive region.”

1.2.6 Horizontal principles

In all phases of the programme cycle, the horizontal principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, gender equality, accessibility for persons with disabilities and environmental sustainability will apply. The programme authorities have and will through the entire life cycle of the programme (preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) ensure that the horizontal principles are respected.

No project that could potentially harm the environment will be supported. The project applicants will have to meet the requirements related to protection of the environment and/or health. Moreover, they will be encouraged to promote climate neutrality and sustainable development.

In implementing the programme, the managing authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support strategic objectives (including professionalisation efforts to address institutional capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to pay more attention to quality and life-cycle cost criteria. Where possible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social aspects and incentives for innovation should be included in public procurement procedures.

Actions planned in the programme, in particular those related to specific objective 2.2 Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials, should be seen in the contexts of the New European Bauhaus initiative, building enriching, sustainable and inclusive places.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1: Justification for selection of policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
PO2 – A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation	RSO2.4 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and disaster resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	- Priority 1 - A more resilient and sustainable region	<p>The programme area is rich in natural heritage and its biodiversity of habitats and species is among the highest in Europe. This is reflected in a dense network of protected areas, nature parks, biosphere reserves, NATURA 2000 sites, as well as in valuable and protected plant and animal species.</p> <p>However, recent events and the available data related to climate change (precipitation, temperatures, river flows, snow cover, etc.) show that the area is very sensible to climate change. An increasing number of natural disasters (i.e. storms, landslides, floods, droughts, sleet, etc.) are highly noticeable effects of climate change in the region. Air pollution (with traffic as the main contributor to GHG), land intake, water quality and biodiversity loss reduce the ability of essential eco-system services that would mitigate the effects and immediate consequences of climate change.</p> <p>Addressing climate change, risk prevention and disaster resilience in a cross-border manner can lead to the mutual benefit of both countries, bringing synergy and common actions in the implementation of national and EU strategies.</p>

<p>and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>		<p>Joint and coordinated measures combined with the transfer of best practices can lead to relevant and tangible results in the programme area for the benefit of the population in the region.</p>
		<p>The programme area is increasingly popular for leisure visitors, since the picturesque landscapes offer many outdoor activities. However, the substantial increase of such activities raises challenges for the management of natural areas (i.e. related to mobility, visitor management, pressure on ecosystems, natural resources, etc.). In order to seek solutions to current threats and upcoming challenges, cross-border cooperation could bring added value in finding joint actions in addressing the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing measures to reduce effects of human activities on CO₂ emissions; - Joint approaches to strengthening resilience to climate change effects on natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity; - Strengthened resilience of businesses and local communities to the consequences of climate change; - Improved capacity and readiness of joint response mechanisms and measures in relation to disasters.
		<p>The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).</p>
<p>PO2 – A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation</p>	<p>RSO2.6 – Promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy</p> <p>Priority 1 - A more resilient and sustainable region</p>	<p>The utilization of the existing potentials of sustainable business models in the circular economy is underdeveloped in the programme area. Considering the strong R&D and the variety of well-established industry sectors and fields, the capacity to develop innovative solutions is considerable. Sustainable use of natural raw materials, their further utilization and recycling is a welcome approach in tackling regional (and cross-regional) challenges of resource efficiency. Efforts should now be directed to the implementation of actions envisaged as part of existing and emerging national and regional development strategies. Building on the capitalisation of existing solutions and seeking synergies among the regions within the programme area will substantially contribute to the enhanced capacities of different stakeholders.</p> <p>Resource efficiency still has a strong potential to be better exploited. Adoption of circular approaches such as recycle, reuse, repair and return of materials in order to (re)make a new product are necessary in order to make the transition to a responsible economy reality and thus support the Green Deal.</p>

and
adaptation,
risk
prevention
and
management,
and
sustainable
urban
mobility

A circular economy provides a wide field of opportunities for cooperation and represents an intervention field interlinking R&D with regional innovation potentials of SMEs, consumers and local-regional-national governmental institutions also across the border. The potential exists in addressing the following needs:

- Efficient use of resources;
- Building of capacities for introducing circular economy models and concepts;
- Supporting innovative local communities and businesses to become green and circular;
- Stimulation of green employment opportunities;
- Increasing local added value.

The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).

PO4 - A more
social and
inclusive
Europe
implementing
the European
Pillar of Social
Rights

RSO4.2 -
Improving
equal access
to inclusive
and quality
services in
education,
training and
lifelong
learning
through
developing
accessible
infrastructure,
including by
fostering
resilience for
distance and
on-line
education and
training

**Priority 2 - A
more
competent
and
competitive
region**

A skilled workforce is an essential asset of the programme area. Economic sectors on both sides are similar and share common smart specialisation topics, e.g. wood and metal processing, new materials and technologies, food technologies and sustainable tourism. Similar skills shortages exist on both sides in the fields of industry, tourism, social and health care, as well as at the vocational education level. A transition to a green and digital economy will require new skills to remain competitive.

Disparities in the **access to education and training** exist between rural and urban areas. Participation in lifelong learning is lower among specific groups such as the lower educated, elderly, and migrants, and more inclusive ways of acquiring work and life skills are needed.

Small businesses play an important role in the regional economy and many suffered from the effects of Covid-19 measures. They need knowledge and skills to adapt to new challenges, to innovate and to become more resilient and competitive. Transfer of R&D findings to SMEs is still poor.

A large number of institutions in the areas of education, training, R&D, labour market and economic and social partners are active in both countries. However, coordination among them is low and language barriers and a low level of intercultural skills are still obstacles that are recognized for more intense cooperation.

Cross-border cooperation can add value in addressing the following common needs:

- Making the education, training and lifelong learning services and actors better prepared to address the skills' needs of regional economies and their transition to a green and digital economy;
- Addressing the digital divide related to work and life;
- Supporting SMEs in developing innovation and R&D skills and competences;
- Improving participation in lifelong learning, including vulnerable groups;
- Activating people's innovative and entrepreneurial potentials
- Fostering inter-cultural and language skills.

The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).

<p>PO4 - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p>RSO4.6 Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</p>	<p>- Priority 2 - A more competent and competitive region</p>	<p>The programme area shares a common historical and cultural heritage, which along with distinct nature values provide strong assets for sustainable tourism. Outdoor activities, wellness, food and wine, hiking, biking, rural, city and cultural tourist products create a significant share in the regional economy on both sides.</p> <p>The tourism sector has been growing for a decade and faced a severe downturn in 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Regional economic systems need to adapt to the changed situation. Increased health and safety measures, a shift to low-touch and digital, and greater resource efficiency are new demands that are especially challenging for small family businesses and rural areas.</p> <p>Preservation of natural and cultural values remains a challenge. Visits to nature (protected areas) even increased during the pandemic. Some regions depend much on seasonal tourism, which is already affected by climate change.</p> <p>Culture plays an important role not only in shaping the area identity and its social fabric, but also has an economic potential. Cultural creation and distribution, access to a diverse audience across the border changed and digital shift have become more important. Culture and creative industries were also badly hit by Covid-19 measures and need to recover and become more resilient. The potential for creation of new jobs and services, also in rural areas, has not yet been sufficiently tackled. Innovative solutions and new more sustainable business models in the sector should be explored.</p>
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Cross-border cooperation can add value in tackling the following needs:

- Making tourism environmentally and economically more sustainable;
- Valorising and capitalising on tourist products based on natural and cultural heritage;
- Promoting sustainable mobility solutions in tourism and adapting to climate change challenges;
- Developing the economic potentials of cultural and creative industries.

The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).

<p>ISO1 - A better cooperation governance</p>	<p>ISO6.2 Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions</p>	<p>- Priority 3 - A better cooperation governance</p>	<p>The geographic features and the state border between Slovenia and Austria are not only physical obstacles dividing the two territories, but also mark a demarcation between different administrative and regulatory systems, cultures, languages, spatial and cultural orientations and of social, economic and cultural activities.</p> <p>Many relevant topics for sustainable socio-economic development (e.g. in spatial planning, business support, intra and interregional mobility, health and social care), climate change mitigation and adaptation and public administration and policy planning require considerations, coordination and involvement of stakeholders beyond administrative and national borders. However, the differences in political, legal, administrative and socio-economic framework conditions in the programme area still hamper a more dynamic cross-border cooperation on an institutional level and a more integrated socio-economic space.</p> <p>Small-size municipalities are those that dominate by far in the region. These municipalities have very limited resources (financial, personnel) for addressing development challenges in many thematic fields. SMEs in the region frequently lack cross-border business cooperation and market access and capacities for digitalisation and applied R&D.</p> <p>Cross-border cooperation could create value added in addressing the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jointly addressing a wide range of joint challenges and overcoming obstacles resulting from the different administrative, legal and regulatory frameworks by promoting sustainable cooperation structures;
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- Strengthening the competitiveness and cooperation capacities of the subjects in the region’s economy.

The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).

ISO1 - A better cooperation governance	ISO6.3 – Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions	Priority 3 - A better cooperation governance	<p>The development of an integrated development space requires a multitude of linkages among people and civil society structures in a region and across borders. However, the historical division of the region by state borders for many decades, different languages and different administrative regimes have led to both people and activities being oriented towards regional and national territories and centres. Thus, apart from formal and institutionalised cooperation structures and procedures on an administrative level, also numerous contacts and connections between local people and institutions across the border are important for the socio-economic integration of the region.</p> <p>A multitude of small scale cross-border cooperation initiatives could create value added in addressing the needs of creating awareness, trust and a culture of cooperation between the population and public and civil society institutions on both sides of the border.</p> <p>The specific objective will be implemented in the form of grants (a more detailed justification is provided in section Planned use of financial instruments).</p>
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2. PRIORITIES

2.1 Priority 1 - A more resilient and sustainable region

2.1.1 Specific objective 1.1 – Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience (RSO 2.4)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The aim of the specific objective is to improve resilience of ecosystems, businesses and communities to the effects of climate change and enhance cross-border risk prevention and response mechanisms. Projects implemented within this SO should therefore introduce applicable approaches and solutions regarding climate protection, biodiversity loss and adaptation to the effects of climate change. Thus, actions related to reduction of CO₂, joint management of water bodies, safeguarding biodiversity, nature protection, risk prevention and disaster resilience are needed.

The actions implemented should be in line with the EU Green Deal objectives, thus paving the way towards climate neutrality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Projects implemented must be a result of joint cooperation and interaction between relevant institutions, provide tangible and applicable solutions and enhance capacities of stakeholders involved for implementation actions that are envisaged in the adopted regional and national strategies (i.e. National Energy and Climate Plans).

Types of activities (indicative):

- Development and implementation of strategies, action plans and pilot actions
- Know-how exchange and capacity building
- Strengthening of research and innovation capacities
- Awareness raising
- Digital solutions
- Actions should originate from the challenges of the area and strengthen the resilience of the environment (nature as well as socio-economic factors) to the effects of climate change.

Thematic fields to be addressed:

- **Climate change: climate protection, resilience, adaptation and mitigation measures**

Joint development, implementation and scaling up of solutions that improve capacities of relevant stakeholders and resilience of communities and businesses to climate change.

- **Management of water bodies**

To ensure long-term sustainable cross-border water management for preservation of freshwater-dependent ecosystems and management of flood risks.

- **Biodiversity and nature protection**

Protect biodiversity and nature by developing, implementing and enhancing joint nature-based solutions and management measures in order to restore, improve and preserve the ecosystem services of the natural environment with regard to climate change (including NATURA 2000 sites and other categories of conservation).

- **Disaster prevention, mitigation and response**

To develop and put into practice cross-border response and rescue protocols and mechanisms for disaster mitigation and response.

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Coordinated joint research and innovation actions, development of strategies, models and pilot actions to reduce man made CO₂-emissions and to improve adaptive capacities in the programme area to cope with the impacts of climate change;
- Initiatives for joint monitoring actions of climate change effects related to landscape, nature, ecosystems and citizens in the border region;
- Capacity development for climate change mitigation and adoption services (e.g. enhancing climate research, setting-up of preventive planning measures and risk management related to natural hazards brought on by climate change, joint development of innovative actions and tools, interoperable databases, disaster monitoring, warning- and response systems at different territorial levels);
- Joint management of water bodies (e.g. shared drainage and groundwater basin management, coordinated flood prevention measures, monitoring of quality and quantity of surface and groundwater bodies, measures for improving the ecological and chemical status and quantity of water bodies) stimulating use of innovative approaches and digitalisation
- Development of cross-border strategies, measures and implementation of pilot projects to prevent biodiversity and landscape diversity loss and enhancement of nature management, sustainable land use management, climate-friendly settlement development and soil protection, preservation of ecosystem services and cross-border ecological connectivity
- Innovative and digital solutions and practices addressing biodiversity loss, air pollution, water management, increased number of disaster risks, etc.
- Development and implementation of cross-border rescue protocols and mechanisms to do with natural hazards related to climate change (harmonized response protocols, coordination of responsible institutions related to risk governance, joint trainings of rescue teams, capacity building, etc.)

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

Expected results

The actions of cross-border cooperation that are implemented will enhance the capacity and readiness of local, regional and national actors for coping with the challenges of climate change and improve the resilience of the cross-border region to the effects of climate change.

Contribution to Macro-Regional Strategies

Actions supported within this priority are in line with the 3rd Thematic Policy Area of the EUSALP Strategy for the Alpine region – ‘A more inclusive environmental framework for all and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future’. The priority 1 of the IP SI-AT 2021-2027 is strongly interlinked with Objective 3 (preserving the Alpine heritage and promoting a sustainable use of natural and cultural resources). The actions implemented will also contribute to achieving the targets of the EUSDR – EU Strategy for the Danube region, namely Priority Area 5 – ‘To manage environmental risks’ and Priority Area 6 – ‘To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils.’

2.1.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators SO 1.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
1	1.1 (RSO2.4)	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot actions	0	17
1	1.1 (RSO2.4)	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	35

Table 3: Result indicators SO 1.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	1.1 (RSO2.4)	RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution	0	2021	15	Jems	
1	1.1 (RSO2.4)	RCR 84	Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisation	0	2021	24	Jems	

2.1.1.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Local, regional and national public authorities and sectoral agencies, especially those active in the field of nature conservation, water management, mobility and civil protection and other relevant fields
- Interest groups including NGOs, especially those concerned with safeguarding biodiversity, awareness-raising regarding climate change
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools
- Enterprises including SMEs
- EGTCs
- General public

2.1.2 Specific objective 1.2 - Promoting the transition to a circular economy (RSO 2.6)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The aim of this specific objective is to stimulate the potentials of the cross-border region in implementing solutions related to the circular economy and resource efficiency.

The actions implemented should support awareness-raising, improve knowledge and skills and support networking of different stakeholders operating at local level (private-public partnerships, R&D, SMEs, public institutions, etc.) across the border to identify, develop and test joint circular economy solutions. The projects supported should aim to establish new value chains according to the economic principles of closed material flows (design, production and processing, distribution, use, reuse and repair, collection and recycling, responsible handling of waste remains), and other activities related to circular economy. Activities, thematic fields and actions should focus on topics that could achieve the highest impact, offering cross-border support by the programme in the transition of the programme area towards a circular economy. Actions should have an impact at regional/local level and by this means contribute to the EU and national and regional environmental and climate objectives.

Types of activities (indicative):

- Development and implementation of strategies and action plans and pilot actions
- Building/establishing cross-sectoral cross-border networks
- Innovative and applicable solutions on resource efficiency that would stimulate the transition to a circular economy and effective use of natural resources
- Strengthening of research and innovation capacities
- Identifying legal barriers and proposing their removal
- Digital solutions
- Awareness-raising and exchange of know-how

Thematic fields to be addressed:

- Circular and climate-friendly business models
- Processes, technologies and services that enhance and support a circular economy and climate-friendly concepts
- Functional and sustainable materials
- Greening of the economy

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Joint development and implementation of innovative circular business models, processes and technologies;
- Actions to support (short) loops in circular economy and cross-border material flow models (reuse, repair, recycle, return);
- Actions related to the research and development of sustainable materials, resource efficiency (e.g. water reuse and energy efficiency), processes, technologies, services, business models and products that lead the way towards the transition to a low carbon economy;
- Quadruple/triple helix cooperations of institutions within the border regions on the concepts of circular economy;
- Applied research models and demonstrative projects on resource efficiency in order to streamline the roadmap to a resource-efficient border region;

- Initiatives that support actions that contribute to industrial symbiosis, waste reduction, improved waste management and promote resource efficiency (reform, reduce, recycle);
- Enhancing the capacities of SMEs for transition to a circular economy and the use of ICT tools;
- Initiatives to raise awareness among the general public regarding resource efficiency.

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

Expected results

Cross-border actions implemented will provide solutions and starting points that serve as best practice and have the potential to transfer successful cooperation between different stakeholders (R&D institutions, SME's, communities, etc.) and give impulses to the circular economy and resource efficiency.

Contribution to Macro-Regional Strategies

The circular economy is becoming one of the priorities of EU programmes and strategies in the 2021-2027 programme period.

Actions supported within this priority are in line with the 1st Thematic Policy Area of the EUSALP Strategy for the Alpine region – 'Economic growth and Innovation'. Priority 2 of IP SI-AT 2021-2027 is strongly interlinked with Objective 1 (Fostering sustainable growth and promoting innovation in the Alps – from theory to practice, from research centres to enterprises) and also partly with Objective 3 (preserving the Alpine heritage and promoting a sustainable use of natural and cultural resources).

Actions supported will also contribute to achieving the targets of the EUSDR – EU Strategy for the Danube region, namely Priority Area 7 – 'To develop the Knowledge Society' and Priority Area 8 – 'To support the competitiveness of enterprises'.

2.1.2.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Output indicators 1.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
1	1.2 (RSO2.6)	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot actions	0	15
1	1.2 (RSO2.6)	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	30

Table 5: Result indicators 1.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	1.2 (RSO2.6)	RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution	0	2021	8	Jems	
1	1.2 (RSO2.6)	RCR 84	Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisation	0	2021	20	Jems	

2.1.2.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Local, regional and national public authorities and sectoral agencies
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Providers of infrastructure and public (communal) services
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools
- Enterprises including SMEs
- EGTCs
- General public

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The Priority concerns the entire programme area.

2.1.4 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

In accordance with Article 17(3)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, support for projects takes a form of a grant. The main focus of the programme is put on fostering cooperation and reducing CB obstacles, promoting sustainable and green solutions. The programme will therefore support projects that will have sector and territory wide influence. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit-oriented nature of cross-border projects.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 6: Dimension 1 – intervention field for Priority 1

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	1.1 Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	060 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness- raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem- based approaches)	6,300,000
1	ERDF	1.1 Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	064 Water management and water resource conservation (including river basin management, specific climate change adaptation measures, reuse, leakage, reduction)	3,150,000
1	ERDF	1.1 Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	079 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	3,150,000
1	ERDF	1.2 Promoting the transition to a circular economy	029 Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities, focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change	4,250,000
1	ERDF	1.2 Promoting the transition to a circular economy	030 Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, focusing on the circular economy	2,975,000
1	ERDF	1.2 Promoting the transition to a circular economy	071 Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials	1,275,000

Table 7: Dimension 2 – form of financing for Priority 1

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	1.1	01	12,600,000
1	ERDF	1.2	01	8,500,000

Table 8: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus for Priority 1

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	1.1	33	12,600,000
1	ERDF	1.2	33	8,500,000

2.2 Priority 2 - A more competent and competitive region

P2

2.2.1 Specific objective 2.1 - Developing skills and competencies for work and life (RSO 4.2)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The aim of this specific objective is to support local and regional actors in providing competences needed for strengthening the competitiveness of the programme area and its transition to a green and digital economy. Furthermore, the specific objective aims to improve intercultural and language competences to advance cross-border cooperation.

Types of activities (indicative)

- Development and implementation of concepts, models and tools at all levels of education and training
- Pilot actions
- Development of curricula and training contents and tools
- Education and training activities, knowledge exchange
- Mentoring, internships
- Teacher/student/worker mobility and exchanges
- Establishing of cross-border networks and cross-border and cross-sectoral partnerships and exchanges
- Awareness-raising and skills promotion

Activities should aim at introducing solutions into sustainable practices and therefore one-off events or single courses are not supported. Also, learning and training opportunities should be fully accessible to persons with disabilities, whether these are onsite or online. Where appropriate, digital awareness training should be included in training offers.

Thematic fields to be addressed:

- Actions should primarily facilitate the development and pilot testing of innovative system solutions for promoting skills and competences in the following fields:
- Competitiveness of regional economies
- Greening of regional economies
- Digitalisation for work and life
- Entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation
- Social innovation and social economy
- Cross-cultural and language learning.

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Identification of existing and future regional market skills and development and testing of related forecasting models and tools;
- Development and piloting of innovative approaches for the promotion of skills sets and vocations needed by local/regional economies, especially concerning vocational education and lifelong learning;
- Development and pilot implementation of new programmes and tools focusing on upskilling and reskilling of workers and unemployed; focusing on competitiveness and greening of the economy;

- Supporting the development of competences and skills promoting the revitalization of heritage (protection, preservation, management, presentation) and CCI, also by stimulating inter/multi-generational cooperation across the border;
- Development of competences for implementation of innovative digital solutions into products and services (Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, Internet of Things, interoperability of data, cyber security, etc.);
- Supporting competence development of SMEs for their digital transformation with the overall goal of greening of the economy and improving regional competitiveness;
- Supporting the development of digital skills of people facing exclusion due to the digital divide (e.g. improving digital skills to work with new technologies, skills development for the elderly and other groups to use and benefit from digitalisation);
- Improving competences of local and regional business support systems to foster entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives, especially in rural areas, in particular in the green economy;
- Cooperation of R&D, education and training organisations and businesses to develop and test support services, which enable access to and application of research findings into local/regional SMEs, especially regarding greening concepts, digitalisation, recovery and resilience building (e.g., through knowledge exchange platforms, networks or hubs);
- Actions supporting the development of competences of local and regional actors to promote social innovation and social economy/entrepreneurship;
- Development of innovative and system solutions to increase cross-cultural and language competences of different target groups.

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

Expected results

The capacity of local and regional actors to equip businesses and the general population with skills for green and digital transition will increase. SMEs will strengthen their capacity for innovation and intensify cooperation with research and innovation institutions. The capacity of business support organisation for supporting (cross-border) entrepreneurial initiatives will improve. Local and regional actors will be offered new models and solutions to build cross-cultural and language competences.

Contribution to Macro-Regional Strategies

A contribution of this priority to the macro-regional strategy EUSALP is expected primarily towards Objective 1: Fostering sustainable growth and promoting innovation in the Alps through the advancement of quality of education and training systems and improved competences for innovation. The contribution to the EUSDR is envisaged especially to Priority Area 9: People and Skills and Priority Area 8: Competitiveness of enterprises by improving skills and competences, quality of education and training and promotion of lifelong learning and entrepreneurial skills.

Cross-border cooperation actions will empower education and training organisations, labour market institutions and economic actors to improve or develop new products and services for effective provision of skills and competences needed by the regional economy in the areas of smart specialisation and transition to green and digital. Attaining digital competencies and solutions will help improve access to training and education, especially in rural areas, and to services of public interest. Provision of opportunities for intercultural and language learning will help build trust and strengthen the potentials for cross-border cooperation.

2.2.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 9: Output indicators SO 2.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	2.1 (RSO4.2)	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot actions	0	10
2	2.1 (RSO4.2)	RCO 85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participations	0	35

Table 10: Result indicators SO 2.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	2.1 (RSO4.2)	RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	10	Jems	
2	2.1 (RSO4.2)	RCR 81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participations	0	2021	28	Jems	

2.2.1.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Local, regional, and national public authorities and sectoral agencies, especially those active in the field of education and training, labour market, entrepreneurship, economic development and competitiveness, digitalisation, social and health and other relevant fields
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools, providing formal and non-formal education and training
- SMEs and enterprises
- Business support organisations, such as start-up centres, business incubators, innovation hubs
- EGTCs

- Interest groups including NGOs, especially those concerned with the training and education in the areas of smart specialisation, greening the economy, digitalisation, care economy, cluster organisations and networks, organisations representing economic and social interests of employees/employers
- General public

2.2.2 Specific objective 2.2 - Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials (RSO 4.6)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The aim of this specific objective is to increase sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of tourism based on sustainable use of local, natural and cultural assets. It aims to activate potentials of the culture, cultural heritage and creative industries (CCI) for economic development and strengthening of the identity of the programme area. The focus should be put on developing tourism in a sustainable manner, considering all protection regimes and providing sustainable solutions for visitor management as well as considering climate change risks. The inclusion and cooperation of small family businesses and the development of tourism and culture in rural and directly bordering regions is to be promoted.

Interventions that have an impact on cultural heritage should be in line with best practices on compliance with the “European Quality Principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact on cultural heritage” developed by ICOMOS on behalf of the European Commission and in the framework of the European Union flagship initiative on the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. These reflect the integrated, sustainable and inclusive guiding principles of the New European Bauhaus initiative.

The programme encourages the inclusion of revenue-generating measures to support the activities in the renovated cultural heritage or cultural sites, e.g. through diversification of use of the site or indirectly as an economic gain to the cross-border region.

Types of activities (indicative)

- Development and implementation of longer-term cooperation strategies, concepts, action plans
- Development and implementation of new cooperation models and tools
- Development and implementation of pilot actions
- Development of curricula, training contents and tools
- Education, training, mentoring, counselling, exchanges of students/staff/workers
- Joint promotion activities

Awareness-raising activities

Thematic fields to be addressed:

- Development of innovative and sustainable cross-border tourism products and services
- Competence for tourism and culture and creative industries (CCI)
- Sustainable cross-border mobility solutions in tourism

- Adaptation of tourism systems¹ to climate change and greening of tourism products and services
- Cooperation in product and service development in culture and creative sectors

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Establishment of cross-border (CB) cooperation networks and pilot actions promoting local development striving for innovative, sustainable and inclusive use of culture, cultural heritage and tourist potentials also through CCI of the border regions;
- Elaboration and implementation of common CB concepts, strategies and action plans based on specific territories (e.g., Alpine, regional/rural, Karavanke-Karawanken area, Mura/Mur), including territories specifically vulnerable to climate risks, or along specific themes or products in the field of natural and cultural heritage and landscape diversity;
- Integration and capitalisation of existing tourist products into sustainable CB thematic routes, products or destinations (e.g., biking, hiking, cultural routes, food, nature values...) and their further advancement (quality, diversity, visibility, accessibility...);
- Capacity building for innovation in tourism and cultural heritage, focusing on sustainable development of new or upgrading of existing CB tourism products (e.g., improved contents, processes, technologies and digital services, quality management, interpretation, authenticity, eco innovation, environmentally friendly technologies in tourism), product diversification (e.g., for new target groups), piloting of new cooperation models among actors in tourism systems;
- Skills development for tourism and/or culture workers to support the recovery and resilience of the sectors and adapt to new trends and needs (upskilling, reskilling, digital skills development, skills regarding health requirements and safety of visitors, understanding market trends, communication, etc.) and building up mutual trust and common knowledge about trends, services and sustainable offers across the border;
- Qualification measures and professional training to improve skills and competences in CB tourism services and cultural offers (e.g., leisure travel and tourism knowledge, management and language skills, handicraft, culture-specific knowledge, etc.);
- Actions supporting CB management of tourist/visitors flows by defining appropriate preservation actions based on the identified carrying capacity of nature areas;
- Development and testing of innovative cross-border off-season tourism offers (e.g. specific environmentally friendly offers that contribute to extending the tourism seasons and promote lesser-known destinations).
- Provision of sustainable intermodal mobility solutions within and to nature or cultural protected areas, provision of last mile solutions;
- Building capacities of local and regional tourist product providers to adopt green concepts and standards in cross-border tourist products and services, considering the vulnerabilities and potentials of cultural heritage, nature and landscape protected areas;
- Activation of cultural potentials of the border area for new bilateral CB product development and implementation with the aim of opening up opportunities for job creation in CCI, e.g., support to start-ups in CCI, opening possibilities for CB exchanges and co-creation in culture, expanding cultural markets across the border and creating impact on local communities;
- Development and testing innovative solutions for presentation and promotion of cultural activities and cultural heritage across the border, primarily focusing on digital solutions and use of ICT tools.

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

¹ In this case the system is understood as a range of actors (enterprises, institutions and organisation) engaged in tourism and its enabling environment, for example, education, administration, marketing, licencing & standards, health and security, etc.

Expected results

Increased capacity of local and regional actors to develop competitive and more resilient products and services based on sustainable use of natural and cultural assets. Capacity of actors in culture and creative industries for creation of CB products and services will be increased. The access to cross-border cultural offers in the programme area will be increased, creating a positive impact on local communities and its inhabitants as well strengthened identity of the programme area.

Contribution to the Macro-Regional Strategies

A contribution of this priority to the macro-regional strategy EUSALP is expected primarily towards Objective 1: Fostering sustainable growth and promoting innovation in the Alps through promoting innovation and sustainable concepts in tourism and towards Objective 3: Ensuring sustainability in the Alps by promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural values and diversity of cultures. The contribution to the EUSDR is envisaged especially towards Priority Area 3: Culture and Tourism by promoting green tourist products and the sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage.

Cross-border cooperation actions are expected to strengthen capacities of the tourism and culture ecosystems to jointly address issues related to recovery and the transition to green and digital, especially in rural areas. The innovation, quality and diversity of culture and tourism products and services adapted to specific target groups will improve. Skills and competences of small businesses and other actors for cross-border cooperation and provision of services will be enhanced, including the awareness and knowledge of the area's tourism potentials and culture across the border. Capacities to preserve natural and cultural values and adapting to specific climate change effects on culture and tourism will be increased.

2.2.2.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 11: Output indicators SO 2.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
2	2.2 (RSO4.6)	RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot actions	0	20
2	2.2 (RSO4.6)	RCO 85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participations	0	25

Table 12: Result indicators SO 2.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	2.2 (RSO4.6)	RCR 81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participants	0	2021	16	Jems	
2	2.2 (RSO4.6)	RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	10	Jems	

2.2.2.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Local, regional, and national public authorities and sectoral agencies, especially those active in the field of tourism, culture and nature protection, rural development
- Interest groups including NGOs, especially those operating in the field of tourism, culture, nature, training and education, greening and digitalisation, rural development, cluster organisations
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools, especially those engaged in culture and tourism
- SMEs, especially those in the field of tourism and culture and creative industries
- Business support organisations, such as start-up centres, business incubators, innovation hubs
- EGTCs
- General public

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The Priority concerns the entire programme area.

2.2.4 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

In accordance with Article 17(3)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, support for projects takes a form of a grant. The main focus of the programme is put on fostering cooperation and reducing CB obstacles, promoting sustainable and green solutions. The programme will therefore support projects that will have sector and territory wide influence.

The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit-oriented nature of cross-border projects.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 13: Dimension 1 – intervention field for Priority 2

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	2.1 Developing skills and competences for work and life	140 Support for labour market matching and transitions	2,125,000
2	ERDF	2.1 Developing skills and competences for work and life	151 Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	2,125,000
2	ERDF	2.1 Developing skills and competences for work and life	145 Support for the development of digital skills	1,700,000
2	ERDF	2.1 Developing skills and competences for work and life	146 Support for adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	2,550,000
2	ERDF	2.2 Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials	166 Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	3,400,000
2	ERDF	2.2 Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials	167 Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	5,100,000

Table 14: Dimension 2 – form of financing for Priority 2

Priority No.	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	2.1	01	8,500,000
2	ERDF	2.2	01	8,500,000

Table 15: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus for Priority 2

Priority No.	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	2.1	33	8,500,000
2	ERDF	2.2	33	8,500,000

2.3 Priority 3 - A better cooperation governance

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.3.1 Interreg-specific objective 3.1 - Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions (ISO 6.2)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Aim of this specific objective

Under this specific objective, cooperation and coordination activities (of local and regional public administrations, institutions and initiatives) in thematic areas that are mentioned below should be supported. The aim of these cooperation and coordination activities should be:

- to address and reduce border obstacles,
- to enhance and intensify the cooperation and coordination among administrations, economic and civil society institutions for developing joint and harmonized policies, frameworks and measures in areas of shared interest and interdependencies,
- to create favourable framework conditions for releasing economic potentials and reducing regional socio-economic disparities in the border area.

The interventions of this specific objective should seek to support and develop strategic and more formalised cross-border structures, cooperation, coordination and policies of competent stakeholders in the programme area. A long-lasting and structural impact throughout a common socio-economic space across the border is expected. The Programme's cross-cutting issues (awareness-raising, exchange of know-how, research and innovation, capacity development and digitalisation) are important aspects of actions within this specific objective.

Infrastructure and works are not the subject of this specific objective. Purchase of equipment or small investments of a minor, complementary nature are possible in cases where it is demonstrated that this specifically contributes to the objectives of this priority.

Types of activities (indicative):

- Organisation of joint meetings, workshops and events
- Exchange of experience (to share solutions and increase their impact)
- Transfer of good practices
- Trainings, peer reviews and staff exchanges (to enhance institutional capacity)
- Data collection and studies (e.g. to better understand border obstacles and processes)
- Identification of legal barriers and proposals for eliminating them
- Development and implementation of strategies and action plans in the thematic areas addressed
- Drawing up cooperation agreements, administrative and legal provisions
- Elaboration of publications and campaigns

All activities should have the aim of producing tangible and sustainable results that have real relevance for the thematic area addressed.

Actions addressing the following fields will be supported:

- a) Establishing cross-border (CB) coordination structures and supporting networking and exchange among local and regional administrations and institutions for addressing common challenges and finding harmonized approaches in cross-border relevant thematic areas, specifically:
- labour market (e.g. exchange between labour market (LM) institutions, businesses and educational institutions on LM situation, promotion of vocations for which shortages exist on both sides ...);
 - health and social services (collaboration of health system institutions, local authorities and public health institutes; capacity building of relevant actors to address common challenge, such as health promotion and capacity building, exploring potentials for cross-border provision of social and health services; ...);
 - sustainable mobility (e.g. development of joint cross border mobility concepts, research on market demand on CB mobility services, establishing of CB structures to promote and develop CB public transport solutions, development of CB / regional mobility plans ...);
 - spatial planning (e.g. development of CB concepts and strategies for potential functional or geographical areas sharing common needs, challenges and potentials; preparation of and digitalisation for overcoming spatial separation and enhancement of the cooperation of different sectors (nature protection, cultural heritage protection, tourism, water management, forestry, agriculture, etc.);
 - administration (e.g. creating or further development of cooperative administrative and/or coordinating structures of local administration units, ...).
- b) Harmonizing administrative, organisational and legal frameworks for overcoming obstacles resulting from the existence of state borders and different legal and regulatory systems in all sectors of socio-economic development, specifically:
- labour market (e.g. labour mobility issues, mutual recognition of competences ...);
 - health and social services (e.g. exploring potentials for cross-border provision of social and health services, ...);
 - mobility (e.g. coordination and harmonization of public transport services, enhancement / introduction of cross-border public transport on short distances (daily mobility of workers, students and tourists, sustainable 'last mile' solutions), promotion of CB mobility and harmonization of timetables and tickets, elaboration of coordinated pricing policies, ...);
- c) Cross-border economic development, applied R&D and business support initiatives, specifically in creation and further development of (existing) business networks, platforms and value chains within the regions and across the border (both for existing SMEs and start-ups); collaboration among business support agencies and institutions for providing support to start-ups (especially in less dynamic, rural areas) and to SMEs in internationalisation, cross-border business activities (entering / extending business activities to the Slovenian or Austrian market) and innovation. The activities should seek to enhance the ecosystem for CB cooperation in the different thematic fields.

Support for infrastructure investments is not envisaged under this Priority.

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

Expected results

This priority seeks to create joint formal structures, procedures and strategies for addressing obstacles, creating favourable framework conditions and implementing solutions for a common socio-economic space across the border.

Contribution to the Macro-Regional Strategies

This specific objective relates to the cross-cutting Policy Area of EUSALP "Governance, including Institutional Capacity" which has the objective of improving cooperation and the coordination of action in the region and across borders. The contribution to the EUSDR is envisaged especially in Priority Area 10 "Institutional Capacities &

Cooperation". Specifically, it relates to Action 1: "To improve institutional capacities in order to provide high-quality public services", Action 2: "To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions" and Action 7: "To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region".

2.3.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 16: Output indicators SO 3.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	3.1 ISO1 (ii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	20
3	3.1 ISO1 (ii)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	9

Table 17: Result indicators SO 3.1

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	3.1 ISO1 (ii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisation	0	2021	10	Jems	
3	3.1 ISO1 (ii)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution	0	2021	7	Jems	

2.3.1.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Local, regional and national public authorities and sectoral agencies
- Civil society structures and interest groups including NGOs
- Providers of infrastructure and public (communal) services
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools

- Enterprises including SMEs
- Business support organisations, such as start-up centres, business incubators, innovation hubs
- EGTCs
- General public

2.3.2 Interreg specific objective 3.2 - Enhancing trust and cooperation among people (ISO 6.3)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Aim of this specific objective

Under this specific objective, joint activities and cooperation initiatives of people and civil society institutions and initiatives should be supported.

Infrastructure and works are not the subject of this specific objective. Purchase of equipment or small investments of a minor, complementary nature are possible in cases where it is demonstrated that this specifically contributes to the objectives of this priority.

Types of activities (indicative):

- Organisation of joint meetings, workshops and events, etc.
- Exchange of information, know-how and staff
- Creation of common structures and interventions in the thematic fields addressed.

Actions addressing the following fields will be supported:

People-to-people projects for information exchange, network development, joint initiatives, innovative pilot activities, awareness-raising, trust building, etc. in areas such as education, cultural heritage, culture, social initiatives, social economy, local development, nature and environment protection. Support for infrastructure investments is not envisaged under this specific objective.

The actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they have been assessed as compatible under the RRF guidelines.

Expected results

This specific objective seeks to create multi-layered linkages and joint actions of people and civil society institutions across the border.

Contribution to the Macro-Regional Strategies

This specific objective relates to the cross-cutting Policy Area of EUSALP "Governance, including Institutional Capacity" that has the objective of improving cooperation and the coordination of action in the region and across borders. The contribution to the EUSDR is envisaged especially to Priority Area 10: "Institutional Capacities & Cooperation". Specifically, it relates to Action 2: "To facilitate the administrative cooperation of communities living in border regions" and Action 7: "To strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube Region".

2.3.2.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 18: Output indicators SO 3.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	3.2 ISO1 (iii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	20	60

Table 19: Result indicators SO 3.2

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	3.2 ISO1 (iii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	40	Jems	

2.3.2.3 The main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of the actions supported are organisations and individuals that will be involved or positively affected by the actions, including:

- Associations, civil society structures and interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centres and schools
- Enterprises including SMEs
- General public

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The Priority concerns the entire programme area.

2.3.4 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

In accordance with Article 17(3)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, support for projects takes a form of a grant. The main focus of the programme is put on fostering cooperation and reducing CB obstacles, promoting sustainable and

green solutions. The programme will therefore support projects that will have sector and territory wide influence. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit-oriented nature of cross-border projects.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 20: Dimension 1 – intervention field for Priority 3

Priority No.	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	3.1 Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions	171 Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	2,040,000
3	ERDF	3.1 Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions	173 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	1,020,000
3	ERDF	3.1 Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions	169 Territorial development initiatives, including preparation of territorial strategies	340,000
3	ERDF	3.2 Enhancing trust and cooperation among people	171 Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	846,915

Table 21: Dimension 2 – form of financing for Priority 3

Priority No.	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	3.1	01	3,400,000
3	ERDF	3.2	01	846,915

Table 22: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus for Priority 3

Priority No.	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	3.1	33	3,400,000
3	ERDF	3.2	33	846,914.02

3. FINANCING PLAN

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Table 23: Financial appropriations by year

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)	0	7,831,915	7,957,719	8,086,039	8,216,924	6,808,714	6,944,887	45,846,198
Total	0	7,831,915	7,957,719	8,086,039	8,216,924	6,808,714	6,944,887	45,846,198

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 24: Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Policy objective No.	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation EU support	EU contribution ((a)=(a1)+(a2))	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown National counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from third countries (for information)
					Without TA Art. 27(1)(a1)	For TA Art. 27(1)(a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
2	Priority 1	ERDF	Total eligible cost	22,843,572	21,100,000.00	1,743,572	5,710,893	4,397,388	1,313,505	28,554,465	80%	0.00
4	Priority 2	ERDF	Total eligible cost	18,404,774	17,000,000.00	1,404,774	4,601,194	3,542,919	1,058,275	23,005,968	79,99%	0.00
ISO1	Priority 3	ERDF	Total eligible cost	4,597,852	4,246,915	350,937	1,149,465	988,540	160,925	5,747.317	79,99%	0.00
	Total	ERDF	Total eligible cost	45,846,198	42,346,915	3,499,283	11,461,552	8,928,847	2,532,705	57,307,750	79,99%	0.00

4. ACTION TAKEN TO INVOLVE THE RELEVANT PROGRAMME PARTNERS IN THE PREPARATION OF THE INTERREG PROGRAMME AND THE ROLE OF THOSE PROGRAMME PARTNERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria was elaborated by a bilateral PTF in partnership with competent regional and local authorities and stakeholders from both countries according to the CPR Regulation Article 8. The PTF held 13 meetings between July 2019 and September 2021. A team of external Austrian and Slovene experts supported the PTF in this process.

The PTF was established based on the decision of the Programme's Monitoring Committee in April 2019. The PTF consisted of representatives from the Austrian side (the Regional Authorities of Styria, Carinthia, and Burgenland), representatives from the Slovenian side, representatives of the MA and the JS.

Stakeholders involved included representatives from the relevant national and regional administration departments, local administrations, Local Action Groups, Regional Managements / Regional Development Agencies, Universities, EGTC, Social Partners, Sectoral/Thematic Agencies (environment and nature protection, research and innovation, mobility, labour market, business support, education, health and social services, culture, youth and tourism) with relevance for the Programme area.

These stakeholders were identified and contacted (by direct mails) based on the Programme's database (contacts from beneficiaries and applicants as well as interested persons of the general public that participated in activities of the Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 and local administrations of the Programme area and recognised thematic institutions). The Slovene National Authority and the Austrian Regional Authorities also informed and contacted relevant institutions in their spheres directly by mail. Information about the programming process and invitations for participation in the consultation process were published on the Programme website (<http://www.si-at.eu/en2/ip-si-at-2021-2027/>) in English, Slovene and German language. In activities of the Programme period 2014-2020 the outreach of electronic communication of the JS to Slovene stakeholders was twice that to Austrians. National/Regional Authorities put in a special effort to increase the active involvement of stakeholders by using different communication channels (publication on websites, direct mailing, newsletters) to mobilise stakeholders in their territories for getting involved in the programming process.

The programming was an interactive process and consisted of two phases:

Phase 1: Territorial and Socio-Economic Analysis

Phase 2: Defining the strategic orientation of the future programme and drafting the contents of the programme document

An important element of this process was the information and involvement of a broad range of competent local and regional stakeholders and experts throughout the entire programming process. To achieve this, information regarding the programming process together with the invitation to participate in the consultation process and draft documents were made accessible on the Programme's website in English, Slovene and German language.

Phase 1: Territorial and Socio-Economic Analysis

- exploratory interviews (49) were held with representatives of different key organisations in the regions of the programme area with both a territorial and a sectoral focus (May-June 2020). The members of

the PTF (and especially NA, RAs and JS) proposed stakeholders who might provide a substantiated opinion both thematically and territorially relevant on the potential thematic areas of the future IP and assure a balanced regional coverage. Interview partners from institutions that had a stronger territorial rather than a mere technical-thematic focus of their work (Regional Agencies, Local Development Agencies, EGTC, Business Support Agencies, Labour Market Agencies) were prioritized, in order to consider a competent coverage of all potential thematic areas of the future IP.

- In these interviews the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as key trends, main disparities between the sub-regions, common challenges and cooperation potentials regarding the potential thematic areas of the future programme were discussed.
- The preliminary findings of these explanatory interviews were distributed via email to the interview partners and additional regional stakeholders and thematic experts (covering public authorities, economic and social partners, civil society organisations, R&D institutions and higher education institutions) with the invitation to comment on them via an e-survey (June 2020). The comments of 9 respondents were documented and discussed by the expert team and the PTF and they were integrated where appropriate into the final version of the Territorial and Socio-Economic Analysis representing a strong bottom-up design of the document.
- The final version of the Territorial and Socio-Economic Analysis was published on the Programme website (October 2020).

Phase 2: Defining the strategic orientation of the future programme and drafting the contents of the programme document

- Based on the previous steps of the programming process, the expert team prepared an overview of potential interventions and arguments for each of the specific objectives that might become part of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027. This document was published on the Programme website (October/November 2020).
- In the framework of public consultation for the strategic orientation of the programme, regional stakeholders and the general public were invited to participate in an online survey to provide their feedback, comments and arguments regarding these potential contents of the future Interreg Programme (November 2020).
- More than 900 persons were personally invited for that online survey via direct mails (composition of mailing lists as in Phase 1) and information about the discussion papers and invitations for providing comments on them were published on the websites of the Programme and other national/regional channels. 228 respondents provided their comments.
- In this context of public consultation on the future orientation of the Programme, separate webinars in German and Slovene language were organized (99 participants, November 2020).
- During these webinars an overview of the potential thematic orientation was provided, first comments discussed with the participants and further statements on the document invited to be provided on the Programme website.
- Six thematic expert workshops were held for each of the potential policy objectives of the programme (November 2020 / January 2021).
- These workshops served to have a substantiated discussion with thematic experts for the selection and potential interventions within the selected policy objectives.
- A draft Interreg Programme document (IP) was drawn up by the programming team on the basis of this process and was discussed by the PTF (February - May 2021).
- This draft IP was published on the Programme website for information and feedback by the general public (1st-30th of June, 2021). Additionally, all persons contacted from the first public consultation process were directly contacted for their feedback. 22 persons provided their comments. These were documented and discussed by the PTF and relevant adaptations introduced into the final draft of the IP document. The information of this consultation process was published on the Programme website.

- During the entire programming process, the members of the PTF consulted with experts from other regional and national government departments on the progress of the programming process and the contents of the programme and assured their considerations would be integrated into the document.
- Accompanying the IP drafting process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been conducted to provide information about the potential effects of the programme on the environment (October 2020 to September 2021). Environmental authorities played an important role and were consulted at several stages to provide input to the assessments. Two workshops with the environmental authorities were organised (December 2020/April 2021) and an additional written feedback round with the environmental authorities on the SEA report was conducted (June/July 2021). Furthermore, the SEA was published for public consultations on the programme's website (September 2021) containing a summary in both national languages as well as the full report in English. The public consultation was open to anybody, i.e. not only public authorities but also NGOs, interest groups and also individuals were invited to give their opinion on the assessments made. Any comments received in this process were considered in drafting the final SEA report. Throughout the programming process, the SEA team provided input to the programming process through informal discussions, as well as through presentation and participation in PTF meetings.

The role of the programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme

The information from the general public and the proper involvement of competent programme partners is considered to be crucial for a successful programme implementation. The regular information of the general public about the programme is needed to assure ownership of the Programme and its outcomes.

The continuous involvement of programme partners in the implementation of the programme is envisaged for two reasons:

- To enhance ownership of the programme among partners, to make use of their knowledge and expertise and to increase transparency in decision-making processes;
- To improve the coordination with other programmes as well as with MRSs to capitalise on project and programme results, as well as to increase synergies and complementarities.

Programme partners will be involved in steering and monitoring of programme implementation to make their voice heard in consultation and the decision-making process.

5. APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY FOR THE INTERREG PROGRAMME (OBJECTIVES, TARGET AUDIENCES, COMMUNICATION CHANNELS, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH, WHERE APPROPRIATE, PLANNED BUDGET AND RELEVANT INDICATORS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

The programme's approach to communication and visibility is developed more in detail in a dedicated communication strategy. The communication focuses on transmission of information, awareness-raising, creating cooperation communities, attracting applicants from all programme areas to apply for funding with relevant good

quality applications, creating a positive working culture internally within the programme bodies etc. The general objective of the programme's communication is to enhance the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the CB area through the effective use of communication instruments.

Communication objectives

The following communication objectives support the programme implementation:

- to promote the programme's funding opportunities by providing information on all programme-related issues and motivating potential beneficiaries to use the possibilities the EU Funds represent;
- to support programme bodies, applicants and beneficiaries in effective project implementation by ensuring well-functioning internal communication between the programme bodies to make the programme function effectively, providing applicants and beneficiaries with high-quality and timely support in all phases of the project implementation;
- to enhance the public awareness about the programme by providing the general public/media with understandable, easy to follow information on co-financed projects, promoting the benefits of CB cooperation and funding opportunities in the programme area and beyond, and underline the benefits of CBC for the general public in the programme area, promoting projects' achievements and capitalisation activities;
- to cooperate with other Interreg programmes by sharing information and best practices to enhance inter-programme cooperation;
- to increase the project's capacities to communicate their own achievements by supporting and encouraging beneficiaries in communication activities, enhancing inter-project cooperation and promoting capitalisation activities.

The communication activities touch on all aspects of the programme life-cycle. Therefore, the intensity of certain communication activities will depend on the implementation phase of the programme.

Target audiences

The programme defines four fundamental types of target audiences which are further detailed in the communication strategy of the programme. These types include applicants or beneficiaries for the co-financing from the ERDF, programme bodies, the expert sphere (the EC, the members of the Monitoring Committee, the programme partners from both Member States) and political sphere (the political public in both Member States and beyond), the general public (especially citizens of the cross-border area/final recipients of products and services co-financed by the Interreg programme) and the media, which fundamentally influences awareness-raising of the EU Funds mostly connected to the general public, but also with the political sphere.

Communication channels and tools

The programme considers the following communication channels and tools as an instrument to convey the content to the target audience: the programme website (accessible, easy to navigate for different users, up-to-date), social media (e.g. Facebook); public events (annual events, workshops for applicants/beneficiaries/programme structures, informational thematic and networking events, synergy events for capitalisation), online or printed publications (e.g. a programme newsletter, info sheets), online campaigns including the production of visual elements (e.g. videos, infographics) especially for the promotion (capitalisation) of project results, articles and other contributions in the media.

Much of the programme visibility comes through the projects. The programme will provide constant support to standard and small-scale projects through events and via the programme web-site and social media.

Monitoring, evaluation and indicators

All communication activities will be evaluated on a regular basis using external or internal evaluators. Data will be collected through surveys, internal statistics and website analytics. The programme will use a detailed set of indicators to follow and evaluate the communication activities and improve their performance on an ongoing basis. The output indicators that are foreseen refer to the satisfaction with the quality of guidance and the engagement of the general public in programme activities. The communication goals are planned to be measured by several result indicators, e.g. number of active regions, number of applications received and approved, satisfaction of the applicants or beneficiaries with the information provided, guidelines and support, number of participants in events and specific activities, level of engagement in the programme newsletter, outreach of the social media account(s), number of events and participants in events other than workshops (e.g. annual events). The programme foresees an estimated communication budget (excl. staff costs) of at least 0.3 percent of the total programme budget.

The programme has appointed a communication officer, who is a member of the JS.

6. INDICATION OF SUPPORT TO SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS, INCLUDING SMALL PROJECTS WITHIN SMALL PROJECT FUNDS

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

The cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Austria has a long history. In the past two programme periods a lot of projects of medium-size financial volume were implemented (from EUR 500,000.00 to EUR 2,500,000.00). The evaluations of the programme revealed the need for simpler projects in the border region which would allow for less demanding administrative procedures, thus enabling also smaller institutions to participate. Therefore, the new programme will also implement projects with limited financial volume, so-called small-scale projects.

Small-scale projects will be an important tool in the new Interreg programme Slovenia-Austria. They will be designed to initiate and promote contacts and interaction between people on both sides of the border. They will have a smaller budget and a limited duration. The activities of small-scale projects will contribute to the programme output indicators and result indicators specified in the Interreg-Specific Objective 3.2: Enhancing trust and cooperation among people. The programme plans to earmark an indicative 2 % of the funds for small-scale projects of this kind.

The added value of small-scale projects will be felt in the increased mutual trust among people across the Slovenian-Austrian border, opening up new cooperation possibilities between neighbours and allowing the cross-border region to grow closer. The inclusion of small institutions such as NGOs, schools, SMEs and small municipalities in cross-border activities via small-scale projects will connect a lot of people in the border region and also increase the visibility of the new Interreg programme Slovenia-Austria.

Support to small projects under a Small Project Fund as defined in Article 2(10) of the CPR and Article 25 of the Interreg Regulation is not planned to be included in the Interreg programme Slovenia-Austria.

7. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS

7.1 Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 25: Programme authorities

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Managing authority	Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC) European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanisms Division Cross-Border Programmes Management Section	Tanja Rener	Head of the Managing authority	tanja.rener@gov.si
Audit authority	Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Finance Budget Supervision Office	Gregor Greif	Head of the Audit authority	gregor.greif@gov.si
Group of auditors representatives	Republic of Austria, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism Financial Control of the ERDF	Markus K�ob		markus.koeb@bmlrt.gv.at efre_finanzkontrolle@bmlrt.gv.at
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Development of Rural Areas (Slovenian Regional Development Fund)	Uroš Klop�i�		uros.klopcic@srrs.si ozp@srrs.si
Body other than the managing authority entrusted with the accounting function	Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Development of Rural Areas (Slovenian Regional Development Fund)	Uroš Klop�i�	Head of the accounting function	uros.klopcic@srrs.si ozp@srrs.si

7.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

The MA, after consultation with the Member States/programme partners, sets up the JS for the programme in compliance with Article 17(6)(b) and Article 46(2) of the Interreg Regulation.

Based on the successful implementation of the two previous programmes in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods, the MA ensures a smooth transition and institutional stability by maintaining the basic organisational, structural and implementation arrangements already in place which will ensure that a highly experienced, professional and bilaterally composed JS team will support the Programme in the future, too. Taking into account the good programme partnership approach, all JS members are selected in a transparent manner by both Member States and are bilingual/trilingual, possessing representative linguistic competence and relevant programme area knowledge.

The JS will continue to be located in Maribor, Slovenia, within the official structure of the GODC (Cross-border Programmes Section). The structural and implementation arrangements within the hosting organisation will be kept. The JS is set up within the same Section as the MA. A clear separation of tasks will be ensured within the description of single positions. The JS will work in close cooperation with the MA related to programme coordination and implementation in such a way as to ensure its cooperation on one hand, and its independence from national structures on the other.

The JS will continue to assist the MA and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective duties and ensuring that all operational implementation tasks of the programme are fulfilled. The JS will provide support to potential applicants by providing them information on funding opportunities and give beneficiaries assistance in the efficient implementation of operations.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

The arrangements related to the irregularities which lead to financial corrections and apportioning of liabilities among MSs will follow the already established, well-functioning principles from the programming period 2014-2020.

Without prejudice to the MSs' responsibility to take all required actions for preventing, detecting and correcting irregularities and reporting on irregularities including fraud, according to Article 69 (2) of the CPR, the MA shall in accordance with Article 52 (1) of the Interreg Regulation ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Partner (LP). The project partners (PPs) shall then repay the LP any amounts unduly paid.

In line with Article 52 (2) of the Interreg Regulation the MA will not recover an amount unduly paid if it does not exceed EUR 250 ERDF (not including interest) paid to an operation in a given accounting year.

If the LP does not succeed in securing repayment from a PP or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the LP, the MS on whose territory the LP or PP concerned is located (in case of an EGTC where it is registered) shall, in accordance with Article 52 (3) of the Interreg Regulation, reimburse the MA the amounts unduly paid to that partner. The MS of Austria is represented by three regions involved in the programme: the Federal States of Burgenland, Kärnten and Steiermark. The MS of Slovenia is represented by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. The final decision on financial liability is taken by the Monitoring Committee on a case-by-case basis. The MA is responsible for reimbursing the amounts recovered to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating MSs as laid down below. The MA will reimburse the funds to the Union once the amounts are recovered from the LP/PP/MS.

Should the MA bear any legal expenses for recovery recourse proceedings – initiated after consultation and in mutual agreement with the respective MS – even if the proceedings are unsuccessful, they will be reimbursed by the MS hosting the LP or PP responsible for the said procedure.

Since MSs have the overall liability for the ERDF support granted to LPs or PPs located on their territories, they shall ensure that any financial corrections required will be secured and they shall seek to recover any amounts lost as a result of an irregularity or negligence caused by a beneficiary located in their territory. Where appropriate, a MS may also charge interest on late payments.

In accordance with Article 52 (4) of the Interreg Regulation, once the MS has reimbursed the MA any amounts unduly paid to a partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that partner pursuant to its national law.

Where the MS has not reimbursed the MA any amount unduly paid to a partner, in accordance with Article 52 (5) of the Interreg Regulation, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order by the European Commission (EC) which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the MS. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF to the respective Interreg programme. The offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the same Interreg programme. In such an eventuality, the MA will start bilateral discussions with the concerned MS at fault so as to find a joint solution on how and from where to offset the amount deducted by the EC.

As stated in Article 69 (12) of the CPR, MSs shall report on irregularities in accordance with the criteria for determining the cases of irregularity to be reported, the data to be provided and the format for reporting set out in Annex XVII of the CPR. Irregularities shall be reported by the MS in which the irregular expenditure is incurred by the LP/PP and paid in implementing the project. The reporting MS shall at the same time inform the MA and the Audit Authority (AA) of the programme.

The MSs will bear liability in connection with the use of the Interreg programme ERDF funding as follows:

- Each MS bears liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by the LPs and PPs located on its territory.
- In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (decided by the programme authorities or the EC), the MS will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective MS's territory.
- For a systemic irregularity or financial correction on programme level that cannot be linked to a specific MS, the liability shall be jointly borne by the MSs in proportion to the ERDF claimed for LPs and PPs (located on MS's territories) to the EC for the period which forms the basis for the financial correction.

The liability principles described above shall also apply to financial corrections to Technical Assistance (TA) calculated in compliance with Article 27 of the Interreg regulation, since such corrections would be the direct consequence of project-related irregularities (whether systemic or not) if they cannot be reused. The MA will keep

the MSs informed about all irregularities and their impact on TA. At the end of the programming period, the MA will carry out a reconciliation to verify whether there is a remaining balance of irregularities that have affected the TA budget. In case of a remaining balance, the MA will inform and ask the respective MS/MSs and ask MS to reimburse the corresponding ERDF amount.

8. USE OF UNIT COSTS, LUMP SUMS, FLAT RATES AND FINANCING NOT LINKED TO COSTS

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 26: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

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

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on union costs, lump sums and flat rates

*Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission
(Article 94 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR))*

Not applicable.

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

*Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission
(Article 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 8CPR))*

Not applicable.

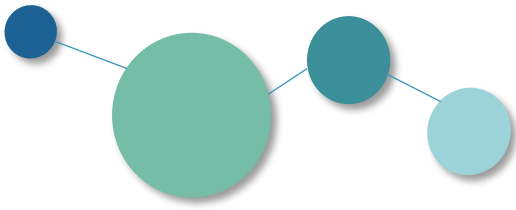
Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable - article 22(3) CPR

As set out in article 17(3) of Regulation (EC) 2021/1059 and article 22(3) of Regulation (EC) 2021/1060 the Member State shall ensure that the programme submitted is accompanied for information purposes by a list of planned operations of strategic importance and a timetable.

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027 is planning to select all operations via Open Calls for Proposals. Therefore, no pre-identified operations of strategic importance have been embedded in the Programme. Nevertheless, operations of strategic importance contributing considerably to the visibility of the Programme may be identified in the course of implementation of the programme. A separate call will be launched for small-scale projects value under Specific Objective 3.2. The programme intends to implement such projects via open call for proposals, with special assessment criteria set to trust building and visibility of the programme. Open calls for small-scale projects will be most likely published within 6 months after the call for standard projects.

The member States decided to support projects of limited financial value (small-scale projects) within the priority 3 (SO 3.2) of the programme in order to increase visibility and trust among people living in the programme area and beyond. The added value of small-scale projects will be felt in the increased mutual trust among people across the Slovenian-Austrian border, opening up new cooperation possibilities between neighbours and allowing the cross-border region to grow closer. The inclusion of small institutions such as NGOs, schools, SMEs and small municipalities in cross-border activities via small-scale projects will connect a lot of people in the border region and also increase the visibility of the new Interreg programme Slovenia-Austria.

Taking all this into consideration people-to-people projects are trust-building projects, which are of high importance in cross-border area and will highly contribute to programmes visibility.



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Interreg
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INTERREG PROGRAMME

Interreg Austria – Hungary 2021-2027

Version 1.1 / adopted by EC on 14/09/2022



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1 Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1 Programme area

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The **AT-HU programme area** is set up by the NUTS 3 regions Nordburgenland, Mittelburgenland and Südburgenland, Niederösterreich Süd and Wiener Umland/Südteil, Wien, Graz and Oststeiermark as well as Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala.

The actions of the population and companies are interconnected in many ways across borders. The programme area fulfils an important bridging function between Western and Eastern Europe and stretches along a main corridor between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas. This **excellent geographic location** has contributed to an above average economic growth, but the region still shows regional disparities: north-south, west-east, urban agglomerations and structurally weaker rural areas. They have been flattening out in some topics for the last ten years.

The region consists of a **broad variety** of urban agglomerations, small- and medium-sized towns and several rural communities. It covers an area of 25 091 square kilometres with a population of **almost 4.5 million residents** (as of 1 January 2019). The Austrian parts represent 78 % of the population on 55 % of the total area, the Hungarian regions 22 % of the inhabitants on 45 % of the area.

The population development over the last 10 years followed almost exactly the trend of the previous decade: shrinking population in Zala, Vas and the Südburgenland, growth in all other regions, very strong growth in Vienna and Graz. The accelerated negative population development in Zala and a slight positive trend reversal in Central Burgenland and Eastern Steiermark are striking. Despite efforts made in Zala to positively manage the situation, the trends in the referred regions are expected to continue.

The demographic change is noticeable in all regions. In the urban regions it is clearly weakened by the positive migration balance of young people, especially in Austria and by the continued domestic migration to Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in Hungary. The COVID-19 crisis might result in a mitigation of the transnational migration.

Hungarian nationals have become more present as inhabitants and workers in Austria in recent years, whereas the number of Austrians living in the Hungarian counties of the programme area is significantly lower. Also, this trend is likely to continue in the future; still, the next years might see a mitigation of this development due to COVID-19.





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

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

1.2.1 Introduction

In the preparation phase of the IP AT-HU 2021-2027 a socio-economic analysis on the programme area was carried out. The findings of this document, the main results of the evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme¹ and the main development directions, provided by the relevant strategies and stakeholders, were summarized in a discussion paper on the potential strategic thematic directions and discussed by the Programming Group.

In compliance with the ERDF policy objectives, the description of the challenges and needs of the border region is structured as follows:

- A smarter Europe: challenges related to the economic structure and performance of the region, including the research and development activities and the situation of the SMEs
- A greener, low-carbon Europe: challenges pointing towards the more integrated and better management of the region's natural resources
- A more connected Europe: the challenges reflect the needs for improved public transport services
- A more social Europe: the challenges mostly relate to the harmonisation of systems in the field of education, and, to a certain extent, the labour market and healthcare cooperation
- Cross-border governance: challenges reflecting the need for a more strategic approach and related institutional conditions in a number of areas

1.2.2 Complementarity and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

Projects can be implemented in significantly higher quality and produce greater impact, if they capitalize on the results of other similar projects and work together with project holders of related initiatives. Synergies make project results more widely usable and enable better upscaling. In order to enable complementarity with other initiatives, coordination with fellow cross-border or transnational programmes, regional-, national-, and other EU programmes, is fundamental.

Complementarities and potential synergies of European, national and regional strategies and programmes with the IP AT-HU 2021-2027 have been considered during programming in the strategy building process, as reflected in the discussion paper on potential strategic thematic directions. Members of the programming group are involved also in

¹ Interreg AT-HU 2014-2020 Impact Evaluation





programming task forces of other programmes and have coordination function on national and regional level.

For the programme area one macro regional strategy is relevant: the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The Interreg programme AT-HU has traditionally strong links with the EUSDR with lot of projects being aligned with some EUSDR priority area (PA). The contribution of some water management related projects is specifically acknowledged by the supporting letter of the Steering Group of the EUSDR PA5, one of them an EUSDR flagship project. For these reasons continued synergies and complementarities with EUSDR were important part of the programming. Each of the following sections about the policy objectives include a description of specific links to the respective EUSDR priority areas.

As only a small part of the programme area in Austria overlaps with the territory of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), the programme will have no impact.

To ensure that synergies and complementarities, beneficial for both programme and project, are effectively used during **implementation**, the following measures are taken:

- Project applicants will be encouraged in the programme manuals to go for increased coherence and complementarity with other projects supported in EU, national and regional programmes as well as with EU macro-regional strategies. Synergies with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives, as well as capitalization on available knowledge shall be described as part of the application form and will be subject to assessment.
- The exchange of information with other (Interreg) programmes (e.g. at joint communication activities) will proactively promote synergies between projects and help to capitalize on outputs and results of other projects. The use of capitalization tools like keep.eu will clearly demonstrate the potential of synergies and complementarities between projects in Interreg AT-HU and other Interreg programmes.
- Links to other EU funded programmes will be ensured by well-established national coordination bodies or existing, stable mechanisms (as provided by national rules and embedded in the partnership agreements of the participating Member States [MS]), seeking (to the possible extent) to achieve coordination at all stages of the programme lifetime (e.g. working group CBC in Austria or the responsible coordination bodies for ESI funds in the responsible line ministries of the two MSs). The national coordination bodies or mechanisms support members of the Monitoring Committee (MC). The MC involves representatives of institutions participating in the implementation of national and regional programmes supported by ESI Funds.

For synergies and complementarities see also appendix 5.

1.2.3 Strategic use of public procurement

During implementation of the programme the Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support policy objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.





1.2.4 Horizontal principles and compliance with the DNSH principle

In line with Art. 9 (4) and Recital 10 of CPR, in order to comply with the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle a dedicated assessment of the types of actions has been carried out aligned to the SEA process with respect to their potential to do significant harm to the environmental objectives in the meaning of Art. 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 (Taxonomy Regulation).

All types of actions defined in chapter 2 have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle. The methodology used was based on the provisions of the RRF DNSH technical guidance.

Supporting information on how the DNSH principle has been taken into account is documented in a dedicated chapter of the SEA report.

The programme’s contribution to the climate target is 28%, to biodiversity target is 19% of the total ERDF contribution to the programme. In addition, environmental aspects are going to be specifically supported horizontally.

By its selection criteria, (barrier-free) communication, conditions for project implementation (where appropriate) and monitoring measures the programme will ensure the respect for fundamental rights, in compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, gender equality, prevention of non-discrimination, and accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance to Art. 9 of the CPR.

Where relevant and appropriate, applicants’ and beneficiaries’ attention will be called to consider the values of the Bauhaus initiative (sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion).

Although direct subsidies to productive investments of SMEs are not foreseen, recommendations of the ECA in the Special Report 08/2018 are going to be respected as far as operations will be selected that are expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the targeted cross-border challenges.

1.2.5 A more competitive and smarter Europe

1.2.5.1 Joint challenges, disparities and inequalities

In general, the situation of the economy is rather characterised by substantial disparities than joint challenges, as outlined in more details below.

Economy

The differences in economic performance are significant in the region, especially between Wien, Wiener Umland/Südteil and Graz on one hand and the southern Hungarian counties - Zala and Vas - on the other. A decrease in the share of the primary sector (agriculture, forestry) and in the secondary sector (industries) and fast growth in the tertiary sector (trade and commerce) is observable, however, regional differences exist:

- agriculture and forestry, as well as downstream industries such as wood- and food-processing play important role in the Hungarian border region and in Nord-, Mittelburgenland and Oststeiermark,
- the Hungarian counties have been facing a clear shift from the primary to processing industries (secondary sector), mostly FDI-led automotive and machinery, with higher employment values in this sector than the Austrian regions and over 50% share of gross value added in Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas.



The level of industrial productivity in Austria is high in EU comparison, while Hungary belongs to the less well-performing MSs. Though productivity of the Hungarian counties of the programme area – especially Győr-Moson-Sopron County - is among the highest in Hungary, the border between Hungary and Austria represents a great difference in productivity.

Research and development

In Austria, research and innovation are on a significantly higher level regarding expenditures and personnel, especially in Steiermark and Wien. According to the Innovation Union Innovation Scoreboards, Austria is classified among the “Strong Innovators” whereas Hungary is in the group “Moderate Innovators”. In spite of the considerable differences at national level, difference between Burgenland and the Hungarian counties is much smaller which indicates an uneven distribution of R&D expenditures within both MSs.

The cooperation in the field of research will remain great challenge in the future, as differences of the two sides of the border in these terms are great. However, the existence of the strong R&D capacities in Austria (like the Universities of Wien and Graz) and a number of Hungarian higher education institutions offer a potential for cooperation, especially in sectors strong on both sides of the border (like automotive or machinery).

SMEs and smart specialization

SMEs play an important role in the economy of the area, although their performance and needs are significantly different in the two countries.

In terms of fields of European Small Business Act, Austria performs above the EU average in four principles: skills & innovation, internationalisation, single market, and environment, while for Hungary considerable room for improvement is proposed on three of these fields: skills & innovation, the environment and internationalisation. While the main challenge for the Hungarian SMEs is to increase their productivity level by stepping up their innovation capacity, development of more innovative products and services of higher added value, the Austrian SMEs are on a much higher level and their need is more to maintain excellence by a better uptake of digital assets.

There are around 50 clusters operating in the area, about 75% of them in Austria, 25% in Hungary, covering a wide range of economic activities. The key sectors are engineering (esp. automotive, mechatronics), IT development, renewable energy, logistics, wood processing, life sciences and wellbeing. The activities of clusters in Austria in general are more intense than in Hungary.

In summary, challenges for both the R&D sector and the SMEs are different on the two sides of the border. Additionally, administrative barriers, concerning also the smooth operation of the labour market, are still hindering the development of stronger cross-border links between SMEs, as well as between research institutions and SMEs. Intermediary institutions that could help organise and manage such cooperation are not sufficiently embedded and their capacities are weak.

Digitalisation

Digitalisation means turning interactions, communications, business functions and business models into (more) digital form. This makes it a driver of increasing productivity in general, is considered as a common opportunity in the programme area. Digitalisation is backed up by strategies at European and national level. At regional level, it is ad-





dressed as an important cross-cutting issue relevant in many thematic contexts. Digitalisation is not equally advanced: in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021, Austria ranks 10th, Hungary ranks 23rd among 27 EU member states.

1.2.5.2 Lessons learned from 2014-2020

In 2014-2020, several projects with different thematic focus include activities related to **research and innovation**. The impact evaluation recommends including research as a horizontal tool in different thematic topics in a focused manner.

According to the 2014-2020 programme's impact evaluation, projects addressing **SME networks** have a limited durability in comparison with thematically more focused projects. In many cases the commitment of partners and beneficiaries ends with the funding. This led to the conclusion that pure SME projects without a clear focus have a lower possibility of achieving any impact. 2014-2020 projects mainly contributed to network development and better cooperation, rather than to any measurable results. The involvement of intermediary organisations has been considered very important in order to ensure take-up of the project results. However, those organisations must make sure they incorporate the project results into their systems. If they do not do this, the knowledge gained does not spread beyond the person originally involved in the project. The evaluation recommends considering SME support as a topic which could be covered horizontally and indirectly by thematic POs instead of directly focus on SME development, i.e. to support projects for SMEs rather than with SMEs. The evaluation also recommends supporting only projects with a clear strategic or thematic focus rather than funding large scale SME networks.

1.2.5.3 Joint investment needs

- An intensified cooperation of intermediary institutions serving the needs of SMEs and especially the ones linking SMEs and research institutions as well as their capacity building is needed to enable these organisations to effectively manage cooperation networks on the longer run. Cooperation shall address the still existing administrative barriers to cooperation of economic actors especially on the labour market, on devising the framework (strategies, actors, means) for a more comprehensive cooperation among SMEs and R&D institutions and on building capacities and lasting networks.
- The need for digitalisation relates to almost all aspects of life, e.g. teleworking, distance learning and e-government, and also enhances the efficiency of cooperation in all fields. Especially, smart solutions in the sectors of climate change adaptation, the management of natural assets, transport, education and tourism, are needed to increase the impact of the thematic interventions and improve digital literacy at the same time.
- Need for more innovative approaches in all topics have been identified. Innovation and scaling up experimental activities shall be encouraged horizontally in each intervention wherever such activities are present in the region.

1.2.5.4 Link with EUSDR

The IP AT-HU can also support the EUSDR Action Plan in its

- PA 7 "To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)", targeting, inter alia, at reverting brain drain, fostering brain circulation and further implementing Smart Specialization Strategies,
- PA 8 "To support the competitiveness of enterprises", targeting, inter alia, at improving digital skills as well as know-how transfer about Digital Innovations,





more intense involvement of the cluster representatives in the process improving the innovation capacity of female SMEs.

1.2.6 A greener and low-carbon Europe

1.2.6.1 Joint challenges, disparities and inequalities

Climate change adaptation

Due to climate change, Central Europe will face an increase in heat extremes and thus in energy demand for cooling, increasing risk of river floods and of forest fires as well as decrease in summer precipitation and in economic value of forests. The programme area will face similar challenges: the weather being overall warm and dry (annual precipitation 550-700 mm) and characterized by large seasonal differences and extreme values - hot summers and cold winters with little snow and low groundwater recharge.

The AT-HU programme area is assessed as having a medium to high environmental sensitivity to climate change. The impact of climate change is already perceivable in many ways and will be a huge challenge for the region's ecosystems, its population and its economy. Differentiations of the variety and extent of the climate change impacts within the region are still hard to predict. Although research is being carried out, the results of it are not translated into practically useable knowledge that could help regional stakeholders develop their tailor made measures or services regarding monitoring and adaptation.

Water management

The Austrian-Hungarian border region is characterized by common water resources regarding surface as well as groundwater bodies. All rivers in the region except the river Zala flow into the Danube, and almost all cross the Austrian-Hungarian border, having great parts of their watersheds in Austria. Danube and its tributaries play an important role in the region; larger border-crossing rivers are the Mur/Mura and Raab/Rába, while smaller rivers include Leitha/Lajta, Ikwa/Ikva, Güns/Gyöngyös, Pinka/Pinka. Water yield and sediment movements of these rivers may be very unsteady, and changes may occur quickly if weather conditions in the watershed change. Besides, on the Danube, sediments became a significant water management issue (under hydromorphological alterations), affecting navigation, biodiversity as well as drinking water supply, which call for actual measures in the region. Also, pollution (e.g. micro plastic) is a constant risk to be managed on each river.

Austria and Hungary also share several groundwater bodies near the border, which are at risk of contamination due to chemicals used in agriculture washed into the soil, as a consequence of the expected more intense precipitation. The weaknesses of rainwater drainage – like the existence of joint systems for waste- and rainwater - further exacerbate the problem.

Areas to be considered as focus areas of interventions due to needs and opportunities attached to them, include:

- The cross-border Lake Neusiedl/Fertő is one of few steppe lakes in Europe with substantial reed coverage and of high ecological value and protected by a range of measures. The high evaporation rate in summer causes deep water levels significant fluctuations in the lake level - in recent years this has become an increasing challenge due to climate change. The threatening drying up of the Lake Neusiedl/Fertő would cause substantial damage to the region's ecological and





also economic value; a supply with external water is under discussion but is – also due to the lake’s very special chemical composition – a complex and controversial issue and thus needs careful cross-border coordination. Apart from this, the lake is under a high pressure of use, which is why the joint Lake Neusiedl/Fertő strategy study was developed setting the base for common water management measures (e.g. reed management).

- The Waasen/Hanság and the Seewinkel/Fertőzug are ecologically valuable cross-border fen areas south eastern of Lake Neusiedl/Fertő. Water management and drainage measures to enable agriculture – and on the Austrian side also water abstraction from agriculture – have caused that the ambient conditions have changed and the wet areas, including the structure of the typical saline lakes are acutely endangered.
- The Kis-Balaton area (a territory under the Ramsar Convention) is a former part of Lake Balaton where the impact of subsequent drainage measures and landfills have recently been mitigated by effective restoration (including re-flooding) measures that resulted in restored sensitive wetland habitats and increased biodiversity in the area. Effective measures to maintain and further develop these processes - including a balanced and sustainable management of tourists’ flow in the sensitive areas – are sought for, as well as experiences of the restoration process can be shared with similar areas in the border region.
- The transboundary biosphere reserve Mura/Drava/Danube (in submission as 5 country UNESCO biosphere reserve) aiming at transforming the customary river management into a modern and ecological one, stopping river channelling and any further removal of gravel and sand from the rivers, restoring degraded river stretches and floodplain areas and halting any further construction plans of new hydropower dams along the Mura and Drava.

Water supply and wastewater management is at a high level in the Austrian regions and the Hungarian regions have caught up considerably in recent years. Minor gaps are still to be tackled in drinking water supply in some areas of Südburgenland, while in the Hungarian part of the region small municipalities of Vas and Zala still lack public sewerage network, mainly as isolated geographical location and small size of these settlements does not allow for an economically viable operation of the network.

Biodiversity

Unique, varied landscapes with special and typical fauna and flora habitats have developed in the region. Many of the region’s valuable eco-systems are protected as national parks, nature parks, Natura 2000 sites and/or landscape reserves, establishing core elements of a transnational biotope network e.g. for water bird migration. The joint management of large protected areas or biotope network systems is quite established. Also, there are several hot spots of physically linked protected areas across the border: in the North with the Lake Neusiedl/Fertő (National Park), in the middle with Geschriebenstein-Írottkő (Nature Park) and in the South with Raab/Őrség/Goričko (Nature Park) areas. Although not having direct border contacts to Austria, the Balaton-uplands National Park in the Hungarian part of the Programme Area is also committed to nature and habitat protection, mainly through awareness raising and nature-conscious tourism promotion activities performed in direct collaboration with all national parks in the Programme Area. The Austrian part of the programme area also has a national park not touching the border to Hungary: the National Park Donau-Auen, situated in Wien and Niederösterreich is the largest complete, ecologically intact natural riverine environment of its kind in Central Europe. Unteres Murtal Biosphere Reserve in Steiermark is also a potential target





area and beneficiary of cooperation projects. Even in well conserved habitats, appearance of invasive species represents a problem in fauna and flora.

Niederösterreich, Burgenland, Steiermark and Nyugat-Dunántúl can be considered as rural regions predominantly shaped by croplands and woodlands. They are increasingly confronted with drought. Among others (biodiversity impacts see below), this has an impact on agriculture and forestry (including hunting), as well as downstream industries such as wood- and food-processing, which play a similarly important role on both sides of the border region. The existence of large woodlands in the programme area (Zala, Vas, Steiermark, Wien) provides good opportunity for cooperation in the entire wood-related activity chain (research, including climate change adaptation, manufacturing, awareness raising, etc.).

Urban environments face an increased occurrence of urban heat islands, meaning that due to the high absorption of solar radiation on paved surfaces, heat storage by built-up structures, lack of vegetation etc., the cities are generally warmer than their rural surrounding, especially at night. This enhances heat stress, causes health risks for the urban population and reduces the quality of life. Several settlements in the programme area, including the Hungarian counties, larger cities and some smaller towns, as well as many cities on the Austrian side, have already developed their strategies to mitigate the effect of the climate change. However, experience in actions to cool down the urban environment by green and water areas is scarce and the use of green roofs, façades and application of reflective surfaces is only in the initial phase.

The border region has a very diverse business landscape with a large number of SMEs, which are especially threatened by the economic development in the light of COVID-19. It is also imperative that this segment of the economy becomes more resilient to future climate impacts and takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the transition to a green economy. At the same time, these businesses are well positioned to develop and sell products and services that strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities. A number of clusters are operational in the region that could play an intermediary role.

Austria has established pilot programmes for awareness raising at regional level, in Hungarian counties and larger cities the basic strategies are available, however, communication on the practical impacts of the climate is not intense and is uncoordinated, making awareness to climate change adaptation on local level very low level.

Circular economy

Austria is the European champion in the recycling sector in terms of recycling quota. In Hungary, awareness of this issue has increased significantly in recent years, but further efforts are to be made both to improve the ratio of recycled materials and to develop the institutional and financing framework. The differences regarding the stages of development and the approaches followed by the two countries constitute an explicit barrier to meaningful cross-border projects in this sector.

Energy

Awareness of energy issues and climate protection is more pronounced in Austria than in Hungary. Austria is one of the top countries in the EU, while Hungary is among the less performing MSs in this field. While the EU's ambitious climate targets will force all states to increase their share of renewable energies, the very different approaches of the two states limits the scope of potential cooperation to the extreme.





1.2.6.2 Lessons learned from 2014-2020

The impact evaluation has revealed that there was no demand for sectoral objectives related to the topic of **energy efficiency**.

All projects related to **climate change adaptation, risk prevention and water management** build on existing structures like the Austro-Hungarian Water Commission, contribute towards the implementation of general framework documents (e.g. EU Floods Directive), and/or are embedded in the work of mainly public authorities and research institutions. The durability of the projects is above average and the focus on specific cross-border problems and the trigger for cross-border expert exchange with Interreg funding mirrors the purpose of the Interreg approach. On this basis the evaluation strongly recommends to continue with projects addressing climate change adaptation/risk management and water management.

There is a long tradition of cross-border cooperation in the border region which generated improvements and knowledge in **nature conservation and environmental protection**. Evaluation has shown that the results of the projects are of high value but should be better embedded in the strategic and regulatory framework of the region.

Evaluation of projects in the field of **biodiversity** reveals that projects increased know-how, increased awareness, and enabled future research projects. The continuation of projects after funding ended show that there is a strong stakeholder interest in research, awareness raising and education regarding biodiversity and environmental protection. The results of the projects are of high value but should be better embedded in the strategic and regulatory framework of the region. Ambiguity between thematic focuses of tourism and the protection of natural sites has been detected. Cross-border cooperation between research institutions and organisations managing protected areas is important and needs to be supported further. An important aspect of cross-border cooperation could be overcoming the difference in legal and ownership frameworks and the impact of those on environmental protection.

1.2.6.3 Joint investment needs

Climate change adaptation

- Results of climate research need to be converted into practical implementation of tailor-made field surveys, monitoring and adaptation measures, with a focus on areas particularly affected, such as forestry and agriculture, tourism, SMEs, urban environment, construction and settlement development.
- Long periods of drought can cause considerable crop failures and increase the risk of wild-fires. In the border region has up to now been no increase in forest fires, but projections show that this risk will increase in future, posing an explicit threat to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods and human lives. The development and implementation of adaptation measures related to risk prevention and disaster resilience of natural risks with cross-border spillover effects are needed to reduce these risks.
- The severity of climate change requires public and private actors to work together in reducing vulnerability and adapting to the impacts. Education and awareness-raising as well as expert- and data-exchange in forestry, biodiversity, water management issues are needed to manage the impacts of climate change, enhance adaptive capacity, and reduce overall vulnerability.





- To cool down the urban environment by green and water areas, cost-effective, scientifically sound, practical and consistent solutions are needed to increase quality of life in a sustainable way in the region's cities and towns.
- The SMEs in the region need information and assistance regarding the availability and benefits of sustainable or adaptive technologies.

Water management

- Common measures need to be devised to manage the risks of water shortage of water bodies (lakes ponds, small rivers, etc.), with special emphasis on Lake Neusiedl/Fertő.
- In case of several surface waters ecological status is still a matter of concern, identification and implementation of the necessary measures to ensure good status in terms of hydromorphology (e. g. river continuity) or the prevention of pollution from diffuse and point pollution sources is essential.
- A number of rivers in the area, especially the Danube, show major problems in sediment balance due to their regulation, also leading to the deterioration of the ecological status. The phenomenon needs continuing coordination of analysis and approaches to solutions, even with pilot actions between Austria and Hungary.
- Cross-border groundwater bodies and thermal groundwater bodies are to be examined together in order to expand the recent knowledge and, based on this, to agree on the management measures and consensus stipulations.
- Intelligent irrigation systems in agriculture are needed to protect the surface water and ground water bodies (especially in ecological sensitive areas such as the Waasen/Hanság, Kis-Balaton or the Raab – Órség – Goričko area), as well as to ensure the future irrigation of agricultural land.
- Coordinated flood monitoring and -forecast systems are needed, as the border region is particularly expected to face an increasing risk of river floods.
- Small-scale local practices for retaining water – including rainwater – need to be developed and followed to tackle problems of extreme distribution of precipitation and water shortage.
- Advancement is needed in the areas of drinking water supply targeting Süd-burgenland and of wastewater treatment targeting small and isolated settlements in Hungary with proper, economically viable solutions.

Biodiversity

- Despite the undisputed importance of the biodiversity and the related eco-system services in the region and the contribution of a number of successful projects addressing such issues in the 2014-2020 period, the general public is still not sufficiently aware about these assets and what each one can do to preserve it. Further education and awareness raising is therefore needed in this field in order to better translate and disseminate the knowledge on nature protection.
- Ongoing land consumption and pressure of use due to the region's economic development caused by housing development, the construction of roads or tourism projects – additionally fired by climate change – bears increasing risks of habitat fragmentation, loss of biodiversity and reduced ecosystem services. In order to keep up the resilience of the habitats, there is a need to improve the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes, e.g. by establishing cross-border migration corridors and additional stepping stone biotopes helping to connect areas of habitat, allowing species move between them and to engage in genetic exchange as well as improving the permeability of migration barriers





(rail, road, weirs). Additionally, sharing local experiences on practices and solutions regarding the strengthening of the resilience of the habitats is needed to deepen the knowledge-base and speedup the application of effective methods.

- Climate change has a specific impact on eco-systems by changing the composition of fauna and flora, shifting the vegetation cycles and favouring pests. There is a need for more knowledge and exchange of experiences on neobiota (new animal and plant species) in the programme area, their influence on both protected and unprotected habitats and the related ecosystem services and possible measures to conserve biodiversity and species protection.
- Biodiversity is not to be seen as a detached, sectoral issue, but rather as an integrated one, being strongly influenced by human activities like agriculture, forestry, hunting, tourism, transport, water management or regional development. Thus, an integrated approach towards preserving the regions biodiversity considering those types of stakeholders and activities is needed to extend this issue to other relevant fields. This integrated approach is already being implemented in the nature and national parks. Continuation and extension of this experience is needed, so that it can serve as starting points for further development.

1.2.6.4 Link with EUSDR

The IP AT-HU can support the EUSDR Action Plan in its PA 4 of the EUSDR “To restore and maintain the quality of waters” targeting generally at realising of integrated river basin management measures in the Danube Region in line with the EU Water Framework Directive and with the International Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) in order to save human health and fresh-water ecosystems.

It can also contribute to the

- PA 5 “To manage environmental risks” targeting, inter alia, at addressing the challenges of water scarcity and droughts, providing and enhancing continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan and supporting the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region,
- PA 6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils” targeting, inter alia, at improving management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas and strengthening the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region.

1.2.7 A more connected Europe

1.2.7.1 Joint challenges, disparities and inequalities

While cross-border commuting in this border region is one of the most intense ones in Europe and cross-border tourism is emerging, clear gaps of the public transport have been identified especially in terms of intra-regional and cross-border accessibility. Without improvement further increase of motorised traffic is expected, causing high levels of air pollutants and emissions. This is contrary to the Air Quality Directive, having harmful consequences on environment, human health and economic performance. Also, the NECD reporting status 2019 finds Hungary (and to a lesser extent Austria) to be at high risk to miss several emission reduction commitments both for 2020-2029 and beyond 2030 required by the National Emission Ceiling Directive (NECD).





Attractiveness of existing public transport services can be increased via better coordination and improving them, including increasing multimodality and the use of information and communication technologies.

Institutional arrangements for the management of mobility services are different in Austria and Hungary: while mobility management on all levels has become a focus of transport policy in Austria within the last years, in Hungary the coordination of the various transport modes is managed at central level with no practical results applicable at the local level yet. While the Mobilitätszentrale Burgenland or the Mobility Management Service in Niederösterreich are institutions with practical experience in mobility management, in Nyugat-Dunántúl, the institutional background to the coordinative function is weak: the Közlekedéstudományi Intézet (KTI Institute for Transport Sciences) has relevant experiences in design and organisation of various aspects of mobility management and has a regional office in Szombathely (involved successfully in several EU-funded transport coordination projects), the Institute does not have any authority in relation to the provision of transport services. Lack of competent regional institution hinders the establishment of the tools for an effective regional level coordination (like joint ticketing system, harmonization of timetables, management of cross-border services).

Awareness, knowledge and expertise is not sufficiently available at local level to effectively organise mobility-related services. Some good practices developed under 2014-2020 programme – such as mobility checks of railway stations or municipality level mobility plans – could be used to enable local authorities to effectively plan and manage mobility services in their area.

Walking and cycling are extremely important elements of the integrated mobility services in the region. Besides their role as daily means of transport, both are important factors in the tourism and leisure industry of the region. However, their full potential is far from being exploited. Attractiveness of the walking and cycling infrastructure should be increased, in order to attract more regular and ad-hoc users.

There are regional disparities with regard to accessibility to the TEN-T core network: the Austrian and the northern Hungarian parts are well connected both in terms of rail and road, whereas accessibility of TEN-T of the southern part of the Hungarian area is less developed. However, ongoing large-scale road developments will very soon result in a much better connectedness of the main regional centres to the Hungarian motorway network and the reconstruction of the Hegyeshalom-Rajka line will fulfil TEN-T core network requirements.

1.2.7.2 Lessons learned from 2014-2020

In 2014-2020, projects aiming to improve **cross-border connectivity** focused too much on individual traffic. The main obstacles to mobility in the border regions are the missing public transport links, thus, projects should focus on public rather than individual transport, with the aim of reducing environmental pollution and improving direct connectivity across-borders, especially in the southern part of the region.

The project “Smart-Pannonia” covers a wide variety of different tasks aiming to serve the whole region. Results of the project – like pre-feasibility study for Oberwart – Szombathely rail link, the comprehensive study on the development of public transport links or the development of pilot local mobility strategies – can serve as starting point of actions for the programme. To look for the efficient take-up of results of projects has been recommended by the evaluation.





1.2.7.3 Joint investment needs

- A move towards a more efficient cross-border traffic which needs gradually building up a common management framework of transport services at regional level and which ensures that services are available in an integrated and border-crossing manner.
- Awareness and capabilities to organise mobility in an integrated manner at local level needs to be developed.
- Harmonisation of the railway and bus systems is needed in both technical and organisational aspects to improve cross-border connectivity.
- Improving efficiency and multimodality of the transport system is essential to shift mobility towards sustainability. Applications based on digital technologies are needed to offer easy-to-use services on various modes of transport, including on combination of various transport modes throughout a journey.
- The inter-regional cycling network has been improved over the last decade. Further potential to extend the use of this mode exists in organising common services and marketing of the network, as well as ensure access to stations, stops and transport information for cyclists.
- In areas where traffic flow does not make investments in public transport financially sustainable, smoother and more convenient access to public transport by car shall be facilitated so that the overall environmental and economic burden of motorized traffic gets reduced.

1.2.7.4 Link with EUSDR

The IP AT-HU can support the EUSDR Action Plan in its PA 1B "To improve mobility and intermodality – rail, road and air" targeting inter alia at supporting safe and sustainable transport and mobility in the Danube Region.

1.2.8 A more social and inclusive Europe

1.2.8.1 Joint challenges, disparities and inequalities

Labour market and employment

Labour costs differ dramatically comparing the Austrian and Hungarian part of the programme region. More than 80 000 Hungarians live in Austria, recent figures of EURO-STAT indicate that more than 56 000 Hungarians commuted to Austria in 2019, mostly to Burgenland, Wien, eastern parts of Niederösterreich or Steiermark, with increasing tendency.

Thus, labour market and employment issues have strong cross-border relevance. However, the risks of changes in this field, due to unforeseeable consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, threaten the previously good absorption capacity of direct interventions.

Education and lifelong learning

The regional population is well educated; the education infrastructure is good on both sides of the border. The share of early leavers from education and training is in all regions below the EU-average.

The prime location for high-quality education and research facilities within the Austrian-Hungarian border region are the cities of Wien, Wiener Neustadt and Graz, whereas in Hungarian counties – in spite of two universities that have the head offices and the





central campuses in the region – capacities are considerably weaker. Capacities, however, are present, so that cooperative developments with the participation of higher education institutions have a considerable potential in the region. Provision of accessible high-quality education could narrow the gap in terms of attractiveness of these concentrated hubs and the rest of the region, contributing to the increased competitiveness of the border region, as a whole.

Education is considered a tool that serves for multiple objectives in the Austria – Hungary border region. Experiences point out, that a more strategic approach to the approximation of outputs of the educational systems – especially vocational training and further trainings – would be beneficial to increase the integration of the cross-border labour market, therefore improve its responsiveness to changing needs. Current challenge is the alignment of the offer and capacities in training- and qualifications with needs of the labour market, with a focus on vocational training, further training, higher education diplomas, joint development and mutual recognition of qualifications. In general, however, this area lacks the joint strategic background.

Language barriers and still existing cultural differences in most of the segments of the population are the main obstacles of deepening cooperation in the border region. Intercultural learning approaches rank among the most effective ones to address these barriers and the existing prejudices and to foster changes in people's perspective and mindset. Projects that address cross-border subjects do not have a priority status in sectoral policies at national level.

Cooperation-willingness and trust

Effective cross-border cooperation requires a good level of trust between partners. Intercultural differences often bring about difficulties in establishing or maintaining the trust among the potential collaborators across the border. A clear improvement has been achieved in this field through a number of interventions of previous cross-border cooperation programmes. Experiences show that the participation of local and well-established civil organizations in projects in various sectors as well as projects with wide partnership tend to be effective in strengthening trust and willingness to cooperate. Networks created by projects, however, are often less durable than expected.

Healthcare and long-term care

The supply of hospital beds is not optimal in all areas of the region; especially in the rural areas of Hungary, but also in the Seewinkel region, the accessibility of hospitals is not always adequate. Accessibility of medical services is not evenly distributed either and tends to be not sufficient in rural areas or in remote, isolated small villages. This applies to both countries, but probably is a bigger problem in Hungary, where also at regional level 40 GP's practice are unfilled, further impairing living conditions locally. Resolving the bottlenecks in health care infrastructure is not a realistic target for the programme, but by the improvement of institutional cooperation it is possible to contribute (among others) to the interoperability of emergency services.

Social inclusion and poverty

The risk of poverty and social exclusion is unequally distributed throughout the region. In Wien, the relevant indicator is relatively high, while in other sub-regions the risk of poverty and social exclusion is not significant. However, Hungarian regional level data hides some intra-regional disparities: in some isolated small settlements with high proportion of ageing and unqualified population mostly situated in the north-eastern and south-western areas of Zala the risk of poverty can be high.





The problem of addiction including the addictive disorders is present in many communities – both in more urban and rural ones – and in many groups of the society on both sides of the border. Most vulnerable groups of the society are threatened most by addictive disorders, especially the ones belonging to groups threatened by poverty in the same time.

Tourism

The border region is rich in natural resources (e.g. hills, lakes, rivers, landscape and great variety of ecosystems, thermal water and spas) and common cultural heritage (e.g. cities, castles, music, festivals). These attractions and their combination generate stay and excursion tourism. Tourism is an important part of economy in all regions, and generates much regional value added for many sectors from agriculture to commerce.

Overnight stays have developed positively in all NUTS 2 regions between 2011 and 2018. The highest increases were recorded in Wien and Nyugat-Dunántúl. The share of foreigners in all regions except Wien remains below the EU-average. The bed occupancy rate is below the EU average everywhere except in Wien. Even without Wien, the tourism industry is more developed on the Austrian side: in terms of bed-places the Hungarian counties account for 22 % of the total regional offer (without Wien), whereas in terms of overnight stays the Austrian regions' share (excluding Wien) is 78 %.

Tourism is one of the branches most heavily affected by travel restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, substantial changes may occur in the whole tourism structure regarding both supply and demand. The reconstruction of tourism could be a good basis for cross-border cooperation. The changing preferences in the tourism sector offer further opportunities to expand tourism on the basis of the available assets, while, in the same time, environmental and social sustainability of operations have to have the same focus, as economic impacts.

1.2.8.2 Lessons learned from 2014-2020

In the long run projects have the potential to address the regional **labour market** if they are taken up by the general public and in some cases by SMEs and employees. But labour market challenges depend to a large extent on aspects outside the scope of the programme, and thus the impact of the programme will remain limited. The evaluation recommends addressing only projects with a clear focus and a strategic value for the region.

Education projects address subjects that have little attention at national level and thus need to be continuously supported by Interreg. Intercultural learning approaches in education rank among the most effective approaches to address barriers and prejudices, and to foster changes in perspective and mindset. The innovative character of such projects might be limited, but it is important to sustain such initiatives in Interreg programmes since quite often cross-border education initiatives lack political interest due to the dominance of national priorities.

The evaluation recommends continuing support of early years **learning of language**. Notwithstanding the need for innovation, it should be acknowledged that language barriers are the main obstacle in the border region and need to be continuously addressed in Interreg programmes. Projects that continue over several funding periods might be justified. Evaluation also recommends to implement people to people projects for trust-building.





Interventions in **tourism** need stronger strategic approach. Synergies should be used to increase the efficiency of individual activities and ensure better durability of the project results. Projects are still concentrated in the middle and northern part of the programme area. Effects and potential take-up of projects are not always visible or long-lasting. However, the take-up of project results will contribute to common understanding of, and an integrated, coordinated approach to green tourism. The evaluation recommends to continue addressing cultural and natural heritage either in combination with natural and environmental protection or assure that future projects will be embedded in a strategic framework.

1.2.8.3 Joint investment needs

- A more strategic approach to the approximation of outputs of the educational systems – especially vocational training and further trainings – is needed to increase the integration of the cross-border labour market, therefore, to improve its responsiveness to changing needs. For a more strategic approach, the need for an institutionalised cooperation has emerged.
- The development of a more intense cooperation in each segment of the society is still considerably hindered by the low-level knowledge of the language of the neighbouring community. Joint learning activities are needed to serve as catalysts to build mutual trust and raise awareness of communities to acknowledge and accept the values of others.
- Encouragement and support is needed for small local organisation (such as schools, sports clubs, cultural and other civic organisations) that are not or not yet prepared to manage full-blown Interreg projects to carry out small-scale local trust-building activities jointly.
- Substantial improvements in performance of the region in the field of innovation has been considered as key factor in increasing the regions' potential for competitiveness, including making the region attractive to young and talented people. In this respect, increasing the offer of high-quality education and training is needed in the region, based on the involvement of well performing institutions that could enable less developed regional actors to access and take part of processes leading to innovations.
- Better access of vulnerable groups to education is needed – including young people or people living in marginalized communities or in dominantly rural areas – to improve social and territorial cohesion of the region. Use of digital technologies in education improves both the efficiency and the outreach of these initiatives.
- To exploit the opening opportunities in the tourism sector improvement and moderate extension of the offer based on the natural resources and cultural heritage, increased and shared knowledge, better integration of the activities with other sectors (like agriculture, ecosystem services) as well as improved cross-border connectedness of attractions and destinations is needed, with strong focus on environmental and social sustainability.

1.2.8.4 Link with EUSDR

The IP AT-HU can support the EUSDR Action Plan in its PA 9 "To invest in people and skills", targeting, inter alia, at contributing to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, to increased higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems, to ensuring inclusive education and training and to closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions.





1.2.9 Cooperation governance

1.2.9.1 Joint challenges, disparities and inequalities

Institutional background for cross-border cooperation is still weak. Sustainability and lasting impact of implemented initiatives is hindered by the lack of organizations capable of maintaining their results. No joint organisation is operational in the region, cross-border networks are incidental, more oriented to cooperate in implementing joint projects than to carry out systemic and lasting activities. In many cases, institutional weaknesses hinder the development of joint development strategies, as their ownership and management cannot be tied to any organisational actor or network. As a consequence, the introduction of a more strategic approach is not possible, however, it would be absolutely needed to improve the effectiveness of the cooperation in key areas.

In the preparation phase, a strategic coordination in the following key areas were identified as especially relevant for the AT-HU region in a cross-border context:

- SME support and smart specialisation,
- labour market,
- health and long-term care services,
- digitalisation and digital connectivity,
- sustainable tourism.

Some elements of functionally coherent sub-regions can vaguely be identified in the programme area, with various thematic focus – like areas around national parks, or areas with similar transport needs or situation, or thematic interconnectedness of project activities of various fields – but identification lacks systemic strategic justification. To further advance in identification of any cross-border sub-regions, the wider thematic strategic framework needs to be established.

1.2.9.2 Lessons learned from 2014-2020

In the 2014-2020 programme, “Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration - Improving institutional cross-border cooperation in order to strengthen the integration” is a priority. All 2014-2020 projects could be seen relevant to this policy objective, since the cooperating project partners are mainly public institutions and organisations.

The impact evaluation reveals that the projects addressing “improving institutional cross-border cooperation in order to strengthen the integration” contribute a great deal to **cross-border cooperation between public administrations**, and some of those projects have already achieved joint agreements and common standards. A considerable proportion of the projects have contributed, or aim to contribute, to balancing governance capacities in the cross-border region. Most successful were projects with a specific focus. Projects with the aim of cooperation per se, without a clear focus, tend to fail in terms of effectiveness and impact. Thus, larger projects are not necessarily more effective. This is also supported by the results of the stakeholder consultation.

In any case, the tangible value of these projects lies in their durability and potential uptake after the project funding ends. Intangible benefits lie with the participants, though in many cases it remains an open question whether those participants are able to transfer the benefits in their organisational surroundings.

The evaluation recommends to continue with sporting projects and local people-to-people like projects. However, the implementation meets the needs of the region only if





appropriate projects are funded. Thus, projects have to have the potential to address pressing needs in the region, schemes under relevant specific objectives need to be open to small-scale people-to-people activities and the selection procedure needs to react flexibly to current needs. The evaluation also recommends to consider intangible results such as “cultural markers” as an important parameter in project evaluation. For projects aiming for cooperation among people, a simplified approach is recommended.

Conclusions of the impact evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme emphasize that a strategic umbrella would increase the added value of projects and the durability of their results in each priority or thematic area.

1.2.9.3 Joint investment needs

- Intermediary organisations and their networks need to be supported to enable them to build joint cross-border database, understand barriers of cooperation of SMEs and SMEs with research institutions and to devise effective strategies to tackle identified challenges concerning smart specialisation in the border region.
- Long-term strategy is needed to ensure the harmonic and sustainable development of the cross-border labour market, focusing on compiling relevant joint database on the cross-border labour market and reducing legal or administrative obstacles.
- Institutional cooperation needs to be established between Austrian and Hungarian stakeholders in health care and long-term care services to find forward-looking strategies and plans to make services more accessible in remote, close-to-the border-areas and to improve the emergency response capabilities of ambulance and rescue services in the programme area.
- A strategic framework for the region's tourism needs to be devised to assure synergies among future projects with a view on the recovery from the damages caused by COVID-19 pandemic, including the compilation and management of a joint database related to tourism.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
PO2	iv	A green and resilient border region (priority 1)	The AT-HU programme area is assessed as having a medium to high environmental sensitivity to climate change. The impact of climate change is already perceivable in many ways and will be a huge challenge for the region’s ecosystems, its





			<p>population and its economy, which can be addressed under this specific objective.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper AT-HU 2019 suggests addressing jointly natural risks with cross-border spillover effects such as those posed by river floods and forest fires. Annex D of the Country Report 2019 on Hungary identifies the need to promote climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience, in particular by an increased cross-border and transnational co-operation, in order to identify the most suitable climate adaptation, risk prevention and management measures, including sharing of best practices and developing harmonized data systems.</p> <p>The lessons learned and results show that projects related to climate change adaptation were already successfully implemented and form a very good basis for basis future cooperation.</p> <p>Within SO iv) it is possible to implement measures aimed at promoting and strengthening coordination and cooperation across the borders to better adapt to climate change impact and improve disaster risk management.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
PO2	v	A green and resilient border region (priority 1)	<p>The Austrian-Hungarian border region is characterized by common water resources regarding surface as well as groundwater bodies. Therefore, joint water management remains an important common issue which can be addressed under this specific objective.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper suggests addressing jointly natural risks with cross-border spillover effects such as those posed by river floods and forest fires. Annex D of the Country Report 2019 on Hungary identifies the investment need to “improve drinking water supply, water reuse, drinking water access in public spaces and for vulnerable and marginalized groups and protection of water sources”.</p> <p>Existing platforms and networks (e.g. permanent Austro-Hungarian Border Water Commission) can be taken up by the programme and better utilised to improve the programme implementation in this matter.</p> <p>Lessons learned show that the durability of projects related to water management is above average in comparison to other projects.</p> <p>Within SO v) it is possible to implement measures aimed at joint sustainable water management.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>





<p>PO2</p>	<p>vii</p>	<p>A green and resilient border region (priority 1)</p>	<p>Unique, varied landscapes with special and typical fauna and flora habitats have developed in the region, many of which are protected. These assets are under increasing pressure due to ongoing land consumption, pressure of use and climate change. In this context, environment protection and promotion of biodiversity remain important topics with respect to cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Austria.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper suggests continuing and deepening cross-border actions on nature as there are shared natural resources along the border (e.g. Neusiedler See/Fertő tó, the jointly managed nature park Geschriebenstein-Írott-kő and the 3-country site nature park Raab-Őrség-Goričko). The paper also recommends considering developing further green infrastructure, as there seems to be potential especially in some areas (extension of the Austrian core green infrastructure to Hungary).</p> <p>Annex D of the Country Report 2019 on Hungary identifies priority investments needs to enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure in urban environment and reducing pollution, and in particular to improve air quality and related monitoring and modelling and support for biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network in urban areas.</p> <p>A long tradition of cross-border cooperation in the AT-HU border region generated improvements in nature conservation and environmental protection and builds a solid base for future cooperation.</p> <p>Implemented projects on biodiversity increased know-how, increased awareness, and showed sustainability regarding ongoing cooperation after funding.</p> <p>Within SO vii) it is possible to implement measures to promote cooperation to reduce land use pressure and jointly manage settlements as well as protected areas in a more sustainable way.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
<p>PO3</p>	<p>ii</p>	<p>A better connected border region (priority 2)</p>	<p>While the main road and rail axes are well developed in the border region, there are clear gaps, especially in terms of intra-regional and cross-border accessibility in public transport. Fostering multimodal transport nodes with a focus on sustainable mobility and harmonised technical and organisational railway systems are an important issue for the region.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper suggests improving cross-border connectivity, in particular rail projects, which have been identified as potential priority investments, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intermodal measures (park&ride, bike&ride, access bike routes) or smaller measures (extension Gols) to accompany cross-border rail links • improvement of cross-border bus connections (e.g. Güssing-Szombathely, Oberwart-Szombathely) • multi-modal cross-border connections by providing safe and direct bike paths and bike parking facilities





			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check need of harmonised technical and organisational railway systems. <p>Annex D of the Country Report 2019 on Hungary identifies the need to promote sustainable urban mobility, in particular to investments reducing the negative externalities of transport, in particular congestion, emissions, and traffic accidents by fostering sustainable and accessible modes like regional/light railways, multi-modal transport, cycling, including cycle transportation on public transit services.</p> <p>Lessons learned show that a wide variety of different tasks aiming at sustainable mobility were tackled already, which need to be efficiently uptaken in the period 2021-2027.</p> <p>Within SO ii) it is possible to enable measures for a more sustainable regional and local mobility both in terms of services and infrastructure.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
PO4	ii	A competent border region (priority 3)	<p>Language barriers and still existing cultural differences in most segments of the population are the main obstacle of deepening cooperation in the border region. Thus language and intercultural education is to be considered as a central theme with high CBC relevance, especially language learning programmes and linking the education/qualification systems (joint or bilingual schools, recognition of qualifications).</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper recommends actions to strengthen and deepen cross-border cooperation related to educational institutions (both primary and secondary) taking into account the existence of language barriers and to support more extensive and structured language-learning activities as a vector for building trust but also as an employment-boosting factor. Annex D of the 2019 country report on Austria identifies the need to develop and implement access to life-long learning and to continuing vocational education. Annex D of the Country Report 2019 on Hungary identifies the need to improve the quality and labour market relevance of education and training and equal access to it, and in particular to strengthen basic skills, including digital skills in vocational education and training and general education, key competences and smooth transition to work.</p> <p>Lessons learned show that is hard to “mainstream” cross-border cooperation in education due to budgetary restrictions and focus on national priorities in both countries. Thus without support it is very likely that intensity of cooperation will drop. It should be acknowledged that language barriers are the main obstacle in the border region and need to be continuously addressed in Interreg programmes.</p> <p>Under this SO ii) joint measures can be implemented to increase foreign language competences as well as cultural skills on both sides of the border. Additionally, various cross-border interventions can be carried out to support synergies between vocational bodies to also address the labour shortage.</p>





			<p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
PO4	vi	A competent border region (priority 3)	<p>Tourism is an important part of economy in all regions of the AT-HU programme area, and generates much regional value added for many sectors from agriculture to commerce. Tourism is one of the branches most heavily affected by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will cause substantial changes in the whole tourism structure regarding both supply and demand. The reconstruction of tourism could be a good basis for cross-border cooperation.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper states a strong potential to continue cooperation projects in the area of tourism and natural and cultural heritage. The paper recommends continuing projects relating to tourism/natural and cultural heritage within a strategic context, involving stakeholders within a multi-governance context.</p> <p>Lessons learned show a long tradition in tourism cooperation although effects and potential take-up of projects are not always visible or long-lasting. Nevertheless, the results of the projects implemented in 2014-2020 are considered to contribute to a common understanding and an integrated, coordinated approach to green tourism.</p> <p>Within SO vi) it is possible to strategically implement measures supporting the regions tourism sector.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
ISO1	b	An integrated border region (priority 4)	<p>Institutional background for cooperation is still weak in the border region. Sustainability and lasting impact of implemented initiatives is hindered by the lack of organisations capable of maintaining their results. Enhanced institutional cooperation, strategic planning and reducing administrative barriers in various areas (such as digital connectivity, health or labour market) are important for the programme area.</p> <p>The Border Orientation Paper recommends strengthening cross-border structures and entities and engage them in planning and implementation of future cross-border measures. It is highly recommended by the paper to put in place mechanisms to finance smaller projects or people-to-people projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civil cohesion of the cross-border region.</p> <p>Annex D of the 2019 country report on Austria identifies strengthening the capacity of beneficiaries, stakeholders, social partners, civil society organisations and other bodies as a factor for effective delivery of Cohesion policy.</p> <p>Lessons learned show that cooperating project partners are mainly public institutions and organisations independently from the specific objective they are implemented under. Pro-</p>





			<p>jects aiming to improve institutional cross-border cooperation contribute a great deal to cross-border cooperation between public administrations, and some of those projects have already achieved joint agreements and common standards. A considerable proportion of the projects have contributed, or aim to contribute, to balancing governance capacities in the cross-border region. Most successful were projects with a specific focus.</p> <p>Within the specific objective b) it is possible to enhance efficient public administration and this way reducing legal and other obstacles as well as to develop and deepen legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions in the programme area including people-to-people projects.</p> <p>Due to the nature and size of the planned operations, support will be provided by grants.</p> <p>Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.</p>
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2 Priorities

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

2.1 Priority 1: A green and resilient border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1 Climate change adaptation (PO2 (iv))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to improve the border regions preparedness and resilience towards climate change impacts, including natural hazards with cross-border spillover effects.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- bridging the gap between climate research and practical implementation (what does the state-of-the-art mean for the region?), with a focus on areas particularly affected such as nature and biodiversity, forestry and agriculture, tourism, SME, urban environment and settlement development or health
- supporting risk prevention and disaster resilience to natural hazards with cross-border spillover effects, imposed by climate change, helping to mitigate threats to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods and human lives
- finding sustainable, replicable, cost-effective, scientifically sound and consistent solutions for climate resilient cities and communities
- empowering the regional diverse business landscape to adapt their business models, products and services ("Greening the economy"), strengthening the SMEs' resilience to climate change impacts.

Related types of action are:

Type of action 1.1 Cross-border research as well as data collection and exchange to improve know-how and preparedness towards climate change impacts

The aim of the type of action is to enhance know-how and preparedness towards climate change impacts and risks on regional and local level with a special focus on joint research, the application of research results in the area as well as creating personal and digital interfaces. Indicative actions:

- studies and analysis to better understand the interrelation of vulnerability and adaptive capacity or to better explore the regions natural "buffers", for example the reed belt of the Neusiedler See/Fertő





- data monitoring and set-up of common data bases on climate-related risks in the border region, such as extreme weather, heat or pests as well as on the impact of adaptation actions
- citizen science activities, for example phenological observations
- developing research networks on climate change enabling a sustainable and long-term collaboration across the border
- workshops, conferences, discussion panels on possible climate-change adaptation measures and related topics in the context of climate change involving different types of target groups and stakeholders on local and regional level also using digital means and social media

Type of action 1.2 Developing cross-border strategies, management and action plans addressing climate change impact, risks and natural hazards in the border region

The aim of the type of action is to boost strategic development across the border to allow for a better adaptive capacity to climate change and climate change-induced risks in the border region especially regarding sectors or areas particularly affected such as nature and biodiversity, forestry and agriculture, tourism, SME, cities and municipalities or health. Indicative actions:

- action plans defining goals and specific measures how to address future climate change impacts
- interdisciplinary strategies for climate related actions such as soil protection or green and open spaces for recreation and leisure uses under changing climatic conditions
- risk management concepts in specific sectors in the cross-border region (e.g. nature and biodiversity, agriculture and forestry, tourism, spatial planning, housing, services and infrastructure or health), also involving emergency response organisations
- plans and strategies related to early warning systems for extreme weather events

Type of action 1.3 Implementing actions including small-scale investments in climate change adaptation and mitigation measures

The aim of the type of action is to promote the implementation of replicable, innovative actions helping to adapt to climate change impacts on regional and local level, building on and providing good practices at local, national and EU level. Indicative actions:

- specific actions at local level such as plantings of drought-resistant species or shading measures in residential areas
- develop and adapt as well as assist in the application of sustainable, climate-friendly and adaptive products, technical processes and services, for example modified and innovative techniques for wood processing taking into account potential changes in wood quality and tree species or "climate change-adapted architecture"
- development and adaptation of digitalisation models oriented towards climate resilience
- actions implementing new research results into practice
- skill development activities addressing local business actors in order to increase the resilience of production, sales, and operational infrastructure of the SMEs in the region
- developing tool boxes with different sustainable adaptation measures for local business and communities aiming at reducing heat islands in the urban area,





cooling buildings or adapting infrastructure towards more energy efficiency and reduction of CO2 emission

- civil protection pilot actions, for example early warning systems for extreme weather events or trainings to improve the preparedness of the region against climate change related hazards
- joint actions building stronger links between associations/organisations responsible for risk prevention and management at local level (e.g. associations of fire-fighters)

Type of action 1.4 Awareness raising on climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially on local level

The aim of the type of action is to raise the awareness of – predominantly local – decision makers and the wider public on climate change impacts and related adaptation measures. Indicative actions:

- general awareness raising activities addressing the wider public, such as gaming events, urban gardening activities, fieldtrips, trainings, school events or exhibitions
- (digital) seminars or other specific information activities addressing local decision makers
 - on climate-related health risks such as heat, the spread of allergenic and toxic species or outbreaks of infectious diseases, taking into account the learnings of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - on civil protection measures and on natural hazards

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA5 action 1, 3 and 5 and shall contribute for example to the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities in line with the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, Goal 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and Goal 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the EU Adaptation Strategy (2021), the Austrian Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation (2017) or the Hungarian National Plan for Energy and Climate 2020.

2.1.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob-ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	iv	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	26





1	iv	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	5
1	iv	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participations	0	279
1	iv	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	7

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	iv	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	18	Monitoring	
1	iv	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring	
1	iv	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participations	0	2021	84	Monitoring	
1	iv	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled	Solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring	





			by or- ganisa- tions						
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2.1.1.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from adaptation and mitigation measures,
- public and private institutions in the programme area, especially those in the field of forestry and agriculture, civil protection, tourism and economic development, urban environment and regional development by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience, such as
 - local, regional or national public authorities, including EGTCs,
 - sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, National Park Directorates, environmental associations or energy agencies,
 - service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services such as transport providers,
 - interest groups including NGOs such as volunteer rescue teams or fire brigades,
 - institutions for higher education and research,
 - educational institutions, training centres and schools,
 - economic development institutions,
- a wide range of further public and private institutions in the programme area taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience to climate change impacts, such as public service providers or SME.

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The whole programme area is affected by climate change and thus actions can be implemented throughout the entire area. Territories that turn out to be particularly vulnerable, for example valuable agricultural land, densely populated regions or protected areas with a sensitive ecosystem, are to be given priority. Additionally, urban and rural areas will be affected differently, so measures need to consider the specific challenges and characteristics of the territory they are applied to.

No territorial tools will be used.

2.1.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)





The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ²	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	iv	171	Enhancing co-operation	341 784
1	ERDF	iv	58	Climate change adaptation: floods and landslides	4 443 196
1	ERDF	iv	60	Climate change adaptation: storms and drought	2 050 706

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	iv	01	Grant	6 835 686

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	iv	32	Other types of territories targeted	6 835 686

2.1.2 Sustainable water (PO2 (v))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

² For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





The aim of this specific objective is to ensure the sustainable management of water bodies in the border region and to promote the sustainable use of water resources, considering water quality, water ecology, flood hazards, water scarcity, wastewater treatment and drinking water supply.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective by the following approaches:

- coordinated monitoring and implementing measures suitable to tackle the challenges imposed on the border region's surface, thermal and ground water bodies by human intervention (such as agriculture, intensive land use, river regulations, tourism) and climate change
- supporting joint flood monitoring, forecast and protection as the border region is particularly expected to face an increasing risk of river floods due to climate change
- enhancing the knowledge and capacities of policymakers and stakeholders as well as the general public about sustainable water management issues promoting sustainable use of water resources

Related types of actions are:

Type of action 2.1. Data collection, monitoring and analysis as well as (inter-disciplinary) know-how exchange to improve the knowledge on water quality and ecology, on sustainable water management as well as on flood hazards

The aim of the type of action is to improve the knowledge of and coordination among relevant stakeholders and decision makers to manage cross-border water bodies, considering water quality, water ecology, flood hazards, water scarcity, wastewater treatment and drinking water supply. Indicative actions:

- jointly developing methods for monitoring and modelling of river morphology and habitat quality
- studies, monitoring and modelling activities for example on the water balance of surface waters, cross-border impact of water abstraction on the transboundary groundwater bodies or sediment transport, or on the impact of human intervention (agriculture, tourism...)
- interdisciplinary know-how exchange and show-how e.g. on innovative irrigation measures in sensitive areas
- improving capabilities and skills of relevant stakeholders to make better use of digitization and digital connectivity regarding sustainable water management
- improving capabilities and skills on local water reprocessing possibilities
- know-how exchange, data collection and analysis for integrative river management or on wastewater treatment, especially in remote areas

Type of action 2.2 Developing strategies and action plans for a more sustainable water management in the border region





The aim of the type of action is to boost strategic development across the border to allow for sound water bodies and a more sustainable water management in the border region, involving also other relevant sectors such as nature protection or tourism. Indicative actions:

- strategies on specific water management measures addressing for example (thermal) water resources, water quality, river restoration or the hydromorphology of the regions' water bodies
- interdisciplinary strategies addressing more sustainable land use to reduce impacts on water quality as well as ground water level, involving other relevant sectors
- strategies or action plans on improving the regional fresh and drinking water supply in a more sustainable way
- strategies and action plans for flood warning systems

Type of action 2.3 Implementing actions including small-scale investments promoting the sustainable water management and sustainable use of water resources

The aim of the type of action is to promote implementing measures for monitoring, protecting and improving the regional surface and ground water bodies and contributing to a sustainable use of water resources including access to clean drinking water. Indicative actions:

- implementing (integrated) monitoring systems on border crossing rivers
- implementing flood warning systems
- measures addressing biodiversity in water management for example by revitalisation of ecological niches
- measures improving the ecological status of the water bodies and ensuring long-term continuity
- application of replicable good practices enhancing the drinking water supply in rural communities
- measures aiming at improving the groundwater management such as small-scale local practices for retaining water, including rainwater and at developing sustainable management practices of thermal water resources, replicable as feasible
- establishing a know-how exchange centre on integrative water management
- education and awareness raising measures of the general public on sustainable use of water resources also by using digital means and social media, such as field trips or (digital) exhibitions
- implementing actions contributing to the execution of the EU Water Framework Directive, the Groundwater Directive and the Flood Directive

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA4 Action 1, 3, 4 as well as PA5 Action 1 and 2, and shall contribute for example to best management practices, to the implementation of the DRBMP and its Joint Programme of Measures, to preventing and reducing water pollution, to reducing knowledge deficits related to protecting water resources and safeguarding drinking water supply as well as to enhance the capacities, extend the coverage of basin-wide or regional forecasting and warning systems, and develop rapid response procedures. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 6 "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" and Goal 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".





All implemented projects shall consider and be in line with related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the EU Water Framework Directive (2000), the Groundwater Directive (2006), the EU Floods Directive (2007), Adaptation strategies to climate change for Austria's water management (2011) or the Hungarian National Water Strategy (2017).

2.1.2.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 7: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	v	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	2	23
1	v	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	5
1	v	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	6

Table 8: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	v	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	23	Monitoring	
1	v	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	4	Monitoring	





1	v	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	5	Monitoring	
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2.1.2.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are:

- the population in the programme area, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, directly benefitting from access to safe and reliable drinking water supply as well as to high quality, ecological sound surface waters
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from access to high quality, ecological sound surface and groundwaters, for example in the field of agriculture, fishery, tourism, sports
- the population and regional enterprises, communities and other infrastructure and public service providers by being better protected from flood risks
- public and private institutions in the programme area responsible for water management, agriculture, environment, infrastructure and public services by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions for a more sustainable water management, such as
 - local, regional or national public authorities, including EGTCs
 - sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, National Park Directorates, environmental associations or energy agencies
 - service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services such as supply and disposal utilities
 - interest groups including NGOs such as nature parks
 - institutions for higher education and research
 - educational institutions, training centres and schools
 - economic development institutions

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme area. This applies especially to measures aiming at a more sustainable use of water resources.

In the field of sustainable water management and, if applicable, in flood prevention, the focus of intervention shall be given to the

- cross-border Lake Neusiedl/Fertő as one of few steppe lakes in Europe with substantial reed coverage and of high ecological value,





- Waasen/Hanság – Seewinkel/Fertőzug as an ecological valuable cross-border fen area,
- Kis-Balaton area (a territory under the Ramsari Convention),
- transboundary biosphere reserve Mura/Drava/Danube (in submission as 5 country UNESCO biosphere reserve) aiming at transforming the customary river management into a modern and ecological one,
- border crossing rivers and their water sheds, such as the Danube and its tributaries, the Mur/Mura and Raab/Rába, Leitha/Lajta, Ikwa/Ikva, Güns/Gyöngyös, Pinka/Pinka,
- areas featuring thermal water in Mittelburgenland, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Zala
- transboundary groundwater bodies

Regarding activities aiming at enhancing drinking water supply and wastewater treatment options, rural areas in Südburgenland, Vas and Zala shall be in the focus.

No territorial tools will be used.

2.1.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 9: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ³	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	v	171	Enhancing co-operation	289 966
1	ERDF	v	64	Water management	5 509 365

Table 10: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	v	01	Grant	5 799 331

³ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





Table 11: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	v	32	Other types of territories targeted	5 799 331

2.1.3 Nature protection and biodiversity (PO2 (vii))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to preserve and restore biodiversity in sensitive areas as well as to improve the cross-border connectivity of protected areas, biotopes and related ecosystem services also as an essential contribution to climate mitigation.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of action contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- gaining knowledge about the regions’ ecological status and threats as well as developing and demonstrating innovative measures suitable to tackle the challenges imposed by pressure of use focused on preserving and restoring biodiversity in sensitive areas, improving the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes and related ecosystem services also as an essential contribution to climate mitigation
- integrating biodiversity and reducing pollution into other sectors like agriculture, forestry, education, hunting, tourism, transport, water management or regional development in order to establish a common approach for a clear focus, use of synergies and more sustainable results
- fostering knowledge transfer and awareness raising on nature protection, biodiversity and related ecosystem services among decision makers, stakeholders and the general public at regional/local level aiming at changes of attitude and behaviour

Related types of action are:

Type of action 3.1. Data collection and research as well as (interdisciplinary) know how exchange to gain better knowledge about the region’s ecological status and threats

The aim of the type of action is to improve the knowledge of and coordination among relevant stakeholders to manage nature protection, green infrastructure and pollution, including of stakeholders other than environmental institutions. Indicative actions:





- jointly developing synchronised methods for monitoring and surveys or setting up joint data bases for example on invasive or migratory species or the impact of actions taken
- citizen science activities (bird watching etc.)
- research and know-how exchange in the field of circular economy and green technology
- workshops, conferences, field trips or other forms of (digital) know-how exchange
 - among research institutions, public and private institutions in the field of nature conservation and local and regional authorities to gain knowledge about local and regional biodiversity and the status of protected areas or subjects of protection (e.g. endangered plants, animals or biotopes) in the cross-border region.
 - between sectoral stakeholders, research institutions and decision makers in order to learn best available technologies e.g. in reducing ammonia emission or GHG emission
 - between the management of nature parks, national parks and other protected areas of the programme area ("nature park academy network")
 - improving capabilities and skills on biodiversity and reducing pollution of all relevant stakeholders, such as municipalities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, transport, education, water management, regional planning and local SMEs, also by implementing enhanced and innovative digital tools

Type of action 3.2 Developing strategies and action plans to enable a positive development of nature and biodiversity in the cross-border region

The aim of the type of action is to boost the strategic development across the border to enable joint protection and preservation approaches, also taking into account a variety of society’s demands, contributing to societal health, human well-being, and the green economy. Strategic documents will be developed with the participation of the relevant stakeholders, to enhance their commitment to connect to and act according to the developed strategies in a longer run. Indicative actions:

- (interdisciplinary) strategies on the conservation and valorisation of special habitats ("protecting by using") for example meadow orchards or addressing the preservation of autochthonous plant varieties and livestock breeds (agrobiodiversity)
- strategies addressing the joint management of cross-border nature parks or establishing common goals in managing sensitive areas, for example grasslands
- action plans for developing model regions of the circular economy and bioeconomy
- strategies on awareness raising measures on biodiversity, green infrastructure or reducing pollution

Type of action 3.3 Implementing actions including small-scale investments that contribute to protecting nature or reducing pollution

This type of activity aims at the implementation of tangible, sustainable and replicable measures contributing to preserve and restore biodiversity, green infrastructure or to reduce pollution, including also circular economy and green technology approaches. Indicative actions:





- creating, improving or restoring valuable habitats for animal and plant species, for example meadows, orchards, ponds or sandy areas, establishing green infrastructure for example community gardens or green walls, establishing small elements enhancing biodiversity, for example stone walls, piles of dead wood or bushes
- developing business models to exploit the market potential for maintaining and improving ecosystem services and green infrastructure
- pilot projects in the field of circular economy and green technology
- technological digitalisation models oriented towards sustainable development and resource awareness
- actions integrating the topic of sustainability in the education system, including vocational training
- developing tool boxes with measures for local business and communities aiming at adapting material management towards circular economy
- implementing actions contributing to the implementation of the Updated Bioeconomy Strategy and the European Green Deal

Type of action 3.4 Awareness raising activities on the need of nature protection and reducing pollution at local and regional level

The aim of the type of action is to improve the awareness of decision makers and stakeholders, local actors and of the general public towards biodiversity, green infrastructure and related ecosystem services, as well as towards reducing pollution, aiming at changes of attitude and behaviour. Indicative actions:

- improving the knowledge and level of acceptance on environmental issues, for example by guided tours or other informal training events (like summer schools, camps, urban or private gardening events etc.), or using digital means and social media
- information events such as exhibitions or field trips on the role of traditional cultivation techniques and knowledge in preserving biodiversity

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA6 Action 3, 4, 5, and 7 and shall contribute for example to improve the management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas, to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats, to reduce the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region or to maintain and restore Green Infrastructure elements. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, Goal 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” and Goal 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, especially the European Green Deal (2019), including sub-strategies such as Farm to Fork, Circular Economy Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy 2030, EU Climate Strategies and targets, as well as the Updated Bioeconomy Strategy.

2.1.3.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)





Table 12: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob- ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	vii	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	26
1	vii	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	5
1	vii	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	7
1	vii	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participations	0	207

Table 13: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	vii	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	18	Monitoring	
1	vii	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring	
1	vii	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled	Solutions	0	2021	5	Monitoring	





			by or- ganisa- tions						
1	vii	RCR85	Partici- pations in joint actions across borders after project comple- tion	Partici- pations	0	2021	62	Monitor- ing	

2.1.3.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution for example in the field of agriculture, forestry, tourism and water management
- public and private institutions in the programme area for example in the fields of nature protection, forestry, education, hunting, tourism, transport, water management or regional development, material management or green economy by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions, such as
 - local, regional or national public authorities, including EGTCs
 - sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, National Park Directorates, environmental associations or energy agencies
 - service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services such as transport providers
 - interest groups including NGOs such as nature parks
 - institutions for higher education and research
 - education and training organisations including kindergarten
 - economic development institutions

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region. This applies especially to awareness raising activities, as well as to measures aiming at preserving and enhancing green infrastructure as an essential contribution to climate mitigation and nature protection, and to measures aiming at reducing pollution being crucial both in the urban and rural areas.





Regarding preserving and restoring biodiversity, a special focus shall be given to the region’s sensitive and protected areas such as the nature and national parks or Natura 2000 sites as core elements of a transnational biotope network, and the areas interlinking them as they are crucial to enhance the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes and related ecosystem services. Additionally, also not protected areas with valuable natural assets, particularly affected by environmental pressure and/or having potential for restoring the region’s biodiversity are to be given priority.

No territorial tools will be used.

2.1.3.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 14: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ⁴	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	vii	171	Enhancing co-operation	326 715
1	ERDF	vii	79	Nature and biodiversity	6 207 587

Table 15: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	vii	01	Grant	6 534 302

⁴ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





Table 16: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	vii	32	Other types of territories targeted	6 534 302

2.2 Priority 2: A better-connected border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.2.1 Sustainable transport (PO3 (ii))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to harmonise and improve smart, safe, and sustainable regional and local mobility offers both in terms of services and infrastructure.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- better organisation and coordination of different modes of transport including a common management framework of transport services (“cross-border mobility platform”) to enhance smart, safe, active and sustainable cross-border mobility services
- coordinated closing the gaps in sustainable mobility infrastructure (especially daily cycling and walking infrastructure) contributing to a better cross-border multimodality and public transport connectivity
- fostering knowledge and awareness on smart, safe, active and sustainable mobility on local level aiming at changes of attitude and behaviour towards rail and bike (e-bike) and walking to increase multimodality of transport

All actions are essential contributions to the mitigation of the impacts of the climate change by reducing the environmental burden of mobility.

Related types of action are:

Type of action 4.1 Cross-border data collection and know-how exchange on cross-border traffic patterns and the mobility behaviour of the population in the programme region





The aim of the type of action is to improve the knowledge needed to harmonise and enhance cross-border sustainable mobility services of stakeholders and decision makers in the programme area. Indicative actions:

- collection and harmonisation of traffic data, especially commuting and employment data, passenger surveys and floating phone data, calibration with other mobility data
- setting up a joint database of mobility-related data contributing to the operation of a cross-border mobility platform
- joint research and cooperation of research institutions exploring further perspectives of intelligent (“smart”) mobility in the programme area
- implementing a model region for mobility panels measuring the mobility behaviour of the population of a specific area and thus create reliable figures for discussion and planning processes (e.g. an app)
- workshops and conferences on cross-border sustainable mobility

Type of action 4.2 Developing strategies and action plans aiming at a better organisation and linking of different modes of sustainable transport

The aim of the type of action is to boost strategic development across the border to allow for better organised and more sustainable mobility services, enhanced cross-border multimodality as well as improved public transport and bike connectivity for commuting and touristic travel across the border. Indicative actions:

- establishing a long-term strategy, a feasibility analysis, an action plan necessary to operate a coordinative forum (“cross-border mobility platform”), also integrating results of previous projects, facilitating the cooperation of potential members of the platform, such as transport service providers, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders
- outlining and approving at least one pilot joint sub-regional mobility strategy
- elaborating concepts on intelligent traffic management services on roads and border crossings that allow for dynamic management of traffic capacities to minimize vehicle emission and reduce traffic congestion (e.g. by providing information for road management bodies and road users) and improve road safety
- elaborating local and sub-regional park&ride/bike&ride concepts, accessibility studies and integrated mobility concepts and offers, including integrating e-mobility and micro-level public transport solutions, ride sharing, cycling and walking into these concepts

Type of action 4.3. Implementing actions including small-scale investments to better connect regional and local public transport and cycling infrastructure and to enhance the sustainability, multimodality and safety of cross-border mobility

The aim of the type of action is to promote the implementation of sustainable measures enabling or encouraging people (mainly tourists and commuters) to travel safer and more sustainable in the programme area or across the border, including the provision of useful (digital) tools that help them do so. Indicative actions:

- identifying and planning sustainable technical solutions needed for harmonisation of the railway systems or bus routes across the border
- preparing (planning, feasibility studies, technical plans, etc.) and implementing small-scale pilot investments with high demonstrative effect, using, wherever possible, existing infrastructure





- in cycling and walking infrastructure (for example shortcuts or safe crossings),
- in public transport infrastructure (for example guidance systems),
- or in measures that connect rail with other modes of transport (for example park/bike & ride places, bike rentals at stations or ride sharing solutions for the last mile) based on the result of "multimodality checks"
- elaborating and implementing community-level mobility checks, small-scale (city-, functional urban area, or settlement-level) sustainable transport development plans and a related provision of training for "Mobility Officers" (persons taking care of mobility issues on local level)
- developing and implementing technical assistance to the mobility platform's participants to enable them to work in framework of the platform and to build technical capabilities of its own
- developing manuals, evaluation concepts or implementation handbooks for local mobility projects
- developing and testing of innovative modes of transport like ride sharing solutions, Mobility On Demand services, etc.
- developing, testing and implementing systems, services and IT solutions providing cross-border information on all available modes of transport and helping to combine various means in CB journeys
- awareness raising actions at local level to accelerate the shift towards smart, active and sustainable mobility and to increase awareness of transport safety in a broad sense, also related to safe use of the railway, safe railway crossings, design of road space (enabling safe use by all)

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA 1B Action 5, 7 and 8, and shall contribute for example to new sustainable solutions to change the mobility patterns of people in the border region, to intelligent traffic systems or increased road safety. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and Goal 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on European, regional and national level, such as the Air Quality Directive (2008), the National Emissions Reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive (2016), the Overall Transport Plan and the Integrated National Climate and Energy Plan in Austria and the National Strategy for the Development Transport Infrastructure and the National Plan for Energy and Climate 2020 in Hungary.





2.2.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 17: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob-ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2	ii	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	21
2	ii	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	2
2	ii	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	4

Table 18: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	ii	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	15	Monitoring	
2	ii	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	1	Monitoring	
2	ii	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring	





2.2.1.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are:

- The population in the programme area directly benefitting from better – more convenient, safer and greener - mobility solutions. Special focus is on daily commuters and visitors of tourism destinations of the region, including the visitors and workers crossing the border
- Public and private institutions in the programme area, especially those involved in the coordination and provision of transport services and local and regional public authorities, by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions developed in the actions, such as
 - local, regional or national public authorities, including EGTCs
 - sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, National Park Directorates, environmental associations or energy agencies
 - service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services such as transport providers
 - interest groups including NGOs
 - institutions for higher education and research
 - educational institutions, training centres and schools
 - economic development institutions

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region.

No territorial tools will be used.

2.2.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.





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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 19: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ⁵	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	ii	171	Enhancing co-operation	2 050 058.5
2	ERDF	ii	120	Digitising transport	2 050 058.5

Table 20: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	ii	01	Grant	4 100 117

Table 21: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	ii	32	Other types of territories targeted	4 100 117

2.3 Priority 3: A competent border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.3.1 Education and training infrastructure (PO4 (ii))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to increase the offer of mutually accepted high-quality education and training, encompassing also digital competences, as well as of learning activities fostering language and cultural competences in the border area.

⁵ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- supporting strategically coordinated learning activities serving as catalysts to build mutual trust and raise awareness of communities to acknowledge and accept the values of others, fostering language and cultural competences
- supporting harmonisation of the vocational education and training systems, tackling the lack of skilled work force and increasing the offer of high-quality education and training, encompassing also digital competences, with a focus on vulnerable groups in the programme area, for example youth and marginalized communities.

Related types of actions are:

Type of action 5.1. Cross-border research and data collection as well as developing strategies to improve coordinated decision making on education and training issues across the border

The aim of the type of action is to create a solid base of information on main characteristics of training needs and the training offer as well as create a strategic framework for development in the border region, in order to enable both regional decision-makers and regional stakeholders (such as educational institutions, training service providers) to take coordinated decisions on education and training issues. Indicative actions:

- data collection and research on competences and training possibilities in the programme area, especially on language and cultural competences as well as regarding digitalisation and sustainability
- assessment and identification of needs of vulnerable groups in the programme area
- setting up and operating joint database(s) of sub-regional data on educational services, needs and projects
- conducting feasibility analysis on the development of institutional structures serving cross-border coordination for education and training on a longer run
- developing sub-regional cross-border education and training strategies and action plans

Type of action 5.2. Implementing actions in cross-border education and training

The aim of the type of action is to help stakeholders to jointly develop and implement methods and tools enabling them to design and provide more effective training and educational services with a special focus on digitalisation. Indicative actions:

- building and operating digital platforms for cross-border learning, skills-development and student-exchange
- developing and testing specific and innovative (digital) approaches, methods and training tools





- for various target groups in line with lifelong learning approach, focusing on key areas, such as language- and intercultural trainings, environmental consciousness and protection, climate change, various aspects of sustainability, the use of digital technologies
- supporting SMEs including start-ups in their digital transformation and environmental consciousness, helping to restructure and revitalise sectors most heavily dependent on traditional industries and support the economic diversification of rural areas, especially in the fields of green technologies, renewable energy sources and eco-tourism
- for work-based learning practices (like dual or triple training systems) in all sectors
- in job orientation, especially in sectors relevant for the programme area (for example automation, digitalisation, robotics, green jobs...)
- developing and promoting methods of civil society engagement in actions in the field of education, training and lifelong learning

Type of action 5.3. Implementing joint training actions focusing on language- and intercultural aspects as well as labour-market needs

The aim of the type of action is to deliver formal and informal training events to enhance the language and intercultural competences of the local population and to develop skills of local and regional workforce, applicable on the labour-market of both countries with a special focus on digitalisation, taking into account formal, non-formal and informal education approaches. Specific tools that ensure proper access of vulnerable groups to education – such as innovative approaches to learning, enhanced digitization or tailor-made contents – will be preferred. Indicative actions:

- developing and delivering training courses, formal or informal training events for a wide range of people to improve their language and intercultural competences (all ages, including kindergarten age and seniors)
- developing and delivering trainings enhancing the competences among business actors in the region regarding key areas like digitalisation, innovation, adaptation to climate change impacts, environmental awareness, helping to restructure and revitalise sectors most heavily dependent on traditional industries and supporting the economic diversification of rural areas, especially in the fields of green technologies, renewable energy sources and eco-tourism
- developing and delivering trainings strengthening the capacity of all groups of the society regarding the future challenges such as climate change or digitalisation as well as trainings serving the prevention of addictions
- developing and delivering joint trainings in work-based environment and offering mutually accepted exams and certifications
- developing and pilot-testing of targeted massive open online courses (MOOC) in relevant sectors
- summer camps, festivals or youth exchange aiming at better intercultural competences

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA9, and shall contribute for example to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, increased quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems as well as civic competences and lifelong learning opportunities for all in the border region. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” and Goal 8





“Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional and national level, such as the Austrian Life Long Learning Strategy and the Programme for a More Competitive Hungary and the Hungarian Strategy for Digital Education at national level.

2.3.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 22: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob-ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
3	ii	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	46
3	ii	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	9
3	ii	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participations	0	275
3	ii	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participations	0	110

Table 23: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ii	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	23	Monitoring	





3	ii	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	6	Monitoring	
3	ii	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participations	0	2021	192	Monitoring	
3	ii	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participations	0	2021	88	Monitoring	

2.3.1.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are:

- The population in the programme area directly benefitting from the better – more diverse, better quality and more accessible – educational offer. Special focus is on the population in working age for the job-related interventions. For businesses, SMEs including start-ups are in the focus of the actions and all age-groups are targeted by the general competence-building actions.
- Public, private and civil (NGO) institutions in the programme area, especially those involved in the coordination and provision of formal and informal education at all levels, including kindergartens, by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions developed in the actions, such as
 - legal entities responsible for education and training
 - educational institutions, training centres and schools including public and private kindergartens, vocational- and higher education institutions, training- or job-orientation centres
 - organisations providing non-formal or informal education
 - interest groups including NGOs
 - local, regional or national public authorities including EGTCs and sectoral institutions (such as National Park Directorates, local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies)
 - institutions for higher education and research





- o economic development institutions and organisations (such as management organisations of clusters, local development agencies)

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region.
No territorial tools will be used.

2.3.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 24: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ⁶	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ii	171	Enhancing co-operation	7 124 127

Table 25: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ii	01	Grant	7 124 127

⁶ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





Table 26: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	ii	32	Other types of territories targeted	7 124 127

2.3.2 Culture and sustainable tourism (PO4 (vi))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to better and more sustainably valorise the region’s natural and tangible/intangible cultural heritage in a strategically coordinated way in order to strengthen the region’s economically important tourism sector.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The types of actions indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by

- developing a joint strategic approach to a better and more sustainable valorisation of the region’s natural and tangible/intangible cultural heritage
- promoting activities in tourism niches, based on local natural and cultural assets aiming at extending the tourism activity throughout the year
- concentrating on environmentally sustainable touristic offers and measures mitigating negative impacts of the tourism
- boosting new and innovative solutions in the tourism sector
- improving the resilience and adaptivity of the cultural and the hospitality sector for example by strengthening regionality
- supporting the economic bailout from the COVID-19 crisis in the hospitality sector
- enhancing the digitalisation process in the culture and tourism sector

Related types of actions are:

Type of action 6.1. Cross-border data collection and know-how exchange in the field of tourism and culture to better understand the cross-border tourism landscape and potential

The aim of the type of action is to create a solid base of information on main characteristics of the cultural assets and services of tourism in the programme area. Indicative actions:

- collection, harmonisation and sharing of data relevant for tourism and culture, including intangible culture and regional products
- mapping and monitoring the cultural heritage, (industrial) building culture and cultural landscape assets





- preparation and feasibility analysis for the establishment of a joint cross border forum serving the coordination of the projects and initiatives in the tourism sector
- elaboration and implementation of joint procedures for systematic visitor monitoring
- conferences, seminars or discussion panels related to the role of culture and cultural heritage in the border region

Type of action 6.2. Developing cross-border strategies and action plans to allow a better strategic embedment of projects addressing culture and tourism

The aim is to provide a strategic framework for future tourism projects and for the tourism-oriented cooperation in the cultural sector in the cross-border region. Indicative actions:

- strategic alignment of tourism services in sub-regions (e.g. Südburgenland, Zala; Mittelburgenland, Vas)
- strategies for new products and heritage sites for yet not explored industrial or agrarian sub-regions
- developing joint marketing strategies for the cross border region
- developing tourism strategies to better coordinate existing and planned tourism activities in
 - natural heritage sites, including areas with geological and geomorphological values, for example a potential UNESCO Global Geopark
 - cultural heritage sites, including archaeological and historical sites for example the Iron Curtain
- developing a sustainability strategy for the hospitality sector to improve its resilience
- further developing frameworks for sustainable tourism in protected areas, with a focus on soft mobility, building on previous projects
- developing frameworks for cooperation in the cultural sector, including (intangible) cultural heritage

Type of action 6.3. Implementing actions including small-scale infrastructure developments for sustainable culture and tourism development in the cross-border region

The aim of the type of action is to prepare and implement measures including small-scale investments in cultural and natural heritage that have a clear added value, for example better accessibility, avoiding any negative environmental impact. All actions shall be based on a strategic framework. Indicative actions:

- developing joint labels and key themes (or a unique combination of themes) and related thematic tourism routes (e.g. iron curtain, wine and bike, hike and bike, wine architecture, archaeological and historical heritage, nature and bike, hiking and biking trails and tracks, spiritual paths, health and spa)
- improving cooperation of destination managements and creating joint (cross-border) destinations under one label, taking into account already established brands, destinations and platforms
- planning and implementing small-scale infrastructure developments valorising the brand identity and the consistency of the service quality
- implementing investments to complement holistic tourism offers, for example barrier-free access or soft mobility offers





- implementing culture and tourism marketing with supporting tools such as digital guides, tutorials, exhibits or other digital means of information, including multi-lingual services
- developing joint communication platforms
- development and valorisation of the cultural heritage by cultivation, processing and marketing of regional products
- elaboration and implementation of joint procedures for visitor management

Type of action 6.4. Implementing thematic trainings and skill development of stakeholders in the culture and tourism sector

The aim of the type of action is to increase the level of knowledge and develop the skills of tourism actors on sub-regional and local level and services at the local and sub-regional level. Activities should be embedded in the strategic framework of the border region. Indicative actions:

- skill development related to culture and tourism
 - covering all relevant product development topics (e.g. nature tourism, sustainable products, cultural heritage, cultural events, regional agricultural product chains (local cuisine), take up of historical characteristics)
 - in digitalisation
 - in management and marketing
 - related to environmental issues and the sustainable and long-term use of the natural and cultural heritage sites
 - related to public health (for example health protocols for service providers, for tour guides, etc.)
- training and skill development with the aim of integrating disadvantaged groups (long-term unemployed, NEETs, elderly) into culture and tourism activities.

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA3 and shall contribute for example to sustainable forms of tourism (like green tourist products and sustainable mobility solutions), to the sustainable preservation, conservation, socialization and contemporary interpretation of cultural heritage and natural values and to valorising, promoting and protecting the cultural heritage of the border region. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and Goal 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional and national level, such as the Masterplan on Tourism and the Master plan for rural areas in Austria and the National Tourism Development Strategy 2030 in Hungary at the national level.





2.3.2.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 27: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob-ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
3	vi	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	2	60
3	vi	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	11
3	vi	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	13
3	vi	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participations	0	216

Table 28: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	vi	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	30	Monitoring	
3	vi	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	5	Monitoring	





3	vi	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	9	Monitoring	
3	vi	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participations	0	2021	108	Monitoring	

2.3.2.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are:

- The population in the programme area directly benefitting from the more sustainable – more inclusive, more stable and environmentally less harmful – flow of tourists in the programme area.
- The public, private and civil (NGO) organisations and individuals providing tourism-related services or managing natural or cultural assets in the border region by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions developed in the actions such as
 - local, regional or national public authorities, including EGTCs
 - sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, environmental management organisations or associations such as tourism organisations
 - service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services such as transport providers
 - museums
 - interest groups including NGOs
 - institutions for higher education and research
 - educational institutions, training centres and schools
 - economic development institutions

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region.

No territorial tools will be used.





2.3.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 29: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Short title ⁷	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	vi	171	Enhancing co-operation	1 714 746
3	ERDF	vi	165	Public tourism assets and tourism services	4 286 864
3	ERDF	vi	166	Cultural heritage and cultural services	1 714 746
3	ERDF	vi	83	Cycling infrastructure	857 373

Table 30: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	vi	01	Grant	8 573 729

Table 31: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	vi	32	Other types of territories targeted	8 573 729

⁷ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.



2.4 Priority 4: An integrated border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.4.1 Legal and administrative cooperation (ISO1 (b))

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The aim of this specific objective is to reduce legal and other obstacles as well as to develop and deepen legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions in the programme area.

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Governance entails all parts of steering and supporting of the citizens' life in the border region and allows for the flexibility to respond to needs appearing in the region due to different global, national or regional challenges of which some are currently unknown. The specific objective is chosen to allow stakeholders at all levels to address cross-border aspects and obstacles when they appear. The range of different actions is wide and cannot be predefined for the programming period. Experience shows that specific cross-border obstacles become evident only in the course of the actual initiating or implementing cross-border cooperation.

Key thematic fields among others which are defined based on previous programmes and projects are:

- demographic changes and the impacts on economic and social development in the border region, including areas of gender equality and social inclusion (including youth, women, disabled)
- SMEs and smart specialisation, with a focus on supporting intermediary institutions in clarifying and better understanding development processes, assets, needs and administrative barriers
- labour market integration, with a focus on the identification and reduction of legal or administrative obstacles and establishing a strategic approach to overcome them
- cooperation in health care and long-term care services contributing to a better accessibility also in remote, close-to-the border-areas as well as to a quick emergency response
- harmonised regional development in the border region
- cooperation along the principles of the concept of circular economy
- digital transformation
- enhanced cross-border crisis management capacity, competence and communication (responding to the COVID-19 pandemic), is an additional key thematic field which contributes to improve the overall crisis resilience in the programme area





As a horizontal principle, environmental considerations shall be included, with a view to achieving sustainable development.

In order to address those challenges adequately a set of type of actions is proposed which should support the capacity building and strengthening of governance to face the future challenges and topics.

Type of action 7.1 Elaborating monitoring and data exchange systems to improve cross-border know how exchange and decision making

The aim of the type of action is to enhance the information and data exchange across the border to support joint administrative and legal activities addressing border obstacles. Indicative actions:

- data exchange and joint monitoring enhancing the availability of data needed for a more targeted cross-border cooperation, for example in the field of
 - regional development with a focus on more sustainable rural development
 - demographic changes and the impact on economic and social development in the border region
 - health and social care with a specific focus on the COVID-19 pandemic
 - crisis resilience
 - circular economy
- studies and analyses identifying cross-border obstacles, for example related to environmental issues
- workshops, discussion panels or conferences addressing experts and public authorities enabling a joint view on border obstacles

Type of action 7.2 Developing strategic frameworks among public organisations in all relevant fields to address upcoming challenges of the border region

The aim of the type of action is to boost strategic developments across the border to allow for better strategic embedding of economic and social cooperation on all identified key thematic fields. Indicative actions:

- joint strategies to reduce legal and administrative obstacles across the border
- joint strategy development
 - in the field of SME support and smart specialisation including for example R&D needs, SME development, start-ups, cross-border economic exchange (demanded goods and services), social innovation, digitalisation and aspects supporting the economic diversification especially in the fields of green technologies, resource efficiency and eco-innovation
 - addressing social matters and a better integration of horizontal issues (e.g. gender equality and social inclusion, including youth, women, disabled)
 - addressing a better crisis resilience
 - supporting effective and comprehensive regional development and implementation of pilot projects

Type of action 7.3 Implementing joint solutions to improve cross-border governance and reduce cross-border obstacles

The aim of the type of action is to boost joint solutions across the border to reduce barriers and obstacles caused by different legal and administrative systems. Indicative actions:





- joint initiatives finding specific solutions for border obstacles, for example in the field of:
 - employee protection across the border,
 - cross-border services for employers (SME) and employees, such as consulting in the mother tongue
 - recognition of qualification, safeguarding and creating new employment opportunities for example in eco-innovation
 - social and health services
 - circular economy
- coordination of services and joint actions to boost digitalisation of joint services for example in the field of crisis management, social and health care and emergency services

Type of action 7.4 Developing skills as well as awareness raising aiming at a better cross-border cooperation

The aim of the type of action is to actively improve mutual and cross-border understanding. Indicative actions:

- (digital) seminars or other training events addressing authorities and stakeholders and aiming at improving their skills and knowledge about cross-border cooperation, its obstacles and how to overcome them
- sport events, student exchanges, field trips or other awareness raising activities contributing to a better cross-border understanding and increased mutual trust

The actions are connected to the EUSDR PA10 action 2, 7 and 8, and shall contribute for example to strengthening the institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance in the border region and increasing the involvement of civil society and local actors for a more effective policy-making and implementation at regional level in the programme area. They will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially to Goal 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

2.4.1.2 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 32: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ob- ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
4	ISO1 (b)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations	0	39
4	ISO1 (b)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies / action plans	0	9





4	ISO1 (b)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions	0	11
4	ISO1 (b)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participations	0	169

Table 33: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
4	ISO1 (b)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0	2021	27	Monitoring	
4	ISO1 (b)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategies /action plans	0	2021	5	Monitoring	
4	ISO1 (b)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions	0	2021	8	Monitoring	
4	ISO1 (b)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participations	0	2021	152	Monitoring	





2.4.1.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main **target groups** of the actions are:

- The main target group is the public who benefits from cross-border achievements such as better coordinated approaches to effectively address major societal challenges and obstacles in the programme region and to provide services of general interest in a more efficient way.
- Additional target groups are local and regional public organisations who benefit from improved administrative processes and increased capacity such as local, regional and national public authorities/institutions, bodies governed by public law, intermediary organisations, EGTCs, agencies, interest groups including NGOs and other organisations.
- Finally for small-scale projects the target group is mainly all citizens directly at the border; this includes the general public as well as economic stakeholders in the region.

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme region.

No territorial tools will be used.

2.4.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The nature and size of the planned operations allow for a very limited use of forms other than grants.

Typical beneficiaries of the programme are public and public equivalent organisations; if their projects include investments, these have (usually) a pilot character, whose nature and size do not allow for other forms than grants.





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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 34: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	objec- Code	Short title ⁸	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO1 (b)	171	Enhancing co-operation	1 370 317
4	ERDF	ISO1 (b)	173	Enhancing institutional capacity	5 481 270

Table 35: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	objec- Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO1 (b)	01	Grant	6 851 587

Table 36: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	objec- Code	Title	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO1 (b)	32	Other types of territories targeted	6 851 587

⁸ For codes, titles and short titles of intervention fields (dimension 1) pls. see Appendix 4.





3 Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 37

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial co-operation goal)	0	8 466 549 €	8 602 547 €	8 741 266 €	8 882 757 €	7 360 436 €	7 507 645 €	49 561 200 €
IPA III CBC⁹								
NDICI-CBC⁹								
IPA III¹⁰								
NDICI²								
OCTP¹¹								
Interreg funds¹²								
Total								

⁹ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

¹⁰ Interreg B and C.

¹¹ Interreg B, C and D.

¹² ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C.





3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 38

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
PO 2	Priority 1	ERDF	total eligible	20 735 000 €	19 169 319 €	1 565 681 €	5 183 750 €	5 183 750 €		25 918 750 €	80%	
PO 3	Priority 2	ERDF	total eligible	4 435 000 €	4 100 117 €	334 883 €	1 108 750 €	1 108 750 €		5 543 750 €	80%	
PO 4	Priority 3	ERDF	total eligible	16 980 000 €	15 697 856 €	1 282 144 €	4 245 000 €	4 245 000 €		21 225 000 €	80%	
ISO 1	Priority 4	ERDF	total eligible	7 411 200 €	6 851 587 €	559 613 €	1 852 800 €	1 852 800 €		9 264 000 €	80%	
	Total	All funds		49 561 200 €	45 818 879 €	3 742 321 €	12 390 300 €	12 390 300 €		61 951 500 €	80%	





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

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

In line with article 8 of CPR, the preparation of the Interreg programme should involve a partnership with competent regional and local authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, as well as research institutions and universities, where appropriate.

The main reason for involving stakeholders in programming is to identify mutual interests and needs, secure commitment and ownership for the Interreg programme and ensure its practical implementation. A number of platforms for an effective communication with relevant partners and stakeholders have been introduced throughout the programming process.

To steer the programming a bilateral programming group (PG) was established, and the Interreg Programme was elaborated with the wide involvement and active participation of important strategic partners for cross-border cooperation both from the national and especially from the regional level. Representatives in the PG have consulted social and economic partners and institutions responsible for specific topics in the respective region on a regular basis. This has served as an important input especially in identifying investment priorities, verifying of demand for possible activities and establishing the financial plan. The PG had 9 meetings between June 2020 and December 2021.

The programming process was coordinated by the Managing Authority (Austria) and joint secretariat (Hungary) of the Austria-Hungary Interreg 2014-2020 Programme, and it was supported by a bilateral team of external experts.

According to its rules of procedures the work of the PG was supported by the Bilateral Working Group (BWG), as far as discussions of operational details and decision preparation for the PG are concerned. The BWG is constituted (besides the MA and JS) of the Regional Coordinators (RCs) of all Austrian and Hungarian regions in the programme area, and Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFA), as representative of the Member State Hungary. The RCs (both AT and HU) and the MFA, had a crucial role in the programming, collecting and organising local inputs from their respective regions and forwarding them to the PG.

In order to involve the broadest possible circle of relevant national, regional and local stakeholders, and in line with regulatory requirements laid down in the draft common provisions regulation, a consultation process was launched in November 2020, built on the thematic discussions and preliminary decisions taken at the previous meetings of the Programming Group. The aim was to collect feedback on an early draft version of the future Interreg Programme, which already indicated possible future programme priorities, selected specific objectives, horizontal topics as well as relevant fields of action.

Almost 1300 stakeholders were invited to provide their feedback in an online survey, which requested quantitative feedback about the relevance of the priorities and possible





fields of activity per specific objective, and additionally respondents could include qualitative inputs. In total 220 persons, representing all regions of the programme area, participated in the online survey which was a valuable source of information for further fine-tuning the programme strategy and for drafting the programme. The comments were further discussed in the frame of two online stakeholder workshops - 01.02.2021 with Hungarian stakeholders and 16.02.2021 with Austrian stakeholders (due to the pandemic "live" workshops were unfortunately not possible).

In order to ensure their transparent processing, all comments received in the online consultation and the stakeholder workshops had been compiled in a list of comments containing information about the source of the comment and how they were considered in the programming process. The outcomes of the stakeholder consultation were also integrated in a consolidated way in the report on the Strategic Thematic Directions as well as in the draft Interreg Programme.

The draft Interreg Programme was elaborated in observation of the inputs of the consultation process and was discussed by the PG at its subsequent meetings.

The draft Interreg Programme was published on the Programme website for information and feedback of the general public. Between 15 July and 16 August 2021, 48 comments were received, with more than one third giving explicit consent to the draft IP. Based on other contributions the draft IP has been revised for improved alignment with stakeholder expectations.

The strategic environmental assessment (SEA) process, beginning in spring 2021, was built on the programme draft that already included the results of the stakeholder consultation process. Launched at the end of April 2021, in the scoping consultation to the SEA comments of all relevant environmental bodies on national, regional and county levels had been collected in line with the respective EU- and national legislation, and taken on board in the SEA process. Parallel to the public consultation to the Interreg Programme document, the environmental report and its non-technical summary were also made available to the general public and to the relevant authorities, as an integral part of the consultation process. In the period of one month, 38 mostly supportive answers were received. Further comments were incorporated in the revised SEA and taken on board in the IP to support the programme's positive expected environmental impact.

Beside the activities on programme level, information and consultation was also carried out on the level of different projects and regions. In 2019, the project ConnReg AT-HU carried out an online survey, qualitative group interviews with institutional experts as well as bilateral thematic workshops. The consultation activities were organised along the thematic topics of the AT-HU Interreg 2014-2020 Programme: competitiveness, sustainability, accessibility and networking. Beneficiaries and strategic partners of AT-HU Interreg 2014-2020 as well as potential new project partners and other stakeholders were addressed. More than 100 Austrian and Hungarian stakeholders took part in the consultation process. The aim of these interviews was to assess possible improvements of the AT-HU Interreg programme and collect experts' ideas and inputs for the funding period 2021+.

In **Vienna**, the RC set the following measures to map the interest and potential in cross-border project work:

- In August 2019 an online-survey was sent out to 516 potential project stakeholders including all relevant municipal departments in order to gather the principle interest in cross-border cooperation 2021 – 2027 as well as to record the topics relevant for Vienna. With 161 completed questionnaires, the response rate is





31%. Results are published at https://cbc.wien/inter-reg/news_folder/Ergebnisse%20der%20Umfrage%202021-2027.

- Due to the Covid-19 crisis (online) bilateral meetings with key stakeholders took place end 2020/beginning of 2021. In six meetings, the RC discussed with strategically relevant stakeholders (20 participants) possible future topics of mainly PO2 and PO4.

Vienna provides regular information on the status of the programming process on its website www.cbc.wien.

In **Styria**, the information and consultation process started with an analysis of existing strategies for various sectors (e.g. energy, climate, economy, tourism) in order to identify their cross-border aspects. This analysis was followed by consultation with the representatives of relevant departments from the regional government, major stakeholder institutions and municipalities, to ensure expert input throughout the programming process.

The development process for the strategy 2030+ of Styria, which took place in the course of 2019, was additionally used to develop the Styrian strategic topics.

In **Lower Austria**, all thematically responsible departments of the Office of the Lower Austrian Regional Government and important stakeholder institutions were involved into the programming process from the beginning.

In January 2020, the RC informed them in a coordination meeting about the new regulations, about the requirements of the EC, potentials and about the programming process in the INTERREG AT-HU program. Furthermore, topics and first ideas for potential activities and projects for the period 2021-2027 were collected and were afterwards communicated to the programming group.

In May 2021, another coordination meeting with Lower Austrian responsible departments took place, where the selected priorities and specific goals were presented and the financial allocation discussed. This information has also flowed into the programming process.

These activities accompanied the stakeholder consultations and workshops organized by the program, in which numerous Lower Austrian stakeholders took part.

In **Burgenland** a platform was founded to bring together relevant stakeholders for international cooperation and international projects. In the platform, regionally important topics for the future period were analysed and discussed, and also the future priorities for the cross-border programmes were fixed on regional level. Additionally, responsible persons in Burgenland for the implementation of Interreg projects were part of the regional working groups for the programming and setting the relevant priorities for the national objective 2 programme 2021-2027.

Close cooperation and a use of synergies between the main stakeholders supported the definition of main objectives for the future strategies and activities of Burgenland.

In **Hungary**, beside the ConnReg events, appropriate discussions were carried out with the relevant institutions of further ATHU projects as well (e.g. WeCon) and of the counties participating in the programme area. Before each PG meeting, Hungarian PG members plus the relevant line ministries had regular preparatory meetings, ensuring the effective involvement of a broad range of aspects. The RC's participation at project events, presentation about and exchange related to the programming process also





helped that the RC could transport all aspects from stakeholder into the programming process.

Many partners involved in the preparation of the Interreg Programme are foreseen to be involved in the Monitoring Committee with the aim of ensuring continuity for the implementation and monitoring of the cooperation programme in the future. Having a link between preparation and later implementation contributes to good management of the programme and achievement of the objectives intended.

With that in mind, the Monitoring Committee is going to be set up in line with the provisions of Art. 29 of the Interreg regulations. It shall consist of both representatives of the national level and the regions participating in the cooperation programme, furthermore, representation of policy areas relevant for the programme and participating regions shall be ensured. The representatives of the broad partnership referred to in Art. 6 (1)(a)-(ca) of the CPR have already been invited to the MC of the 2014-2020 programme as advisory members – their participation in the MC shall be ensured in line with the relevant provisions of the EC for the 2021-2027 programme period, thus ensuring the broadest possible involvement of programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Interreg Programme.

The programme has set up a system ensuring e-cohesion in partnership with Interact.





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

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

Communication activities of the programme are not standalone initiatives but parts of a horizontal approach and thus, serve the achievement of all programme objectives. Besides the general aim of awareness raising and providing information, the programme strives for community building and enhanced stakeholder involvement for the overall objective of an enhanced cooperation culture in the programme area.

Communication objectives

Based on programme and management objectives, the main communication objectives are:

- Establish common understanding about and achieve effective use of processes by all programme bodies;
- Increase knowledge of (potential) applicants of the simplified framework and support offered by the programme;
- Improve the communication with beneficiaries and foster the exchange among them for better project implementation and increased valorisation of results;
- Achieve broad visibility of project results/achievements in the programme region and beyond in continued cooperation with neighbouring Interreg programmes.

The communication approach is further specified in a roadmap, to be adapted annually, including target groups, channels and measurement of indicators.

Target groups

- Programme bodies,
- (potential) applicants,
- beneficiaries,
- stakeholders relevant for the programme's thematic interventions,
- citizens of the region (focusing on areas of project interventions).

Implementation and planned budget

The implementation is a shared responsibility of all programme bodies, coordinated by a JS communication manager accompanying the programme bodies in all communication activities.

An estimated communication budget (excluding staff costs) of at least 0.3% of the total programme budget is foreseen.

Main communication channels

Communication channels include:

- Website: the main communication channel of the programme, where (potential) applicants and beneficiaries can easily and directly access information. Downloadable tools also serve as communication channels (e.g. manuals, webinars, project information and achievement library).
- Programme events are tailored to the particular needs of the relevant target groups during project lifecycle: help (potential) applicants and beneficiaries to





understand the programme requirements, encourage network building and use of synergies, and in the long run support capitalisation of project results.

- Internal platform: the programme management uses a data-sharing platform for all programme bodies to foster and harmonise information exchange;
- Direct contact to applicants and beneficiaries via programme bodies: the advisory system will be improved with better internal and external know-how exchange and communication;
- The wider public – relevant stakeholders and citizens – will be approached best via projects. Project communication plays a fundamental role in increasing awareness about the programme and its achievements. It shall be tailored to thematic stakeholders and can raise interest of citizens in the project area. The past has proven that project events and infrastructure have the highest impact in terms of awareness raising for Interreg.
- Social media play a key role in reaching various target groups and thus will be increasingly used by the programme as well as by projects. The programme's social media channels (e.g. Facebook, YouTube) will be used to reach out to all target groups and to present tailored information on programme news, events, project results or campaigns in cooperation with other Interreg programmes.

Responding to their special needs, explicit focus will be added in all channels to small scale projects and – due to their strategic importance – operations with an environmental focus. e.g. dedicated newsletters, social media campaigns.

The vital use of the harmonized Interreg brand will increase commitment of projects to the programme and support the programme's natural contribution to greater visibility for Interreg in Europe.

Information about the programme will be published in the AT and HU single web portals on ESI-funds.

Monitoring and evaluation

The programme will use a set of indicators to monitor and evaluate the progress and achievements of the communication activities. The following types of indicators are foreseen:

- Output indicators measure the outputs produced by communication actions (e.g. nr. of participants, nr. of events, nr. of visitors, etc.); data will be collected with project reports, internal statistics and web analysis.
- Result indicators measure the specific changes that will be achieved in response to communication outputs (perception of participants and beneficiaries, communication quality, quality of the guidelines, efficiency in the project implementation, etc.); data will be collected with interviews and surveys.

Capitalisation

The capitalisation system established will allow utilising the most suitable communication channel for promoting different (predefined) types of results to the relevant target group. Capitalisation however is not only in the responsibility of the programme but should be embedded in each project. Therefore, project partners will be encouraged to plan capitalisation activities already in the project design.





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

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

The Austria-Hungary Interreg 2021-2027 Programme offers direct support to small-scale projects in accordance with Article 24(1)(a) of the Interreg Regulation. Article 25 (SPF) will not be applied.

Starting point for small-scale projects in Interreg Austria-Hungary

In the period before Hungary's accession and shortly thereafter, small projects were used as a tool to introduce cross-border cooperation and were popular among beneficiaries on both sides of the border. Over the last two periods the projects got bigger in terms of financial volume and partnerships, there was high interest in the implementation of strategic as well as broad and comprehensive sets of cross-border activities as part of comparatively large, longer-term projects. Because of this, and due to the related administrative burden and comparatively low funding, in the last two programme periods neither a small project fund nor another simplified solution for small cross border initiatives was implemented in the programme region.

Purpose and rationale of small-scale projects

Small-scale projects will help to reduce the growing average project size, and offer easier management with fewer administrative burden for less experienced potential beneficiaries of also projects with limited financial volume. Although the available funding for 2021-2027 has substantially decreased compared to the previous period, smaller projects can help to maintain the outreach of the programme.

Small-scale projects shall

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

Although especially newcomers and small sized institutions are invited to implement their cross-border ideas and hence to bring the programme closer to the citizens of the cross-border AT-HU region, the measure should give opportunity to implement small-scale projects under simplified conditions to all potential beneficiaries of the Interreg Programme. This is also in line with the recommendation of the impact evaluation to the Austria-Hungary Interreg 2014-2020 Programme.

Potential beneficiaries can apply for funding of small-scale projects in all priorities of the Austria-Hungary Interreg 2021-2027 Programme, depending on the thematic focus of their cooperation. The programme welcomes small-scale projects with the following purposes (the list is not exclusive):

- First cooperation actions for newcomers;
- Establishing new governance networks (including new elements of cooperation);
- Testing and seed financing for larger projects;
- Small and targeted pilot actions;





- Capitalisation on the results of other initiatives (incl. know-how transfer and knowledge exchange);
- Awareness raising actions for the general public;
- People-to-people actions, promoting contacts and interaction between people, trust building;
- Direct co-operations between SME's (rather thematic than business co-operations desired).

As this approach is new for the programme, approximately 25 directly managed small-scale projects are expected, although more are welcome.

Implementing provisions

Compared to the average funding above 1.2 million euro per project, average partner budget exceeding 300 000 euro, with large partnerships involving 4 partners on average in the 2014-2020 period, attractive conditions shall be established for smaller projects in 2021-2027.

- The indicative size of directly managed small-scale projects is between 25 000-200 000 euro (total eligible budget),
- Head for small partnerships: at least one Austrian and one Hungarian partner (not more than 3 project partners altogether);
- Limited duration (indicative length maximum 18 months);
- Beneficiaries of small-scale projects shall use SCOs offered by the programme to the fullest possible extent (in line with second subparagraph of paragraph 1, Article 48, CPR). Real costs shall be possible only if the flat rate option is chosen (up to 20% staff or 40% for all eligible costs other than direct staff costs). This will contribute to more simple reporting, control and accelerated reimbursement.
- The programme is heading for a proportionate management approach, i.e. "downscaling" of implementation provisions and administrative requirements. For the application, project selection, reporting and control procedures simplified versions of the Harmonised Implementation Tool templates will be used wherever possible, as they are applied in the programme's monitoring system.





7 Implementing provisions

7.1 Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 39

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	E-mail
Managing authority	Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland GmbH	Tatjana Paar	tatjana.paar@wirtschaftsagentur-burgenland.at
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)			
Audit authority	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism Unit ERDF Audit Authority	Verena Wessely	efre_finanzkontrolle@bmlrt.gv.at
Group of auditors representatives	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds	Balázs Dencsó	balazs.dencso@eutaf.gov.hu
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland GmbH	Tatjana Paar	tatjana.paar@wirtschaftsagentur-burgenland.at

7.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

In accordance with Article 46 (2) Interreg Regulation, the Managing Authority (MA), after consultation with the Member States, sets up a Joint Secretariat (JS) assisting the MA and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions.

In continuation of the implementation of two successive programmes in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, the JS remains in Sopron hosted by Széchenyi Programme Office (SzPO). The structural and implementation arrangements within the hosting organisation are kept.





Participating Member States consider stable implementation structures as an anchor of successful programme implementation. Taking into account the good programme partnership approach, all JS members are selected in a transparent way with the involvement of both Member States and are bilingual/trilingual, possessing representative linguistic competence and relevant programme area knowledge. Thus, the JS with its highly experienced, multilingual and long-term team members ensure smooth transition and an uptake of long-term Interreg experience.

The JS works in close cooperation with the MA assisting in all programme coordination and implementation tasks and supporting the Monitoring Committee in monitoring the implementation of the programme. Furthermore, the JS provides support to potential applicants by giving them information on funding opportunities and assisting all beneficiaries in the implementation of operations.

Building on the positive experiences of the past two programmes, the MA's and JS's work to aid potential applicants and beneficiaries is further supported by the Regional Coordinator Network of the Austrian regions and their Hungarian counterpart in Western Transdanubia.

Using fully functional Jems, Annex XIV of CPR is complied with.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

The arrangements related to irregularities and the apportionment of liabilities among Member States (MS) will follow the already established principles from the 2014-2020 programming period.

Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities and for recovering amounts unduly paid according to Article 63 (2) of the CPR, the MA shall in accordance with Article 52 (1) of the Interreg Regulation ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead partner. The project partners shall then repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid.

In line with Article 52(2) of the Interreg Regulation, the MA will not recover any amount unduly paid if it does not exceed EUR 250 ERDF, not including interest, paid to an operation in a given accounting year.

If the lead partner – bearing overall responsibility for the project – does not succeed in securing repayment from a project partner, or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner, the Member State responsible for the control of the project partner concerned (in the case of an EGTC where it is registered), shall reimburse the MA the amount unduly paid to that project partner in accordance with Article 52 (3) of the Interreg Regulation. The MA is responsible for reimbursing the amounts recovered to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States as laid down below. The MA will reimburse the funds to the Union once the amounts are recovered from the lead partner/project partner/Member State.





Should the MA bear any legal expenses for recovery recourse proceedings – initiated after consultation and in mutual agreement with the respective Member State – even if the proceedings are unsuccessful, these will be reimbursed by the Member State hosting the lead partner or project partner responsible for the said procedure.

Since Member States have the overall liability for the ERDF support granted to lead partners or project partners for whose control they are responsible, they shall ensure that – prior to certifying expenditure – any financial corrections required will be secured and they shall seek to recover any amounts lost as a result of an irregularity caused by a beneficiary for whose control the Member State is responsible. Where appropriate, a Member State may also charge interest on late payments.

In accordance with Article 52 (4) of the Interreg Regulation, once the Member State has reimbursed the MA any amounts unduly paid to a partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that partner under its national law.

If the Member State has not reimbursed the MA any amount unduly paid to a partner, in accordance with Article 52 (5) of the Interreg Regulation, the amounts shall be subject to a recovery order by the European Commission (EC) which will be executed, where possible, by offsetting with amounts due to the Member State. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF to the respective Interreg programme. The offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the same Interreg programme. In such an eventuality, the Managing Authority will start bilateral discussions with the Member State at fault so as to find a joint solution. In case no solution is found, as a last resort, the MA shall offset the amount deducted by the European Commission with amounts due to beneficiaries of that Member State.

Member States will bear liability in connection with the use of the programme ERDF funding as follows:

- Each Member State bears liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by lead partners and project partners for whose control the Member State is responsible.
- In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (decided by the programme authorities or the European Commission), the Member State will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective Member State territory.
- For a systemic irregularity or financial correction on programme level that cannot be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be jointly borne by the Member States in proportion to the ERDF claimed for project partners (for whose control the Member State is responsible) to the European Commission for the period which forms the basis for the financial correction.

The liability principles described above shall also apply to financial corrections to Technical Assistance (TA) calculated in compliance with Article 27 of the Interreg regulation, since such corrections would be the direct consequence of project related irregularities (whether systemic or not), if they cannot be reused. The MA will keep the Member States informed about all irregularities and their impact on TA. At the end of the programming period, the MA will carry out a reconciliation to verify if there is a remaining balance of irregularities that have affected the TA budget. In case of a remaining balance, the MA will inform the respective Member State and ask to reimburse the corresponding ERDF amount. The reimbursed amount shall be transferred to the TA account of the MA.

As stated in article 69 (12) of the CPR, Member States shall report on irregularities in accordance with the criteria for determining the cases of irregularity to be reported, the





data to be provided and the format for reporting set out in annex XII of the CPR. Irregularities shall be reported by the Member State in which the expenditure is paid by the lead Partner or project partner implementing the project. The Member State shall at the same time inform the MA who will then further inform the Audit Authority (AA). Specific procedures in this respect will be part of the description of the programme management and control system to be established in accordance with article 69 (11) of the CPR.





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

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 40: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

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





9 Appendices

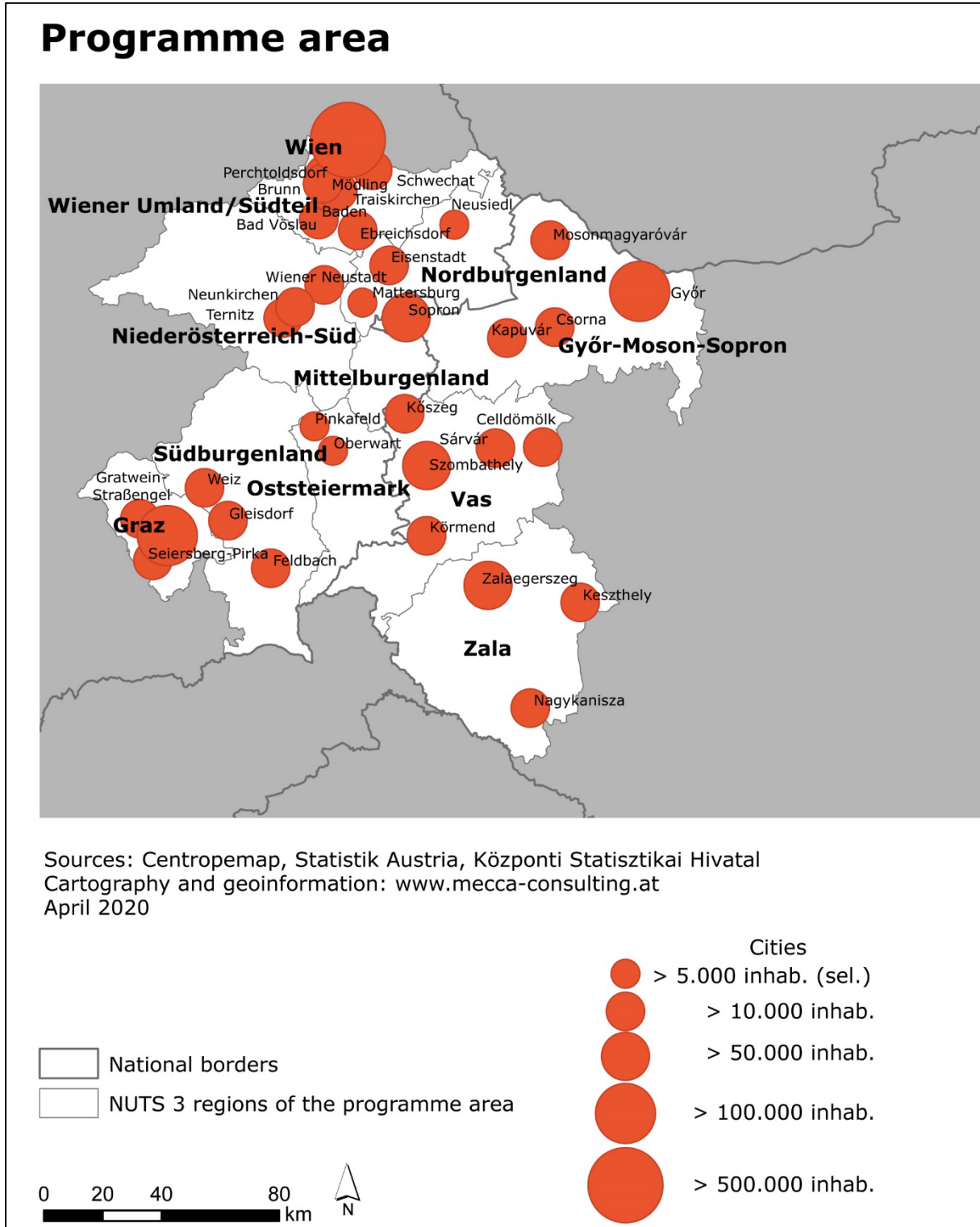
Map 1:	Map of the programme area
Appendix 1:	Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates
Appendix 2	Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs
Appendix 3:	List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable
Appendix 4:	List of codes, titles and short titles of the intervention field (dimension 1) used in the Programme
Appendix 5	Overview of potential synergies and complementarities with programmes overlapping with the AT-HU border region





Map

Map of the programme area





Appendix 1

Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission

(Article 94 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR))

Date of submitting the proposal	

This Appendix is not required when EU-level simplified cost options established by the delegated act referred to in Article 94(4) of CPR are used.





A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the simplified cost option will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of simplified cost option (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the simplified cost option
				Code ¹	Description	Code ²	Description			

¹ This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I CPR.

² This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.





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

Did the managing authority receive support from an external company to set out the simplified costs below?

If so, please specify which external company:

Yes/No – Name of external company

1.1	Description of the operation type including the timeline for implementation ¹	
1.2	Specific objective	
1.3	Indicator triggering reimbursement ²	
1.4	Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	
1.5	Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	
1.6	Amount per unit of measurement or percentage (for flat rates) of the simplified cost option	
1.7	Categories of costs covered by the unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	
1.8	Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation? (Y/N)	
1.9	Adjustment(s) method ³	
1.10	Verification of the achievement of the units delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the units delivered – describe what will be checked and by whom during management verifications – describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store the relevant data/documents 	
1.11	Possible perverse incentives, mitigating measures ⁴ and the estimated level of risk (high/medium/low)	
1.12	Total amount (national and EU) expected to be reimbursed by the Commission on this basis	

¹ Envisaged starting date of the selection of operations and envisaged final date of their completion (ref. Article 63(5) of CPR).

² For operations encompassing several simplified cost options covering different categories of costs, different projects or successive phases of an operation, the fields 1.3 to 1.11 need to be filled in for each indicator triggering reimbursement.

³ If applicable, indicate the frequency and timing of the adjustment and a clear reference to a specific indicator (including a link to the website where this indicator is published, if applicable).

⁴ Are there any potential negative implications on the quality of the supported operations and, if so, what measures (such as. quality assurance) will be taken to offset this risk?





C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

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

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 88(2) of CPR is relevant to the type of operation:

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

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

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





Appendix 2

Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission

(Article 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR))

Date of submitting the proposal	

This Appendix is not required when amounts for EU-level financing not linked to costs established by the delegated act referred to in Article 95(4) of CPR are used.





A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission		Indicator	Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary or beneficiaries
				Code ¹	Description	Code ²	Description			

¹ This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and Annex IV to the EMFAF Regulation.

² This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.





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

1.1	Description of the operation type			
1.2	Specific objective			
1.3	Conditions to be fulfilled or results to be achieved			
1.4	Deadline for fulfilment of conditions or results to be achieved			
1.5	Unit of measurement for conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission			
1.6	Intermediate deliverables (if applicable) triggering reimbursement by the Commission with schedule for reimbursements	Intermediate deliverables	Envisaged date	Amounts (in EUR)
1.7	Total amount (including Union and national funding)			
1.8	Adjustment(s) method			
1.9	<p>Verification of the achievement of the result or condition (and where relevant, the intermediate deliverables)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the result or condition (and where relevant, each of the intermediate deliverables) - describe how management verifications (including on the spot) will be carried out, and by whom - describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store relevant data/documents 			
1.10	Use of grants in the form of financing not linked to costs/ Does the grant provided by Member State to beneficiaries take the form of financing not linked to costs? [Y/N]			
1.11	<p>Arrangements to ensure the audit trail</p> <p>Please list the body(ies) responsible for these arrangements.</p>			





Appendix 3

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

As set out in article 17(3) of Regulation (EC) 2021/1059 and article 22(3) of Regulation (EC) 2021/1060 the Member State shall ensure that the programme submitted is accompanied for information purposes by a list of planned operations of strategic importance and a timetable.

The Austria-Hungary Interreg Programme 2021-2027 is going to select all operations via open calls for proposals. Therefore, no pre-identified operations of strategic importance have been embedded in the programme.

In the ATHU Interreg Programme, environment has been for several programming periods a topic of horizontal strategic importance – irrespective of the thematic priority, about 50% of all supported projects in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 have some positive environmental impact. In 2021-2027, environmental and sustainability aspects are reflected not only in the IP's dedicated Priority 1 (A green and resilient border region), but also in the other priorities, e.g. in Priority 2 through sustainable transport options. In line with the proposals of the SEA report, environmental aspects are going to be specifically supported horizontally in the project application and selection procedures, as well as followed up in the programme evaluation in each priority. As such, for the ATHU Interreg Programme operations with an environmental focus are considered as of strategic importance.





Appendix 4

List of codes, titles and short titles of the intervention field (dimension 1) used in the Programme

Code	Title	Short title
58	Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	Climate change adaptation: floods and landslides
60	Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	Climate change adaptation: storms and drought
64	Water management and water resource conservation (including river basin management, specific climate change adaptation measures, reuse, leakage reduction)	Water management
79	Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	Nature and biodiversity
83	Cycling infrastructure	Cycling infrastructure
120	Digitising transport when dedicated in part to greenhouse gas emissions reduction: other transport modes	Digitising transport
165	Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	Public tourism assets and tourism services
166	Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	Cultural heritage and cultural services
171	Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	Enhancing cooperation
173	Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	Enhancing institutional capacity





Appendix 5

Overview of potential synergies and complementarities with programmes overlapping with the AT-HU border region

Potential overlaps on the basis of the selected specific objectives (SOs) of the AT-HU IP and of other programmes are marked with “+” or “++” in blue background: +

- “+” means that there is thematic link between the AT-HU IP and the other programme
- “++” means that the SO of the AT-HU IP is specifically targeted by the other programme or the topic of the SO is an obvious target of the other programme based on the available documents

“+” or “++” marks are placed in the table on the basis of (draft) programme documents available in spring 2022.

Further synergies may exist in other related thematic fields, however, if neither obvious thematic link can be established nor are the SOs of the AT-HU IP directly targeted by other programmes on the basis of the available programme documents, these are not marked in the table. Synergies with related fields (e.g. among other related environmental topics) will nevertheless be sought during programme implementation.

Proposed SOs → Hungarian Operational Programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
Digital Renewal OP Plus ²¹	++ ²²	+	+	+	+	+	+
Human Resources Development OP Plus					++		
Economic Development and Innovation OP Plus					++	++	
Integrated Transport OP Plus				++			
Environmental and Energy Efficiency OP Plus	++	++	++				
Territorial and settlement development OP Plus	+	+	+	+	++	+	
HU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)					++		

²¹ based on digitalization having a horizontal relevance in all SOs of the AT-HU IP

²² PO2 (iv) is specifically mentioned in the Digital Renewal OP





Proposed SOs → Austrian Operational Programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
EAFRD AT 2023-2027	+	+	+	+	+	+	
AT ERDF IGT-JTF Program	+					+	
AT ESF+ Program					+		
AT Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)	+			++		+	
Proposed SOs → Neighbouring Hungarian Interreg Programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
HU-SK			++		++	++	++
SI-HU			++			++	++
HU-CR	++				++	++	++
Proposed SOs → Neighbouring Austrian Interreg Programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
AT-CZ	++		++		++	++	++
SK-AT	++		++		++	++	++
SI-AT	++	+	+		++	++	++
Proposed SOs → Transnational Interreg Programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
Central Europe	++		++	++			++
Interreg Europe							++
Danube	++	++	++		++	++	++
Alpine Space	++		++				++
Urbact	++			++	++	++	+
Proposed SOs → Central programmes ↓	PO2 (iv) Climate change adaptation, risk prevention	PO2 (v) Sustainable water management	PO2 (vii) Nature protection and biodiversity	PO3 (ii) Sustainable transport	PO4 (ii) Education and lifelong learning	PO4 (vi) Culture and tourism	ISO12 Better cooperation governance
Horizon Europe	+			+			
Erasmus +					++		
Live 2021-2027	++		++				



INTERREG PROGRAMME SK-AT 2021-2027

PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

based on the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1059 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg)

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

1.1 Programme area

The **SK-AT programme area** is set up by the NUTS 3 regions Bratislavský kraj, Trnavský kraj, Nordburgenland, Niederösterreich-Süd, St. Pölten, Waldviertel, Weinviertel, Wiener Umland/Nordteil, Wiener Umland/Südteil and Wien.

The region consists of a broad variety of urban agglomerations, small- and medium-sized towns and several rural communalities. According to the urban-rural topology of Eurostat, Wien, Wiener Umland/Nordteil and Südteil and Bratislavský kraj are predominantly urban regions, all other rural regions. (Eurostat 2016)

The largest cities in the region are Wien (1,9 million inhabitants), Bratislava (475 503), Trnava (62 798), St. Pölten (55 040), Wiener Neustadt (45 277), Klosterneuburg (27 368), Piešťany (27 301), Baden (25 906) and Krems (24 876). (Statistik Austria 2019a; Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky 2021)

Wien and Bratislava are twin cities with two urban agglomerations and capital cities being in close proximity (60 km) with urban sprawl in the surrounding areas; both agglomerations are also transport and innovation hubs from a national perspective. The smaller cities act as local and regional growth poles.

The characteristic landscape elements are the Alps in the south and the Carpathians in the east, the Vienna Basin in between, the Bohemian Massif in the northwest and the Pannonian Plain in the east.

The region is embedded in the "Centroe" and "Danube Region Strategy" initiatives.

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

Introduction

In the preparation phase of the IP SK-AT 2021-2027, a detailed socio-economic analysis on the programme area was carried out, summarizing relevant data, the main results of relevant studies and analyses such as the mid-term evaluation of the cooperation programme Interreg V-A SK-AT and the relevant strategies on European, national and – if available – regional level. Its main findings were discussed by the Programming Group. The following description of the main joint challenges and needs of the border region follows the ERDF policy objectives.

A more competitive and smarter Europe

Economy

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

In terms of GDP per capita, Bratislavský kraj (173%), Wien (149%), Wiener Umland/Südteil (147%) and St. Pölten (133%) reach values above or around 130% of the EU-28 average, making them the strongest regions in the programme area.

All other regions are below the EU-28 average: Nordburgenland (99%), Niederösterreich-Süd (93%), Waldviertel (89%), Wiener Umland/Nordteil (84%), Trnavský kraj (77%) and Weinviertel (69%).

Vienna/Wien and Bratislava (the Twin City region) are the economic centres of the cross-border area. Vienna/Wien is the economic heart of Austria and home to over 200 multinational corporation headquarters. It ranks among the top EU regions in terms of productivity and also leads the Mercer Quality of Living Ranking for the 10th consecutive year.

Bratislavský kraj accounts for the highest GDP per capita, wage and employment levels in Slovakia. In the last years, Bratislavský kraj has benefited from its good infrastructure compared to the rest of the country, considerable stock of human capital and influx of foreign direct investment (FDI). High economic performance of Bratislavský kraj measured in GDP per capita in PPS is partly due to statistical effects, which occur often in capital/metropolitan regions. The effects result from concentration of inter/national companies in the capital and the fact that considerable part of companies register their official seat in the capital while operating in other regions. Additionally, part of Bratislava population does not have official residence in the city and approximately 200.000 persons commute to the capital for work on daily basis.

The Twin City region also reports the majority of SMEs situated in the programme area. It is among the EU's major growth poles and is an important hub in the European urban and transport system. However, the opportunities arising from the Twin City concept have not been intensively exploited in the previous programming periods. Therefore, stronger focus and tailoring on the reasons of non-functionality of this concept should be made.

Based on the **Regional Competitiveness Index 2019**, the competitiveness in all regions in Austria and Bratislavský kraj is (strongly) above EU-average. However, Západné Slovensko¹ is well below the EU-average. In all regions except Západné Slovensko, competitiveness has improved since 2010 in comparison with the EU.

Vienna/Wien and its commuting area is above EU-average in all indicators of the Regional Competitiveness Index. Bratislavský kraj performs well, but is below EU-average regarding the indicators "institutions", "health" and "technological readiness".

The tertiary sector is the main economic sector in almost all regions (two-thirds of employees work in the sector), while the primary sector plays only a minor role. Niederösterreich, Burgenland and Trnavský kraj are productive in agriculture. The industrial sector is strong in Niederösterreich and the Slovak regions.

¹ Západné Slovensko (NUTS 2 level)

Key sectors in the Austrian regions are life sciences, ICT, renewable energy/environmental technology/green building/ mechanical engineering and metal processing, chemical industry and plastics, mobility, logistics, tourism, creative industries and food industries (Vienna Region Marketing GmbH 2019).

Important branches in Bratislavský kraj include chemical, automobile, machine, electro-technical and food industries. With a strong automotive base, the region is expected to upgrade its production capabilities by focusing the research on new materials for the car industry.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

As highlighted in the Mid-term evaluation of the SK-AT programme 2014 – 2020 it is important to also take into consideration the intra-regional disparities within the cross-border programming area. Especially on the Austrian side - remote, rural areas are lagging behind and are facing decreasing population (brain drain of young people and demographic challenges due to ageing). Therefore, the programme shall put stronger emphasis on balanced territorial development within the area. For example, the programme can contribute to strengthen the regional centres in the area (e.g. Eisenstadt, St. Pölten) and support services of general economic interest in more rural areas outside the development corridor of the Danube.

Joint investment needs

With respect to the economic potential, there is a particular need to:

- better and further explore the opportunities arising from the Twin City concept (Vienna/Wien - Bratislava)²;
- support the growth of SMEs by promoting cross-border cooperation; to increase internationalisation of enterprises;
- build the capacity of small companies which help to maintain employment levels in promising sectors;
- promote digitalization in the business sector on both sides of the border and foster SMEs access to R&D&I

Research & innovation and SMEs

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

Research and Innovation is of **cross-border-relevance** especially in the Twin City region Vienna/Wien-Bratislava. The capital regions have a high share of innovative, high growth companies, research institutions and universities, complemented by other regions such as Lower Austria, Burgenland and the Trnavský kraj as locations with tertiary education and research.

However, **cross-border links are not developed enough to be reflected in the functional region**. Research and innovation systems are at **different development stages**, with the Vienna/Wien innovation system being more efficient than the Bratislava innovation system. In addition, there are differences in starting conditions and institutional settings of innovation systems in the cross-border area.

² Source: Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report (2020); Border orientation paper AT-SK (2019); The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2018). Bratislava and Vienna: Twin Cities with big Potentials (Authors: Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner & Römisch)

Referring to the European Innovation Scoreboard 2021 and the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021, Austria and its three regions Wien, Niederösterreich and Burgenland are classified as “Strong Innovators” (second best category out of four). Slovakia and the Slovak region Západne Slovensko are considered as “Emerging Innovators” (the fourth category), whereas the Slovak region Bratislavský kraj is classified as a “Moderate Innovator” (the third category).

In addition, there is an **unbalanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel** mainly concentrated in the Twin City region, which requires more efforts to effectively enhance the innovation capacities of the whole area.

On national level, Austria has a higher level of R&D expenditure (3,05%,) compared to Slovakia (0,89%), and to the EU-27 average (2,15 %). At NUTS 2 level the value is below the EU average in all regions except Vienna/Wien.

In Austria, the total expenditure on R&D carried out by the private sector (49%) is almost equal to the R&D expenditure carried out by the public and regional institutions (51%). In Slovakia approximately 64 % of R&D expenditure come from the private sector and 36% from the public sector.

With respect to **small and medium sized enterprises** (SMEs), 30,5 % of active enterprises in the programme area are SMEs with less than 10 employees (123.565), and 63,5% one-person-companies (total: 257.279). Overall, 94 % of the companies have 0-9 employees. The share of one-person-companies is higher in Slovakia (up to 73% in Trnavský kraj), while the share of SMEs with 1-9 employees is higher in the Austrian regions (up to 35 % in Waldviertel).

Digitalisation infrastructure is of high quality in both countries and in the centre of the Interreg regions. Only some rural areas, particularly in Austria have a less favourable accessibility. Nevertheless, digitalisation skills and utilisation are still a matter of improvement especially in SMEs.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

In the 2014-2020 programming period the issue of **research and innovation** has been rising awareness more than in the programming period 2007-2013.

The high number of public research institutions in both capitals provides very good opportunity for international cooperation for excellent research teams on both sides. Furthermore, activities related to the creation or maintenance of networks especially by research institutions is likely to continue without programme funding to some extent.

Direct **SME** support under Interreg has limited success due to the administrative burden of Interreg projects. Therefore, it is recommended to support projects, which address the needs of SMEs and/or provide research infrastructure for SMEs.

As regards **Digitisation**, this topic can be addressed horizontally within various relevant areas of the cross-border region.

Joint investment needs

There are restrictions and **obstacles to directly support the business sector** under Interreg. However other types of support can be provided in the context of cross-border cooperation. Projects addressing the needs of SMEs and/or providing **research infrastructure for SMEs** for better involvement in R&D activities, and improvement of their access to R&D&I results can be of high cross-border relevance. Improvement with

respect to **digitalisation in businesses** remains necessary for both countries. In addition, digitalisation can be addressed horizontally within other relevant areas related to labour market, tourism, environment, etc.

In addition, **cross-border networking** between enterprises in similar and different sectors, as well as cluster development and cooperation in innovation activities need to be promoted. There is a considerable number of clusters that could possibly cooperate on themes of common interest (e.g. plastics industry, "green" technologies, etc.)

Stronger cross-border cooperation in science and technology, economic cooperation (e.g. by using synergies of services and manufacturing) and improved connectivity across borders (Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report 2020) can support the economic growth, competitiveness and innovation of the whole cross-border area.

In particular, the geographic proximity and the relative strength of the two capitals Wien-Bratislava on "Professional, scientific and technical activities" provide good opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation and cross-border cooperation.

In summary, there is a need for:

- harmonisation of unbalanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel in the regions;
- acceleration of cross-border links on research and innovation;
- harmonisation of development stages of innovation systems; heterogeneous starting conditions and institutional settings;
- development of a cross-border research and innovation strategy;
- involvement of SMEs in R&D activities and R&D&I results;
- cluster development and cooperation, especially in innovation activities regarding issues specific for SK-AT area according to the smart specialization strategies;
- improvement of digitalisation infrastructure and skills;
- core facilities, jointly developed services for research purposes

A greener and low carbon Europe

Climate change and Biodiversity

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

The programme area SK-AT has a medium environmental sensitivity to **climate change**. Both sides of the border are expected to be affected in similar ways by climate change, including an increase in warm temperature extremes and water temperature, decrease in summer precipitation, increase in the risk of forest fires and decrease in economic value of forests.

While climate change adaptation and risk management is strongly backed by strategies on European and national level (e.g. The European Green Deal and the upcoming EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, EU Floods and Water Directives, etc.), **policies on a regional level on climate change adaptation and mitigation are not yet fully implemented.**

The Austrian-Slovak border region is strongly dominated by a river system. The Danube and Morava Rivers run along the border between the two countries. The Danube is of great economic importance to both countries, especially in the fields of freight transport, hydropower, industrial and residential water supplies, irrigation and fishing.

Therefore, **water management** remains a common issue with respect to climate change and risk management. There are existing platforms and networks (e.g. permanent Austro-Slovak Border Water Commission) which should be considered and taken up by the programme and better utilised to improve the programme implementation in this matter. In the 2014-2020 programming period a few Interreg SK-AT projects address the cross-border cooperation between public authorities in relation to water management of the Danube (e.g. Dream³, PlasticFreeDanube, etc.) upon which future cooperation could be built.

Biodiversity and reduced environmental pollution are central issues on European level and will be increasingly in focus in the coming years with the European Green Deal as the central road map of the new EU Commission on a sustainable economy.

Characterized by a rich biodiversity and a large number of natural areas, environment protection and promotion of biodiversity have been prominent in the cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia. The common river system of the programme area provides green infrastructure and a large number of protected areas. Main sources of biodiversity are the wetlands along the Danube and Morava, Lake Neusiedl, the Wienerwald and the Small Carpathians. There are three national parks in the region: Donauauen (Wien and Niederösterreich), Thayatal (Niederösterreich) and Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (Burgenland).

56 sites in the Austrian part of the programme area and 98 sites on the Slovak side are protected under Natura 2000. There are still gaps in the coverage of Natura 2000 sites with 89% of the proposed areas being implemented in Austria, compared to 74% in Slovakia. (European Commission - DG REGIO 2019, p. 14).

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

While activities related to **renewable energy** are considered as relevant for the programming period 2021 – 2027 (Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report 2020), flexible approaches and cross-border challenges should be taken into account.

Water management and climate change adaptation and mitigation have been important topics during the 2014 – 2020 programming period, with related activities focused on strengthening the cross-border integration of functional ecological networks and green infrastructures. Taking into account the projects that are being implemented, the upcoming interventions related to water management and climate change adaptation and mitigation should build upon the lessons learnt and results of these projects (e.g. one strategic project on research and management of Danube river aiming at strengthening the institutional cross-border cooperation).

In addition, common interventions in the border area related to the environmental protection and flood risk management will also remain of high cross-border relevance for the programming period 2021-2027.

On **waste management**, one project has been approved aimed at finding solution on macro-plastic waste along Danube river, and another project has been financed under the specific objective “Strengthen collaboration in the innovation system” focused on know-how in waste management. This topic offers good opportunities for know-how exchange

³ Approved under SO 1.1

and cooperation on common problems, which should be built upon the lessons learnt and results of the projects of the 2014-2020 programming period.

The issue of **biodiversity** has been very attractive in previous programming periods. This importance has been underlined by 8 projects approved under the Interreg programme 2014 - 2020, aiming at protecting and developing river biotopes, flowering country for butterflies, installing floating islands for nesting birds, managing biotopes and strengthening biodiversity, developing ecosystem tools and services for the biodiversity protection and restoration, and reducing the risk of wine diseases.

The area of nature conservation is of key importance for a thorough conservation and restoration of biodiversity together with the nature protection, all aiming to achieve a favourable condition of all habitats and species of European and national interest. Interventions in the area of nature protection as well as those aiming on ecological and environmental education are still of high priority for the programming period 2021-2027.

As regards **circular economy**, this topic is mainly national and/or regional driven. Possibilities and need of cross-border waste streams and joint waste treatment are still unclear and a better cooperation between public authorities may be needed. Cross-border cooperation in the SK-AT region may also include "soft" measures aiming at reduction of waste production, shared economy, repair, refurbishment and reuse of used goods, use of recyclable materials, reduction of food waste etc.

Likewise, investing in **renewable energy** is a national/regional matter of high-level infrastructure projects, which are less adequate under Interreg programmes. Interreg with its limited budget and relatively soft approach seems to be less suitable for implementing and/or achieving the renewable energy objectives of the Member States. In this context, soft cross-border measures could be supported, taking into account cross-border challenges.

Joint investment needs

Promoting and strengthening coordination and cooperation across the border is necessary to better adapt to the climate change impact and improve climate change mitigation. Cross-border climate change prevention measures should be promoted, such as actions to improve the knowledge base, as well as the preparation and implementation of disaster risk management strategies (i.e. flood, biodiversity loss and forest fires).

Green infrastructure is especially important between the growth poles of the Twin City Wien-Bratislava. The increasing pressure on settlements in the Twin City Region puts further pressure on land-use, which in its current approach considerably reduces biodiversity.

Cooperation among public authorities to improve the growth-pole and agglomeration between the two capital cities and its hinterland (as well as other urban and cross-border growth poles) are important to reduce the land use pressure and jointly manage settlement and protected areas in a more sustainable way.

In summary, there is a need for:

- joint actions to adapt to climate change impacts in the CBC region especially in terms of floods and droughts and promote cross-border climate change prevention measures;
- climate change measurements in urban areas;

- joint actions to preserve the rich biodiversity and fight against invasive species which harm the environment;
- joint strategies to protect natural heritage, Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas;
- joint efforts to protect the green infrastructure in the twin city region and in the whole cross-border area;
- joint actions to fight against pollution (e.g. river pollution);
- joint efforts to improve the accessibility of green infrastructure, natural heritage for recreational purpose;
- measures to preserve biodiversity and nature conservation/protection in urban areas.

A More connected Europe

Sustainable mobility

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

On public transport and **sustainable mobility**, local and regional accessibility shows significant gaps across border. Apart from some key links (i.e. Wien-Bratislava; Hainburg-Bratislava), cross-border public transport links remain weak. Main reasons are the missing electrification of railway link Bratislava – Marchegg and its limited capacity, especially on the Slovak side of the border, as well as the lack of a high-level bridge connection over March between Devínska Nová Ves and Marchegg.

Currently there are some extensions with cross-border relevance under construction and planned. In the light of the Green Deal and the demand to reduce CO₂ emission, multimodal transport nodes and harmonised railway systems will remain an important topic. The share of public transport is higher in Slovakia than in Austria, but significantly lost ground over the last years in both countries.

Cross-border **bicycle networks** improved, particularly supported by the Interreg programmes. However, there are still gaps in the system, which need to be filled. Several European cycle routes are passing through the region (e.g. EuroVelo6, EuroVelo13), as well as EuroVelo9⁴, Moravská cyklotrasa⁵ and are of importance for a sustainable tourism industry as well as a core cycle network for sustainable mobility/commuting for work purposes.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Trans-European Transport Network (**TEN-T**) infrastructure investments are of no high relevance due to time and financial burden. On **sustainable mobility**, the main focus in the programming period 2014-2020 was given under the priority axis 3 Supporting sustainable transport solutions. The initial focus was on sustainable forms of transport that would reduce air and noise pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.

⁴ EuroVelo9 can be reached from Slovakia through Moravský Sv. Ján – Hohenau border bridge where Moravská cyklotrasa and EuroVelo13 meet.

⁵ Moravská cyklotrasa connects to EuroVelo13 at the Slovak-Austrian border crossing and runs along the Morava River and passes the three borders geo point/tripoint (AT-SK-CZ)/Drei Grenzen/Trojštátie

As regards the **TEN-T**, the cross-border region is well-connected. It lies at the intersection of three rail and road corridors of the TEN-T consisting of motorway, railway and waterway axes. Considering the time and financial burden, infrastructure projects at the level of TEN-T are beyond the scope of an Interreg programme.

One approved project - Cleanmobility - aims at future synchronisation of the transport schedules in the programme area. Another project for constructing the bridge as part of the cycle-path crossing the border between Vysoká pri Morave and Marchegg has been approved and implemented in the 2014 – 2020 programming period. However, the significant amount of funds, time required for the preparation of such investment projects and the narrow target group limit the absorption capacity in this area.

Joint investment needs

In the scope of the Interreg programme only sustainable mobility including cycling needs to be addressed.

In summary, there is a need for:

- improvement of local and regional level cross-border accessibility, e.g. by cycle bridge Gajary-Dürnkrot and Angern- Záhorská Ves bridge;
- accelerating the shift of the modal split towards public transport means;
- joint actions to establish cross-border transport plan as well as to harmonise the transport plan;
- closing cross-border public transport gaps and solving last mile issues;
- further embedding the cross-border cycle routes in high level international bike trails;
- improvement, elaboration of concepts and awareness raising regarding sustainable and multimodal mobility in rural and urban areas.

A More social and inclusive Europe

Labour market and social services

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

The employment rates do not differ significantly, generally are in the medium range compared with other EU regions. Unemployment is below the EU average in all regions except Wien. In 2011, a few years after the economic crisis, the unemployment rate had increased up to 11 % in Západné Slovensko, whereas the other Austrian federal states had a 4-5 % overall unemployment rate, Bratislavský kraj 6 % and Wien 8 %. Since then the situation in Niederösterreich, and Burgenland has not changed significantly. However, in the Slovak regions it **dropped** to 2 - 4 % in 2019. Wien was the only region with an increase of unemployment and the only region with a long-term unemployment above EU-average. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the unemployment decreased in both countries in 2020. The trend is however positive and decrease of unemployment rate can be recognized in 2021.

On the other side here are **considerable asymmetries on cross-border labour markets**, especially in labour productivity, labour market efficiency and wages.

As regards labour productivity, the Austrian regions have a productivity rate between 100-125% of the EU average, compared to 75% of the EU average for Bratislavský kraj and Západné Slovensko. In addition, overall wages and salaries in the industry, construction

and services sector are three times higher in Austria, being one of the drivers behind an asymmetrical flow of people across the border for work or business purposes with significantly higher number of people from the Slovak regions crossing the border to Austria for this purpose.

There is a **strong potential for cross-border labour mobility** with many benefits (increase activity in enterprises, keep people in the region, etc.), including recognition of skills/qualifications/diplomas, social services, pensions, transport, schools/ kindergarten, etc. Several relevant institutions have established 'offices' to help workers and businesses in this regard. In the cross-border region there are EURES offices operating in Wien and Bratislava. Ensuring operability and sustainability of the **EURES Info Points** is important to reduce labour mobility asymmetry between the Austrian and Slovak regions.

At the same time commuting is a widespread phenomenon in the programme region. In Niederösterreich a total of 28% of workers commute to other federal provinces (especially Wien) and fewer than 1% commute abroad. In Burgenland, 37% of workers commute to neighbouring federal provinces (mainly Wien and Niederösterreich). In Bratislavský kraj 1,6 % of employees commute to another Slovak region and 2 % of workers commute abroad, in Západné Slovensko 4 % respectively 8 %.

Furthermore, there is a **lack of foreign language skills** in both countries, namely the Slovak language skills on the Austrian side while the German language is more widespread in the Slovak Republic. The weak language and thus intercultural skills are hindering cooperation and the necessary change of mindsets.

Overall, the population is well **educated** in the cross-border region. Proportion of people with upper secondary education is higher than the EU-28 average in almost the whole programme area. All regions have also made progress regarding the number of highly educated people. Both educational systems perform well in attracting pupils into early childhood education (Austria 96% and Slovakia 77%). (Eurostat 2019a).

In Bratislavský kraj, 45,5 % of people aged 25-64 have tertiary education, which is the highest level in the region and provides a good basis for the higher value-added economy. Wien follows with 43 %. This makes Bratislavský kraj and Wien the only parts of the programme region to outdo the EU-28 average of 33 %. All other sub-regions are on EU-average (Niederösterreich, 32 %) or below, Západné Slovensko having the lowest proportion of aged 25-64 population with tertiary education (22 %). Since 2011 all regions have made progress regarding the amount of highly educated people. The amount of people with upper secondary education is higher than the EU-28 average (45,5 %) in almost the whole programme region. Only in Wien the share is significantly less (40 %). However, at the peripheral parts of the programme region the share of high-level education decreases.

There is a **low cross-border student exchange** due to lacking attractiveness of universities. Such activities will be provided as complementary tool to the Erasmus+ programme. High-quality education and research facilities are mainly concentrated in Wien and Bratislava.

Lifelong learning is more widespread in Austria than in Slovakia. Slovakia is one of the countries with the lowest education budget in the EU, while Austria stays above the EU average. However, Austrian regions need to pay attention to counter steer against gaps between the young population with a migrant background and their native peers. (European Commission - DG REGIO 2019, p. 17).

The **health system** in the region is well developed, especially in urban areas. The Austrian health system, and especially the health services are increasingly depending on immigrant labour force, with a considerable share from the Slovak Republic. Spending on health is high in Austria, the health expenditure per capita with 3.900 € is about 1.000 € higher than the EU-average, putting Austria on the second place after Germany. This amounts to 10,4 % of GDP. The Slovak Republic spends less on health than most other EU countries, both in absolute terms and as a share of GDP. In 2015, EUR 1 538 per capita was spent on health care, compared to the EU average of EUR 2 797, which ranked Slovakia at the 20-th place among all EU countries.

Austria had 7.4 acute care beds per 1.000 inhabitants in 2017, 46 % more than the EU average (5.1 per 1 000) and the third highest after Germany and Bulgaria. Slovakia with 5.8 per 1.000 ranges also above EU-average. Nevertheless, the supply of hospital beds is not optimal in all regions; especially in the in the Seewinkel region, the accessibility of hospitals is not always available in adequate time (a hospital in Gols is being planned). Bratislava has a high concentration of hospitals. There are 8 public hospitals and numerous separate clinics including private medical centers. There are approximately 4 000 hospital beds catered to by more than 1 300 highly skilled doctors. Institutional health care in Trnava region is provided in 7 hospitals, 4 medical clinics and 2 spas. The number of beds in hospitals is 1,734.

Health and social services have **different legislative framework and competencies arrangements** in both countries, which causes many restrictions and makes cross-border cooperation and project implementation rather complicated. On the other hand, such projects can be feasible if they are inspired by good examples from other countries.

The **ageing population** also presents growing challenges for the social health services, the care system for the elderly people and financing of the public pension system.

In this context, **transition from institutional to family- and community-based care** is relevant and could be promoted for example through joint research activities, knowledge sharing, exchange of good practices and training of service providers and personnel, among others. In this context person-centred care will be supported where appropriate. This means a move away from professionals deciding what is best for a patient or service user, and places the person at the centre, as an expert of their own experience. The person and their family where appropriate, becomes an equal partner in the planning of their care and support, ensuring it meets their needs, goals, and outcomes. Such approach allows users of services to be active not only in their own care but also in the design and delivery of services. This approach can improve both the experience and quality of care.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Although, the **labour market** issue is not directly addressed by the cross-border interventions under the 2014 – 2020 programme, they are closely linked to other topics like education and training. Based on the current situation, better alignment of interventions addressing labour market issue and needs and education and training should be ensured in the future.

In the programming period 2014-2020, after the 8-th round of call for proposals 5 projects have been approved/committed within the specific objective 1.2 to Improve higher education and lifelong learning. Considering the importance of **education activities** in safeguarding competitiveness in the long run period, it is necessary to underline their

relevance also in the new cross-border programme SK-AT for the programming period 2021-2027.

Healthcare activities in the programming period 2014-2020 have been supported under the priority axis 4 Strengthening cross-border governance and institutional cooperation, specific objective 4.1. Strengthen the institutional cooperation. 2 projects have been approved aiming on active ageing and creating competence centre for health of seniors. In addition, one project has been approved with the aim to further strengthen the care of newborns in the border region. At the same time one project has been approved in the specific objective 1.1 aiming on nutrition and healthy aging, as well as another one aiming on development of more favorable system of treatment for early remobilization after total knee and hip endoprosthesis. While there are significant differences in legislation and public competences between both countries which hamper cooperation, projects in this area can be feasible if they are inspired by good examples from other countries.

Social inclusion and poverty are less addressed in the cross-border region with no approved projects/interventions dealing specifically with these topics during the programming period 2014 – 2020.

Joint investment needs

Different interventions of high cross-border relevance in the field of employment include among other institutional cooperation, education and training and better access to research and innovation. However, the situation is different at the moment due to COVID-19 and assessing future developments on this topic is specifically difficult.

Considering the labour shortage in different sectors, **lifelong learning and an adequate educational response** show room for improvement. In addition, the current crisis will most probably shift the labour market demands in different sectors which might lead to new demands in sectors and/or skills.

Cross-border interventions will be necessary to support synergies between universities and vocational bodies to increase the attractiveness of tertiary education curricula and identify new professional opportunities that could address the labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility. In addition, joint measures are needed to facilitate student exchanges and increase foreign language skills on both sides of the border. The pandemic particularly unveiled the importance of **sufficient health infrastructure**, as well as of the **cross-border cooperation** in case of emergencies.

Cross-border cooperation will be crucial for better tackling these challenges of an **ageing population**. In addition, improved communication on health services available on both sides of the border, including on the procedures of cost reimbursement will allow better public services across the border.

In summary, there is a particular need to:

- address labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility;
- support cooperation between educational, training, research institutions and the labour market;
- continuously address language barriers in the border region to improve the cross-border understanding and the change of mindsets;
- improve cooperation among health services across the border with regards to establishing a legislative framework for cross-border emergency services;
- jointly address challenges regarding the aging population;
- promote the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care.

Tourism and cultural heritage

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

The programme region offers a unique diversity of **cultural heritage** with strong potentials for further cross-border cooperation. In terms of tourist visits, the programme area reports around 30 million overnight stays yearly, which clearly shows the importance of tourism in the region. However, **seasonal dependency** remains an issue, especially in rural areas.

Well-known UNESCO World Heritage sites situated in the programme area include the Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn, the Historic Centre of Wien, the Lake Neusiedl Cultural Landscape and the Border of Roman Empire – Danube Limes (Austria, Germany, Slovakia). Moreover, two sites in the Bratislavský kraj and Trnavský kraj are currently on the so-called 'Tentative List' of UNESCO, which is the first step in the registration process for the World Heritage List (i.e. the Memorial of Chatam Sófer and Slavonic Fortified Settlement at Mikulčice – Church of St. Margaret at Kopčany).

There is a lack of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products (gastro tourism and wine production) which should be addressed through cooperation among actors on both sides of the border. In the context of the current crisis, this cooperation becomes even more important in addressing the significant decline in tourism and the future challenges arising from the pandemic.

In the above mentioned context the OP INTERREG VA SK-AT will reflect and follow the New European Bauhaus initiative by respecting the integrated, sustainable and inclusive guiding principles.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

As regards cultural heritage, this has been a very popular topic in previous programming periods. Promotion of tourism and cultural heritage of the cross-border region will also remain important for the programming period 2021-2027, with strong potentials on ecotourism, cycling, agro-tourism, wine culture, antique Roman culture and other similar activities. Besides the OP identified the need to supplement the tourism infrastructure and improve the accessibility in the area of the Morava river in connection with the already built bridges Devínska Nová Ves-Schlosshof and Vysoká pri Morava-Marchegg. In this context sustainable cross-border connections Angern – Záhorská Ves or Dürnkrut – Gajary have been planned.

Joint investment needs

Some cross-border interactive **cultural and tourism** databases or travel guides have been established in recent years. However, other common approaches should be established and strengthened to better develop promising sites, theme paths and joint products, paying particular attention to small and family businesses. Fields of cross-border relevance include inter alia eco - and agro-tourism, wine culture, cycling, antique Roman culture and similar activities.

In summary, there is a need for:

- establishment of common approaches to cultural and sustainable tourism;
- joint tourism strategy in the border region to better utilise the cross-border assets;

- better promotion of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products including awareness raising for natural assets and the cultural ties among citizens;
- joint investments in common natural and cultural heritage products, sites and services, with a strong focus on supporting small and family businesses
- enhanced cooperation among public institutions and municipalities

Cooperation Governance

Cross-border Governance

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

Cooperation between state, municipalities and other public institutions in the programme area is already taking place to some extent. However, there is still a considerable need for further qualitative development and deepening of **institutional cooperation**.

Legal, administrative differences and differences in institutional capacity are a major source of bottlenecks hindering the cross-border cooperation in the programme area. This concerns inter alia the relationship between federal administration and municipalities in Austria and between ministries and self-governing regions and municipalities in the Slovak Republic and different legislative levels.

In addition, the **use of different languages** on both sides of the border is another important issue that impedes cross-border cooperation.

Although there is a strong functional area in the Twin City Region Vienna/Wien-Bratislava with an increasing interdependency, there are **no joint strategies**, nor sufficient functioning cross-border structures like organisations and institutions. The pressure to work together might increase with an upcoming economic crisis and environmental challenges.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Interventions under the specific objective 4.1 Strengthen the institutional cooperation have been mainly dedicated to cooperation of public and private institutions in the cross-border region with the aim of improving institutional coordination and strategic planning through development of common planning processes and databases, enhancing institutional cooperation in areas with major societal challenges and building up more effective frameworks to support small-scale projects.

Institutional cooperation, strategic planning and reducing administrative barriers in various areas (i.e. health and social services) will remain important for the programming period 2021- 2027. The main benefit should be in the form of mutual cooperation of the institutions across border bringing common solutions of the main challenges in the border region.

The Small Projects Fund is a tool with significant contribution to the visibility of the cross-border programmes. The small projects are very popular and visible among the population of the cross-border regions (such as common sport or cultural events, fairs, etc.). Unfortunately, this opportunity to gain wider publicity through a Small Project Fund was not used in the previous programming period. It is recommended to include a Small Project Fund scheme into the next programme to facilitate participation of small municipalities in the programme activities.

Joint investment needs

Better institutional coordination, reduction of administrative barriers and awareness rising of public authorities about the benefits of cross-border cooperation are necessary in addressing common challenges in key areas such as in environmental protection and disaster risk management, healthcare, public transport, cross-border labour market obstacles, use of languages etc. Shared use of health care or educational facilities could contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in border regions.

Further development and strengthening of cooperation between the authorities and in the administration, despite different structures, is an ongoing challenge to which the cooperation programme can contribute, taking into consideration the legal framework (cooperation in the programme area has no influence on national and European legislation).

In summary, there is a need for:

- joint strategies in various areas (e.g. water management, mobility, tourism, health and social care, regional development, labour market);
- enhanced cooperation among public institutions to jointly address the upcoming challenges regarding economic and ecological changes;
- improvement of data exchange in regard to environmental data, security, labour market, etc.;
- joint fight against preconceptions among the population in the border region;
- joint efforts to overcome the legislative obstacles of the cross-border cooperation.

Horizontal principles and compliance with the “do no significant harm” principle

The IP SK-AT will ensure the respect for fundamental rights, in compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, gender equality, prevention of non-discrimination, and accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance to Article 9 of the CPR by its selection criteria, (barrier-free) communication, conditions for project implementation (where appropriate) and monitoring measures.

In line with Article 9 (4) and Recital 10 of CPR, in order to comply with the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle a dedicated assessment of the types of actions was carried out aligned to the SEA process with respect to their potential to do significant harm to the environmental objectives in the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 (Taxonomy Regulation).

All types of actions defined in chapter 2 were assessed if they are compatible with the DNSH principle. The methodology used was based on the provisions of the RRF DNSH technical guidance.

Supporting information on how the DNSH principle has been taken into account are documented in a dedicated chapter of the SEA report.

The programme’s contribution to the climate target is 26 %, to biodiversity target is 37,4 % of the total ERDF contribution to the programme. In addition, environmental aspects are going to be specifically supported horizontally.

Where relevant and appropriate, applicants’ and beneficiaries’ attention will be called to consider the values of the Bauhaus initiative (sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion).

Direct subsidies to productive investments of SMEs are not foreseen in the IP SK-AT. However, recommendations of the ECA in the Special Report 08/2018 are going to be respected as far as selected operations are expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the targeted cross-border challenges.

In implementing the programme, the managing authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support strategic objectives (including effort to address institutional capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to pay more attention to quality and life-cycle cost criteria. Where possible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social aspects and incentives for innovation should be included in public procurement procedures.

Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

During programming the IP SK-AT 2021-2027, complementarities and synergies with European, national and regional strategies and programmes have been considered in the strategy building process, based on the findings of the socio-economic analysis. Moreover, the members of the SK-AT programming group are also participating in the programming task forces of other programmes and have national and regional coordination responsibilities, thus enabling complementarity with other initiatives, coordination with fellow Interreg cross-border or transnational programmes, regional-, national-, and other EU programmes.

To ensure that synergies and complementarities are effectively used also during implementation, all projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level (please see further descriptions in section 2 for each SO). In addition, project applicants will be encouraged to go for increased coherence and complementarity with other projects supported in EU, national and regional programmes as well as with EU macro-regional strategies. Synergies with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives, as well as capitalization on available knowledge shall be described as part of the application form and will be subject to project assessment. Moreover, the exchange of information with other (Interreg) programmes (e.g. at joint communication activities) will proactively promote synergies between projects and help to capitalize on outputs and results of other projects. The use of capitalization tools like keep.eu will clearly demonstrate the potential of synergies and complementarities between projects in Interreg SK-AT and other Interreg programmes.

Overall, the IP SK-AT 2021-2027 shall account for complementarity and synergies also with fellow Interreg cross-border or transnational programmes, regional, national, and other EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, Smart Specialisation Strategies platform, SMEs programmes or instruments deriving from the European Green Deal among others, yet most of them are still under development.

For synergies and complementarities also see appendix 4.

Link with existing macro-regional strategies and other cohesion policy programmes

Cross-border cooperation programmes and macro-regional strategies require trust and confidence between partners (EU Member States, regions, stakeholders, etc.) in order to share a common vision which brings concrete measures and projects. These strategies and

the action plans currently being drafted offer a high degree of flexibility in terms of thematic diversity.

For the programme area one macro regional strategy is relevant: the EU Macro-regional strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR). In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the Interreg programme Slovakia-Austria has made some contribution to the implementation of the Danube Strategy. However, further can be done to strengthen convergence between the strategy and the cross-border programme.

The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Slovakia-Austria could support actions arising from the EUSDR, which also contribute to the specific objectives of the cross-border area. The following topics described in the strategy are considered to be relevant to the SK-AT programme:

Priority Area 4 “To restore and maintain the quality of waters”, aiming at realising of integrated river basin management measures in the Danube Region, and specifically inter alia:

- contributing to the implementation of the DRBMP and its Joint Programme of Measures
- contributing to preventing and reducing water pollution from point and diffuse sources in the Danube Region, especially related to organic substances, nutrients, hazardous and emerging substances inter alia by enhancing wastewater treatment and
- promoting best management practices, by contributing to protecting water resources and safeguarding drinking water supply

Priority Area 5 “To manage environmental risks” inter alia:

- addressing the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan and the ongoing work in the field of climate adaptation,
- providing and enhancing continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan, also taking into account potential impacts of climate change and adaptation strategies and
- supporting the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities.

Priority Area 6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils”, aiming among other at:

- improving management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas through transnational cooperation and capacity building.
- strengthening the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region and covered by EU nature legislation and in particular to continue the ongoing work and efforts to securing viable populations of Danube sturgeon species.
- reducing the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region
- maintaining and restoring Green and Blue Infrastructure elements through integrated spatial development and conservation planning.
- improving and/or maintaining the soil quality in the Danube Region

Priority Area 7 “To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)” aiming among other at:

- supporting education, research and ICT in the Danube Region by improvement of framework conditions for building a knowledge society,
- contributing to an increasing level and quality of network activities, at strengthening the existing links and fostering new cooperation in the Danube Region,
- strengthening the realization of the European Research Area in the Danube Region,
- reverting brain drain and foster brain circulation and
- further implementing Smart Specialization Strategies in all Danube countries.

Priority Area 9 “To invest in people and skills” aiming at:

- contributing to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, active citizenship and well-being
- contributing to increased higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems
- contributing to ensuring inclusive education and training and promoting inclusive labour markets, equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as the promotion of civic competences and lifelong learning opportunities for all
- contributing to closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions

Priority Area 10 “to step up institutional capacity and cooperation” aiming at:

- strengthening institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance.
- increasing involvement of civil society and local actors for effective policy-making and implementation.
- enhancing coordination and knowledge for better use of funding and to develop needs-based funding instruments.

To ensure better synergies and collaboration, good coordination will be needed with the National Coordinators of the EU Macro-regional strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR). Furthermore, the cross-border programme may develop and apply specific project selection criteria to encourage the development of projects that support the priorities of the EUSDR.

Linking with the EUSDR will allow the cross-border programme to reach a bigger impact (on a wider territory), as well as to have good projects with a political support and better visibility. In addition, stronger links with the neighbouring CBC programmes can be built where Slovak and Austrian regions are involved in overlapping cross-border programmes. Establishing close working relationships among the programmes (SK – CZ, SK – HU) with the aim of supporting multi-lateral cooperation (where appropriate) can be of great benefit in addressing joint challenges.

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

The justification for the selection of priorities and specific objectives and related priorities is based on a sound analysis of data, strategies and interests of programme partners and stakeholders. Different points of view in favour of a SO are explained in the format of a comparative analysis, including also few key "challenges and needs" presented under section 1.2 to avoid repetition.

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity (PO 1)	(i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	Priority 1	<p>The socio-economic-analysis, the border orientation paper as well as the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme among others, have shown that the PO1 and specifically SO i) Research and innovation has high potential for cooperation among different actors in the programme area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 highlights the potential that the Vienna/Wien – Bratislava Twin City region has on research and innovation, while cross-border links are still very limited. • The socio-economic-analysis clearly shows the need for more support towards a more balanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel in the whole programme area. • There is still unused potential for developing cross-sectoral collaboration in R&D and innovation through clusters and cross-border networking, fostering

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, and Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>knowledge transfer between academia and businesses.</p> <p>Within SO i) it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at exploiting the potential of cross-border cooperation of partners on research and innovation, including their application in business and the use of R&I results by SMEs in areas relevant for cross-border region.</p> <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility (PO 2)</p>	<p>(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches</p>	<p>Priority 2</p>	<p>The SK-AT border region is strongly dominated by a river system. Therefore, climate change adaptation and risk management and water management remain important common issues which can be addressed under this specific objective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 clearly supports the promotion of climate change prevention measures (e.g. improvement of the knowledge base, development of disaster risk management strategies related to floods and other disasters etc.). • A likely stronger involvement of the climate change topic for all regions is also

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>stated in the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, existing platforms and networks (e.g. permanent Austro-Slovak Border Water Commission) can be taken up by the programme and better utilised to improve the programme implementation in this matter. • The lessons learned and results from the projects of the 2014-2020 programming period on water management form a very good basis for future cooperation. <p>Within SO i) it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at promoting and strengthening coordination and cooperation across the borders to better adapt to climate change impact and improve disaster risk management, especially floods.</p> <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>
2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by	(vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in	Priority 2	The cross-border area is characterized by a rich biodiversity and a large number of natural areas. In this context, environment protection and promotion of biodiversity remain important

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility (PO 2)</p>	<p>urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>		<p>topics with respect to cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular, the increasing pressure on settlements in the Twin City Region puts further pressure on land-use, which in its current approach considerably reduces biodiversity. • There is a need for elaboration and implementation of concepts for preservation of biodiversity and nature protection in urban areas. • There are still gaps in the coverage of Natura 2000 sites in both countries which could be addressed under this specific objective. • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 also recommends the development of common and/or joint approaches among regional/local agencies or institutions in the programme area to manage nature protection areas along the border. • Within this SO it is possible to implement a number of measures to promote cooperation among public authorities to improve the growth-pole and agglomeration between the two capital cities and its hinterland (as well as other urban and cross-border growth poles) to

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>reduce land use pressure and jointly manage settlement as well as protected areas in a more sustainable way.</p> <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)</p>	<p>(ii) Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</p>	<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>As stated in the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT, activities related to education are preconditions in safeguarding the competitiveness of the programme area in the long run period. Therefore, it is necessary to underline their relevance for the programming period 2021-2027.</p> <p>Some of the key challenges that can be addressed under these specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour shortage in different sectors, which shows room for improvement with respect to lifelong learning and an adequate educational response, as well as closer cooperation with SMEs. • The current crisis which will most probably shift the labour market demands in different sectors and might lead to new demands in sectors and/or skills. • Better cross-border cooperation between educational institutions.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low expenditure on education and training (in Slovakia) and achievement gaps between young migrants and their native peers (in Austria), as stated in the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019. • Cross-border student exchange, and • Foreign language skills, which is considered as a core cross-border issue in various studies and analyses. As suggested by the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019, bilingualism could be promoted starting with basic education, as well through more extensive and structured language-learning activities across the border. <p>Under this SO various cross-border interventions can be carried out to support synergies between universities and vocational bodies, to increase the attractiveness of tertiary education curricula and identify new professional opportunities that could address the labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility. In addition, other joint measures can be implemented to facilitate student exchanges and increase foreign language skills on both sides of the border.</p> <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)	(v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care	Priority 3	<p>The analysed documents for the cross-border region highlight the relevance of cross-border cooperation with respect to healthcare activities, including in particular the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 and the Mid-term evaluation report of SK-AT programme.</p> <p>Under this specific objective several issues can be addressed including among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant differences in the legislative framework and the public competences between Austria and Slovakia, which could be reduced through cross-border interventions. • Growing challenges arising from the ageing population, which make cross-border cooperation crucial for better tackling these challenges (Socio-economic-analysis; Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019). • Improved communication on health services available on both sides of the border, including on the procedures of cost reimbursement to allow better public services across the border.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current pandemic particularly unveiled the importance of sufficient health infrastructure, as well as of the cross-border cooperation in case of emergencies. • Cooperation between educational and research institutions and (regional) institutions in implementation <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)</p>	<p>(vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</p>	<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>The programme region offers a unique diversity of cultural heritage with strong potentials for further cross-border cooperation. The support of tourism and culture is considered as an important development factor in the cross-border area in the previous programming periods, which stresses the relevance of this topic on both sides of the border.</p> <p>Cross-border cooperation on culture and tourism is supported by various documents (e.g. Mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme, Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019, etc.) as well as by the stakeholders of the programming groups.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Within this specific objective, several cross-border issues can be addressed linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal dependency which remains an issue especially in rural areas. • Better development of promising sites, theme paths and joint products, paying particular attention to small and family businesses. • Lack of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products which could be addressed through cooperation among actors on both sides of the border. • Further exploiting opportunities in fields of cross-border relevance such as eco- and agro-tourism, cultural tourism, wine culture, cycling, antique Roman culture and similar activities through common products and services. • Coordination of cultural and natural heritage development plans and common initiatives. • In the context of the current crisis, cross-border cooperation becomes even more important in addressing the significant decline in tourism and the future challenges arising from the pandemic.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.
Interreg-specific objective (ISO) 'a better cooperation governance'	b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	Priority 4	<p>Institutional cooperation, strategic planning and reducing administrative barriers in various areas (i.e. health and social services, environmental protection and disaster risk management, public transport, cross-border labour market, use of languages) will remain important topics during the programming period 2021- 2027.</p> <p>As highlighted in the socio-economic-analysis, the border orientation paper as well as the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme among others, a better cooperation governance will help both countries to address common challenges in the border region, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal, administrative differences and differences in institutional capacity, which concerns inter alia the relationship between federal administration and municipalities in Austria and between ministries and self-governing regions and municipalities in Slovakia, and different legislative levels. • Further qualitative development and deepening of institutional cooperation

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>between state, municipalities and other public institutions in the programme area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite a strong functional area in the Twin City Region, there are neither joint strategies, nor sufficient functioning cross-border structures like organisations and institutions. The pressure to work together might increase with an upcoming economic crisis and common environmental challenges. • Use of different languages on both sides is another administrative obstacle to be tackled through cross-border interventions. • Shared use of health care or educational facilities could also contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in border regions. <p>Further development and strengthening of cooperation between authorities and in the administration, despite different structures, is an ongoing challenge to which the cooperation programme can contribute, taking into consideration their legal frameworks (cooperation in the programme area has no influence on national and European legislation). It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
	c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to people actions	Priority 4	<p>beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p> <p>Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to people actions will remain important during the programming period 2021-2027. These actions will help both countries to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better address common challenges in the programme area and reduce preconceptions, • promote the exchange of good practices of trust building initiatives, implement dialogue platforms, trainings and mutual learning. Various dialogue formats should also enhance capacities to engage in participatory processes • link up various organisations such as sports clubs, cultural organisations, schools, etc. <p>Within this SO it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at supporting bottom-up cooperation among citizens in the programme area and reducing negative mindsets as well as drawing people across the border together.</p> <p>It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>

2. Priorities

2.1 Priority 1: A more competitive and smarter SK-AT border region

2.1.1. (i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

The aim of the specific objective is to promote cross-border cooperation in research and innovation in line with the national smart specialisation strategies.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- promoting cross-, multi- and interdisciplinary cooperation activities, i.e. cooperation between multiple sectors in line with the SK and AT smart specialisation strategies
- sharing and transfer of research and innovation results into practice
- raising awareness of both professionals and the wider public towards cross-border R&I

Related types of action

Type of action 1.1.1 Interdisciplinary cross-border cooperation in research and innovation

The aim of the type of action is to strengthen cross-border research and development in fields of common interest, such as life sciences (including biomedicine and biotechnology), (digital) health (including ageing society, food and nutrition), sustainability and environment (including eco-innovation, waste management, climate change and renewable energy and circular economy), creative industries, and digital transformation (including smart technologies and services and industry 4.0).

Indicative actions:

- joint research and innovation activities in the fields of common interest
- cooperation activities of Universities with SME/with the private sector to transfer technologies and knowledge from research to practice
- cross-border mobility of researchers, for example by postdoc fellowships and staff exchange

Type of action 1.1.2 Implementing actions including small-scale investments in shared research facilities

The aim of the type of action is to develop or improve shared (digital) research and transfer infrastructure and services.

Indicative actions:

- investments in new or improved shared research and innovation facilities and services of cross-border interest
- developing joint transfer and technology facilities including social innovation such as clusters, high-quality R&D hubs or cross-border incubators
- fostering (digital) social innovation by e.g. setting up digital innovation hubs, accelerators or co-working & technopreneur campus

Type of action 1.1.3 Science education and awareness raising activities

The aim of this type of action is to raise awareness of local and regional actors and of the general public towards R&I.

Indicative actions:

- awareness raising and capacity building activities on local and regional level such as field trips, (digital) trainings or other information activities
- science education in schools and other education institutions including know-how exchange

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to priority area 7 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), for example to the improvement of framework conditions for building a knowledge society, to an increasing level and quality of network activities, to strengthening the existing links and fostering new cooperation in the Danube Region, to strengthening the realization of the European Research Area in the Danube Region, to revert brain drain and foster brain circulation and to implement Smart Specialisation Strategies in all Danube countries.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the Renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation (2018), the Open Innovation Strategy for Austria (2016) or the Slovak Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization (2013) as well as the Action Plan of the Research and Innovation Strategy for the Smart Specialization of the Slovak Republic (2015). Particular attention will be paid to the programme’s potential contribution to European Research Area (ERA) and its policy objectives.

They shall use synergies and complementarities with related initiatives wherever possible, especially with projects funded by Horizon Europe, e.g. in pillar I and take into account results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
1	PO1 i)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	15
1	PO1 i)	RCO07	Research institutions participating in joint research projects	Nr of research institutions	0	4

1	PO1 i)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	4
1	PO1 i)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	533

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	PO1 i)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	6	Monitoring / survey	
1	PO1 i)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
1	PO1 i)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	107	Monitoring / survey	

2.1.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from research and innovation activities put into practice
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from better access to research and innovation results
- public and private institutions in the field of R&I by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions, sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, institutions for higher education and research, educational institutions, training centres and schools, SMEs or economic development institutions

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	28	4 073 515 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	29	1 110 959 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	30	1 110 959 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	171	1 110 959 €

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	01	7 406 391 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	32	7 406 391 €

2.2 Priority 2: A greener SK-AT border region

2.2.1. (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance know-how about and resilience towards climate change impacts and risks on regional and local level, including natural hazards.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- supporting the identification of climate risks and the development of appropriate measures of climate change adaptation and mitigation with a focus on areas

particularly affected such as forestry, agriculture, urban development, water management and tourism in the SK-AT border region, considering also ecosystem based solutions in order to control and reduce the impact of disasters

- fostering prevention of natural hazards imposed by climate change such as flood and forest fires, helping to mitigate threats to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods and human lives,
- promoting climate resilient cities and communities by finding optimal, cost-effective, scientifically sound and consistent solutions for sustainable, future-oriented communities and informing authorities and stakeholders as well as the general public about measures they can take to pro-actively adapt to climate change.

Related types of action

Type of action 2.1.1 Data collection and analysis, know-how exchange and strategy development

The aim of the type of action is to enhance and coordinate know-how and preparedness towards climate change impacts and risks on regional and local level with an interdisciplinary focus.

Indicative actions:

- data collection and data harmonising on climate-related risks in the border region, such as extreme weather, heat or pests or to assess the impact of climate mitigation measures, including open data activities
- studies and analysis on climate change to better understand the interrelation of vulnerability and adaptive capacity in the programme region
- (digital) citizen science activities, for example phenological observations
- (digital) workshops, conferences, discussion panels on possible climate-change adaptation measures involving different types of target groups and stakeholders on local and regional level, including match making activities between technology providers and lead users.
- interdisciplinary strategy development for climate related actions such as soil protection or green and open spaces for recreation and leisure uses under changing climatic conditions
- risk management plans addressing specific sectors in the cross-border region (e.g. water management, agriculture and forestry, tourism, housing, services and infrastructure...), also involving response organisations

Type of action 2.1.2 Implementing joint (pilot) actions including small-scale investments

The aim of the type of action is to promote the implementation of innovative or practice proven actions helping to adapt to climate change impacts on regional and local level, building on and providing good practices at local, national and EU level.

Indicative actions:

- specific local mitigation measures such as greening and shading measures in residential areas or maintenance of water in rural and urban areas
- actions implementing new research results or innovative solutions into practice
- developing toolboxes with different adaptation measures for urban areas, communities and businesses aiming at e.g. reducing heat islands, cooling

buildings or adapting infrastructure towards more energy efficiency and reduction of CO₂ emission

- implementing joint (digital) risk management systems and tools, e.g. flood warning
- pilot measures to improve the Danube River management with respect to sediment transport and river morphodynamics for adaptation to climate change

Type of action 2.1.3 Awareness raising activities and capacity building

The aim of the type of action is to raise the awareness and capacity of - predominantly local - decision makers and the wider public on climate change impacts and risks and related adaptation measures

Indicative actions:

- general awareness raising activities on local level addressing the wider public e.g. gaming events, urban gardening activities, fieldtrips, trainings, school and community events
- (digital) seminars or other specific information activities addressing local decision makers on climate-related health risks such as heat, the spread of allergenic and toxic species or outbreaks of infectious diseases, taking into account the learnings of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as on civil protection measures and on natural hazards
- (digital) trainings or field exercises on civil protection to improve the preparedness of the region against climate change related hazards

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) priority area 4 (PA4) “Climate change” strategic topic and to PA5, for example to the development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards, strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness among governmental and non-governmental organizations and anticipating regional and local impacts of climate change.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the EU Adaptation Strategy (2021), the Austrian Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation (2017) or the Action plan for adaptation to the adverse consequences of climate change in the capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava for the years 2017-2020. They shall use synergies with related initiatives and projects wherever possible and take into account especially results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.2.1.2. Indicators

Table 7: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
2	PO2 iv)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	18
2	PO2 iv)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies	0	3

				and actions plans		
2	PO2 iv)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	3
2	PO2 iv)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	325

Table 8: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	PO2 iv)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	5	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	65	Monitoring / survey	

2.2.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from adaptation and mitigation measures
- public and private institutions in the programme area, especially those in the field of forestry and agriculture, civil protection, tourism and economic development,

urban environment and regional development by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience, such as local, regional or national public authorities, sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies, service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services, interest groups including NGOs such as volunteer rescue teams or fire brigades, institutions for higher education and research, educational institutions, training centres and schools or economic development institutions

- a wide range of further public and private institutions in the programme area taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience to climate change impacts, such as public service providers or SMEs

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

The whole programme area is affected by climate change and thus actions can be implemented throughout the entire area. Territories that turn out to be particularly vulnerable are to be given priority, for example densely populated regions, areas along the region’s water bodies or protected areas with a sensitive ecosystem. Additionally, urban and rural areas will be affected differently, so measures need to consider the specific challenges and characteristics of the territory they are applied to.

No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.2.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Table 9: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	58	4 307 205 €
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	60	1 845 945 €

Table 10: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	01	6 153 150 €

Table 11: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	32	6 153 150 €

2.2.2. (vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance the region's overall ecological status and reducing threats to its natural assets, including also circular economy and green technology approaches.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by the following approaches:

- preserving and strengthening biodiversity and cross-border ecological connectivity focusing on "unprotected" areas between already protected sites
- promoting integrated approaches to nature protection and green infrastructure in the urban and rural environment as a main asset for the regional population
- fostering the sustainable use of natural resources and fighting against pollution, including river pollution

Related types of action

Type of action 2.2.1. Data collection and analysis, know-how exchange and interdisciplinary strategy development

The aim of the action is to establish a coordinated knowledge base and interdisciplinary approach in enhancing the region's overall ecological status and reducing threats to its natural assets.

Indicative actions:

- data collection/harmonization, analyses and studies relevant for protection or enhancement of the natural assets of the cross-border region, for example on invasive species or on plastic waste or relevant for protection or restoration of the region's water bodies including floodplains and tributaries
- (digital) citizen science activities, e.g. bird sightings
- interdisciplinary know-how exchange on nature protection, natural heritage and green infrastructure or on (river) pollution and circular economy
- workshops, conferences or fieldtrips or other forms of (digital) know-how exchange among research institutions, local and regional authorities and organisations managing protected areas and sectoral stakeholders, e.g. addressing pressure on biodiversity and nature in the cross-border region resulting from economic and social development
- specific action plans, for example on the conservation and valorisation of special habitats such as meadow orchards
- (interdisciplinary) strategy development addressing nature protection, circular economy or sustainable water management

Type of action 2.2.2 Implementing joint (pilot) actions including small-scale investments

The aim of the type of action is the implementation of measures specifically contributing to preserve and restore biodiversity, green infrastructure or to reduce pollution, including also circular economy and green technology approaches.

Indicative actions:

- specific actions improving biodiversity and ecological connectivity, for example renaturation of the river systems, creation of permanent steppingstone biotopes for the interconnection of protected areas or preservation of local orchard trees
- establishing or enhancing green infrastructure for public recreation and counteracting pressure on biodiversity and nature in the cross-border region resulting from economic and social development
- pilot projects in the field of circular economy and green technology, for example developing tool boxes for local business and communities on food or plastic waste management or developing and testing of new processes for waste treatment
- technological digitalisation models on sustainable development and resource awareness
- pilot actions helping to protect national and nature parks against pollution and other threats (including climate-related risks)

Type of action 2.2.3 Awareness raising and capacity building activities

The aim of the type of action is to improve the awareness of decision makers and stakeholders, local actors and of the general public towards improving the knowledge and level of acceptance on eco-system services and environmental issues, aiming at changes of attitude and behaviour.

Indicative actions:

- awareness raising activities on local level addressing the wider public such as gaming events, urban gardening activities, fieldtrips, trainings, school and community events
- eco-education in (pre-)schools
- (digital) trainings and information activities improving capabilities and skills of different types of stakeholders such as communities, local decision makers or sectoral stakeholders, for example in the field of forestry, tourism, transport, education, water management, regional and urban planning or local SMEs

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EUSDR PA6 Action 3, 4, 5 and 7, for example to improve the management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas, to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats, to reduce the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region or to maintain and restore Green Infrastructure elements.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, especially the European Green Deal (2019), the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy 2030. They shall use synergies with related initiatives and projects wherever possible and take into account especially results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.2.2.2. Indicators

Table 12: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
2	PO2 vii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	3	29
2	PO2 vii)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	1	4
2	PO2 vii)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	4
2	PO2 vii)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	63	525

Table 13: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	PO2 vii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	9	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	105	Monitoring / survey	

2.2.2.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution, for example in the field of agriculture, forestry, tourism and water management
- public and private institutions in the programme area, for example in the fields of nature protection, forestry, education, hunting, tourism, transport, water management or regional development, material management or green economy by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions, such as local, regional or national public authorities, sectoral agencies (local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies), service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services, interest groups including NGOs (including Nature parks), institutions for higher education and research, education and training organisations including kindergartens or economic development institutions

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

Activities shall be implemented in the entire programme area. This applies especially to awareness raising activities, as well as to measures aiming at preserving and enhancing green infrastructure as an essential contribution to climate mitigation and nature protection, and to measures aiming at reducing pollution being crucial both in the urban and rural areas.

Regarding preserving and restoring biodiversity, a special focus shall be given to the region's sensitive but unprotected areas, such as humid biotopes and wetlands along the region's water bodies as they are crucial to enhance the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes. Additionally, all areas with valuable natural assets, particularly affected by environmental pressure and/or having potential for restoring the region's biodiversity, including nature and national parks are to be given priority.

No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.2.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Table 14: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	79	9 936 690 €

Table 15: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	01	9 936 690 €

Table 16: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	32	9 936 690 €

2.3 Priority 3: A more social SK-AT border region

2.3.1. (ii) improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

The aim of the specific objective is to improve the mutual understanding and to enhance educational capacities.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by strengthening cross-border links through educational activities focused on language, skills and cultural competences.

Related types of action

Type of action 3.1.1 Developing joint strategies and implementing joint solutions including small-scale investments to foster cooperation in the field of education

The main aim of the type of action is to improve joint education, training and lifelong learning activities in order to improve the mutual understanding.

Indicative actions:

- setting up a joint data base by collecting, harmonizing, sharing of data relevant for education, training and lifelong learning
- development of educational programmes improving skills and competences (language and culture; environmental, technical and digital education)
- developing a regional/sub-regional education and training strategy
- developing a strategy for closer cooperation allowing teacher and student exchanges

Type of action 3.1.2 Know-how exchange and training of relevant stakeholders actively involved in educational process

The main aim of the type of action is to support synergies between educational institutions, universities and vocational training institutions to enhance educational capacities.

Indicative actions:

- know-how exchange on effective approaches and methods in education, e.g. language and cultural education, environmental, technical and digital education or inclusive learning
- joint training activities for teachers
- cooperation among organisations providing vocational education
- cooperation among educational institutions in the programme region or between education institutions and the business sector
- job orientation courses
- student exchange (secondary schools and universities) as complementary tool to the Erasmus+ programme

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EUSDR priority area 7 “To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)” and especially to priority Area 9 “To invest in people and skills” aiming on contributing to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, active citizenship and well-being, contributing to increased higher quality and efficiency of education, ensuring inclusive education, equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as the promotion of civic competences and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Besides, closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions is strongly envisaged.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as Education for Sustainable Development, Austrian Life Long Learning Strategy, Qualification Plan (Qualifikationsplan Wien 2030, 2018), Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy 2019-2050 (Smart City Rahmenstrategie 2019-2050, 2019) as well as National Programme for Education and Training Development (2018), Strategy of Lifelong Learning (2011), Action Plan for Lifelong Learning (2011) and Regional Strategy of Education and Learning in the High Schools in Bratislavský samosprávny kraj region for the years 2019-2022 (2019) and Strategy for Education and Learning Development in Trnavský samosprávny kraj (2019) on the Slovak side.

The IP SK-AT 2021-2027 will be fully complemented with other Interreg cross border or transnational programmes implemented in the programme area, the ESF+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Erasmus+ programme and other relevant programmes, e.g. Digital Europe Programme (DEP) or CEF2 Digital.

2.3.1.2. Indicators

Table 17: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	PO4 ii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	15

3	PO4 ii)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2
3	PO4 ii)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	2
3	PO4 ii)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	288

Table 18: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	PO4 ii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	4	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 ii)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 ii)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 ii)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	58	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved educational system
- educational institutions such as elementary, primary, secondary and tertiary schools

- institutions for higher education, education and training organizations including kindergartens
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area
- interest groups including NGOs
- vulnerable groups (e.g. people with disabilities, pensioners, families, etc.)

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Table 19: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	171	5 444 679 €

Table 20: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	01	5 444 679 €

Table 21: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	32	5 444 679 €

2.3.2. iv) ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance the cross-border accessibility of healthcare and social services.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by closer and systemic cooperation for better accessibility of health care and social services in the cross-border region.

Related types of action

Type of action 3.2.1 Developing and implementing cross-border strategies and action plans to strengthen cooperation of health care and social services providers

The aim of the type of action is to develop joint strategies and action plans to overcome the different legislative framework, and provide quality health and social services.

Indicative actions:

- data collection and joint research projects, e.g. digital health, etc.
- developing joint strategies and action plans on cooperation between health care providers and educational/research institutions, cooperation between social care providers or between client-oriented health and social services
- innovative concepts of regional health care structures or regarding transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

Type of action 3.2.2 Implementing solutions including small-scale investments to facilitate cross-border cooperation in provision of health care and social services

The aim of the type of action is to strengthen cooperation and provide better access for the health and social services providers across the border.

Indicative actions:

- joint actions for better access to emergency health services across the border
- pilot actions for cooperation of relevant stakeholders providing health care and social services
- activities aiming at joint standards for health care and social services
- joint cross-border awareness raising campaigns
- cross border pilot actions and investment projects directly contributing to strengthening the resilience and long-term sustainability of the healthcare sector and supporting the transition away from hospital-centred models to more person-centred approaches

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

There is no direct link of the actions to the EUSDR; however, the actions in the priority shall follow the Commission Priority for 2019-2024 (2019) which focuses on “An economy that works for people targeting inter alia at a social Europa (social protection and inclusion)” and on “Promoting our European Way of Life targeting inter alia at protecting health”.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, for example Charter of Fundamental Rights, European Pillar of Social Rights and Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. At the EU level, Health Targets Austria (Gesundheitsziele Österreich, 2017), Masterplan Care Services – draft (Masterplan Pflege - Entwurf, 2018), Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy 2019-2050 (Smart City Rahmenstrategie 2019-2050, 2019), Digital Agenda (Digitale Agenda Wien, 2019) on the Austrian side as well as Strategy of Long Term Social and Healthcare in Slovakia (2019) on the Slovak side.

2.3.2.2. Indicators

Table 22: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	PO4 iv)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	6
3	PO4 iv)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2
3	PO4 iv)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	2

Table 23: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	PO4 iv)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 iv)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 iv)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.2.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved health and social care system
- educational institutions actively working in the field of health and social care

- research institutions benefiting from the results of the joint health research
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area such as hospitals, emergency and rescue systems
- NGOs working in the field of health and social care
- People with disabilities

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

2.3.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 24: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	171	3 859 813 €

Table 25: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	01	3 859 813 €

Table 26: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	32	3 859 813 €

2.3.3. vi) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

The aim of the specific objective is to valorise the regions touristic assets and sites in a coordinated and sustainable way and to enhance their accessibility.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by preservation, maintenance and valorisation of cultural and natural

heritage of the cross-border region through sustainable tourism and by connections across the border fostering sustainable forms of mobility. The indicative activities mentioned below will strengthen all strands of sustainability (environmental, social and financial).

Related types of action

Type of action 3.3.1 Developing and implementing cross-border strategies and action plans for sustainable tourism development

The main aim of the type of action is to implement cross border tourism strategies and to improve the development of the sustainable tourism.

Indicative actions:

- studies on sustainable and effective valorisation and distribution of the cultural and natural heritage in tourism
- strategies/studies on eco-innovations, green business models and environmentally friendly technologies in tourism
- initiatives coordinating cultural and natural heritage development plans, e.g. common preparation of exhibitions, joint research initiatives
- action plans developing quality labels in services and products
- development of new innovative mediation/digital formats
- common approaches to valorisation of promising sites and attractions, to promotional activities or to education of public and volunteers
- development of joint thematic tourism routes and offers based on the natural and cultural heritage (e.g. wine, biking, architecture, history, etc.)

Type of action 3.3.2 Implementing joint solutions including small-scale investments in natural and cultural heritage sites and joint tourism services

The main aim of the type of action is to support projects that can contribute to variety of tourism offers and products in a more strategic approach achieving synergies among them. The indicative activities mentioned below will strengthen all strands of sustainability (environmental, social and financial). Besides the investment actions will respect the digital and green transformation and long-term resilience and environmental, social and economic sustainability needs of the tourism sector.

Indicative actions:

- cross-border destination management and marketing activities such as promotional actions of natural or cultural heritage sites (joint tourism guides, information boards, touristic tours)
- creation of new cultural products contributing to broadening equal access to culture and cultural heritage through digital tools and services
- implementation of thematic offers such as routes on joint topics (e.g. the Route of aristocratic families, Iron Curtain Trail, Water paths, Geopark Little Carpathians, Historical parks route)
- preservation and maintenance of the cultural heritage monuments, sites and landmarks including investments in the tourist infrastructure, e.g. visitor centres
- implementation of measures contributing to social inclusion and social innovation in the tourism sector, e.g. special offers for families, senior citizens and people with disabilities
- activities related to cross border tourism mobility including small-scale investment
- educational activities for relevant bodies/owners of historical sites or volunteers

- awareness raising activities for the general public on natural and cultural heritage
- exchange of know-how, improvement of cooperation and promotion of culture, arts and artists

Type of action 3.3.3 Investments in infrastructure to enhance accessibility of cross-border regions and sites to citizens and tourists

The main aim of the type of action is to improve the local and regional level of cross-border accessibility. The indicative activities mentioned below will strengthen all strands of sustainability (environmental, social and financial).

Indicative actions:

- planning process and implementation of sustainable cross-border connections (e.g. Angern – Záhorská Ves, Dürnkrut – Gajary, Rusovce-Carnuntum)
- filling the gaps in cycle routes embedded in tourism projects

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) priority area 3 “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts” mainly by:

- developing sustainable forms of tourism (green tourist products and sustainable mobility solutions) and ensuring the sustainable preservation, conservation, socialization and contemporary interpretation of cultural heritage and natural values;
- supporting science, research and new technologies in culture, tourism and people to people contacts by supporting the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system dedicated to sustainable tourism and cultural/natural heritage and promoting the exchange of practices and networking in the field of Arts, further support of creation of linkages and synergies between the cultural and creative sectors and the tourism sector;
- valorizing, promoting and protecting the cultural heritage, inter alia by establishing the Danube Region as important European tourist destination, by promoting the development of quality products, infrastructure and innovative forms of tourism and culture by SMEs and public private partnerships.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as Masterplan on Tourism (Plan T – Masterplan für Tourismus, 2019) and Strategy of Tourism Development in Slovakia until 2020 (2013), Marketing Strategy of the Slovak Tourism Board for the years 2014-2020 (2013) on the national level. Furthermore, on the regional level Tourism Strategy (Tourismusstrategie Burgenland 2022+, 2018), Cultural Strategy (Strategie für Kunst und Kultur des Landes Niederösterreich, 2016), Tourism Strategy 2020 (Tourismusstrategie 2020, 2017), Shaping Vienna – Visitor Economy Strategy 2025 (2019) as well as Programme of Economic and Social Development of Bratislavský samosprávny kraj 2014-2020, Programme of Economic and Social Development of Trnavský samosprávny kraj 2016-2020, Strategy of Tourism Development in Bratislavský samosprávny kraj (2015) and Strategy of Tourism Development in Trnavský samosprávny kraj (2015)

2.3.3.2. Indicators

Table 27: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
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3	PO4 vi)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	1	3
3	PO4 vi)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	5	15
3	PO4 vi)	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Number of sited supported	0	4
3	PO4 vi)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	1	10

Table 28: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	PO4 vi)	RRCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 vi)	RRCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	5	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 vi)	RRCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	8	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.3.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved culture and tourism offers and mobility connections
- local tourism service providers
- local business actors actively participating in tourism services
- owners of local cultural sites
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area
- NGOs actively working/providing services in the field of tourism and culture

- vulnerable groups (e.g. people with disabilities, pensioners, families, etc.)

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.3.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

2.3.3.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 29: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	165	2 371 420 €
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	166	6 521 405 €
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	83	1 778 565 €
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	171	1 185 710 €

Table 30: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	01	11 857 100 €

Table 31: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	32	11 857 100 €

2.4 Priority 4: A better cooperating SK-AT border region

2.4.1. b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions

The aim of the specific objective is to remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation and fostering institutional cooperation and improving the joint strategy development in areas of cross-border relevance.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by allowing stakeholders at all levels to address cross-border aspects, remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation for long-term development of the programme area and improve know-how and data exchange.

Particular emphasis could be put on strengthening the functional area of the Twin-City region and its hinterland by fostering institutional cooperation and improving the joint strategy development in areas of cross-border relevance. The joint administrative cooperation should address needs and dynamics evolving in the Twin-City region. This is especially important in thematic fields such as mobility, housing, labour market, health and social services. According to the European Strategy for Data communication (COM(2020) 66 final) datasets resulting from the action will be made available where relevant (Open Data Directive (Directive (EU)2019/1024 of 20/6/2019)).

Related types of action

Type of action 4.1.1: Know-how and data exchange to improve strategy development in the cross border region

The aim of the type of action is to enhance the information and data exchange across border to support joint administrative and legal activities addressing, for example, border obstacles.

Indicative actions are:

- exchange of experience to share solutions and increase their impact
- studies to understand cross-border obstacles, processes and gather expertise
- data collection and harmonization to build a solid data base
- strategy development (e.g. transport and mobility, housing, labour market, demographic change, business development, RTI, rescue services, health education, regional development)

Type of action 4.1.2 joint pilot actions addressing the removal of border obstacles

The aim of the type of action is to boost joint solutions across the border to reduce barriers and obstacles caused by different legal and administrative systems.

Indicative actions:

- joint activities and know-how exchange among public actors in relevant thematic fields, e.g. in housing, mobility, environmental protection or tourism, biodiversity etc.

Type of action 4.1.3 strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities/organisations

The aim of the type of action is to improve the institutional capacity towards cross-border cooperation information and skill development in order to understand each other better.

Indicative actions are:

- joint actions promoting skill development of public authorities how to cope with challenges (for example regarding circular economy, regional development, health, housing, labour market, environmental protection, biodiversity, climate change and how to address the European Green Deal in the most effective way)
- trainings, peer reviews, language training and staff exchanges addressing topics such as mobility, twin city region development, environmental protection, tourism etc.
- joint processes that facilitate and support sustainability transitions in the region

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to initiatives in priority area 10 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), for example by aligning the regulatory framework and strengthening cross-border governance, supporting more effective cooperation between administrations, providing support for actions that contribute to the strengthening of institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance in the border region in the specified topics and increasing the involvement of civil society and local actors for a more effective policy-making and implementation at regional level in the programme area.

The actions shall contribute to 4th objective of the EU strategy of the Alpine region EUSALP “Improving cooperation and the coordination of action in the Alpine Region”.

2.4.1.2. Indicators

Table 32: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
4	ISO b)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	2	11
4	ISO b)	RCO117	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles identified	Number of solutions identified	0	3
4	ISO b)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	3

Table 33: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
4	ISO b)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	

4	ISO b)	RCR82	Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved	Nr. of obstacles alleviated or resolved	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	
4	ISO b)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr. of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	

2.4.1.3. The main target groups

According to their thematic scope the main target group comprises local, regional and national public authorities/institutions, intermediary organizations, EGTC and non-governmental organisations in the programme area.

An additional target group is the general public benefitting from cross-border achievements such as better coordinated approaches to effectively address major societal challenges and obstacles in the programme area and to provide services of general interest in a more efficient way.

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.4.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Table 34: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	171	847 151 €
4	ERDF	ISO b)	173	3 388 604 €

Table 35: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	01	4 235 755 €

Table 36: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
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4	ERDF	ISO b)	32	4 235 755 €
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2.4.2. c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

The aim of the specific objective is to deepen the cooperation of citizens in the programme area.

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

Contribution to specific objective

Small projects are a specific tool that can help to lower barriers to cooperation in order to foster the involvement of the local civil societies. The SPF builds on a strategy development process specifically dedicated to the SPF. The implementation model builds on experience and structures of neighbouring Interreg programmes. However, the actual territorial and system-related configuration is subject to the aforementioned strategy-development process and the accompanying decision-making process at programme level. Furthermore, simplification in terms of SPF administration and implementation is a major goal. Hence, a use of simplified cost options shall reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries and administrative bodies. The use of SCOs is mandatory for small projects in a SPF.

Small projects mainly focus on people-to-people activities and are intended to contribute to increased intercultural understanding in the border regions, diminishing cross-border (mental) barriers on many levels, and reach as many citizens as possible in the border regions. They may also serve as pilots for larger projects.

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by supporting bottom-up cooperation among citizens in the programme area and reducing negative mindsets and drawing people across the border together.

Related types of action

Type of action 4.2.1 Joint actions to build up mutual trust and promote citizens' cooperation

The aim of the type of action is to improve the local interaction between citizens across the border and to reduce negative mindsets and improve communication among people in the border area.

Indicative actions:

- people-to-people activities for improving cultural, social and economic relations with a clear cross-border focus by particularly supporting trust and capacity building in the programme area (e.g. educational exchange visits, cultural events, conferences, tourist trips/excursions etc.)
- jointly explore and develop solutions at local level, e.g. for overcoming obstacles in the fields of public administration or facilitating exchange between associations, e.g. in the fields of education or natural and cultural heritage, etc.

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to initiatives in priority area 3 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), with supporting local initiatives related to culture and tourism and related social activities.

2.4.2.2. Indicators

Table 37: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
4	ISO c)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	4526
4	ISO c)	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Nr of events	0	75

Table 38: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
4	ISO c)	6.2.1	Joint actions to build up mutual trust and promote citizens' cooperation	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	453	Monitoring / survey	

2.4.2.3. The main target groups

The main target group among others are citizens of the cross-border region, local public authorities/institutions, bodies governed by public law, intermediary organisations, EGTC, who can contribute to a common understanding and a common identity in the border region.

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.4.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

2.4.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 39: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	171	2 975 580 €

Table 40: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	01	2 975 580 €

Table 41: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	32	2 975 580 €

3. Financing plan

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Table 42

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)	0 €	9 481 075 €	9 633 371 €	9 788 710 €	9 947 158 €	8 242 421 €	8 407 265 €	55 500 000 €
IPA III CBC⁷								
NDICI-CBC⁷								
IPA III⁸								
NDICI²								
OCTP⁹								
Interreg funds¹⁰								
Total								

⁷Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

⁸Interreg B and C.

⁹Interreg B, C and D.

¹⁰ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C.

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Table 43

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
PO 1	Priority 1	ERDF	total eligible	7 924 839 €	7 406 392 €	518 447 €	1 981 210 €	1 981 210 €		9 906 049 €	80%	
PO 2	Priority 2	ERDF	total eligible	17 216 129 €	16 089 841 €	1 126 288 €	4 304 033 €	4 304 033 €		21 520 162 €	80%	
PO 4	Priority 3	ERDF	total eligible	22 642 903 €	21 161 592 €	1 481 311 €	5 660 726 €	5 660 726 €		28 303 629 €	80%	
ISO 1	Priority 4	ERDF	total eligible	7 716 129 €	7 211 336 €	504 793 €	1 929 033 €	1 929 033 €		9 645 162 €	80%	
	Total	All funds		55 500 000 €	51 869 161 €	3 630 839 €	13 875 002 €	13 875 002 €		69 375 002 €	80%	

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

Developing the Interreg programme in line with the partnership and multi-level governance principle, and a bottom-up approach is a distinct requirement set by the EU legislation. In this regard, involvement of a broad range of competent local, regional and national stakeholders, including relevant bodies representing civil society, such as environmental partners, non-governmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination along with research organisations and universities as well as contracted experts throughout the entire programming process was a central component of preparation of the 2021-2027 Interreg SK-AT Cross-border cooperation programme (hereinafter referred to as "Interreg Programme" or "Programme").

The programming process of the Interreg 2021-2027 Programme was coordinated by the Programming Group (hereinafter referred to as "PG"). The PG was formed as a platform, where the members of the Task Force of the Interreg SK-AT Programme together with contracted external experts guided the overall programming process of the 2021-2027 Programme.

More specifically, the following partners participated in preparation of the SK-AT cooperation programme as members of the Programming Group:

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as the Managing Authority;
- City of Vienna, Magistrat der Stadt Wien, MA 27 - Europäische Angelegenheiten, Dezernat für EU-Förderungen;
- Lower Austria, Amt d. NÖ Landesregierung, Abt. Raumordnung und Regionalpolitik, Geschäftsstelle für EU-Regionalpolitik;
- Burgenland, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH;
- Bratislava self-governing region;
- Trnava self-governing region;
- City of Bratislava;
- External experts, namely a consortium of 3 consultancy companies: Mecca consulting, M&E factory GmbH, and Consulting Associates, s.r.o.;
- Representative of the European Commission;
- Representatives of the Joint Secretariat of the Slovakia-Austria Programme in Bratislava (hereinafter referred to as „JS“) and representatives of the Joint Secretariat Point in Vienna (hereinafter referred to as „JSP-V“);
- Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic.

In addition, these partners were involved in preparation of the 2021-2027 Programme:

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as Central Coordinating Body;
- Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic;
- Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Vienna;
- Association of Slovak towns and municipalities;

- Federal Chancellery of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria;
- Embassy of Austria;
- Alliance of Environmental NGOs.

The main task of the Programming Group was to ensure an effective preparation of the Programme, to set its directions and priorities. Besides steering and coordinating the process of programming, the responsibility of the PG was to discuss and agree on relevant documents and major outputs related to the process of programming (territorial analysis, draft Programme document, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and other content-related strategic documents). For particular themes, e. g. simplified cost options, small-scale projects and small project fund, ad-hoc Small Programming Working Groups (hereinafter referred to as "SPWG") were organized in order to support the work of the Programming Group in an effective way.

In overall, the Programming Group for preparation of the 2021-2027 Programme held 12 meetings in the period of September 2020 – January 2022, and 10 SPWG meetings in the period of April 2021 – January 2022.

Regular meetings of the Programming Group were thus a key element in creation of the 2021-2027 Programme. However, due to an unfavourable epidemic situation linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and related introduction of travel restrictions, the involvement of the partners was carried out mainly through a series of online meetings, workshops, interviews and online stakeholder consultations. Regardless of the unusual situation, an active dialogue with a wide range of partners was generated with the aim to identify local challenges and development needs, concrete actions and project ideas, existing and potential applicants, and cooperation networks. In this regard, experience of the Programme partners from 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 Programme implementation periods, valuable information and guidance provided by colleagues from Interact as well as a constant feedback from the representative of the European Commission generated a solid base of knowledge for the 2021-2027 programming process.

The role of the programme partners in the preparation of the Programme

Within the framework of preparation of the Interreg SK-AT 2021-2027 Programme, the contracted experts first elaborated a socio-economic/regional analysis and a SWOT analysis describing the geographical and socio-economic development and the specifics of the Programme area. In addition, the five regions were responsible for ongoing surveys among social and economic actors in respective regions, which served as another important input for the programming, especially in identifying investment priorities, verification of demand for various types of activities and establishing the financial plan.

In the next step, an online stakeholder consultation was conducted by the experts, which offered a unique opportunity to discuss the Programme strategy and its priorities with a wide range of stakeholders during the Programme development phase. The online survey was open in the period of 6th May – 28th May 2021. Altogether, 104 stakeholders from Wien (45), Niederösterreich (17), Bratislava (11), Bratislavský kraj (11), Burgenland (11), Trnavský kraj (7) and from other institutions outside of Programme area (2) participated in the online survey. The mostly represented types of institution were institutions for higher education and research (31), local, regional or national public authorities (27), educational

institutions, training centres and schools (13), sectorial agencies (9) and interest groups including NGOs (8). Results of the stakeholder survey were discussed in the eight meeting of the Programming Group (PG8).

In order to support the ongoing programming, public inquiries and attitude surveys among residents in the cross-border region were carried out, and workshops with potential beneficiaries were organized within the framework of the RegioCoop project.

Based on the results of multiple opinion surveys, stakeholder consultations and public inquiries, the Programme strategy (Chapter 1), Programme priorities (Chapter 2) and Financial plan (Chapter 3) were elaborated by the experts and discussed by the Programming Group in the period of June 2021 – July 2021. All comments received from the PG members were compiled in a list of comments and incorporated in the revised draft version, which was presented in the ninth meeting of the Programming Group (PG9). The remainder chapters of the Programme document were elaborated by the Managing Authority of Interreg SK-AT Programme.

Accompanying the drafting process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (hereinafter referred to as "SEA") was conducted in order to provide information about the potential effects of the Programme on the environment (December 2021 – October 2022). In this regard, environmental authorities played an important role and were consulted at several stages to provide input to the assessments until the SEA report was published for public consultations on the relevant website and in print media in July 2022. Following the on-the-spot consultations, which were held on 28th July in Bratislava, all relevant inputs from environmental authorities and other stakeholders were incorporated into the SEA report and Programme document. The SEA process was formally concluded with the expert opinion and final statement of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic in October 2022.

The role of the programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme

The main reason for involving stakeholders in programming is to identify the mutual interests and needs, secure commitment and ownership for the Programme and ensure its smooth practical implementation. According to Article 8 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, partners from competent public authorities, economic and social partners, and civil society partners from all member states shall be involved in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme, and be represented in the Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as „MC“), which is the Programme´s supervisory and decision making body.

Among others, members of the MC are responsible for examination of the progress in Programme implementation, in achieving its milestones and targets, investigation of issues that hinder its performance and measures to address them, evaluation of the implementation of communication and visibility actions as well as for selection of projects and operations.

The composition of the MC shall be ensured by nomination of the participating member states in agreement with the Managing Authority. Consequently, the MC shall adopt its rules of procedure, which shall include provisions on its functioning, its rights and obligations, voting rights of its members and other rules for attending the meetings as well as means and tools for prevention and elimination of potential conflict of interest. The rules of procedures together with the list of MC members shall be published on the Programme website as referred to in Article 36(2) of the Interreg Regulation.

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

Effective communication is key to successful cooperation. Therefore, with the aim to achieve Programmes' operational objectives and disseminate funding opportunities widely to potential beneficiaries and other interest groups, a communication strategy is to be designed at the outset of the 2021-2027 Programme period.

In overall, the communication strategy shall be mission driven, audience focused and action oriented. For it to be effective, communication objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound. To achieve this, effective internal and external multi-level communication strategy shall be maintained.

Communication objectives

The overriding objective of the communication strategy is to raise the public awareness of the EU-funded projects, ensure transparency and contribute to economic and social cohesion in the CBC through effective use of appropriate range of communication tools.

On Programme and project level, the objective is to ensure timely preparation and implementation of successful CBC projects through well-structured communication with (potential) applicants and project beneficiaries. Especially as regards operations of strategic importance, namely the small project fund and the project aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area, a targeted communication and promotion activities shall be performed in order to meet the pre-defined outputs and objectives.

The key results of an effective realisation of communication strategy related to the Programme are:

- Programme is a well-known and trusted actor in CBC and information about funding opportunities is easily available;
- Programme is implemented efficiently and transparently, internal communication works well, project best practices are shared with all projects, and information on Programmes' current situation is available;
- Results of the Programme are widely disseminated and easily found.

Target audiences

Accurate identification of the main target audiences is indispensable for successful communication of the Programmes' objectives, and following analysis of their specific needs is fundamental for introduction of adequate communication measures.

In the SK-AT Programme, these include:

- Potential applicants are timely informed about the Programme and calls for proposals, understand the administrative processes and implementation mechanisms;

- Beneficiaries know and respect the necessary information in the implementation process; and
- Other target audiences, e. g. general public, national, regional, and local authorities, regional agencies, universities, knowledge and research institutes, NGOs and relevant private non-profit organisations and other influential figures learn about the Programme/project results, and/or are affected by the EU-financed action, and act as multipliers of the information provided.

Communication channels/tools

Efficient communication channels shall be the following:

- (Programme) website (linkage to a portal providing access to all programmes of the Member States shall be ensured)
- Communication campaigns
- European Cooperation Day
- Social media
- Videos/Photographs
- Seminars/workshops/open days for potential beneficiaries (linked to open calls)
- Trainings/meetings for beneficiaries, etc.
- Participation in 3rd-party events
- Traditional media (by default disseminated in e-form).

With the increased uptake of digital engagement, development of a robust digital strategy is critical to a successful communication. One of the most recent and promising external communication tendencies is the use of social media for information and visibility purposes. Social media have proven to be a very cost-effective tool intended for promotion of the Programme that can potentially reach a variety of target audiences.

Planned budget

The intensity of certain communication activities will depend on the Programmes' implementation phase. In general, á 0,25-1 % of the Programme allocation shall be allocated to communication activities.

Monitoring, evaluation and indicators

The communication objectives shall be measured by several output indicators, e.g. by the number of visitors to Programme website and number of appearances in media. The output indicators and the proposed approach to communication shall be elaborated in detail in the Programme Communication Strategy. In order to ensure a successful realisation of communication strategy and to evaluate progress regularly, **a Communication Officer shall be appointed.**

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

Background information

In the previous Programme periods, neither a small project fund (hereinafter referred to as „SPF“) nor another simplified solution for small cross-border initiatives was implemented in the Programme region. Yet, a survey carried out by the project RegioCoop SKAT as well as a workshop on small projects showed a great interest among regional actors for implementation of projects of small volume in the cross-border area. Considering also a substantial decrease in funds that are at disposal in the 2021-2027 Programme, while following the overarching aim of maintaining the number of supported operations, promoting direct cooperation between citizens and institutions, increasing visibility of the Interreg in the whole region and improving the outreach of the Programme by attracting new beneficiaries to the cross-border cooperation as well as offering an easier management with fewer administrative burden for less experienced potential beneficiaries, the Programme partners foresee a great potential for supporting the small projects through establishment of the small project fund (as referred to the Article 24 (1) (b) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059; hereinafter referred to as also “Interreg regulation”).

Small project fund

In the 2021-2027 Programme period, one SPF covering the whole Programme area shall be established in ISO 1 under the administration of the NÖ.Regional. In practical terms, the main goal of SPF implemented under this specific objective is to open up the Programme to small local initiatives and to strengthen the cross-border social cohesion by supporting local cooperation, social, sports and cultural contact and trust building activities, establishing and deepening long-term partnerships, and realisation of other people to people initiatives. In order to develop an attractive system of SPF and achieve the foreseen objectives, sound cooperation between the SPF administrator, the MA/JS, regional bodies and other relevant Programme partners is envisaged.

With respect to provisions governing the maximum ERDF contribution to SPF within an Interreg Programme, approximately EUR 3.2 Mio from ERDF shall be allocated to administration of the SPF, out of which around 0.64 Mio from ERDF shall cover the management costs of the SPF administrator (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (1), (3) and (5)).

As provided for in Article 25 (3) of Interreg Regulation, the SPF administrator is in the first place responsible for preparation and implementation of the SPF project, setting up criteria and procedures for selection of small projects, contracting, monitoring, check of results and closure of the small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (3)).

Despite the fact that tasks such as information, motivation, activation, supervision and guidance of potential project applicants are not explicitly mentioned as primary tasks of the SPF administrator, they are pivotal for a successful implementation of small projects. Due to limited financial resources provided for administration of the SPF, such activities cannot be covered within the SPF budget; however, they could be covered within a project aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area. Since both projects would be of particular importance for the Programme, their classification as an operation of strategic importance should be considered, and they might be submitted in a joint application.

After deducting the costs for administration of the SPF, approximately EUR 2.56 Mio ERDF shall be available for realisation of small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (5)). The supported small projects shall involve at least one Slovak and one Austrian partner, but not more than three project partners altogether. The total eligible budget shall not exceed EUR 50.000 per project, or EUR 25.000 per project partner. Since especially newcomers, small sized institutions and local communities are invited to implement their cross-border initiatives which might, however, lack previous experience with cross-border project realization, the Programme shall provide its beneficiaries with the opportunity to implement small projects under simplified conditions. In order to make SPF an attractive tool for the administrator and the future project applicants, and thus achieve its full potential, standardized and simplified processes as well as SCOs shall be applied as much as possible.

The foreseen implementation period of the SPF starts from January 2023 until December 2029. Calculated over a period of 7 years, about 130 – 170 cross-border small projects might be implemented.

The following basic requirements shall be fulfilled for realisation of small projects through the SPF in the Interreg SK-AT Programme:

Duration: 12 months for implementation + 1-2 month for accounting;

Partnership: 1 (or more) partner(s) from Slovakia + 1 (or more) partner(s) from Austria, altogether max. 3 partners;

Beneficiaries: All target groups of ISO1 (mutual trust building and people to people actions), but especially Programme newcomers, local border communities and small sized institutions are invited to participate;

Activities: Mutual trust building and people to people actions (ISO1);

Project size: Up to EUR 50 000 total eligible costs per project / EUR 40 000 ERDF per project, but max. EUR 25 000 total eligible costs per project partner / max. EUR 20 000 ERDF per project partner;

Financing: Up to 80% ERDF financing, min. 20 % national contribution to the financing (public or private);

Eligible costs: According to the general eligibility rules of the Programme, i. e. staff costs, office & administration costs, travel & accommodation costs, external expertise & services costs, equipment costs (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 39-43), except from costs of infrastructure and works (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 44);

Use of SCOs: All Programme bodies acknowledge that application of SCOs would considerably reduce the burden for the SPF administrator, small project beneficiaries and FLC's. Any concrete proposals for application of SCOs are to be discussed (TBD);

Project selection: TBD;

Contracting: TBD;

Reporting: TBD.

Support to small-scale projects

In addition to small projects administered by the SPF (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25), support to small-scale projects might be provided in the framework of the 2021-2027 SK-AT Programme (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 24).

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, Section of Cross-border cooperation programmes	<i>Ing. Lea Malá</i>	<i>lea.mala@mirri.gov.sk</i>
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)	<i>Not relevant</i>	-	-
Audit authority	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Audit and Control Section	<i>Ing. Vladimíra Zacharidesová</i>	<i>vladimira.zacharidesova@mfsr.sk</i>
Group of auditors representatives	<i>Not relevant since no group of Auditors shall be established in the 2021-2027 Programme</i>	-	-
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of European Funds	<i>Ing. Katarína Vallová</i>	<i>katarina.vallova@mfsr.sk</i>

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

The Managing Authority in agreement with the Programme partners from Austria and Slovakia set up the Joint Secretariat (JS) for the Programme in compliance with the Article 46 (2) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

The head office of the JS is located in the Slovak Republic, within the official structures of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (Managing Authority):

Joint Secretariat for the OP Slovakia-Austria 2021-2027

Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic
Section of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes
Department of Management and Implementation of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes
Unit of Joint Secretariat of Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia – Austria
Račianska 153/A
830 03 Bratislava
Slovak Republic

Next to the head office, a branch office of the JS will be established in Vienna (JS Point Vienna) on the location and under the same organisational and employment structure as the JS Point Vienna of the 2014-2020 programme, i.e.

Municipal Department for European Affairs of the City of Vienna
Kirchberggasse 33-35/9
1070 Vienna
Austria

The main tasks of JS will include in particular:

- providing support to the MA and the MC when performing their functions;
- providing information to potential applicants/beneficiaries regarding financing options within the Programme and assisting beneficiaries when performing operations;
- organizing sessions of the MC, preparing and sending supporting documents;
- technical support to the operation selection process, including processing draft forms for operation appraisal and selection;
- preparing minutes from sessions of the MC and sending them to members of the MC;
- providing information and consultation to potential applicants regarding options to obtain financial support from the Programme;
- supporting search for suitable project partners for project implementation;
- receiving payment requests (at project level);
- performing official registration of payment requests (at project level);
- checking correctness of delivery of payment requests;
- performing administrative check of payment requests;
- arranging expert appraisal of payment requests;
- informing applicants of outcomes of the appraisal process and operation selection process;
- preparing draft contracts on provision of grants from ERDF with lead partners;
- preparing contracts on provision of co-financing from the state budget for Slovak partners;
- processing supporting documents for drawing up annual reports and the final report on Programme implementation;
- being responsible for contents and updates of the official programme web page;
- helping prepare and update any supporting documentation for both applicants and beneficiaries;

- cooperating with the MA when performing tasks related to establishment and operation of the system for recording and storing data about every project in digital form;
- support to the Audit Authority and Accounting functions.

Activities of the JS during the programme period 2021-2027 will be financed from the Technical Assistance resources.

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

Member State is responsible for preventing, detecting, correcting, and reporting on irregularities including fraud, and for recovering amounts unduly paid. Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities and for recovering amounts unduly paid (according to Article 69 (2) of the CPR), the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Partner. The Project Partners shall repay the Lead Partner the amounts unduly paid in accordance with the agreement existing between them (in line with the Article 52 (1) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

If the Lead Partner fails in securing repayment from other Project Partner(s) or if the Managing Authority fails in securing repayment from the Lead Partner, the Member State on whose territory the Beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to that Lead Partner/Project Partner. The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities between the Member States (according to Article 52 (3) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

Upon request of the responsible Member State, which reimbursed the amount to the Programme budget, the Managing Authority shall provide to this Member State all relevant information concerning the claim of recourse against a Lead Partner and/or a Project Partner within two months from the date of request.

The Managing Authority shall reimburse the funds to the European Union once the amounts are recovered from the Lead partner/ Project Partner/Member State.

For a systemic irregularity or financial correction on Programme level that cannot be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be jointly borne by the Member States in proportion to the ERDF claimed to the European Commission for the period which forms the basis for the financial correction.

For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the Member State, the liability shall be borne by the Member State concerned.

In the case of irregularities that result from the actions taken by the Managing Authority and/or the Joint Technical Secretariat (hereinafter referred to as "JST"), liability towards the European Commission and the Monitoring Committee shall be borne by the Member State hosting the Managing Authority. In case of irregularities caused by the body hosting

and administrating the JTS branch in Vienna, the liability shall be borne by the host institution.

Referring to the Article 52 (4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, once the Member State has reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a Lead Partner/Project Partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that Partner pursuant to its national law. In the event of successful recovery, the Member State may use those amounts for the national co-financing of the Programme. The Member State shall not have any reporting obligations towards the Programme authorities, the Monitoring Committee or the European Commission with regard to such national recoveries.

If a Member State has not reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a Lead Partner/Project Partner pursuant to Article 52 (4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the European Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the Member State in the Programme. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF or any external financing instrument of the European Union to the Programme. The amount recovered shall constitute assigned revenue in accordance with Article 21 (3) of the Financial Regulation.

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

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

In addition, a system ensuring that all exchanges between beneficiaries and all the Programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange in accordance with Annex XIV of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

Detailed provisions on the division of responsibilities between the Member States in case of irregularities will be provided in the description of the programme management and control system that shall be established in accordance with Article 69 (12) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and if applicable, in other Programme documentation.

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

Table 10

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






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


Annex

Map 1: Map of the programme area



Sources: Centropemap, Openstreetmap
Cartography and geoinformation: www.mecca-consulting.at
December 2021

-  major rivers
-  National borders
-  NUTS 2
-  NUTS 3 of the programme area
-  other NUTS 3 regions

0 20 40 80
 km

Appendix 3

List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable (Article 22(3) CPR)

Please note that the List is indicative and may be subject of future changes.

Small project fund & 'Mobilization of potential in the cross-border area' project

In the 2021-2027 Programme period, one **SPF covering the whole Programme area** shall be established **in ISO 1 under the administration of the NÖ.Regional**. In practical terms, the main goal of SPF implemented under this specific objective is to open up the Programme to small local initiatives and to strengthen the cross-border social cohesion by supporting local cooperation, social, sports and cultural contact and trust building activities, establishing and deepening long-term partnerships, and realisation of other people to people initiatives.

For a SPF in ISO 1, the following initial framework conditions are being discussed:

<i>Spatial effect of the SPF:</i>	Programme area of Interreg SKAT 2021-2027
<i>Foreseen implementation:</i>	01/2023 – 12/2029
<i>Financial volume of the SPF:</i>	€ 3,2 Mio ERDF (i. e. 2.56 Mio ERDF for realisation of small projects and 0.64 Mio ERDF for management costs)

As provided for in Article 25 (3) of Interreg Regulation, the SPF administrator is in the first place responsible for preparation and implementation of the SPF project, setting up criteria and procedures for selection of small projects, contracting, monitoring, check of results and closure of the small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (3)).

Despite the fact that tasks such as **information, motivation, activation, supervision and guidance of potential project applicants** are not explicitly mentioned as primary tasks of the SPF administrator, they are pivotal for a successful implementation of small projects. Due to limited financial resources provided for administration of the SPF, such activities cannot be covered within the SPF budget; however, they **could be covered within a project aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area**. Since both projects would be of particular importance for the Programme, their classification as an operation of strategic importance should be considered, and they might be submitted in a joint application.

Interreg 2021-2027 AT-SI (Programmanteil Burgenland)

Thematisches Ziel / konkrete Maßnahmen		Gesamt- ausgaben	Förderung	EFRE	National öffentlich	National öffentlich			Privat
						Bund	Land	Sonstige	
(1)	Eine widerstandsfähigere und nachhaltige Grenzregion	1 036 250,00	1 036 250,00	829 000,00	207 250,00	0,00	207 250,00	0,00	0,00
(2)	Eine kompetentere und konkurrenzfähigere Grenzregion	835 000,00	835 000,00	668 000,00	167 000,00	0,00	167 000,00	0,00	0,00
(3)	Bessere Governance in Bezug auf die Zusammenarbeit (ISO 1)	208 750,00	208 750,00	167 000,00	41 750,00	0,00	41 750,00	0,00	0,00
	Technische Hilfe	170 000,00	170 000,00	136 000,00	34 000,00	0,00	34 000,00	0,00	0,00
Interreg insgesamt (2024-2029)		2 250 000,00	2 250 000,00	1 800 000,00	450 000,00	0,00	450 000,00	0,00	0,00

Interreg 2021-2027 AT-HU (Programmanteil Burgenland)

Thematisches Ziel / konkrete Maßnahmen		Gesamt- ausgaben	Förderung	EFRE	National öffentlich	National öffentlich			Privat
						Bund	Land	Sonstige	
(1)	Eine grünere und widerstandsfähigere Grenzregion	9 375 493,75	9 375 493,75	7 500 395,00	1 875 098,75	0,00	1 875 098,75	0,00	0,00
(2)	Eine stärker vernetzte Grenzregion	3 749 966,25	3 749 966,25	2 999 973,00	749 993,25	0,00	749 993,25	0,00	0,00
(3)	Eine kompetente Grenzregion	6 124 752,50	6 124 752,50	4 899 802,00	1 224 950,50	0,00	1 224 950,50	0,00	0,00
(4)	Eine integrierte Grenzregion (ISO 1)	2 181 795,00	2 181 795,00	1 745 436,00	436 359,00	0,00	436 359,00	0,00	0,00
	Technische Hilfe	1 750 488,75	1 750 488,75	1 400 391,00	350 097,75	0,00	350 097,75	0,00	0,00
Interreg insgesamt (2024-2029)		23 182 496,25	23 182 496,25	18 545 997,00	4 636 499,25	0,00	4 636 499,25	0,00	0,00

Interreg 2021-2027 AT-SK (Programmanteil Burgenland)

Thematisches Ziel / konkrete Maßnahmen		Gesamt- ausgaben	Förderung	EFRE	National öffentlich	National öffentlich			Privat
						Bund	Land	Sonstige	
(1)	Eine konkurrenzfähigere und intelligentere SK-AT Grenzregion	437 500,00	437 500,00	350 000,00	87 500,00	0,00	87 500,00	0,00	0,00
(2)	Eine grünere SK-AT Grenzregion	1 000 000,00	1 000 000,00	800 000,00	200 000,00	0,00	200 000,00	0,00	0,00
(3)	Eine sozialere SK-AT Grenzregion	1 500 000,00	1 500 000,00	1 200 000,00	300 000,00	0,00	300 000,00	0,00	0,00
(4)	Eine stärker kooperierende SK-AT Grenzregion (ISO 1)	940 000,00	940 000,00	752 000,00	188 000,00	0,00	188 000,00	0,00	0,00
	Technische Hilfe	247 500,00	247 500,00	198 000,00	49 500,00	0,00	49 500,00	0,00	0,00
Interreg insgesamt (2024-2029)		4 125 000,00	4 125 000,00	3 300 000,00	825 000,00	0,00	825 000,00	0,00	0,00