

INTERREG VI-A IPA HUNGARY-SERBIA PROGRAMME

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

**PART OF THE APPLICATION PACKAGE
OF THE 2ND CALL FOR PROPOSALS**



*Good neighbours
creating
common future*

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMME

Background

The Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary Serbia Programme (the Programme) is implemented within the 2021-2027 European Union financial framework under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Established by the Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III) and implemented by the (Interreg) Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council, this instrument for pre-accession assistance serves as a financial source both for candidate (among them Serbia) and potential candidate countries. IPA addresses five policy areas, and ‘regional and territorial cooperation’ (including CBC) is one of them.

In the current Programme, Hungary and Serbia co-operate in a joint structure through shared management and joint decision making, with common financial resources available. The Programme summarizing the priorities and objectives, as well as the main implementation modalities has been developed mutually, and it was approved by the EC by its decision C(2022) 7444 on the 14 October 2022. The Programme is available on the Programme’s official website: <http://www.hungary-serbia.eu>.

NOTE: The present Programme builds on the results of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Hungary - Serbia 2014-2020 and on several planning documents relevant for the Programme area. Most of the basic requirements remained the same as in the previously implemented Programme but there are many specific details, which are changed. Therefore, we strongly recommend to all applicants to read all the documents of the Application package carefully.

In the Programme, the partner countries selected the Policy objectives and Specific objectives available in Article 3 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 and Article 14 of the (Interreg) Regulation 2021/1059. Based on these objectives the Programme lists **priorities** and **objectives** as well as the type of activities to be supported during Programme implementation.

The present Guidelines intend to provide detailed information to potential applicants in the course of preparing, applying for and a framework for implementing joint **projects** in the Programme.

The present Guidelines were elaborated in line with the Programme document and relevant legislations. All applicants must respect and follow the legislations governing the Programme, the provisions of the Call for Proposals and those of the present Guidelines.

Basic definitions of terms used in the Guidelines for Applicants

Activities are the actions (tasks) that have to be taken to produce results mainly at project or, if applicable, at project-part level. Therefore, the main identified activities are the summary of what the project must do – by means of applied inputs/resources – in order to deliver results. Thus, results have to be expressed in terms of a tangible output ('delivered / produced / conducted, etc.') which are the measurable consequence of the activity ('to prepare / design / construct / conduct a research, etc.) being implemented.

Applicant: Under the present Call the term refers to **both** the potential lead partner (LP), the potential partners applying in a partnership for subsidy from the Programme's funds and which are fulfilling the same eligibility criteria.

Application: set of documents comprised of application form (with Annexes) and required supporting documents. Application form needs to be filled in electronically via the Application Module of the INTERREG+ IT system available at <https://husrb.interregplus.eu/21-27>

Application package: Documents containing all provisions and relevant information for the present Call for Proposals available for download on the Programme's official website: <http://www.hungary-serbia.eu>. The Application package is comprised of all the guides, documents, annexes and appendices necessary for the application process. (for the full list, please read Chapter 13. "Annexes and Appendices to the Application package").

Partnership: Projects have to be implemented in partnership (following the "lead partner principle") including a lead partner and partner(s). A partnership should be formed by at least two partners, one from each side of the border. The LP takes full financial and legal responsibility for the implementation of the entire project. The partnership can also contain partners who participate in the project but are not receiving any financial support. However, it is necessary that the project contains at least one partner from Member State receiving financial support.

Partner: an organisation actively participating in the implementation of a project with a responsibility to properly implement its project part in particular and assisting the lead partner in order to meet project level objectives. Partner is only the organisation that is explicitly listed as a partner in the application, one that receives funding and, therefore, has a budget in the application form.

Partner not receiving financial support: an organisation that is assisting in activities, has a very specific singular role in the application form, does not receive funding and, therefore, has no budget in the application form.

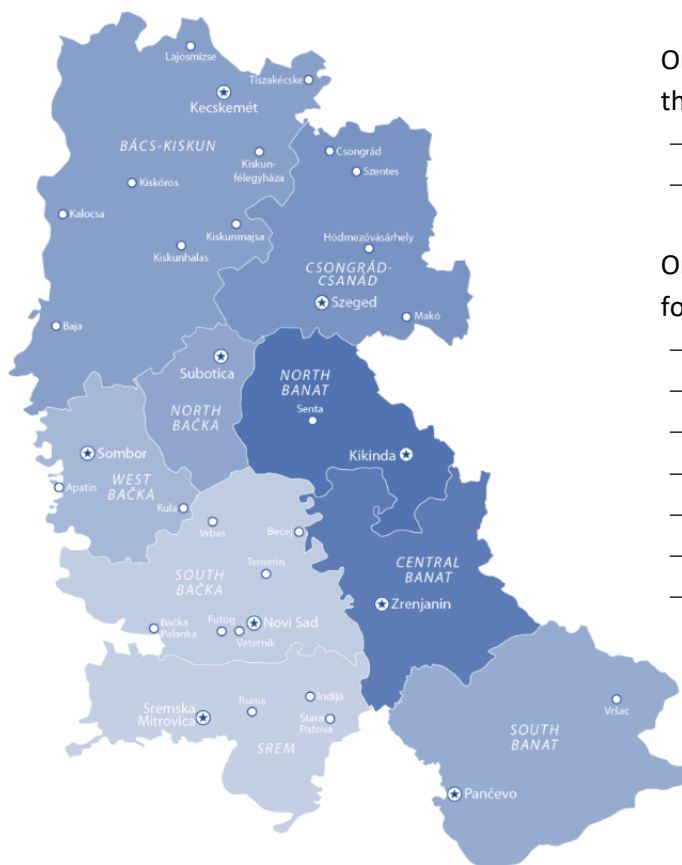
Lead partner: the organisation assuming the leading role in the partnership, as defined by the "Lead partner principle" in the Article 26 of the Interreg Regulation 2021/1059. Accordingly, all partnerships have to designate one partner among them to act as the lead partner who will submit the application on behalf of the entire partnership and will be responsible for the overall project implementation towards the programme management structure. The project is represented by the lead partner, acting as the only direct contact between the project and the joint management bodies of the Programme. It is the responsibility of the lead partner to create a well-working consortium among the project partners based on a partnership agreement. Nevertheless, the lead partner also acts as a "Partner" in connection to its own project part.

Project: this term refers to a coherent set of interconnected activities, directed towards a common goal and necessary for its achievement to contribute to indicators, deliver outputs and results, implemented by the partnership in a defined timeframe and matched by the corresponding budget.

Project part: a group of activities within the project, implemented by one of the partners, in a defined timeframe (indicated in the application form/subsidy contract) and matched by the corresponding budget (see separate budget tables for each partner in the application form). The implementation of a specific project part is the responsibility of the designated partner (including the lead partner as well), both from a professional and a financial point of view. Moreover, each partner is responsible for any irregularity established regarding their project part. The verification of project expenditures is conducted by the respective national Control Body at the partner level.

User Manual of the INTERREG+ Application Module: The main objective of the Manual is to provide instructions to the applicants of the Programme on how to use the INTERREG+ Monitoring and Information System. It is available for downloading on the Programme's official web site: <http://www.hungary-serbia.eu>

Programme area



On the Hungarian side the programme area covers the following counties:

- Csongrád-Csanád
- Bács-Kiskun

On the Serbian side the programme area covers the following NUTS III level equivalent regions:

- West Bačka (Zapadnobački upravni okrug),
- North Bačka (Severnobački upravni okrug),
- North Banat (Severnobanatski upravni okrug),
- South Bačka (Južnobački upravni okrug),
- Middle Banat (Srednjobanatski upravni okrug),
- South Banat (Južnobanatski upravni okrug),
- Srem (Sremski upravni okrug)

1. CONTENTS OF THE 2ND CALL FOR PROPOSALS

1.1 Priorities and Objectives open in this Call for proposals

PRIORITY 1: A GREENER REGION

Objective 1.1: Climate change adaptation, risk prevention (SO 2.4)

Objective 1.2: Biodiversity and reduced pollution (SO 2.7)

PRIORITY 2: ENHANCING THE HUMAN AND CULTURAL VALUES

Objective 2.1: Education and lifelong learning (SO 4.2)

Objective 2.2: Culture and tourism (SO 4.6)

PRIORITY 3: CROSS-BORDER INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIL COOPERATION

Objective 3.1: Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation (ISO1)

1.2 Financial allocation of the present Call for Proposals

The total available EU contribution for the present Call for Proposals is **12 963 000 EUR**. The table below shows the **indicative distribution** of the total available EU amount between the priorities and objectives within the present Call, indicating the **EU contribution** per project.

- **Small-scale projects** (marked with SSP) are above or equal to 70 and below 200 thousand Euros,
- **Regular-scale projects** (RSP) are above or equal to 200 thousand.
 - For **Objectives 1.1 and 2.2** the maximum is 850 thousand Euros.
 - For **Objectives 1.2, 2.1 and 3.1** the maximum is 500 thousand Euros

| Priority | Objective | SSP | RSP | EST.TOTAL |
|---|--|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1. A greener region | 1.1 Climate change adaptation, risk prevention | 450 000 | 1 100 000 | 1 550 000 |
| | 1.2 Biodiversity and reduced pollution | 538 000 | 1 200 000 | 1 738 000 |
| 2. Enhancing the human and cultural values | 2.1 Education and lifelong learning | 650 000 | 2 000 000 | 2 650 000 |
| | 2.2 Culture and tourism | 635 000 | 2 000 000 | 2 635 000 |
| 3. Cross-border institutional and civil cooperation | 3.1 Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation | 1 640 000 | 2 750 000 | 4 390 000 |
| Total | | | | 12 963 000 |

Table 1. Indicative financial allocation breakdown of the present Call

Any **EU contribution** awarded for projects under this Call for Proposals must take into consideration the minimum EU budget and must not exceed **85%** of the total approved budget.

The following section summarizes the **priorities and objectives** of the Programme and lists some of the **types of actions** that are welcome by the Programme. The indicative list of types of activities and the list of potential partners may help the orientation of the applicants when planning their projects (Please also consult Chapter 2. “Eligibility of Applicants” of the present Guidelines). And finally, for each objective an indicator table is of corresponding indicators is also listed.

PRIORITY 1: A GREENER REGION

A greener Europe - 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.

Objective 1.1: Climate change adaptation, risk prevention

Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches.

The type of actions contribute to the Specific Objective by increasing the capacity to adapt to and to mitigate the effects of climate change and to improve the measures and interventions in disaster risk prevention in the region with active contribution to sustainable development as the horizontal principle 4 (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)). The aim is to jointly develop specific skills and know-how as well as to improve the common *infrastructural* background for appropriate, timely and efficient interventions. As a result, the Programme area will be better prepared to prevent and/or tackle the negative consequences of extreme weather phenomena (including droughts, heat waves or floods) or of other anthropic events. Interventions of all types of actions must comply with all relevant EU and national regulations, with special emphasis on EU Birds and Habitats Directives, Invasive Alien Species Regulation, the EU Floods Directive, and the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030.

In order to efficiently respond to the identified problems and mitigate the effects of the climate change, this Specific Objective focuses on three types of actions. The types of actions closely relate to Priority Area 5 of the EUSDR “To manage environmental risks” of the EUSDR.

Type of action 1. Joint development, coordination and improvement of the cross-border risk prevention and disaster management systems

The aim is to increase the cross-border disaster-management capacity in the border region and to improve the coordination and reaction capabilities of organisations involved in disaster management.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Exchange of experiences and know-how among the professional and voluntary units involved in the disaster management from the two sides of the border, networking and organisational development with the aim of handling risk prevention actions more efficiently, including coordination between/among central, local and cross-border levels, coordination/synchronization of intervention protocols, capacity building through joint trainings and exercises;
- Investments (both equipment and infrastructure) in improving the capacity of the disaster management units to prepare and respond to the natural and man-made emergencies/accidents in the border region.
- Joint campaigns addressing the general population or specific target groups, depending on the type of risk
- Joint prevention programs, focusing on addressing the effects of climate change

Type of action 2. Joint actions for adaptation to climate change in view to reducing the impact of climate change, addressing natural phenomena occurring as a consequence of climate change

The aim is to increase the climate change resilience of the border region by reducing the probability of occurrence and/or by mitigating the effects of the natural phenomena that are increasingly frequent in the border area as a result of climate change. They also include cross-border interventions that provide solutions for already existing significant damages caused by climate change.

Possible activities should promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS)¹ and can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint plans and interventions in the field of water management in order to reduce the impact of climate change, including measures for increasing the natural water retention capacity and the quantitative and ecological status of water bodies in the border area, and for preventing against the effects of extreme weather conditions (as droughts, floods, inland water and including activities aiming the planning and construction of water replacement solutions;
- Activities with the clear cross-border character aimed at mitigating risks to agriculture - as an area highly exposed to the negative impact of climate change.
- Cross-border cooperation projects that target existing or potential negative climate change related impacts with the aim of preserving natural habitats and fight against biodiversity loss (e.g. in the field of forestry, wetlands, or grasslands, aquatic ecosystems).

Type of action 3. Joint awareness raising and educational activities on causes, consequences of climate change and possible adaptation and mitigation measures

The aim is to enhance the climate change resilience of the border region by increasing the awareness of the general public about the consequences of climate change and possibilities for adapting and mitigating them.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint information campaigns among the agricultural producers in the region, presenting the effects of climate change on agriculture, as well as mitigation and adaptation options;
- Joint information campaigns for the inhabitants of the border area severely impacted by climate change risks or damage;
- Joint educational programs about the effects of climate change and possible approaches to adapt and to reduce climate change related threats and damages on the environment, nature and people;
- Capacity building activities for civil society organisations in the field of climate change adaptation and mitigation of negative effects of climate change.

The main target groups and relevant organisations

The primary target groups of the present objective besides the inhabitants of the border region are the agricultural producers (farmers) as well as students and teachers.

¹Solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.

The listed type of actions should be implemented by the following organisations:

- Disaster management bodies
- Water management organisations
- Environment protection organisations
- Government bodies dealing with climate protection
- Administrations of protected natural areas
- Forestry organisations
- Local governments
- Professional organisations (e.g. chambers of agriculture)
- Civil society organisations and non-profit companies
- Educational organisations
- Research organisations
- Regional development councils
- *other relevant organisations.*

Indicators for Objective 1.1 – Climate change adaptation, risk prevention

Indicators measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific output and result indicators. Detailed information on the indicators is available in the **Indicator guide** document, which is part of the Call for Proposals package. The following indicators are relevant to the objective:

| <i>INDICATORS FOR OBJECTIVE 1.1</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|-------------------|
| <i>ID</i> | Programme-level indicators | <i>Type</i> | <i>Obligation</i> |
| RCO87 | Organisations cooperating across borders | Output | Compulsory |
| RCR84 | Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | Result | Compulsory |
| RPR01 | Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters | Result | Compulsory |
| RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | Output | Optional |
| RCR104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | Result | Paired with RCO84 |
| RCO24 | Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against natural disasters | Output | Optional |
| RCO115 | Public events across borders jointly organised | Output | Optional |
| <i>ID</i> | Project-level indicators | <i>Type</i> | <i>Obligation</i> |
| I111 | Number of persons educated about climate change adaptation and risk prevention | Output | Optional |
| | <i><or self-defined project-level indicator></i> | Output/Result | If needed |

Objective 1.2: Biodiversity and reduced pollution

Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

The types of actions contribute to the Specific Objective by strengthening the cooperation among stakeholders from the two sides of the border on the protection and preservation of the natural values and habitats, while enhancing the efficiency of the measures for safeguarding biodiversity. The aim is to tackle the unfavourable processes observed in the remaining natural areas as a result of the climate change and human activities. This includes initiatives to reduce and eliminate the pollution sources from the Programme area with active contribution to sustainable development as the horizontal principle 4 (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)). The interventions should be selected with regard to the EU Birds² and Habitats Directives³.

In order to efficiently respond to the identified problems, protect and preserve the nature, safeguard biodiversity and reduce and eliminate pollution, this Specific Objective focuses on three types of actions. Activities should promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS)⁴.

The type of actions closely relate to Priority Area 4 “To restore and maintain the quality of waters” and Priority Area 6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils” of the EUSDR.

Type of action 1. Joint activities which identify and contribute to the elimination of the cross-border pollution sources

The aim is to reduce and/or prevent further pollution of air, soil, or water in the border region. Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint interventions to map pollution sources and/or development of up-to-date solutions to eliminate various pollution sources and pollutants from air, soil, or water – e.g., elimination/reduction of greenhouse gasses and different kind of liquid and solid waste such as paper, plastics, metals, chemicals in solid form;
- Pilot projects establishing cooperation initiatives and organisational alliances aiming at reducing pollution.

Type of action 2. Joint initiatives for ensuring the sustainable development of natural areas

The aim is to enhance the sustainable use of the natural areas in the border region. Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint blue (e.g. backwater) and green interventions for in-situ conservation, reconstruction/protection, restoration or revitalization of natural habitats;
- Re-introduction of native species to cross-border habitats, including species protection programs, prevention and control of invasive alien species and their priority pathways, operation of rescue centres, or ex situ breeding and release programs;

² https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm

⁴ <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/nature-based-solutions>

- Creation of educational trails in nature, interconnected between the two sides of the border (either geographically or by thematic focus);
- Establishment of cooperation networks (e.g. in agricultural sector) to enhance and harmonize cross-border planning and joint interventions in the field of environment and nature protection and biodiversity.

Type of action 3. Joint awareness raising and educational activities on environmental and nature protection topics in the border region

The aim is to promote effective communication that contributes achieving common understanding of the objectives of sustainable development as well as to promote self-mobilisation and other forms of involvement in nature protection activities.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Organizing information campaigns, social events and programs on environment and nature protection topics;
- Implementing educational programs to develop environmental awareness and understanding of the impact of human consumption and other activities on the deterioration of natural habitats;
- Organizing joint education and/or dissemination programs for children including outdoor kindergartens, thematic children/youth camps connected to nature protection and biodiversity;
- Capacity building activities of civil society organisations in the field of environment and nature protection.

The main target groups and relevant organisations

The primary target groups of the present objective besides the inhabitants of the border region directly benefitting from the actions are the students, teachers, vulnerable social groups and disadvantaged learners

The listed type of actions should be implemented by the following organisations:

- Administrations of protected natural areas
- Environment and nature protection organisations
- Water management organisations
- Waste management organisations
- Civil society organisations and non-profit companies
- Educational organisations
- Research organisations
- Local governments
- Disaster management bodies
- Professional organisations (e.g. chambers of agriculture)
- Regional development councils
- *and other relevant organisations.*

Indicators for Objective 1.2 – Biodiversity and reduced pollution

Indicators measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific

output and result indicators. Detailed information on the indicators is available in the **Indicator guide** document, which is part of the Call for Proposals package. The following indicators are relevant to the objective:

| INDICATORS FOR OBJECTIVE 1.2 | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------|--------------------|
| ID | Programme-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| RCO87 | Organisations cooperating across borders | Output | Compulsory |
| RCR84 | Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | Result | Paired with RCO87 |
| RCO115 | Public events across borders jointly organised | Output | Compulsory for SSP |
| RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | Output | Optional |
| ID | Project-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| I121 | Number of actions contributing to the elimination of pollution sources | Output | Optional |
| I122 | Number of investments in biodiversity and green infrastructure ⁵ , enhanced protection and preservation of nature | Output | Optional |
| I123 | Nature protection areas covered by protection and restoration measures | Result | Optional |
| I124 | Number of educated persons on environmental and nature protection topics | Output | Optional |
| | <or self-defined project-level indicator> | Output/Result | If needed |

⁵ Green infrastructure can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings. More specifically GI, being a spatial structure providing benefits from nature to people, aims to enhance nature's ability to deliver multiple valuable ecosystem goods and services, such as clean air or water."

PRIORITY 2: ENHANCING THE HUMAN AND CULTURAL VALUES

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

Objective 2.1: Education and lifelong learning

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.

Importance of education for achieving and maintaining social rights cannot be overstated. Moreover, the cultural and economic development of the region and quality of life depend also on education, training and skills of its inhabitants and (future) workforce and their health and wellbeing. This objective will contribute to sustainable development and the promotion of non-discrimination as horizontal principles 3 and 4 (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)). In order to appropriately and efficiently respond to the identified problems and challenges of the region, this Specific Objective focuses on three types of actions.

In relation to the activities of all three types of actions, it is possible to purchase equipment and implement small-scale infrastructural interventions.

The planned Actions closely relate to all Actions of the Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” of the EUSDR and the implementation of the Actions will be coordinated with similar interventions financed under ERDF or ESF+ in the participating Member states.

Type of action 1. Lifelong learning for social inclusion, social cohesion and environmentally sustainable and healthy digitalization

ICT developments of the past two decades combined with the pandemic situation of early 2020's have shown that access to digital tools is becoming necessary for participation in social and economic life and exercising social rights. Educational interventions can help ensure that digitalization is socially inclusive, healthy and environmentally sustainable.

The aim of this Action is to deliver jointly developed formal and informal direct training and train-the-trainer actions to promote socially inclusive and sustainable digitalization, strengthen social cohesion, protect health, enhance wellbeing, foster digital hygiene, and improve digital skills of all people of all ages while mitigating the harmful effects of digital technologies.

The proposed activities, thus, contribute to improving equal access to education, participation in social and economic life and exercising social rights by focusing on socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable digitalization and balanced integration of digital technologies into lives and work of people of the region.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to implementation of jointly developed:

- Trainings on intercultural, language and other relevant competences;
- Collaborations and exchange of best practices to improve the quality of education for vulnerable social groups and disadvantaged learners (e.g., children with disabilities);
- Practical training and exchange programs for people with disabilities, rural population, Roma, low-income families, young people and, where appropriate, older people and other vulnerable groups to learn about and use digital services related to day-to-day administration, job search, and healthy

living (e.g. e-health, e-government and online administration platforms, online job search and applications);

- Multi-level courses for the general public, including massive open online courses (MOOC) to develop digital skills, to address technological challenges (e.g. carbon footprint of digital technologies), emerging technologies (e.g. AI, VR, AR), risks (e.g. screen dependency and other addictions, cyberbullying), privacy and data protection, responsible and secure internet use, social networks, open source software;
- Educational programs promoting balanced usage of digital tools and healthy lifestyles, for example by tackling problems caused by a sedentary lifestyle, poor eating habits, vision loss, lack of movement and other health risks.

Type of action 2. Joint development of training, mentoring and outreach programs to combat and reverse early school leaving

The aim of the second Action is to deliver jointly developed educational and training actions and campaigns devised to prevent and reverse early school leaving recorded on both sides of the border. By tackling a high number of school dropouts recorded in the Programme area, the proposed activities contribute to social inclusion and desegregation by improving the effective equal access of the disadvantaged learners, especially children, youth and Roma population, to mainstream education.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to delivery of jointly developed:

- On-site, in-school and online programs and curricula to tackle early-school leaving, with an emphasis on improving digital skills;
- Practical training and skill development for children not attending school;
- Practical training and exchange programs for teachers and educators to update knowledge and upgrade skills with special emphasis on teaching, mentoring and inclusion of people from vulnerable groups, trends and challenges of digitalization and sensitivity trainings.

Type of action 3. Joint development of vocational training

A border region with skilled workforce can effectively combat (and reverse) outmigration and problems stemming from ageing and deskilled or unskilled population. To achieve this, educational interventions shall also meet a growing demand of the economic operators for people who possess both required qualifications and actual professional knowledge and skills.

The aim of this Action is collaboration on developing inclusive vocational education and trainings with strong emphasis on practical, e.g., work-based training schemes for development of relevant skills that respond to the labour market needs. Its aim is to contribute to upskilling and reskilling local and regional workforce making them well trained in applying modern tools and digital solutions in the given field.

The proposed vocational training activities and strong emphasis on green and digital skills contribute to accessible and socially inclusive education and better employment opportunities.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Joint development of curricula for practical trainings, dual education and work-based educational programs – e.g. agriculture;

- Joint development of training programs especially for (new) vocational profiles in high demand, with an emphasis on improving green and digital skills and services, upgrading technical competences, and incorporating e-solutions and emerging technologies;
- Support for and promotion of society-wide measures to restore the prestige to vocational training;
- Cross-border cooperation and exchange of experiences of practical vocational training centres operating on a non-profit basis related to the company.

The main target groups and relevant organisations

The primary target groups of the present objective besides the inhabitants of the border region are as follows:

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- Unemployed and hard-to-employ people
- The children and youth who left school early
- The children and youth at risk of schools leaving
- School professionals and authorities
- Social workers
- Primary school pupils and young people applying for secondary/high schools
- Students of secondary/high schools
- Students of vocational schools and centres, and their teachers, professors, trainers and educators

The listed type of actions should be implemented by the following organisations:

- Institutions and non-profit organisations dealing with formal and informal education
- Social work and social care services
- Non-profit organisations dealing with child and family protection and youth
- Vocational schools and non-profit training centres
- *and other relevant organisations.*

While a number of activities will target all inhabitants of the region, for example some MOOCs, individualized educational activities will target and benefit persons from specific social groups, for example vulnerable groups such as rural, low-income population, Roma, people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, children and youth, victims of bullying/cyberbullying, people struggling with addictions, older individuals and other disadvantaged learners. Such individualized activities shall be tailored to address their specific (educational) needs while improving their access to mainstream education, employment opportunities, services and digital tools necessary for them to lead safe, healthy and fulfilled lives and actively participate in all avenues of social life.

In line with the Article 9(1), (2) and (3) of the CPR, the proposed measures targeting vulnerable social groups and disadvantaged learners, for example children with disabilities, Roma and rural population should respect the principle of desegregation and ensure equal access for all to mainstream quality training and education.

Indicators for Objective 2.1 – Education and lifelong learning

Indicators measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific output and result indicators. Detailed information on the indicators is available in the **Indicator guide** document, which is part of the Call for Proposals package. The following indicators are relevant to the objective:

| INDICATORS FOR OBJECTIVE 2.1 | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------|-------------------|
| ID | Programme-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| RCO87 | Organisations cooperating across borders | Output | Compulsory |
| RCR84 | Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | Result | Compulsory |
| RCO85 | Participations in joint training schemes | Output | Optional |
| RCR81 | Completions of joint training schemes * | Result | Paired with RCO85 |
| RCO81 | Participations in joint actions across borders | Output | Optional |
| RCR85 | Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion * | Result | Paired with RCO81 |
| ID | Project-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| I211 | New or modernized childcare and education facilities | Output | I211 |
| I212 | Number of trained human capacity involved in actions for training, mentoring and combatting early school leaving | Output | I212 |
| | <or self-defined project-level indicator> | Output/Result | If needed |

Objective 2.2: Culture and tourism

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

Based on the identified needs and challenges of the border region, the proposed Actions contribute to the Specific Objective in many ways. By using the tools of the modern age and incorporating innovative works in the area, the actions facilitate the creation of a competitive and socially inclusive tourism offer. Tourism products developed through the actions will be based on existing cultural traditions and natural values, thus assuring sustainable tourism, such as active and eco-tourism. Utilisation of products and services developed by creative industries, digitization, digitalization and online accessibility of cultural heritage, incorporated in tourism products developed through actions will allow access to cultural heritage to all people, including those who are economically disadvantaged, socially deprived or persons with disabilities such as reduced mobility. This ensures active contribution to promotion of non-discrimination as the horizontal principle 3 (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)). Moreover, such actions recognize the need for transformation of culture and tourism sector in order to strengthen their capacity to drive economic development, social inclusion and social innovation and other identified socio-economic challenges. Applicants will be encouraged to plan their activities in line with the best practices and relevant and available quality principles, e.g. relevant guidelines of ICOMOS, New European Bauhaus initiatives). In order to ensure sustainability of the touristic offer, the Actions support the development of a single communication system for managing previously developed cross-border tourism products, as well as for managing the future products. The Actions emphasize the need to better promote the region and deliver information more effectively in order to increase the number of tourists in the border region. Tourism developments should be implemented taking into account environmental and sustainability aspects, as all interventions regarding culture and tourism are encouraged to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability.

In order to efficiently respond to the identified challenges of the region and enhance and promote its cultural values, this Specific Objective focuses on three types of actions.

Being significant topics in all four macro-regional strategies, the activities under this Specific Objective contribute in particular to all seven targets of the Priority Area 3 of the EUSDR and Pillar 4 “Sustainable Tourism” of the EUSAIR.

Type of action 1. Development of joint tourism products with joint marketing management of these products

Development of a joint tourism product must be based on joint tourism strategy and on well-justified, evidence-based demand for that product. A tourism product should combine tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities. Most importantly, these elements should be presented in a produced touristic programme that creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential tourists.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Development and marketing of water tourism (lake, river, canal) and related bicycle tourism products (involved Eurovelo 6,11,13 routes), operation of boat docks and boat mooring, with improved accessibility, information and linkage with service providers.
- Development of health tourism and other active tourism (e.g. equestrian and hiking);

- Development or expanding and marketing of touristic offer of cross-border thematic trips and routes related to cultural and fine arts tourism, ecotourism, active tourism and rural-ethno tourism, based on cultural heritage (including museums and parks, crafts and traditions, religious facilities, historic periods and famous individuals, etc.) and natural values;
- Development and marketing of joint touristic brand with establishment of a service quality assurance system, and also development of management of joint touristic destinations;

Activities may include, if necessary, development of infrastructure, purchase of needed equipment and common communication interfaces (including software applications).

Type of action 2. Cultural cooperation

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Cooperation between professional institutions/organisations dealing with culture (e.g. theatres, houses of culture/cultural centres, libraries, museums, galleries, music and art schools, etc.) for joint non-formal cultural learning and joint cultural competences development with special regard for the development of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as target groups (e.g. women, people from families with low educational attainment, Roma, people with disabilities);
- Sustainable promotion of contemporary arts and preservation of cultural heritage by developing networks/clusters, promoting professional exchange and multilingualism.
- Cooperation resulting in developed, promoted and implemented joint cultural events and festivals for tourists.

In line with the Article 9(1), (2) and (3) of the CPR, the proposed measures targeting vulnerable social groups and disadvantaged learners, for example children with disabilities, Roma and rural population should respect the principle of desegregation and ensure equal access for all to mainstream quality training and education.

Type of action 3. Joint management of information for tourism and cultural purposes

The Activities are aimed at joint information management assuring permanent information to potential national and international tourists about touristic and cultural offers, news and events of the border region. Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Publishing information (in national languages and any relevant languages);
 - Development of infrastructural conditions for information;
 - One-stop touristic information;
 - Information and marketing system management;
 - Launching marketing campaigns;
 - Operation of information centres;
 - Organizing trainings for employees in tourism sector
- all bearing in mind existing information infrastructure and systems.

The main target groups and relevant organisations

The primary target groups of the present objective besides the inhabitants of the border region are tourism service providers (e.g. accommodations, restaurants, catering places) and tourists.

The listed type of actions should be implemented by the following organisations:

- Local governments
- County and regional level bodies and their organisations
- Tourist destination management organisations
- Public entities responsible for the preservation and utilization of cultural values
- Cultural institutions/organisations dealing with culture (e.g. theatres, houses of culture/cultural centres, libraries, museums, galleries, music and art schools, etc.)
- Professional tourist organisations
- Civil society organisations dealing with culture
- Civil society organisations dealing with tourism
- Regional development councils
- Cross-border cooperation organisations responsible for developing and operating cultural information centres
- *and other relevant organisations.*

Indicators for Objective 2.2 – Culture and tourism

Indicators measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific output and result indicators. Detailed information on the indicators is available in the **Indicator guide** document, which is part of the Call for Proposals package. The following indicators are relevant to the objective:

| INDICATORS FOR OBJECTIVE 2.2 | | | |
|---|---|---------------|-------------------|
| ID | Programme-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| RCO87 | Organisations cooperating across borders | Output | Compulsory |
| RCR84 | Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | Result | Paired with RCO87 |
| RCO77 | Number of cultural and tourism sites supported | Output | Optional |
| RCR77 | Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported | Result | Paired with RCO77 |
| RCO115 | Public events across borders jointly organised | Output | Optional |
| ID | Project-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| I221 | Number of newly created/developed joint touristic products (tangible and intangible) | Output | Optional |
| I222 | Number of persons with special regard to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups working for cultural organizations | Output | Optional |
| I223 | Investments in new or upgraded information and marketing tools | Output | Optional |
| I224 | Number of trained persons working in tourism and cultural sector | Output | Optional |
| <or self-defined project-level indicator> | | Output/Result | If needed |

PRIORITY 3: CROSS-BORDER INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIL COOPERATION

Interreg Specific Objectives (ISO)

Objective 3.1 Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation

Better cooperation governance.

Based on the identified needs and challenges, the planned Actions contribute to the development of the cooperation among the local governments and civil organisations, thus reinforcing the trust among people living in the border region. The youth, older people and people with disabilities, as the highlighted target groups, can be the engine for strengthening the cross-border relationships regardless of the mother tongue spoken, with active contribution to promotion of non-discrimination as the horizontal principle 3 (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)).

The development of the town twinnings with involvement of both public and civil organisations can significantly improve the quality of local governance and encourage introduction of innovative solutions and with deeper involvement of local communities into the governmental actions.

By focusing on the elimination of obstacles in the cross-border labour market, trade of local products and health or social services, the joint institutional activities can make the cross-border cooperation among people, enterprises or relevant institutions and civil organisations closer, stronger and enduring.

In order to efficiently tackle the identified problems and challenges of the region and promote harmonious neighbourly relations, this Interreg Specific Objective focuses on two types of actions.

The planned Actions closely relate to Priority Area 10 “to step up institutional capacity and cooperation” of the EUSDR.

Type of action 1. Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging ‘people to people’ (P2P) actions

Within the P2P Action it is possible to support projects to encourage the daily cooperation of people of all generations living in the border region.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Organizing cross-border sport programs and activities e.g. camps, competitions preferably for young people;
- Implementing joint activities in local traditions and creation of new programs with involvement of local community e.g. in the field of music, handcraft, theatre, etc;
- Implementing activities among target groups such as the youth, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic groups and ethnic minorities, etc;
- Development of new or renewed Cooperation Agreements and Action Plans for implementation of joint activities of Twinning towns or villages. In connection with the implementation of Cooperation Agreements and Action Plans skills development and knowledge sharing between local governments, city management non-profit companies and institutions with involvement of relevant non-governmental organisations can be supported related to green urban mobility, traffic safety, monitoring of energy consumption, use of renewable energy, development of green infrastructure, communication with inhabitants, IT solutions in administration, etc.

In relation to the above activities, it is possible to purchase equipment.

Type of action 2. Actions supporting better cooperation governance

The aim is to encourage the cross-border cooperation among institutions and civil organisations to exchange experiences, develop their capacities and reduce legal and administrative barriers to cross-border cooperation.

Possible activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Coordination of cross-border sustainable transport, mobility development plans, including public transport developments – the plans should be in line with National Air Pollution Control Programme (Article 6 NEC Directive 2016/2284) and/or the Air Quality and Noise plans and Sustainable Urban Mobility plans;
- Promotion of cross-border labour market participation, e.g. development of information and counselling in the border region.
- Exchange of experience in order to harmonize and develop cross-border services in the social sphere and health care;
- Helping the trade of local agriculture and handcrafted products in the neighbouring country.
- Cooperation among the local media in order to improve the information flow about daily life and events in the border region;
- Encouraging social innovation and applying creative and innovative institutional solutions in public administration;
- Institutional capacity development of cross-border territorial management organisations.

In relation to the above activities, it is possible to purchase equipment and implement small-scale infrastructural interventions. The involvement of civil organisations and citizens into the implementation of activities at least in the form of partnership consultations is preferable.

During the implementation of the Programme, it must be ensured that projects receiving support under the objectives 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 cannot be supported within this objective.

The main target groups and relevant organisations

The primary target groups of the present objective besides the inhabitants of the border region. There is no specific target group defined for this objective.

The listed type of actions should be implemented by the following organisations:

- Local and regional level operated public authorities
- Local governments
- Civil society organisations, non-profit companies and professional organisations dealing with the relevant topics of planned actions
- Local media organisations
- Regional development councils
- *and other relevant organisations.*

Indicators for Objective 3.1 – Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation

Indicators measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific

output and result indicators. Detailed information on the indicators is available in the **Indicator guide** document, which is part of the Call for Proposals package. The following indicators are relevant to the objective:

| INDICATORS FOR OBJECTIVE 3.1 | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------|-------------------|
| ID | Programme-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| RCO87 | Organisations cooperating across borders | Output | Compulsory |
| RCR84 | Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | Result | Compulsory |
| RCO81 | Participations in joint actions across borders | RCO81 | Optional |
| RCR85 | Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion | RCR85 | Paired with RCO81 |
| ID | Project-level indicators | Type | Obligation |
| I311 | Number of people involved in cross-border sport programmes | Output | Optional |
| I312 | Number of joint activities in local traditions or newly created programmes with involvement of local communities | Output | Optional |
| I313 | Investments in modernization of NGO organizations | Output | Optional |
| I314 | Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border proposed | Output | Optional |
| I315 | Investments in modernization of public administration/public transport/healthcare/social institutions | Output | Optional |
| | <or self-defined project-level indicator> | Output/Result | If needed |

2. ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS

2.1 General eligibility of Applicants

Applicants have to fulfil eligibility criteria with respect to their legal status, their operational background, their geographical location and their professional and financial background. At the same time, they must not be subject to any of the exclusion criteria. Last, but not least, the proposed partnership has to meet the respective requirements.

Each applicant has to fulfil all of the following criteria:

- be a legal person and
- be non-profit making⁶ and
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the proposed project activities both from a professional and financial point of view and must not act as intermediaries and
- in general, the following organisations are eligible to apply for the EU contribution allocated to the Programme:
 - 1) **Public authorities**, meaning legal entities established and governed by public law, assigned with special competencies and performing tasks in public interest; **or**
 - 2) **Bodies governed by public law**, meaning organisations
 - established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character,
 - having legal personality, and
 - which are either
 - financed, for the most part, by the state, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law; or
 - subject to management supervision by those bodies; or
 - have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, with at least half of the members appointed by the state, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law; **or**
 - 3) **Non-profit organisations governed by private law**, established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character
- Applicants have to prove **an operation of at least one year**, counted back from the day of opening the present call for proposals. Cases of legal succession can be accepted when proving the necessary operational background, provided that the predecessor- and the successor organisation together can cover at least one year of continuous operation.
- As a general rule applicants have to have their headquarters in Hungary or Serbia, and their headquarters or a regional/local branch office has to be registered and acting in the eligible Programme area or if not registered there but having legislative scope of authority to act in the programme area (NUTS 3, or equivalent regions covered by the Programme) as defined in the introductory chapter under “Programme area” of the present Guidelines.

⁶ With exceptional status by law, ministries and state owned companies having portfolio of public interest are eligible.

In a situation **where the headquarters of the partner is not located in the eligible Programme area but it has a regional/local branch office there**, two setups can be distinguished:

- a) in case the national/regional organisation's headquarters in Hungary or Serbia is not registered in the eligible Programme area and the local branch is a legal entity registered in the Programme area then the local branch office has to be the applicant and in case of contracting it shall be the lead partner / partner. In this case, the local branch has to prove at least one year of operation in the eligible Programme area, counted back from the day of opening the present call for proposal and the leader of the branch office has to be an authorised representative of the legal person to act in connection to the implementation of the relevant project part. Furthermore, local staff of the branch has to be involved in project management.
 - b) in case the national/regional organisation's headquarters in Hungary or Serbia is not registered in the eligible Programme area and the local branch, registered in the Programme area, is not a legal entity, then the national/regional organisation has to be the applicant and in case of contracting it shall be the lead partner / partner. In this case, the organisation shall prove its distinct role in the border region and take into consideration that project activities have to be implemented in the eligible Programme area and must have a cross-border character, with local staff of the branch being involved in project management. The participation of a partner from outside the eligible Programme area can be justified if the organisation/institution is legally authorised for a professional task. In addition, it must be provided that it has legally defined competences or field of functions for certain parts of the eligible Programme area.
- Applicants have to possess relevant previous **professional experience** and must prove their **financial and administrative capacity** to manage the relevant project parts.
 - Applicants have to possess proper project management experience matching the scale of funding they are requesting in the present Call.

NOTE! Applications in which any of the applicants fails to meet the eligibility criteria will not be further evaluated.

2.2 Grounds for exclusion

Any member of the partnership falling under any of the grounds for exclusion listed below may not participate in the partnership or be awarded subsidy. These are:

- a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* (i.e., against which no appeal is possible);
- c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the managing/national authority can justify;
- d) they have not fulfilled obligations related to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are

established or with those of the country of the National Authorities or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;

- e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- f) they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations in connection to a procurement procedure or other grant award procedure financed from the Union budget;
- g) they are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the managing/national authority as a condition of participation in the Call for Proposals or fail to supply this information;
- h) they have attempted to obtain confidential information from decision-making and management bodies or influence any stage of the assessment/project selection process of current or previous Calls for Proposals;
- i) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty due to one of the situations referred to in points (f) and (h).

Note! All applicants are obliged to certify declaration annexed to the application in which they declare that they are not subject to any of the grounds of exclusion listed in the 2.2 a) - i).

Please, note that an application may still be excluded in the contracting phase in case the monitoring committee awarded decision is conditional and if it is determined that the applicant has not fulfilled conditions until the specified deadline.

2.3 Summary of eligibility of Applicants

To summarize, the conditions to be fulfilled simultaneously by all applicants are:

- being a non-profit legal person governed by public or private law for the purposes of public interest (except with exceptional status by law state owned companies having portfolio of public interest),
- having the headquarters or a regional/local branch office in the eligible Programme area (or if not, are being in line with the special rules on geographical location, described in Chapter 2.1 of the present Guidelines),
- having stable and sufficient professional and financial resources,
- being experienced in order to be able to manage activities similar to the ones in the application,
- being directly responsible for the project and not act as an intermediary, and
- not falling under the listed exclusion criteria.

3. ELIGIBILITY OF PARTNERSHIPS

The members of the partnership, i.e. the later partners have to be classified according to their responsibilities in the project:

- Lead partner (LP)
- Partners (Ps)

In the course of the implementation of the Programme, only **jointly prepared and implemented** projects are to be supported. These joint applications will be submitted by the lead partner on behalf of the members of the partnership.

Legal representatives of all applicants establishing a partnership are required to sign and stamp the following:

Declaration by the applicants (Annex I of the Application package)

De minimis declaration by the applicants (Annex II of the Application package)

and submit them via INTERREG + system (for details regarding submission of applications, please refer to chapter 11).

In case the submitted application is selected for funding, a **partnership agreement** has to be signed by the lead partner and each member of the partnership and submitted to the joint secretariat (JS) before contracting. The **draft partnership agreement** is available as part of the Application package on the website of the Programme. However, members of the partnership may modify this template according to the specificities of the partnership, keeping in mind that the modification must not be in conflict with principles, objectives and rules of the present Call for Proposals and of the draft Partnership Agreement.

Note! Partnership agreement has to be signed only in case the application is selected for funding – not before the contracting phase.

3.1 Lead Partner (LP)

According to the lead partner principle set out in Article 26 of the Interreg Regulation, the applicants have to designate a lead partner for their project and that particular organization will be responsible for representing and mediating the whole project towards the Programme management bodies. In all cases the lead partner has to have the necessary financial and human resources in order to coordinate the management and implementation of the project. The LP will ensure smooth cooperation and communication within the partnership as well as oversee the fulfilment of the activities of each partner, in particular:

- The LP will sign the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution on behalf of the members of the partnership;
- The LP shall conclude a Partnership Agreement with partners laying down the arrangements for its relations with them, inter alia, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- The LP will bear the responsibility to ensure the full implementation of the project, (however, each partner bears full responsibility for the appropriate implementation of its own project part):

- The LP shall ensure, that the expenditure presented by the partners receiving financial support has been paid and was incurred for the purpose of implementing the project and corresponds to the activities agreed between the partners and to those listed in the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution;
- The LP will be accountable for project reporting and administrative actions on project level;
- The LP will have to transfer the EU contribution to the partners receiving financial support, according to the approved Application for Reimbursement in full, no amount shall be deducted or withheld and no specific charge or other charge with equivalent effect shall be levied.

The responsibilities of the LP are set out in the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution as well in the Partnership Agreement (please see the model Subsidy Contract and the draft Partnership Agreement as part of the Application package on the website of the Programme).

3.2 Partners

The role of the partner is as important in the implementation of joint projects as that of the lead partner. Each partner is responsible for irregularities regarding the expenditure(s) which they declare. All partners are required to have the necessary financial and human resources and capacity in order to implement their own project part.

In accordance with the above, each partner (including the lead partner) will be required **to fill in and sign individual Declaration by applicants (Annex I of the Application package) and De minimis declaration by the applicants (Annex II of the Application package)** and make sure to provide to the lead partner all the necessary information needed for filling in the application form. The separate declaration to be submitted by the partners is necessary before contracting.

Note! **Eligibility of expenditures** is a separate document available for download on the Programme's website.

3.3 Minimum requirements for partnership

The Programme's objective is to facilitate the development of balanced partnerships with an efficient division of tasks and responsibilities. Partnerships shall be composed of partners who are able to carry out the implementation of project activities professionally and will significantly contribute to the partnership. One-sided partnerships will not be recommended for funding.

The partnerships must have eligible partners from both sides of the border, each and all satisfying the eligibility criteria for applicants. **The minimum setup is that the lead partner has at least one partner organization from the other side of the border, i.e. one cross-border partner.** Additional cross-border and/or domestic partner/s can be involved in the implementation of the project, provided the content of the project justifies so. **The number of partners is maximum 6, including the lead partner.**

Note! The budget of the applications has to be planned in a balanced way (proportionate to the planned activity), thus each partners' share shall be at least 10 % of the total project budget (except those partners not receiving financial support).

4. PROJECT DURATION

The planned implementation period of a project must not be less than 6 months.

For small-scale projects (SSP) the project must not exceed 18 months of its planned duration.

For regular-scale projects (RSP) the project must not exceed 24 months of its planned duration.

The period of implementation of a project must not start before the date of the deadline for submission of applications defined in chapter 11.5 of the present CfP. After the submission deadline, the lead partner and partners can start implementing their project taking the risk of being not selected for funding and keeping in mind that the approved project activities might differ from the ones planned in the application, as the MC has the right to select a project for funding with reductions of the budget and/or with certain conditions to be fulfilled. These conditions shall be detailed in the Notification letter sent to the lead partner. As a general rule, only those expenditures which are clearly connected to project activities and included in the Project can be reimbursed.

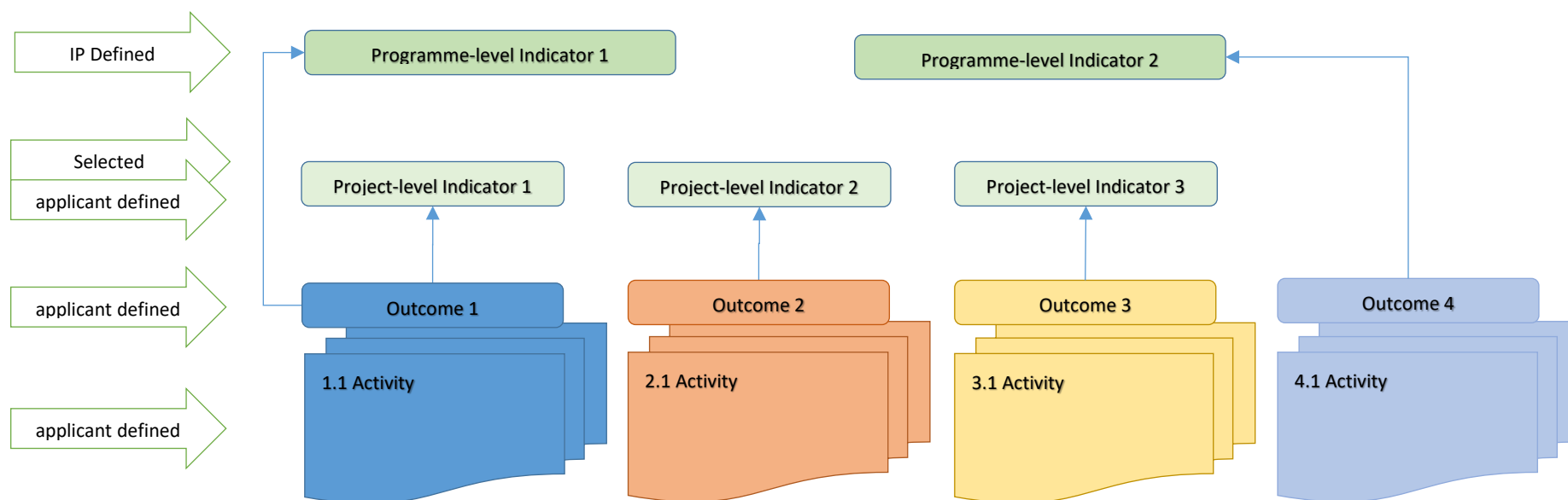
The start and end date for the implementation of the project shall be specified in the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution.

Note! As general rule project implementation has to start within one year from the deadline for submission of applications under this Call for Proposals

In extraordinary situations and due to objective circumstances beyond the control of the partners, the **Monitoring Committee (MC)** may approve a prolongation of a project duration.

5. PROJECT LOGIC

The project planning starts from the definition of the project's objective, which must fit to one of the programme's objectives. Only then, the applicant starts planning the **activities**, which lead to accomplishment of the set objective. Activities are grouped in such way that each group leads to an **outcome**, which is measured by at least one **indicator**. Therefore, each activity must be necessary, purposeful and logically coherent with other activities, which lead to a joint outcome. The outcome, on the other hand, must be tangible and measurable by at least one indicator (either programme level, project level or both). One outcome may correspond to at least one programme-level or project-level indicator. To measure accomplishment of the outcome the applicant either chooses one of the pre-defined programme-level indicator or a pre-defined project-level indicators or defines their own project-level indicator.



Scheme 1. Project logic in view of connections between activities, outcomes and indicators

- A minimum of 1 and maximum of 5 activities can be grouped together. Each group is defined by the desired outcome of those activities.
- One project can have a minimum of 1 and maximum of 4 outcomes, which means the maximum number of activities is 20.
- Each outcome is measured by a minimum of 1 and maximum of 2 indicators.

6. INDICATORS

Indicators are relevant to measure whether the project – and the Programme as a sum of projects – has achieved its objectives. Therefore, the achievement of specific objectives of each project will be measured by specific output and result indicators.

The following set of indicators is established within the Programme:

- Programme-level indicators (Output and Result)
- Project-level indicators (Output and Result)

Programme-level Indicators are defined in the Interreg Programme and they are objective-specific. This means that they are predefined and the applicant cannot change them. The applicant can select more than one programme-level indicator in case their project corresponds to them.

In some cases, a programme-level output indicator is tied to a programme-level result indicator. In these cases, the selection of the output indicator means the tied indicator is also selected - automatically. In most cases, the result indicators of the paired output indicators are to be measured upon the conclusion of the project implementation and reported on during the follow-up period.

Project-level Indicators are selected or defined by the applicants, as a part of the logical framework of their project and they are objective specific. The programme offers a number of pre-defined project-level indicators that can be selected. If neither of the proposed indicators fit the desired outcome, the applicant may define their own project-level indicator.

Important notes regarding the indicators

- Special attention will be paid to Indicators during the assessment.
- The indicators must be carefully chosen or defined and their values realistically set because they will be used in the monitoring of the project implementation and evaluation of the project's achievements and during the follow-up period.
- The list of project-level indicators is only a proposal and neither of these indicators is obligatory – a project that has their overall logic covered by programme-level indicators should not feel obligated to make up new ones or select project-level indicators. Whatever the applicants chose, however, must be part of the over-all logic of the project.

Indicators are a measurement tool to count/quantify the success of the project. They are vital for the understanding of the goals of the projects and are carefully graded during assessment. However, the number of indicators is not proportional with the quality of the project; more indicators do not mean a better project. The assessors will assess the overall achievements, the interconnectivity of elements, the intervention logic, and how the applicants envisage to reach the desired outcomes and the referent specific objectives of the project.

For more information on indicators, please consult with the **Indicator guide** - Annex IV of the Application package.

7. HORIZONTAL AND OTHER PRINCIPLES

Horizontal principles, in the context of EU funded work, are core principles of importance that cut across and have relevance to all areas of the work of EU funded projects.

All projects financed by the Programme must respect the horizontal principles of the Programme.

The Programme horizontal principles are aligned to Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) which stipulates that all actions must respect four horizontal principles:

- respect for **fundamental rights** and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁷
- **equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming** and the integration of a gender perspective
- appropriate steps to **prevent any discrimination** based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation
- **sustainable development** as set out in Article 11 TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "do no significant harm" principle

Moreover, to pursue the Programme priorities and objectives, all projects need to have a full respect of the Union environmental *acquis*.

While fully respecting the fundamental rights and ensuring compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, projects must respect three horizontal principles of the Programme: equal opportunity and non-discrimination, gender equality, and sustainable development including environmental protection. Furthermore, the project may decide to go beyond mere compliance and contribute to promotion and strengthening of any of the three Programme horizontal principles. In such cases, project applications will be assessed and, as explained in the section 8.2, an active positive contribution to any of the horizontal principles may be awarded up to three points.

In addition, the Programme's SEA and the DNSH report will be considered when determining the eligibility of projects, in particular where actions are carried out in Natura 2000 sites and where infrastructures are planned. More specifically, all selected projects need to show full respect for the EU Water Framework Directive⁸, the Natura 2000 sites, and both the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

Special consideration will be given to the DNSH principle in case of applications, which include infrastructure works, partial rebuilding of existing infrastructure or purchase of equipment.

It is crucial for the Programme that projects respect horizontal principles during all phases of the project cycle; from the project design and preparation to its implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. Therefore, the applicants are strongly encouraged to (re)familiarize themselves with the concepts related to horizontal principles and ensure compliance from the early stage of project planning.

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

7.1 Glossary of terms

Some of the concepts relevant to the Programme horizontal principles are briefly described here:

Accessibility - encompasses all policies, rules, instruments and measures devised to ensure access to the physical environment, infrastructure and services, information and communications as well as public life to the vulnerable groups on an equal basis with others.

Discrimination – unfavorable and unjustifiable treatment of people who belong to certain groups or possess certain features. **Direct discrimination** occurs when in a comparable situation one person is treated less favorably than another, on the basis of any of the prohibited grounds such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation. **Indirect discrimination** occurs when a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, has a worse effect on people from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Disadvantaged groups - categories of persons in a position of inequality in relation to most citizens because of identity differences, and/or which are facing social exclusion: rejection and marginalization, and/or denied or partial access to resources, goods, services, rights and all or some aspects of public life. The term *disadvantaged groups* is often used interchangeably with the term **vulnerable groups**.

“Do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle – actions which promotes and respects the following objectives: climate change mitigation; climate change adaptation; the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources; the circular economy including waste prevention and recycling; pollution prevention and control to air, water or land; the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Equality – eliminating disadvantage, discrimination, deprivation, and treating people fairly.

Equality between women and men - ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in similar situations.

Equal opportunities – measures devised to ensure the access of every person to the areas of public life (for example, to the workplace, to education, or to accessing goods and services, etc.).

Environmental Sustainability- responsibility to conserve natural resources and protect ecosystems to support health and wellbeing, now and in the future.

Fundamental rights - The key values of fundamental rights are the following: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Gender mainstreaming - involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.

Green Public Procurement or green purchasing- choosing environmentally friendly goods, services and works and thus contributing to sustainable consumption and production.

Social exclusion - the processes which deny (or obstruct) access to resources, goods or services and exercising their rights to certain groups of people because of their ethnicity, race, religion, gender,

sexual orientation, origin, age, disability and economic status. Social exclusion is more often than not closely related to various forms of discrimination.

Sustainable development and UN sustainable development goals - environmentally responsible development which satisfies the needs of a society without diminishing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The New European Bauhaus⁹ - a creative and interdisciplinary initiative that connects the European Green Deal¹⁰ to our living spaces and experiences.

Since the glossary contains succinct and condensed definitions of concepts, in addition to consulting the Glossary, applicants are invited to consult reference literature, EU and national legislation on each of the topics.

Horizontal principles must be respected (e.g. project proposal with negative impact will be rejected; please see below). Horizontal principles are to be assessed and the applicants are encouraged to prepare projects planning specific actions designed to advance and promote the values of the horizontal principles.

Applications for measures targeting vulnerable social groups and disadvantaged learners, for example children with disabilities, Roma and rural population should respect the principle of desegregation and ensure equal access for all to mainstream quality training and education.

7.2 “Do no significant harm” principle

DNSH will be assessed by YES/NO criteria whether the projects applications are in line with the types of actions assessed already as do not significantly harm the environment. If applications are in line with DNSH, they go for further evaluation, if they are not in line, the applications will be rejected.

In line with the DNSH¹¹ principle, the Programme considers harmful any project which:

- leads to significant greenhouse gas emissions
- leads to a worsening of the negative effects on the current or expected future climate or on people, nature or assets
- is detrimental to the good status or ecological potential of water bodies, including surface and underground waters
- leads to significant inefficiencies in the use of materials or in the direct or indirect use of natural resources, or leads to a significant increase in production, incineration or disposal waste, or if long-term disposal of waste can cause significant and long-term damage to the environment
- leads to a significant increase in emissions of pollutants in the atmosphere, water or soil

and significantly harms the good condition and resilience of ecosystems or harms the conservation status of habitats and species, including those of interest to the EU.

⁹ https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹¹ For more information, please see the [DNSH report](#)

7.3 Assessment of the contribution to the Horizontal Principles

All projects must respect **fundamental rights**, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The fundamental rights that are outlined in the EU Charter are considered intrinsic to the other three horizontal principles and, as such, not separately assessed.

Compliance with three horizontal principles of the Programme will be thoroughly evaluated during the assessment of the submitted applications.

Applicants shall describe in their applications how their project considers and complies with horizontal principles. In case the project will promote and strengthen any of three horizontal principles, applicants shall explain which specific actions within project activities are implemented in reference to them. The quality of specific actions will be evaluated and, if applicable, the points will be awarded during the assessment of applications. In case of project selection, specific actions relevant for horizontal principle(s) will be monitored by the Programme.

The main principles for assessment and for awarding the points for the contribution to the horizontal principles during the assessment and selection of applications for co-financing are summarized in the table below.

Under no circumstances, an application that might have a **negative** impact on any horizontal principle can be selected for funding. Such applications will be rejected.

Project proposals that respect horizontal principles, but do not actively contribute to any of them, are considered to have a **neutral**

impact. In such cases, applicants need to explain how their projects comply with each horizontal principle. Compliance means that horizontal principles are respected with no contribution to their advancement. Since there is no contribution, zero points are awarded for the horizontal principles. Neutral impact does not diminish chances of selection and such applications can be selected for financing.

| Contribution to horizontal principles | Assessment |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| NEGATIVE | Rejected application |
| NEUTRAL | 0 point |
| PROACTIVELY POSITIVE | 1-3 points |

The applications which demonstrate clear and unambiguous contribution to selected horizontal principle(s) are considered to have a **proactively positive** contribution. They will be awarded up to 3 (three) points during the assessment. The applicants need to prove that their project will have a positive impact on the selected horizontal principle. They are expected to explain measures, tools, and methods that will be taken to advance selected horizontal principle(s) and to define means of verification of the expected impact. Points for horizontal principles will be awarded only if the project description, planned activities and project measures clearly demonstrate that the project will advance the selected horizontal principle(s).

A proper understanding of horizontal principles is a basic precondition for their integration into the project proposals. Before deciding on the project in relation to horizontal principles, applicants are strongly advised to review available programme documents, reference literature, EU and national legislation on each of the horizontal principle topics.

NOTE: Contribution to horizontal principles will be closely monitored and verified during reporting in the course of the implementation of the project.

7.4 Possible examples of active contribution to horizontal principles

The Chapter 2 of the Interreg Programme of the Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary Serbia identified how each of the Programme Objectives contribute to the horizontal principles. Applicants are invited to consult respective parts of the IP as it may be helpful when integrating horizontal principles into project proposals. The Programme encourages applicants to consider options to promote and strengthen horizontal principles. In order to support applicants to design projects that will have active contribution to horizontal principles, potential areas of intervention are listed in this section, grouped around each horizontal principle. The below lists with examples are by no means exhaustive but it gives indication of potential actions. The applicants are encouraged to be creative and integrate horizontal principles in a way which fits the project context.

Equality between men and women

All projects are obliged to avoid discrimination based on any kind as well as based on gender. Respecting the gender equality principle means that women and men, and girls and boys, have the same possibilities to participate in actions supported by the Programme, and to take part in benefits resulting from these actions. This is considered a neutral impact having no active contribution to the gender equality principle.

In order to be appraised as a project which actively contributes to the gender equality principle, the applicants need to demonstrate that their project will make a positive change to gender inequality. Applicants are advised to describe the situation in which people are treated differently simply because they are male or female, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities. With reference to a baseline situation, applicants should explain which specific actions will ensure overcoming identified gender inequality.

Potential area of intervention:

- Equal access to, use of and benefit from all specific resources where gender inequalities were identified
- Women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and leadership
- Political empowerment of women
- Promotion of women/girls throughout actions in science, sport or other field where they are underrepresented
- Gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive budgeting
- Any other area of intervention with identified gender divide

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The purpose of the equality and non-discrimination principle is to prevent any discrimination based on gender¹², age, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or other such grounds. Prevention of discrimination should be ensured from the project outset and, if selected, during the project implementation, monitoring and reporting. Accessibility for persons with disabilities should be taken into account throughout the project life cycle. Ensuring equality and non-discrimination is a must and considered as having a neutral impact with no points awarded.

To be considered as a project with an active contribution to the equality and non-discrimination, applicants need to describe vulnerable groups, explain situation(s) in which they are at risk and show how the project will reduce or eliminate that risk.

¹² Gender is a social, psychological and cultural construct, not necessarily defined by biological sex. Discrimination of any gender should be prevented.

Potential area of intervention:

- Assessment of needs of target groups, identification of groups or individuals who need specific forms of protection and special measures of protection of those at risk
- Building capacities of vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities¹³, elderly people, children, disadvantaged women, unemployed, poor/homeless, ethnic minorities, etc.) to articulate their needs, and address them to a responsible and competent body(s)
- Humanitarian activism based on identified needs of target groups
- Bridging the age gap to promote social inclusion of older and/or young people by promoting intergenerational dialogue and solidarity
- Social inclusion through silver economy actions (all economic activities linked to older age groups), engagement of young people, people with disabilities or any other disadvantaged group through developing and strengthening skills, knowledge, tools and other resources needed

Sustainable development including Environmental Sustainability

The Programme is committed to the responsibility to conserve natural resources and protect ecosystems to support health and wellbeing, now and in the future. All projects need to fully respect the Union environmental *acquis* and national legislation on environmental matters. Full respect is necessary regarding legal requirements of the Natura 2000 network¹⁴, the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats and Birds Directives. They should take into account the UN sustainable Development Goals¹⁵, the Paris Agreement¹⁶ and the “do no significant harm” principle.

Respecting above legal requirements and the DNSH principle as well as green public procurement means having a neutral impact and no points are awarded. To have an active contribution to the sustainable development principle, projects should not only respect this principle but also contribute its promotion and realisation. Applicants are expected to explain how their project contributes to the environmental sustainability when compared to the baseline situation.

Potential area of intervention:

- Environment and climate change awareness campaigns for individual’s and group’s behavioural change
- Awareness raising as a part of the adaptation process to manage the impacts of climate change, enhance adaptive capacity, and reduce overall vulnerability
- Establishment and/or sustainable maintenance of green public spaces within urban environment including community gardens
- Waste recycling which goes beyond mere waste collection and separation
- Energy efficiency including promotion and use of renewable energy sources
- Voluntary, non-profit community actions to reduce pollution and protect the environment
- Any other actions resulting in improved environmental sustainability

¹³ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines persons with disabilities as ‘those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

¹⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

¹⁶ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

7.5 Climate change resilience check

In line with the Article 22 (4) of the Interreg Regulation, in selecting projects, the monitoring committee shall ensure that, for investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, an assessment of expected impacts of climate change is carried out based on the above mentioned Technical guidelines published by the European Commission.

The mandatory **climate change resilience assessment** aims to identify projects that may have significant greenhouse gas emissions or are highly exposed to climate change. It will also help project planners to design additional measures into their project to ensure that the infrastructure created will continue to operate cost-effectively and fit for purpose in the long term, by taking into account the likely impacts of climate change and the risks they pose.

Applicants that have an infrastructure component with an expected lifespan of at least five years are therefore required to carry out a simplified Climate Change Resilience Check based on the *Resilience test* (Annex III of the application package). At the same time, if the resilience test identifies an aspect meaning a high risk, at least one **risk mitigation activity** from the set of good practices listed the Guiding material must be **included in the project** to address the issue.

In this regard, concerned applicants have to present the result of their analysis in the ***Resilience test***. It will be checked during the quality assessment. The Annex III shall be submitted in its full length, together with the guiding material. Please note that the result of the accomplished simplified check shall be reflected in *Table 4 “Summary table of the results of the simplified climate change resilience assessment”*.

7.6 Infringement

According to Article 22(4)i) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (Interreg Regulation) · The Programme shall ensure that selected operations are not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations. Those projects financing such activities falling under this Article cannot receive EU financing.

8. SOURCES OF FUNDING

On project level, **the European Union co-financing rate is maximum 85%** of the total eligible expenditure. **The remaining amount (as a general rule 15%) shall be financed from national sources** (state contribution and/or own contribution of applicants), which may differ in case of Hungary and Serbia.

In case of **partners from Hungary**, as a general rule, **5% of total eligible cost** of the respective project part must be provided by the applicant **as own contribution**, and the remaining **10% will be provided by the Hungarian state budget**. In case the partner is a central state owned budgetary organization, the own contribution will be covered by the Hungarian State, meaning that as a general rule, 15 % of the total eligible costs will be provided from the Hungarian state budget.

In case of **partners from Serbia**, as a general rule, **15% of total eligible cost** of the respective project part must be provided by the applicant **as own contribution**.

NOTE:

The ratio of own contribution is calculated based on the eligible costs of the given partner's budget, that is, the given project part.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR APPLICANTS:

The final applicable sources of funding of the respective project part will depend on the classification of applicants determined by the managing authority based on legal classifications!

The ratio of the state contribution as well as the own contribution of the respective applicant depends on the type of organisation applying for the Programme and also on the applicable **State aid rules** (on the latter please consult Chapter 9 of the present Guidelines).

In Hungary, the national state contribution will be provided based on national legislation.

9. STATE AID

9.1 The notion of state aid

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

In practical terms, state aid applies when all five criteria listed below are met:

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

Apart from compliance with the aid specific rules, state aid can be granted in consideration of the Chapter I-II of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty¹⁷ (hereinafter: GBER) and the Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831¹⁸ (hereinafter referred to as: **“De Minimis Regulation”**). Comprehensive information on state aid can be found on the [DG Competition website of the European Commission](#), where also a guideline on the notion of state aid is available¹⁹. Also relevant national or regional authorities may be consulted to obtain more specific information on rules and limitations concerning state aid.

9.2 State Aid Assessment and Contractual Conditions

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

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

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

- a) **No state aid relevance.** In this case, no contractual conditions are set on state aid.

¹⁷ [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty Text with EEA relevance](#)

¹⁸ [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid Text with EEA relevance](#)

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/competition-policy/state-aid/legislation/notion-aid_en

- b) **Risk of state aid that can be removed.** In this case, the MC may approve the project with certain conditions that are included in the subsidy contract in order to eliminate the state aid risks (e.g. wide dissemination, also to competitors, of certain project outputs).
- c) **Direct state aid granted to one or more partners.** In this case, the entire budget allocated to the activity/activities under state aid/de minimis incidence carried out by the concerned partner, that is, the direct beneficiary of the project.
- d) **Indirect state aid granted to third parties** outside the project partnership. The direct beneficiary of the Programme does not gain advantage. The partner confers the advantage on the third party, therefore the state aid evaluation must be carried out in the relation between the direct beneficiary and the final beneficiary. A contractual condition setting a threshold to the aid granted to third parties is set.

During the implementation of the project, the MA/JS verifies that the concerned partners fulfil contractual conditions on state aid.

Any amendment to the project might be restricted if its activities are assessed as state aid relevant. Furthermore, additional contractual conditions on state aid may be given to projects in case of project amendments assessed as state aid relevant.

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

Partners shall include information on applications for additional public co-financing in the budget co-financing section of the application form.

9.3 Common Provisions

1. Scope

This Call for proposal does not apply to:

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

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

2. Incentive effect

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

3. Cumulation

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

4. Aid intensity

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

5. Miscellaneous

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

- 3) The grantor must provide information on each individual aid award exceeding EUR 100 000 or for beneficiaries active in primary agricultural production or in the fishery and aquaculture sector on each individual aid award exceeding EUR 10 000.

9.4 Specific provisions for different categories of aid

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

- 1) In case of Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation projects covered by Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 the aid intensity shall not exceed the maximum co-financing rate provided for in Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.
- 2) To the extent that they are linked to the cooperation project, the following costs, which shall have the meaning ascribed to them in Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, shall be eligible costs:
 - a) staff costs;
 - b) office and administrative costs;
 - c) travel and accommodation costs;
 - d) external expertise and services costs;
 - e) equipment costs;
 - f) costs for infrastructure and works.
- 3) Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project cannot exceed EUR 2 million per undertaking, per project.

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

- 1) In case of Aid to undertakings for their participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects covered by Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 the total amount of aid granted to an undertaking per project shall not exceed EUR 22 000.

3. Aid for culture and heritage conservation

- 1) Aid for culture and heritage conservation may take the form of:
 - a) investment aid, including aid for the construction or upgrade of culture infrastructure;
 - b) operating aid.
- 2) The aid shall be granted for the following cultural purposes and activities:
 - a) museums, archives, libraries, artistic and cultural centres or spaces, theatres, cinemas, opera houses, concert halls, other live performance organisations, film heritage institutions and other similar artistic and cultural infrastructures, organisations and institutions;
 - b) tangible heritage including all forms of movable or immovable cultural heritage and archaeological sites, monuments, historical sites and buildings; natural heritage linked to cultural heritage or if formally recognized as cultural or natural heritage by the competent public authorities of an EU Member State;
 - c) intangible heritage in any form, including folklorist customs and crafts;
 - d) art or cultural events and performances, festivals, exhibitions and other similar cultural activities;
 - e) cultural and artistic education activities as well as promotion of the understanding of the importance of protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions through educational and greater public awareness programs, including with the use of new technologies;

- f) writing, editing, production, distribution, digitisation and publishing of music and literature, including translations.

For the activities defined in paragraph 2(f), the maximum aid amount shall not exceed either the difference between the eligible costs and the project's discounted revenues or the 70 % of the eligible costs. The revenues shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante or through a clawback mechanism. The eligible costs shall be the costs for publishing of music and literature, including the authors' fees (copyright costs), translators' fees, editors' fees, other editorial costs (proofreading, correcting, reviewing), layout and pre-press costs and printing or e-publication costs.

- 3) For investment aid, the eligible costs shall be the investment costs in tangible and intangible assets, including:
 - a) costs for the construction, upgrade, acquisition, conservation or improvement of infrastructure, if at least 80 % of either the time or the space capacity per year is used for cultural purposes;
 - b) costs for the acquisition, including leasing, transfer of possession or physical relocation of cultural heritage;
 - c) costs for safeguarding, preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including extra costs for storage under appropriate conditions, special tools, materials and costs for documentation, research, digitalisation and publication;
 - d) costs for improving the accessibility of cultural heritage to the public, including costs for digitisation and other new technologies, costs to improve accessibility for persons with special needs (in particular, ramps and lifts for disabled persons, braille indications and hands-on exhibits in museums) and for promoting cultural diversity with respect to presentations, programmes and visitors;
 - e) costs for cultural projects and activities, cooperation and exchange programmes and grants including costs for selection procedures, costs for promotion and costs incurred directly as a result of the project;
- 4) In case of the investment aid, the aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. The operator of the infrastructure is allowed to keep a reasonable profit over the relevant period. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2,2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.

Investment aid for culture and heritage conservation cannot exceed EUR 165 million per project.

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

- c) costs of the improvement of public access to the cultural institution or heritage sites and activities including costs of digitisation and of use of new technologies as well as costs of improving accessibility for persons with disabilities;
 - d) operating costs directly relating to the cultural project or activity, such as rent or lease of real estate and cultural venues, travel expenses, materials and supplies directly related to the cultural project or activity, architectural structures for exhibitions and stage sets, loan, lease and depreciation of tools, software and equipment, costs for access rights to copyright works and other related intellectual property rights protected contents, costs for promotion and costs incurred directly as a result of the project or activity; depreciation charges and the costs of financing are only eligible if they have not been covered by investment aid;
 - e) costs for personnel working for the cultural institution or heritage site or for a project;
 - f) costs for advisory and support services provided by outside consultants and service providers, incurred directly as a result of the project.
- 6) In the case of the operating aid, the aid amount shall not exceed what is necessary to cover the operating losses and a reasonable profit over the relevant period. This shall be ensured ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2,2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs. Operating aid for culture and heritage conservation cannot exceed EUR 82,5 million per undertaking per year.
- 7) Aid cannot be granted to press and magazines, whether they are published in print or electronically.

4. Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures

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

- 8) In case of the investment aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructure, the aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2,2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.
- 9) Investment aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures cannot exceed EUR 33 million or the total costs of the project cannot exceed EUR 110 million.
- 10) For operating aid for sport infrastructure the eligible costs shall be the operating costs of the provision of services by the infrastructure. Those operating costs include costs such as personnel costs, materials, contracted services, communications, energy, maintenance, rent, administration, etc., but exclude depreciation charges and the costs of financing if these have been covered by investment aid.
- 11) In case of the operating aid for sport infrastructure, the aid amount shall not exceed the operating losses over the relevant period. This shall be ensured ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism. Alternatively, for aid not exceeding EUR 2,2 million, the maximum amount of aid may be set at 80 % of eligible costs.
- 12) Operating aid for sport infrastructure cannot exceed EUR 2,2 million per infrastructure per year.

5. Investment aid for local infrastructures

- 1) Investment aid for local infrastructures finances the construction or upgrade of local infrastructures which concerns infrastructure that contribute at a local level to improving the business and consumer environment and modernising and developing the industrial base. Investment aid for local infrastructures shall not apply to aid for infrastructures that is covered by other sections of Chapter III of GBER with the exception of Section 1 - Investment aid for local infrastructures shall also not apply to airport infrastructure and port infrastructure.
- 2) The infrastructure shall be made available to interested users on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis. The price charged for the use or the sale of the infrastructure shall correspond to market price.
- 3) Any concession or other entrustment to a third party to operate the infrastructure shall be assigned on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis, having due regard to the applicable procurement rules.
- 4) The eligible costs shall be the investment costs in tangible and intangible assets.
- 5) The aid amount shall not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating profit of the investment. The operating profit shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a claw-back mechanism.
- 6) Dedicated infrastructure shall not be exempted.
- 7) Investment aid for local infrastructures cannot exceed EUR 11 million or the total costs exceeding EUR 22 million for the same infrastructure.

De Minimis Aid

- 1) The gross grant equivalent²⁰ of any de minimis aid granted on the basis of the De Minimis Regulation to any single undertaking²¹ shall not exceed EUR 300 000 over any period of three years per Member State taking into account Article 3 paragraph 8 and 9 of the De Minimis

²⁰ The gross grant equivalent can be calculated on the basis of Article 4 of the Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831.

²¹ Undertakings within the meaning of Article 2 Section 2 of the De Minimis Regulation are considered to be one and the same undertaking.

- Regulation, which contain additional provisions for mergers, acquisitions and undertakings splitting into two or more separate undertakings.
- 2) Aid shall not be granted to undertakings active in the sectors listed in Article 1 paragraph 1 of the De Minimis Regulation, taking into account Article 1 paragraph 2, which contains additional provisions for undertakings active in sectors falling within the scope of the De Minimis Regulation and sectors excluded from the scope of the De Minimis Regulation as well.
 - 3) De minimis aid may be cumulated with de minimis aid granted on the basis of other de minimis Regulations up to EUR 300,000 with the exception of aid granted on the basis of Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2832.
 - 4) De minimis aid may be cumulated with State aid in relation to the same eligible costs or with State aid for the same risk finance measure, if such cumulation would not exceed the highest relevant aid intensity or aid amount defined in a block exemption regulation or a decision adopted by the European Commission.
 - 5) The beneficiary must submit a declaration in accordance with Article 7 paragraph 4 of the De Minimis Regulation about any other de minimis aid received to which the De Minimis Regulation or any other de minimis Regulations apply over any period of 3 years.
 - 6) With a direct reference to the De Minimis Regulation the aid grantor shall inform the beneficiary by issuing a certificate stating the amount of the aid expressed in gross grant equivalent and its de minimis character, in accordance with Article 7 paragraph 4 of the De Minimis Regulation.
 - 7) Aid payable in several instalments shall be discounted to its value at the moment it is granted. The interest rate to be used for discounting purposes shall be the discount rate applicable at the time the aid is granted.
 - 8) The records regarding information on de minimis aid must be kept for 10 years from the date on which the aid was granted. On request by the European Commission information shall be provided within 20 working days on aid granted under the De Minimis Regulation.

9.5 Classification of the supported activities in terms of state aid

- 1) The aid measures according to the Objective 1.1. (Climate change adaptation, risk prevention) and Objective 1.2 (Biodiversity and reduced pollution) do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (“TFEU”) Article 107 (1), as long as the supported activities affect the exercise of public powers according to the Point 17 of the Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2016/C 262/01) (“Commission Notice”), therefore the supported activities do not qualify as economic activities within the meaning of the EU competition law.

Within the meaning of the Point 17 of the Commission Notice TFEU Article 107(1) does not apply where the State acts ‘by exercising public power’ or where public entities act ‘in their capacity as public authorities’. An entity may be deemed to act by exercising public power where the activity in question forms part of the essential functions of the State or is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject. Generally speaking, unless the Member State concerned has decided to introduce market mechanisms, activities that intrinsically form part of the prerogatives of official authority and are performed by the State do not constitute economic activities.

Generally, the aid measures according to the Objective 1.1. (Climate change adaptation, risk prevention) and Objective 1.2 (Biodiversity and reduced pollution) also do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), since the supported activities do not qualify as economic activities within the meaning of the EU competition law.

- 2) In relation to the Objective 2.1 (Education and lifelong learning) as long as the beneficiaries are only reimbursed for justified expenses and costs that are not reimbursable from elsewhere, the beneficiaries do not thereby receive an economic advantage within the meaning of the Point 66 of the Commission Notice.

In this case the aid measures according to the Objective 2.1 (Education and lifelong learning) do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), since the beneficiary does not receive an economic advantage that cannot be obtained in the market.

- 3) The aid measures according to the Objective 2.2. (Culture and tourism) do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), because the supported activities related to culture and the preservation of cultural heritage within the meaning of the Point 34 of the Commission Notice can be organized in a non-commercial way, so in some cases these activities are not of an economic nature.

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

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

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

- 4) In relation to the Objective 3.1 (Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation) as long as the beneficiaries are only reimbursed for justified expenses and costs that are not reimbursable from elsewhere, the beneficiaries do not thereby receive an economic advantage within the meaning of the Point 66 of the Commission Notice.

The aid measures according to the Objective 3.1 (Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation) do not qualify as state aid within the meaning of the TFEU Article 107 (1), since the beneficiaries do not receive an economic advantage that cannot be obtained in the market.

As long as the aid measures according to the Objective 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1 are considered State aid, the aid measures are granted only in line with the provisions of the 241/2023 (VI. 20.) Government Decree on the implementation of the cross-border Interreg programmes 2021-2027 (hereinafter referred to as: "241/2023 Government Decree").

| Supported activities | Reference to the legal ground | Aid category |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Objective 1.1: Climate change adaptation, risk prevention (SO 2.4) | Government Decree 75. § Point 1. | GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 1.) GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 2.) GBER 56 Investment aid for local infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 5.) de minimis aid (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 6.) |
| Objective 1.2: Biodiversity and reduced pollution (SO 2.7) | Government Decree 75. § Point 2. | GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 1.) GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 2.) GBER 53 Aid for culture and heritage conservation (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 3.) de minimis aid (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 6.) |
| Objective 2.1: Education and lifelong learning (SO 4.2) | Government Decree 75. § Point 3. | GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 1.) GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 2.) GBER 56 Investment aid for local infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 5.) de minimis aid (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 6.) |
| Objective 2.2: Culture and tourism (SO 4.6) | Government Decree 75. § Point 4. | GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 1.) GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 2.) GBER 53 Aid for culture and heritage conservation (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 3.) GBER 55 Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 4.) GBER 56 Investment aid for local infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 5.) de minimis aid (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 6.) |
| Objective 3.1: Harmonious neighbourly relations through cooperation (ISO1) | Government Decree 75. § Point 6. | GBER 20 Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation project (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 1.) GBER 20a Limited amounts of aid to undertakings for participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 2.) GBER 53 Aid for culture and heritage conservation (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 3.) GBER 55 Aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 4.) GBER 56 Investment aid for local infrastructures (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 5.) de minimis aid (241/2023 Government Decree Article 78 Point 6.) |

10. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

The Programme is to be implemented through shared management under the responsibility of a single managing authority, a certifying authority and an audit authority. The partner countries regulate their relations and responsibilities in a Memorandum of Understanding. The management structure of the Programme is the following:

- **European Commission:** Donor of the EU contribution.
- **Monitoring Committee (MC):** supervises and monitors the programme implementation, responsible for project selection. Its operations are regulated by the Rules of Procedures of the MC.
- **Managing authority (MA):** bears the overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the Programme towards the European Commission. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary acts as the Managing authority.
- **Body carrying out the accounting function - Certifying Authority (CA):** the main task of the CA is drawing up certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment and submitting them to the European Commission. The Hungarian State Treasury acts as the Certifying Authority.
- **Audit authority (AA):** body functionally independent from the managing authority, national authorities and the certifying authority, that is responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system and the expenditure declared to the EC by means of audits on projects. The work of the AA is assisted by the Group of Auditors. The Directorate General for Audit of European Funds in Hungary acts as the Audit Authority.
- **Joint secretariat (JS):** Set up within Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit Limited Liability Company (hereinafter referred to as SZPO) in Budapest with member(s) in the SZPO Regional Office in Szeged, the JS assists the MA, CA, AA, the MC and the National Authorities in carrying out their respective duties. The JS keeps daily contact with potential applicants and lead partners of contracted projects. The JS has its **JS Antenna (JSA)** in Subotica, which fulfils its tasks in close cooperation with the JS. The JS Antenna is particularly responsible for supporting efficient project development on both sides of the border, by giving direct assistance to potential applicants. Similarly to JS members, the JS Antenna bears also Programme Manager responsibilities.
- **National authorities (NAs):** Beside the above-mentioned structures, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and the Ministry for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia bear responsibility – among others – for setting up the control system in order to verify the expenditures at national level and for ensuring national state co-financing (if applicable). Moreover, NAs are responsible for investigation of suspicion of irregularities, declaration of irregularities and handling of irregularities (and handling of the recovery procedure of national state co-financing part of the irregularities, if applicable).
- **Control bodies:** Set up in SZPO in Hungary with its territorial offices in Szeged and Békéscsaba and within the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia, the Control Bodies are responsible for verifying expenditures at the national level in accordance with EU and national rules.

11. SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATIONS

11.1 Project development assistance

Cooperation among the partners within the project is an essential component of projects financed by the Programme. Cooperation between cross-border partners will not only be important during the implementation phase, but also in the phase of joint planning of project activities. **The amount and the quality of cooperation between partners is one of the key criteria for selecting applications.**

While searching for partners, special attention should be paid to:

- Joint interests and objectives,
- Type of the project which applicants are developing, bearing in mind the targeted activities of the present Call
- Partner's eligibility,
- Partner's financial and organisational capability to implement their respective project parts,
- Professional qualifications of partners regarding the project activities.

Potential partners are listed in Chapter 1 (please see corresponding objective) of the present Guidelines helping the orientation, although the list of potential partners is not exhaustive.

11.2 Available information and contacts related to the Call for Proposals

The complete Application package and all relevant information for the present Call for Proposals are available on the Programme's official web site: <http://www.hungary-serbia.eu>

In the application period, applicants from both sides of the border may ask for information, guidance and clarification from the designated contact persons of the JS and the JS Antenna **by phone or via e-mail**. **Personal consultations are provided only at pre-arranged appointments at the given office hours.**

JOINT SECRETARIAT

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Institution: | Joint secretariat of the Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary-Serbia |
| Address: | Széchenyi Programme Office Limited Liability Company H-1053 Budapest, Szép utca 2., 4.em |
| E-mail: | info@hungary-serbia.eu |
| Office hours: | For personal consultation: |
| Monday and Wednesday | (9.00 – 12.00 and 13.30-16.00) |
| We can accept phone calls: | |
| Monday to Thursday | (9.00 – 16.00) |
| and on Fridays | (9.00 – 14.00) |

Contact persons:

Ms Andrea Szeti-Furka (in Budapest) tel: +36 1 457 55 96 (ENG / HU)
Ms Olivera Tanacković (in Budapest) tel: +36 1 457 55 58 (ENG / SRB)
Mr Halász János (in Budapest) tel: +36 1 457 55 69 (ENG / HU)
+36 62 549 372

Pre-arranged personal consultations are also possible in Szeged on Wednesdays.

JS ANTENNA IN SERBIA (JSA)

Institution: JS Antenna of the Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary-Serbia
Address: Subotica, Matije Korvina 17 (HKPC Galleria, 1 floor)
Phone: +381 (0) 24 55 97 97

Contact persons:

Mr Relja Burzan e-mail: relja.burzan@mei.gov.rs (ENG / SRB)
Mr Dejan Vujinović e-mail: dejan.vujinovic@mei.gov.rs (ENG / HU / SRB)

NOTE: Questions may be asked over the phone, however if you prefer to receive a written answer, questions should be put in writing (e-mail) but not later than 7 calendar days before the deadline of submission.

11.3 Approval of data management / Privacy policy

The potential partners, by submitting the application of the present Call for Proposals, acknowledge that the Data Controllers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade acting as Managing Authority and Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC hosting the Joint Secretariat) will manage all the personal data included in the Application phase in line with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation).

11.4 Supporting documents

11.4.1 General requirements

Applications must be submitted electronically via INTERREG+ IT system. When you start filling in the application form, please consult the User Manual of the INTERREG+ Application Module on: <http://www.hungary-serbia.eu>

The language of application forms is English. Application forms in languages other than English will be rejected!

Supporting documents have to be scanned and uploaded also via INTERREG+ IT system.

The original documents have to be retained by the lead partner/partner at its premises. The documents might be a subject of a monitoring visit, or later on on-the-spot check.

The requested supporting documents must be scanned originals meaning that the original documents have to be issued by the respective authority or certified by a public notary /court, or certified by the legally authorised representative of the respective applicant meaning they have to be signed, stamped and dated by the person(s) authorised in the establishing document and/or in the specimen of signature to sign in the name of the applicant organisation!

The scanned version of uploaded documents can be full-colour or black/white and should be saved and uploaded as a pdf file (or other common format like .jpg, .png, .tif, etc). Each uploaded scanned document must be filled in with correct data, openable, legible and must contain all pages and identifiable (legible) stamp and signature. The signature and date on the scanned and uploaded documents shall be legible when opening the given document.

11.4.2 List of documents to be submitted

The following documents shall be prepared and uploaded to the INTERREG+ IT system:

! APPLICATION PHASE !

Supporting documents – application phase

1. **Application Form** – compulsory to be filled in electronically via INTERREG+ IT system according to the instructions of the present Guidelines and the separate User Manual of the INTERREG+ Application Module.
2. **Declaration by the applicants** (Annex I of the Application package) – compulsory to fill in separate declarations properly by all applicants (by each potential partner organization of the partnership) and upload it to INTERREG+ IT system. The applicants must fill in the data about their organization, but the content and provisions of the Declaration by the applicant cannot be altered in any way.
3. **De minimis declaration by the applicants** (Annex II of the Application package) – compulsory to fill in separate declarations properly by all applicants (by each potential partner organization of the partnership) and upload it in INTERREG+ IT system. The applicants must fill in the data about their organization, but the content and provisions of the Declaration by the applicant cannot be altered in any way.
4. **Specimen of signature²² of the legally authorised representative(s) of all applicants** - specimen of signature of all persons (signing e.g. the declarations by the applicant) as legally authorised representatives of the respective organisation.
5. **Curriculum Vitae (CV)** of staff and project team members - to be provided for all personnel involved in the implementation (i.e. project management staff as well as team members) employed by the potential partners indicating their position in the project. Each future team member must sign his/her CV.

NOTE! CVs of all personnel need to be submitted, regardless of the chosen type of reimbursement of staff costs (real cost or flat rate).

²² The legal representative of the applicant i.e. the person(s) with the right of representation and signature is determined by the establishing document of every organisation, and the **specimen of their signature** is kept in a legally prescribed way, depending on the legal status of the organisation. The original specimen – or a copy certified by a public notary – must be submitted alongside with the application form.

In the case the organisation does not have such a document issued by the relevant institution, it should provide a statement in original language – signed, stamped and dated by its legally authorised representative declaring that the signature at the end of the statement belongs to the ‘legally authorised representative’ and that ‘the same signature will be used on all official documents in the course of project implementation’. This very statement **must be certified by a public notary**. The signatory person (and the signature itself) has to be the same on the AF and on other statements that are signed by the respective applicant.

- 6. Other supporting material for complex budget procurements** – The description of all budget items must be thorough, informative and understandable. If the applicant can't sufficiently explain the budget item in the cell of the budget description, additional supporting material is to be submitted. The programme requires the following:

| <i>Budget line number(s)</i> | <i>Budget item</i> | <i>Possible supporting material</i> |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 4.1, 4.2 | technical plan, study, research, software production | content summary or terms of reference |
| 4.3 | camps, lectures, trainings, courses | detailed programme and course outline |
| 5.1, 5.2 | equipment - especially complex equipment | technical specification |
| any | any other complex budget item | any type of summary |

The forms are not defined by the programme. The additional documents serve the purpose to provide more detailed information on the given service or equipment to the assessors. If some of the budget items do not have sufficient information for the assessment - the programme will ask for additional supporting materials.

Further supporting documentation – in case of infrastructural investments/works component – application phase

7. Construction plans, descriptions

– *If building permit is required:* Construction plan and technical description submitted for the building permit in PDF format AND in an engineering software compatible format (protected version). The document proving that the documentation is submitted for the attainment of the permit must be attached.

– *If the planned works activity does not require a building permit:* technical description and diagrammatical plan and the general plan of each building site (one copy per plan) must be submitted.

- 8. Photo documentation – Photos taken from the scene of the works activities (taken from all corners for each item for which land or building registration certificates are submitted) in its current state – in separate folders in JPG or PDF format.**

- 9. Detailed cost estimation of works** – Detailed cost estimation/price quotation by type of work issued by a designer indicating unit prices and the costs of materials and works / Detailed price quotation issued by an actor of the market, indicating unit prices and the costs of materials and works.

- 10. Filled in Resilience test** (Annex III of the Application package) – For those applicants that have an infrastructure component planned with an expected lifespan of at least five years, it is obligatory to prove that they have concluded the resilience test. The Annex III shall be submitted in its full length, together with the guiding material. Please note that *Table 4 “Summary table of the results of the simplified climate change resilience assessment”* must be filled in, in addition to the declaration on chapter 6 of the Resilience test.

11. Documents as per Appendix B – In case a project has infrastructural component, the special stipulations of **Appendix B** must be respected. Based on the appendix, if relevant, the following document(s) must be submitted:

- written consent of the joint proprietors containing their agreement with the project implementation (see Appendix B point 2);
- pre-contract to be attached to the application ruling the implementation and the ownership of the investment (see Appendix B point 3a);
- rental contract with the owner's declaration on agreeing with the submission of the application and with its operation (see Appendix B point 3b);
- contract on trusteeship or any other document proving the trusteeship legal relation (see Appendix B point 3c);
- pre-contract on the purchase of property, or the appropriation plan concerning the properties affected by the investment (see Appendix B point 4).

! CONTRACTING PHASE !

Supporting documentation necessary for contracting

NOTE: The below list of documents is only for information purposes and shall be submitted only in case the application is selected for financing during the verification of eligibility as part of the contracting procedure. Applications selected for financing will receive detailed instructions regarding the **documents to be submitted** in the **notification letter** on the award of subsidy.

- **Extracts from register** (or equivalent document) – by all applicants (by each potential partner organization of the partnership)
- **Establishing documents / Statutes**, are requested to prove eligibility of all partners receiving financial support before contracting.
- **Original, signed Partnership Agreement**, one of the most important contracting documents is the Partnership Agreement between all partners of the project.
- In case of national/regional organisations established outside of the Programme area, but having a branch office (which is not a legal entity) in the Programme area, the **proof of at least one year of operation of the branch office in the Programme area**.
- **Bank statement proving the establishment of a separate EUR bank account** by the lead partner for the purposes of the project.
- **Certifications on the payment of contributions and taxes.**
- **Declaration of no-profit principle, if relevant.**
- If relevant, **any additional documents** requested by the MC relating to the conditions of approval of the project.

Supporting documentation necessary for contracting – in case of infrastructural investments/works component

- Proof of status of ownership (Land or building registration certificates)
- Legally binding building permit OR Documents certifying the exemption of the construction from building permit
- Legally binding environmental permit and environmental impact assessment OR Documents certifying the exemption from environmental assessment / attainment of environmental permit –
- Supporting letter from the relevant authority (if applicable; for clarifying issues related to national legislation), identified by the MC based on the assessment.

11.5 Deadline for the submission of Applications and the limit of Applications

The **Applications for SSP and RSP** must be submitted online via the Application Module of INTERREG+ IT system by **15 December 2025, 15:00 local time (Central European Time)**. Applications submitted after the given deadline will be considered formally non-compliant and will not be considered further.

Please, note that 1 applicant can be involved in maximum 3 applications. If an applicant is involved in 4 or more applications, the 4th application and all subsequent ones by time of submission shall be considered ineligible and will be considered formally non-compliant.

12. ASSESSMENT, SELECTION, CONTRACTING

12.1 Pre-assessment stage

The joint secretariat is responsible for the assessment process. Based on the number of received applications, the JS proposes the schedule of the assessment process and forwards it to the MA for information.

Every application receives an individual registry number that will be used throughout the assessment process as a reference number. The format of the registry number is specified by INTERREG+ IT system and ensures precise identification of each application.

12.2 Assessment process

The selection procedure consists of the following main stages:

- **Formal assessment** – a simplified formal and eligibility administrative check
- **Quality assessment** - assessment of the quality of the applications
- **Decision of the MC**
- **Notification of the applicants** (including the request of documents necessary for the verification of the eligibility and the preparation of the Subsidy Contract)

The assessment process is carried out in the INTERREG+ IT system, i.e. all the evaluation grids are filled in the system. In addition, completions shall be submitted also via the INTERREG+ IT system, and after finalisation of the evaluation process all grids are **stored also electronically in INTERREG+**.

12.2.1 Formal assessment

The simplified formal and eligibility administrative check is carried out before the assessment of the quality of the applications based on **Formal assessment grid** (Appendix C of this document). As a general rule the formal assessment of the applications starts after the deadline for submission expires. Generally, the staff of the JS or JS Antenna does the formal assessment – they are the **formal assessors** of applications.

Only those applications, which met the submission deadline are subject to the formal assessment.

The formal assessment is made in order to ensure that:

- The applicant is eligible (see Chapter 2 of the present Guidelines)
- The supporting documents have been submitted.
- Other administrative requirements were met.

Each application is evaluated by two formal assessors to ensure the four-eye principle. The formal assessors check the applications against the grid and mark 'Yes' or 'No' next to each criterion.

If the Application is not complete, i.e. any of the criteria listed in the formal evaluation grid are not satisfied, the lead partner is invited to submit²³ a completion/clarification within maximum 10 calendar days from the date of receipt of the official notification. The request for formal completion of the application will be sent out from INTERREG+ IT system by e-mail and the completion shall be carried out by the applicants in the INTERREG+ IT system. After the completion/clarification, the JS finalizes the formal assessment grid.

- If after the completion/clarification the Application is still not compliant with any of the formal criteria listed in the formal assessment grid, the application will be rejected and will not be subject to further evaluation,
- If the application meets all the formal assessment criteria, the formal assessors recommend it for quality assessment, and it proceeds to the quality assessment phase.

The JS, on behalf of the MA, informs the potential lead partners via e-mail, informing them whether their application was submitted within the deadline, whether it satisfied the formal assessment criteria and, as a consequence, whether it proceeds to the quality assessment.

12.2.2 Quality assessment

The assessment of the quality of the applications (Quality assessment) is carried out against the set of criteria listed in the **Quality assessment grid** (Appendix D of this document).

The quality assessment grid contains the following aspects of evaluation:

- *Financial and operational capacity of the partnership*: applicants must have stable and sufficient resources for the implementation of the project as well as the necessary professional competencies and qualifications to complete the proposed activities. The partnership must be able to perform the proposed activities; the distribution of tasks, activities and budget must be well balanced between the partners; it should be described how the partnership improves the chances for the project's success.
- *Relevance, project content and CBC effect*: The application must clearly contribute to the Programme's objectives; there must be a link between the project's indicators and the Programme's results, as well as between the project's results and the Programme's result indicator. Applicants must elaborate the importance of the cross-border effect for the chosen topic as well as for the target groups, Programme area and the partners. In addition, the chosen topic must be justified clearly, must be relevant and realistic; the proposed activities should be beneficial for the target groups, the Programme area and the partners. Project content should be in line also with macro-regional/national/regional/county level policies, strategies and international plans where relevant.
- *Methodology (Work plan)*: there should be a clear connection between the proposed activities and overall project objective; all proposed activities should lead to the project's objective; activities must be practical and achievable in the proposed timeframe; the project indicators should be realistic, achievable and SMART; potential risks should be identified and probable solutions suggested. The active contribution to horizontal principles is also examined under this

⁹ Completions will be required to be submitted through the INTERREG+ IT system.

criterion. The communication is vital part of the content of the project – the communication activities of the proposal must contribute to the Programme's visibility, promotion of the horizontal principles.

- *Budget and sustainability*: the project idea should lead to the project's sustainability; the project's results should be sustainable; project activities must be environmentally friendly, and project's results must be environmentally sustainable. The proposed expenditures must be necessary, realistic and cost effective.

Based on the aspects of the evaluation the quality assessment grid is divided into sections and subsections according to the different aspects of the evaluation. The maximum score that can be obtained is 100 points, distributed between the main sections as follows:

| Section | Maximum score | Minimum score |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| Financial and operational capacity of the partnership | 17 | 8 |
| Relevance, project content and CBC effect | 31 | 15 |
| Methodology (Work plan) | 31 | 10 |
| Budget, sustainability | 21 | 7 |
| Total: 100 | | Min. to pass: 50 |

The quality assessment of the applications will be performed by quality assessors. The assessors involved in the evaluation should possess adequate knowledge in the fields and aspects of the evaluation, so that the Programme bodies can rely on their assessment when selecting applications for financing.

During the evaluation, assessors assign points to each criterion in the assessment grid according to their professional judgement and justify in written form the scoring for each section of criteria. Scoring of each assessment question shall reflect in a range of 0-1, 0-2, 0-3, 0-4, 0-5 or 0-7 points how well developed the application is in terms of that specific question or how strongly it contributes to that specific field of evaluation. In addition to evaluation of applications, assessors shall be available for sharing their professional point of view or giving clarification on their assessments in case in a later stage of the assessment procedure questions would emerge (e.g. MC needs clarification during project selection or during complaint procedure).

Assessors must assign only integral number of points, without decimals. The final score of each application is the arithmetical average of the total number of points given by the assessors. In order to be recommended for support, the application must meet the following two criteria at the same time:

- the arithmetical average of the total scores given by the assessors must reach at least 50 points,
- AND
- the arithmetical average of the scores given by the two assessors in the above listed four sections must reach the defined minimum.

This also means (in theory) that in case only one of the assessors gives less score than the minimum to be reached in any of the above listed sections, but the arithmetical average of the scores given by the two assessors in that specific section reaches the minimum, the application still can be recommended for support. The same applies for the total scores, in case the application does not reaches the minimum 50 points in one grid, it still can be recommended for support, if the arithmetical average of the points received in the two grids reaches the minimum.

In case some details are unclear in the application, which do not allow assessors to assess the application entirely, assessors may initiate a clarification process through the JS. Assessors submit a written notification (via e-mail) to the JS in which they list the questions/clarifications/justifications related to specific applications. The JS asks the lead partner through the INTERREG+ IT system or e-mail to submit clarification within 10 calendar days from the day of receipt of the request (by e-mail, with the 'Request a read receipt' option activated) and forwards it to the assessor. Clarification/justification can be requested only once during the assessment process and its aim is only clarification not the improvement of the submitted application. If the justification is unsatisfactory the assessor should make a note on the assessment grid that the given criteria was assessed based on the provided data.

After the assessment is completed, the JS prepares a list of applications recommended for financing ranked according to their scores and a list of applications not recommended for financing and presents them both at the MC meeting in order to facilitate the MC decision on selection.

12.2.3 Decision on selected projects

The MC is responsible for selecting applications for support. The MC makes the decision which applications will be financed, which will be financed with conditions, which will be placed on the reserve list (with or without conditions) and which will not be financed. The decision is based on the ranking list of applications made after assessment.

Applications that do not reach at least 50 points as the arithmetical average of the total scores given by the assessors, or at least the defined minimum scores from the arithmetical average of the points given by the two assessors in each section of the assessment grid; are not recommended for financing, the MC will not discuss them, and they will be rejected.

The quality assessors might be invited to the MC meeting in order to present their assessment and answer the questions of the MC members.

The MC may decide to support applications with certain conditions (budget modification, compliance with EU or national regulations, horizontal principles, etc.). These conditions must be recorded in the minutes of the MC meeting.

The MC decision to approve or reject any application must be duly justified and made by consensus of the Committee.

According to the ranking list the MC supports applications up to the available allocation of the Call for each objective. The MC also reserves the right not to allocate all available funds.

As a general rule 120-160 days elapse between the deadline for submission of applications and the date of the MC decision. The managing authority may prolong the above timeframe.

Once the decision is made by the MC, the JS, on behalf of the MA, sends Notification letters to the lead partners with the final decision about their application.

The Notification letters also include the list of supporting documents required for the verification of eligibility and other conditions that must be fulfilled in order to sign the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution. In case of rejected applications, the JS offers the possibility to check the results of the assessment.

The JS is entitled to carry out monitoring visit(s) before verifying the eligibility of the applicant.

12.3 Handling complaints

Complaints submitted during the evaluation process will be considered by the Complaint Committee which consists of the MA, the Serbian NA and the JS. The Complaint Committee will gather and after thorough consideration will give recommendation on each submitted complaint. Based on the Committee's recommendations, the decisions regarding the complaints on formal evaluation of an application are made by the MA and the decisions regarding the quality assessment of an application are made by the MC.

Procedure of handling complaints

The lead partner can ask for having an insight in the assessment grids within 10 calendar days after the receipt of the notification letter about the relevant decision by e-mail. In case the potential lead partner or the partnership does not agree with the decision of the MA/MC, the potential lead partner is entitled to file a complaint.

The complaint can be filed in case the decision:

- infringes the rights stipulated in the Regulations of the European Union;
- presents an encroachment to the Call for Proposal published or the procedures regulating the assessment process.
- The complaint can be lodged after the formal assessment or after the quality assessment.

The complaint shall

- be written in English;
- be filed by the legal representative of the potential lead partner;
- be addressed and sent to the joint secretariat by e-mail to the e-mail address of the JS with the scanned official letter signed by the legal representative of the potential lead partner as attachment.
- be sent in 10 calendar days following the receipt of notification regarding the rejection of the project or within 10 calendar days after becoming familiar with the content of the quality evaluation, i.e. receiving the anonymized quality assessment grids in e-mail, in case an insight in the evaluation documentation was requested;
- contain clear reference to the nature of the encroachment based on EU Regulations, procedures or the Call for Proposal.

Complaint on the decision on the selection of the projects

If the lodged complaint challenges the findings of the quality assessment and the decision on the selection of the projects, the Complaint Committee examines the complaint and prepares its technical examination regarding the merit of the complaint.

Firstly, the JS in the name of the Complaint Committee invites the potential lead partner for consultation to examine the quality grids if it is requested by the applicant. The names of the quality assessors must be removed from the grids before they are sent to the LP by e-mail.

In case the applicant persists in lodging a complaint, the complaint will then be examined on the basis of the information brought forward by the potential lead partner in the complaint and the technical examination done by the MA/JS with the involvement of the quality assessors concerned.

As a result of the examination of the complaint the decision, whether the complaint is justified and it should be considered by the MC, is made by the Complaint Committee. The applicant will be notified on the decision.

In case it is justified, the case may be sent back to the MC to review the application and its assessment. The Complaint Committee has to provide the MC with a written justification with explicit reference to the criteria described earlier.

The MC decides whether the revised assessment is adopted and modifies the initial decision accordingly.

The decision whether the complaint is approved or rejected by the MC is communicated by the managing authority in e-mail with a scanned official letter in attachment to the potential lead partner within 15 calendar days following the adoption decision on the complaint.

The decision whether the complaint is 'justified and adopted' or 'not justified and rejected' is final, binding to all parties and not subject of any further complaint proceedings within the Programme based on the same grounds.

All complaints shall be forwarded to the members of the Complaint Committee by the JS ex officio and shall be considered and answered by the MA in 30 calendar days following receipt of the complaint. This can be extended with an extra 45 calendar days in case further investigations or MC decision are needed. The lead partner is informed about the extension of the deadline.

Complaints shall be automatically rejected, without any examination in case:

- they were not filed by the potential lead partner entitled to submit a complaint;
- they were filed after deadline, i.e. more than 10 calendar days after the receipt of the official rejection letter or more than 10 calendar days after the date of becoming familiar with the content of the quality evaluation;
- they do not contain clear reference to the nature of the encroachment based on EU Regulations, procedures or the Call for Proposal;
- the subject and content of a complaint corresponds with a complaint already filed and rejected;

- the e-mail did not contain the scanned official letter signed by the legal representative of the potential lead partner as attachment.

12.4 Preparation for contracting

After the approval of an application by the MC, the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution (hereafter: contract) should be signed between the MA and the LP. The language of the contract is English. The contract and its annexes will contain all the necessary information: legal framework; the objective of the financing; activities, work plan, maximum contribution; rules of contract/project modifications; reporting requirements and deadlines; procedure for payment requests; rights and obligations of the LP etc. The MA/the JS on behalf of the MA will notify the lead partners selected for support about the approved amount of subsidy and about the conditions for approval of the application (if any). At the same time, the lead partners will be requested to submit – on behalf of the partnership – documents necessary for the verification of eligibility and preparation of the contract. **Please see the list of documents to be submitted in Chapter 11.4 of the present Guidelines under CONTRACTING PHASE. In addition, please note that the above list of documents is indicative and serves for information purposes only.**

In order to be able to conclude the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution, the LP has to submit all required documents and fulfil all conditions stipulated in the letter of award of subsidy within the deadline defined in the Notification letter.

Verification of eligibility

In case of projects containing ‘works/investments’ the deadline for submitting all documents required for contracting is as a general rule maximum 6 months after the reception of the notification letter. For all other projects, the deadline for submitting all documents required for contracting is maximum 1 month after the reception of the notification letter.

The managing authority reserves the right not to contract those projects for which the applicants failed to submit the requested documents proving the fulfilment of eligibility criteria by the given deadline. The verification of eligibility is carried out in parallel with the preparation of the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution.

12.5 Project content and indicator clarification meeting

Before the conclusion of the subsidy contract for EU contribution, programme managers from the JS will initiate a meeting with the partners: either online or in person at the premises of the lead partner/partners or the representatives of the partnership will be invited for a visit to the premises of the JS.

The main goal of this meeting is to clarify the content, activities and budget with special attention to the indicators and horizontal principles, without altering the substance of the original application. The result of the meeting would be a finalized **project form** with updated budget explanations, reallocated budget items (provided they were planned on the wrong budget heading or line) and clarified indicators. The JS will have the mandate of the MC to make necessary corrections of indicators, activities, budget, and any other elements of the project that were misunderstood or not properly planned in the application form. The quality assessors’ opinions would be taken into account at this point.

12.6 Contracting of the EU contribution

Once the lead partner submits documents necessary for the subsidy contract for EU contribution on behalf of all partners, the JS prepares the contract in the INTERREG+ IT system, following the template annexed to the Application package.

General Terms and Conditions are for information purposes only and the MA reserves the right to change them before signature.

The Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution is signed between the Head of the MA on one side, and the legal representative(s) of the lead partner (on behalf of the partnership) on the other side.
Please note, that in case of Hungarian partners, the possibility of the e-signature is also available.

12.7 National state co-financing (only for partners from Hungary)

The national state co-financing for partners from Hungary will be done in accordance with the relevant Hungarian national legislation.

12.8 Publication of the contracted projects on the Internet

In line with Article 49 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) list of projects (operations) selected for support by the programme will be made publicly available on the website of the programme.

12.9 Indicative timetable

| | DATE | TIME (CET) |
|---|-------------------------|--------------|
| Official launch of the 2 nd Call for Proposals - submission becomes possible in INTERREG+ IT system. | 15 September 2025 | - |
| Deadline for submission of applications | 15 December 2025 | 15:00 |
| Information to LP on the results of the formal assessment | January/February 2026 | - |
| Notification to LP on the result of the assessment and request for documents necessary for contracting | as soon as possible | - |
| Signature of the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution | as soon as possible | - |

13. ANNEXES AND APPENDICES TO THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

The Annexes and Appendices to the Application package available on the Programme website are as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Annex I: | Declaration by the applicants (for all applicants) |
| Annex II: | De minimis declaration by the applicants (for all applicants) |
| Annex III: | Resilience test (for some applicants ²⁴) |
| Annex IV: | Indicator guide |
| Annex V: | Visibility manual |
| Annex VI: | User Manual of the INTERREG+ Application Module |

Annexes for contracting:

Draft Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution (includes General Terms and Conditions)
Draft Partnership Agreement

NOTE: Annex I: Declaration by the applicants and Annex II: De minimis declaration by the applicants are to be considered as Annexes to the Application and should be submitted during the application as instructed under sub-chapter 11.4.2

Appendix A: List of abbreviations

Appendix B: Special stipulations on the ownership of land and buildings in case of projects having investment/works activities

Appendix C: Formal assessment grid

Appendix D: Quality assessment grid

NOTE: All Assessment related appendices (Appendix C and D) are visual representations of on-line assessment grid forms that will be used within INTERREG+ IT system during the different stages of assessment. The actual printed grid forms (if their printing becomes necessary), may differ from the listed appendices.

Other important programme-level documents:

- **Interreg Programme document for Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary Serbia Programme**
- **Eligibility of expenditures** – a document that defines the eligibility rules of expenditures for applicants.
- **Project Implementation Manual** – a manual that defines the implementation rules

All available on the download section of the programme website: www.hungary-serbia.eu

²⁴ For applicants that have an infrastructure component planned with an expected lifespan of at least five years.

APPENDIX A

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| AA | Audit authority |
| AF | Application form |
| CA | Certifying authority |
| CfP | Call for proposals |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| EUDSR | The EU Strategy for the Danube Region |
| EUSAIR | The EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region |
| INTERREG+ IT system | The monitoring and information system of the programme |
| IPA | Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance |
| ISO | Interreg specific objective |
| JS | Joint secretariat |
| LP | Lead partner |
| MA | Managing authority |
| MC | Monitoring committee |
| NA | National authority |
| SO | Specific objective |
| SZPO | Széchenyi Programme Office Llc. |

APPENDIX B

SPECIAL STIPULATIONS ON THE OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND BUILDINGS IN CASE OF PROJECTS HAVING INVESTMENT/WORKS ACTIVITIES

In case of projects having investment/works activities, the partners must prove the status of ownership (property rights, usage rights of the land and/or building) involved in the works component.

Please note, that in the frame of the Interreg VI-A IPA Hungary Serbia Programme, the following rules must be respected:

- investment/works activities can exclusively be implemented on the land or to a building which is **the property of the partner or owned by the State or a county/local government**²⁵;
- In all cases a land or building **registration certificate** from the relevant public register must be by Contracting at the latest (in case of being selected).

The ownership, or the certain usage right has to be proven by the relevant document (contract, declaration etc.) appointed in the below sections, according to the national legislation.

The following cases can be distinguished:

- 1) In case **the land or building is exclusively owned by the applicant** implementing the works component, then investment is implemented on own property. Therefore, only a land or building registration certificate from the relevant public register is necessary to be submitted by contracting.
- 2) In case **the land or building is a joint property, not in the exclusive ownership of the applicant** implementing the works component, the *written consent of the joint proprietors* also has to be attached to the application, in which they must express that they agree with the implementation of the project and with the continuation of its operation until 5 years from the closure of the project.

If the land or building constitutes a piece of **undivided joint property**, the *usage agreement between the joint proprietors* stipulated in a notarial document or *private law contract* of equal probative value, as well as the *drawing about the functional division* of the property have to be submitted together with the application.

- 3) The **land or building** is not **owned by** the partner implementing the works component, but by **the State or county/local government**:
 - a) If the ownership of the land and of the building located on it is legally **divided**, the owner of the land and the applicant implementing the works component have to conclude a detailed

²⁵ In this respect, property owned in 100 % by organisations (non-profit making companies) which are in the 100 % ownership of the State or the local government can also be regarded as 'in the ownership of the state or of county/local governments'.

pre-contract to be attached to the application, ruling the implementation of the investment and how the ownership of the land and the building will be separately indicated in the public register.

- b) If the applicant implementing the works component **already rents, or wishes to rent** the land or building for the duration of the project and for subsequent operation, , the relevant rental contract must be annexed to the application, together with the declaration of the owner of the property that the owner agrees with the submission of the application to implement and subsequently operate the works component for at least **5 years** after project closure. The rental contract must be stipulated for a definite period of the project implementation and **no shorter than additional 10 years**. Additionally, it must ensure the exclusive use of the investment, according to the activities described in the application form and endorsed by the MC, during the implementation of the project **and in the following 10 years**.
- c) If the land or building on which an investment is to be implemented is not the property of the partner responsible for the activity but the **partner acts as the trustee** of the property, the trusteeship has to be proven by attaching to the application the relevant contract or any other document proving the trusteeship legal relation.
- 4) If the partner implementing the works component wishes to **purchase the land** on which an investment is to be implemented from its current owner, then the submission of a pre-contract on the purchase of the property, or the appropriation plan concerning the properties affected by the investment (if relevant) must be attached to the application. The contract can contain a suspending clause stating that the contract on the purchase will only be stipulated if the project receives funding. In all cases the land concerned must become the property of the lead partner / partner by the time of conclusion of the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution or a separate clause in the Subsidy Contract for EU Contribution should be introduced, stating that no investment related invoices can be submitted by the partner until the partner's ownership regarding the real estate concerned is not proven, e.g. the land or building registration certificate(s) are submitted to the JS.

In all cases the building and/or the land must:

- be free of any encumbrances,
- not be the object of pending litigation and
- not be the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.

The land or building is free of encumbrances and is not an object of a claim if nobody has a claim, for the present or for the future, listed in the register that could in any way and to any extent hinder the present or future owner of the property in exercising his or her ownership and usage rights.

A claim is e.g. if on the extract from the register of the property in question one of the following entries can be found:

- purchasing right, repurchasing right,
- forcible collection right,
- existence of a winding-up or liquidation procedure against the owner,
- a construction or parcel-establishing prohibition based on a court or administrative decision, other construction restrictions,
- commencement of a parcel-establishing or expropriating procedure,

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- appointing of an auction procedure,
- closure,
- purchase with the retention of ownership,
- suspension of a register procedure.

By the end of the implementation period of an investment type project at least the record of the technological delivery session must be presented, together with the statement of the responsible architectural supervisor. Until the final and valid permission of use is attained, a temporary permission of use can be accepted from the lead partner/partner or they can submit a copy (provided by the relevant authority) of the document proving that the organisation has handed in its request for the initialisation of the permission procedure.

APPENDIX C

| FORMAL ASSESSMENT GRID | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| No. | Criterion/Question | Yes | No | Comment |
| I | Eligibility criteria | | | |
| I.1. | Each applicant is an eligible organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| I.2 | Each applicant is present only in maximum of 3 applications – in case it is not, the 4 th and all subsequent applications are ineligible and are to be marked with No. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| II | Administrative criteria | | | |
| II.1 | Declarations by all applicants (Annex I and Annex II of the Application package) are submitted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| II.2 | All Declarations by the applicants (Annex I and Annex II of the Application package) are stamped and signed by the legally authorised persons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| II.3 | All obligatory supporting documents are submitted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| II.4 | Administrative and formal data in the application are consistent | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| II.5 | The application form is fulfilled in English | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| The project is formally compliant | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

APPENDIX D

| QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRID | | | |
|--|---|---------------|----------------------|
| No. | Criteria | Maximum score | Relevant chapters |
| I Financial and operational capacity of the partnership | | 17 | |
| | <i>Needs 8 to pass</i> | | |
| 1. | Please assess the experience of the potential applicants in project management and implementation of similar projects. | 3 | |
| 2. | Please assess the operational capacity of the applicants; managerial, professional and technical capacity for implementing the proposed activities (staff, equipment, resources). | 4 | |
| 3. | Have the applicants had stable financial situation in the last two financial years? | 1 | |
| 4. | To what extent are the applicants adequate to the activities assigned to them (management, communication, thematic field)? | 3 | |
| 5. | How necessary and how beneficial the partnership is for the implementation of the proposed activities? | 2 | |
| 6. | How balanced is the proposed budget and how balanced are the proposed activities between the project partners? | 2 | |
| 7. | How suitable are the proposed costs of the budget in comparison with the size and the financial capacities of each applicant? | 2 | |
| II Relevance, project content and CBC effect | | 31 | Relevant AF chapters |
| | <i>Needs 15 to pass</i> | | |
| 8. | To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives? | 4 | |
| 9. | To what extent are the proposed activities addressing the problems identified in the region (by the IP)? | 3 | |
| 10. | To what extent the chosen target groups benefit from the proposed activities? | 3 | |
| 11. | To what extent are the sections of project summary consistent, descriptive and clear for the wide public by showing the real demand for the project? | 3 | |
| 12. | To what extent will the affected area benefit from the proposed activities? | 5 | |
| 13. | To what extent are the activities feasible and how realistic is the proposed time frame? | 3 | |
| 14. | To what extent are the potential risks realistically observed and tackled? | 3 | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 15. | To what extent is the importance of the cross-border approach to the topic clearly demonstrated - the results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation? | 3 | |
| 16. | How significant is the added value for the partners – how clear is the benefit from cooperating for the partnership / target groups / project area / programme area? | 2 | |
| 17. | To what extent are the proposed activities and processes compliant with macro regional/national/regional/county policies? | 2 | |
| III Methodology (Work plan) | | <i>Needs 10 to pass</i> | 31 Relevant AF chapters |
| 18. | To what extent are the proposed activities, outcomes and objectives corresponding to the chosen thematic priority of the programme? | 3 | |
| 19. | To what extent are the project results and outcomes linked to the programme-level indicators? | 3 | |
| 20. | How clearly are the proposed activities clearly defined and described? | 3 | |
| 21. | To what extent are the activities necessary in achieving the project objectives? | 5 | |
| 22. | To what extent are the indicators set for the project results and outputs, realistic and achievable? | 3 | |
| 23. | To what extent is the communication package chosen by the applicants adequate to the planned activities? | 3 | |
| 24. | To what extent are the communication activities and deliverables appropriate to promote the project indicators/results and to reach the relevant target group(s)? | 3 | |
| 25. | To what extent is the project logic (summarised in the logframe) coherent and to what extent are the activities, outcomes, indicators and objectives logically linked together in the project proposal? | 5 | |
| 26. | If applicants chose to contribute to the horizontal principles proactively, how likely is it that they would achieve significant results by implementing the planned activities? | 3 | |
| 27. | Does the application respect the “Do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle? | Y/N | |
| IV Budget, sustainability | | <i>Needs 7 to pass</i> | 21 Relevant AF chapters |
| 28. | To what extent are the proposed activities and their expected results sustainable in terms of financial and social aspects? | 7 | |
| 29. | To what extent are the proposed costs necessary for the implementation of the project and for the achievement of the planned results? | 4 | |
| 30. | To what extent is the proposed budget realistic and well justified? (Overestimated or underestimated amounts?) | 4 | |
| 31. | How balanced are the budget headings in relation to the theme of the project? (Staff, Services, Equipment, Works) | 3 | |
| 32. | How balanced is the budget of the project between the potential partners? | 3 | |

| SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT AND JUSTIFICATION | | | | |
|--|-----|-------|----------|----------------------|
| Main assessment criteria | MAX | Needs | Obtained | Result |
| I Financial and operational capacity of the partnership | 17 | 8 | x | Passed/Failed |
| [please add justification for scores and for this heading over-all] | | | | |
| II Relevance, project content and CBC effect | 31 | 15 | x | Passed/Failed |
| [please add justification for scores and for this heading over-all] | | | | |
| III Methodology (Work plan) | 31 | 10 | x | Passed/Failed |
| [please add justification for scores and for this heading over-all] | | | | |
| IV Budget and sustainability | 21 | 7 | x | Passed/Failed |
| [please add justification for scores and for this heading over-all] | | | | |
| TOTAL SCORES | 100 | 50 | x | Passed/Failed |
| The Assessor's proposal: | | | | |
| Overall justification, advice for project development (if project is not recommended), proposed conditions for contracting (if applicable): | | | | |
| | | | | |