

Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme Citizens summary

What is this document?

This document is the citizen's summary of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme. Its main aim is to provide a brief, to-the-point overview of the strategy behind the programme, its main focus areas and the specific actions that will be financed from the programme budget.

Following the adoption, the programme's implementation will start later this year.

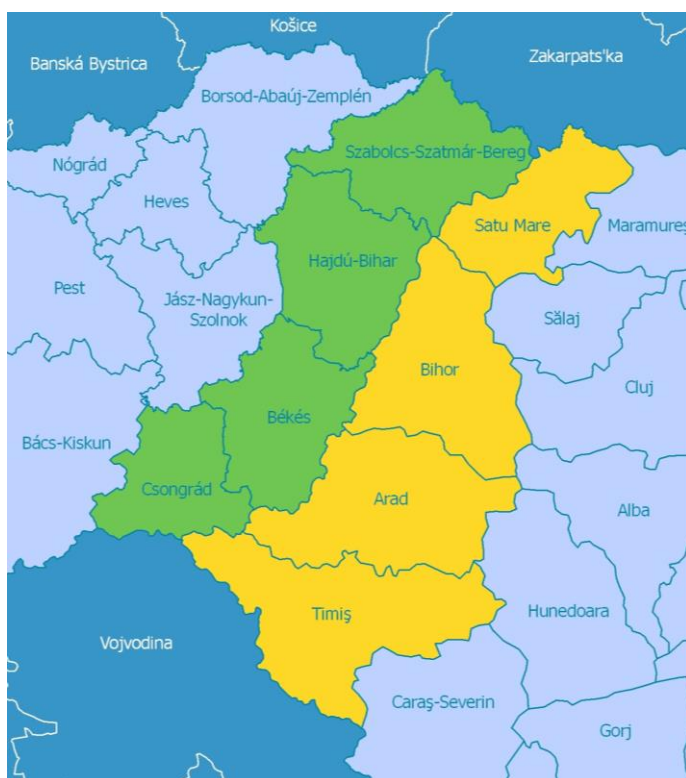
What is the cooperation area?

The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme is co-financing cross-border cooperation in eight counties (NUTS III regions) in Romania and Hungary: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiş in the former; Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád in the latter. The eligible counties

combine an area of over 50 thousand km², representing 15.2% of the two countries' territory (23.7% of Hungary and 11.9% of Romania, resp.).

According to the latest census, the counties of the eligible area have a total population of almost 4 million people, representing 13.1% of the two countries' inhabitants.

The Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The overall ERDF allocation to the Programme is EUR 189,138,672.00; the total budget of the Programme – together with the national co-financing – thus amounts to EUR 231,861,763.00.



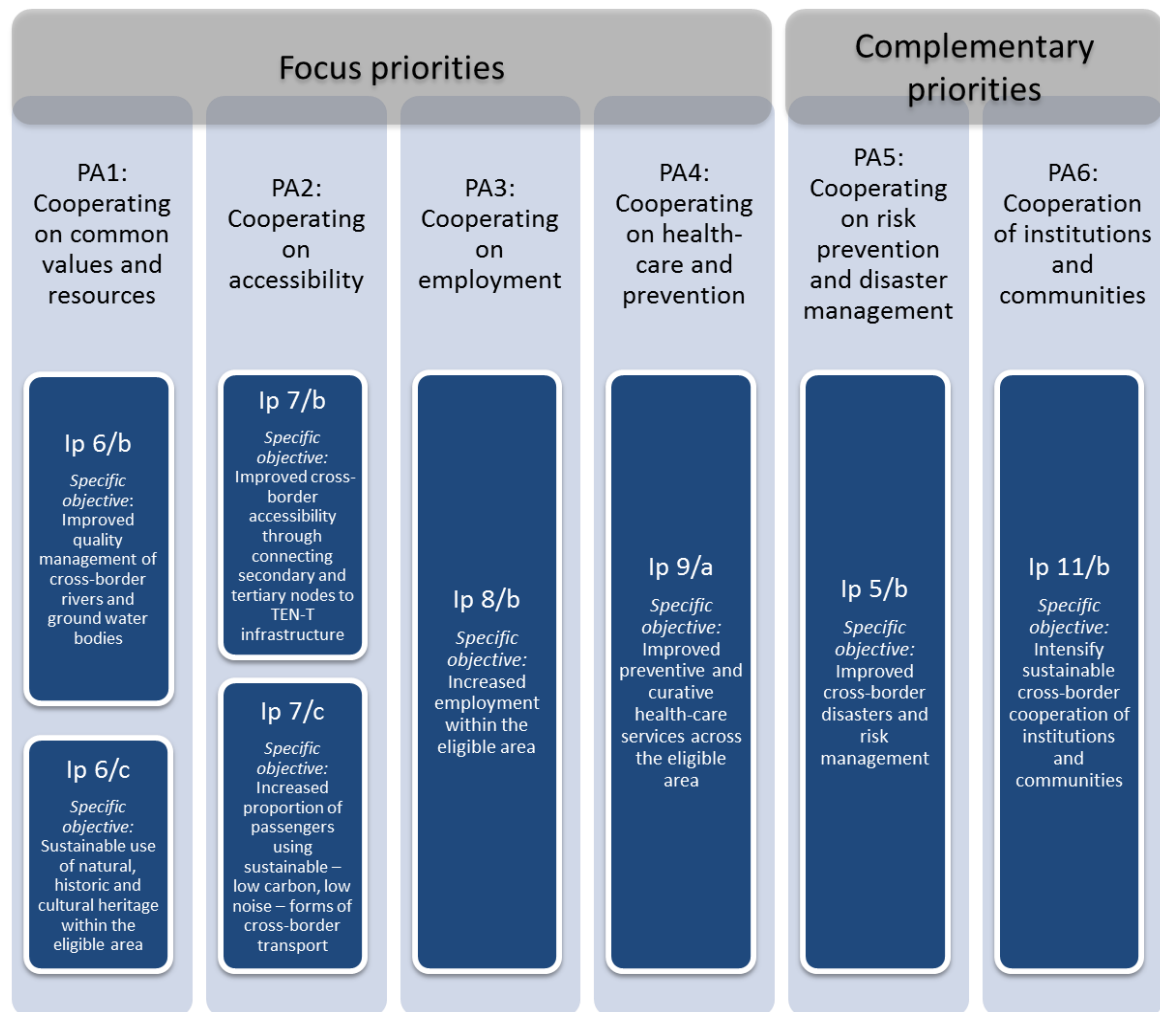
What is the strategy behind the programme?

Based on the detailed analysis of the eligible border area, the identification

and categorisation of the most important joint challenges and potentials, on the long-term vision of the area, as well as on the results of extensive consultations with the stakeholders a coherent strategy has been devised.

The proposed strategy will be implemented through a pool of 6 thematic objectives (TO) – reflected in 6 priority axes - with 8 investment priorities (Ip). Out of the 6 TOs selected, 4 represent the focus areas of the programme, concentrating the majority (significantly over 80%) of the funds available. This is a combination of interventions that can serve as a solid basis for a joint programme, enabling the concentrated use of limited resources.

The figure below presents the priority axes, the investment priorities and the specific objectives of the programme.



What are the interventions the programme will support?

Priority Axis 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources (Cooperating on common values and resources)

Investment Priority 6/b

Specific objective: Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies

Water is one of the most important joint asset of the eligible area, thus water management is a traditionally important field of cross-border cooperation in the eligible area; managing its quality and safeguarding its quantity to compensate the negative effects of rapid changes of quantity or the quality level of the surface and ground water assets, as well as its efficient use in the long run are joint challenges. As a result of the interventions proposed we foresee improvement in the quality of cross-border rivers and streams (surface waters) and groundwater bodies, more sustainable use and management of existing water resources, improved prevention - protection against pollutions, especially flood-related pollutions, efficient communication and joint actions to reduce the negative effects of pollutions.

Having a positive impact on one of the most important natural resources of the area, the interventions foreseen also contribute directly to the horizontal principle of sustainable development and the protection of natural habitats. Water management organizations have jointly implemented various projects already under the previous programme, and future actions are foreseen to further improve the quality and safeguard the quantity of valuable joint water resources.

Types of actions foreseen are as follows:

- Protection and utilization of the cross border water basins;
- Development of water quality and quantity monitoring, information, forecasting and management systems;
- Identification of polluting sources, the necessary measures to reduce water pollution;
- Development and modernization of water supply systems;
- Mitigation of the negative impacts of significant water pollutions caused by flood, collection and use of excess water, measurements for the mitigation of flood risks;
- Organization of field-related dissemination actions, workshops and seminars and also awareness raising of local population¹.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip6/b: EUR 12,647,059.00.

Investment Priority 6/c

Specific objective: Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area

The area is rich in natural, built, historic and cultural values that represent the joint heritage of the eligible area. The interventions envisaged will result in improved conditions of the most important values – including physical facilities but also the intangible elements of the joint heritage. These improvements – including better accessibility where necessary - will make these facilities more attractive to visitors. The combination of these values and their joint promotion – together with the physical improvements made, can contribute to the formulation of a joint and integrated tourism destination, attracting visitors both internally, and also from outside the eligible area. The increased number of visitors will result in an increase of visitor nights and thus contribute indirectly to the strengthening of the area's tourist industry.

The protection and rehabilitation of the natural and cultural heritage is also important from the perspective of sustainable development.

Types of actions foreseen are as follows:

- Preparation of studies, strategies, plans etc. in the field of preservation, development and utilisation of cultural/natural heritage;
- Training and awareness-raising campaigns regarding the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage;
- Improving the state of conservation of monuments, buildings and territories that are part of the area's natural, historical or cultural heritage (e.g. churches, castles, museums, theatres, natural parks, nature protection areas);
- Preservation, promotion and development of intangible cultural heritage;
- Preservation of natural values;

¹ Such actions may not be supported as standalone operations, but only as part of complex projects contributing to the specific objective.

- Development, reconstruction and promotion of cultural facilities protecting the cultural heritage of the eligible area;
- Conservation and maintenance of natural and national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas, safeguarding biodiversity;
- Creation of thematic routes, tourism products and services based on the natural and cultural heritage;
- Improving the accessibility of the rehabilitated natural and cultural heritages (construction, upgrading / modernization of roads and ensuring accessibility by bicycle)²;
- The promotion and utilisation of cultural/natural heritage potential by investments in sustainable touristic infrastructure.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip6/c: EUR 35,855,785.00.

Priority Axis 2: Improve sustainable cross-border mobility and remove bottlenecks (Cooperating on accessibility)

Investment Priority 7/b

Specific objective: Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure

In order to improve cross-border mobility, further development of the road infrastructure cannot be neglected. Road development, however, needs to rely on a strategic approach: only roads that are on a joint priority list agreed by both countries (national level and county level alike) should be supported and bilateral – international – agreements need to be signed. Given the relatively modest funding available, the programme can only support developing a small number of road links that truly enhance cross-border mobility through improving the connections between secondary or tertiary nodes and the TEN-T core and comprehensive network.

Types of actions foreseen to address these challenges are as follows:

- Preparation of particular investment: elaboration of studies, analyses, feasibility studies, technical plans, obtaining necessary authorisations / certificates / permits / licences.
Investments related to such studies should have a reasonable likelihood of being implemented by identifying possible sources of funding. They shall also be part of the strategic planning for transport in the eligible area.
- Construction, upgrading / modernization of roads with cross-border impact, providing or improving direct access of secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T (Trans-European Transport network) core or comprehensive network and related infrastructure (also taking into account improving the conditions and safety of cycling, where possible).

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip7/b: EUR 16,382,451.00.

Investment Priority 7/c

Specific objective: Increased proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport

Proper mobility is an important pre-condition of cross-border cooperation, while the shift towards more sustainable forms of transport is necessary to meet the EU2020 climate change objective.

² Road development projects may not be supported as standalone operations, only as part of complex projects contributing to the specific objective.

Currently the majority of cross-border transport uses the most polluting forms of transport – passenger cars and trucks. Cross-border road public transport is provided on a limited scale mainly by small private enterprises.

While cross-border cycle paths connect nearby communities (and contribute to improving the tourism potential) in 2011 bicycles represented only a negligible part of the total traffic.

Cross-border passenger and freight railway transport play a minor role in the area: the number of passengers of the 5 railway lines and the 18 pairs of trains is low, access times between major cities are high.

While several airports exist, including major ones with international traffic (Timisoara, Debrecen), cross-border use is rare as they are not part of a cross-border multimodal system.

Types of actions are foreseen to address the challenges are as follows:

- Preparation of particular investments: elaboration of studies, analyses, concepts, technical / design documentation, elaboration of recommendations concerning legal administrative bottlenecks hampering cross-border mobility.

Investments related to such studies should have a reasonable likelihood of being implemented by identifying possible sources of funding. They shall also be part of the strategic planning for transport in the eligible area.

With regard to improving railway transport, the programme with its fairly limited budget can only undertake to induce and catalyse investments from other sources (like mainstream OPs of the two countries) by supporting the preparation phase (feasibility studies, engineering designs) of the development of railway infrastructure developments between the two countries.

- Development of cross-border intelligent transport system, passenger information system, on-line schedule, e-ticketing, mobile apps, common tariff systems³;
- Development and integration of cross-border public transport services⁴;
- Investment into public transport related infrastructure (e.g. low emission vehicles, bus);
- Innovative solutions to improve cross-border public transport and reducing transport-related emission;
- Construction, upgrading / modernization of roads, bicycle roads, path or lane, also by using existing infrastructure elements, where appropriate (e.g. dams, agricultural roads, etc.).

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip7/c: EUR 18,613,138.00.

Priority Axis 3: Improve employment and promote cross-border labour mobility (Cooperating on employment)

Investment Priority 8/b

Specific objective: Increased employment within the eligible area

The eligible area is mainly rural with a few important large cities and a number of smaller cities. The majority of the population, the economic performance and the services concentrate in the bigger cities. Despite this duality, the low employment rate is an overall problem in almost all parts of the eligible area (even if the data show major intraregional differences). The economically active

³ Compliance shall be ensured with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No. 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on public passenger transport services by rail and by road and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No.s 1191/69 and 1107/70

⁴ Idem No.3.

population decreased since 2001. The unemployment is also high in the significant part of the region. Challenges include low level of job creation, underuse of economic potential and inadequate cross-border mobility.

These challenges may be best addressed through integrated actions aimed at inclusive growth and employment, relying on the endogenous potential of specific territories.

Types of actions foreseen to address the challenges are as follows:

- Preparation of integrated development strategy and action plans⁵ of specific territories (identification of endogenous potential and infrastructure development needs to increase employment) to introduce the coherence among the planned actions.

The following actions can be implemented, based on strategies:

- Implementation of cross-border training and employment initiatives, cross-border cooperation between relevant stakeholders of labour market (e.g. employment centres, training institutions, social partners and NGOs)
- Targeted actions facilitating the creation of local products/services and related infrastructures based on the local potential
- Increase employment by improving business environment through integrated development measures
- Improving cross-border accessibility to employment related facilities in the eligible counties through the construction, upgrading / modernization of roads with cross-border impact⁶.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip8/b: EUR 55,070,771.00

Priority axis 4: Improving health-care services (Cooperating on health-care and prevention)

Investment Priority 9/a

Specific objective: Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area

Acceptable level of services in health care is a key precondition of balanced development. There are more than 70 hospitals in the eligible area, many struggling with deficiencies in infrastructure and also with obsolete equipment. The condition and the level of equipment of health care facilities in Hungary is better than in Romania. The differences in service quality lead to “health care migration”: Romanian residents travel to Hungary to use health care services. Patient migration is the sign of free movement of services, however it causes financial and service provision tensions. Access to specialised health and social services is limited for disadvantaged groups in rural settlements; prevention, health status screening rate are not satisfactory, either.

Types of actions foreseen to address these challenges are as follows:

- Investments in health-care and prevention-related infrastructure;
- Purchase and installation of health-care equipment, delivery of training to staff on the use of new equipment;
- Promotional actions for health screening and providing information to prevent and diagnose diseases with high frequency in the eligible area;

⁵ Preparation of a strategy or an action plan cannot be supported as a separate standalone project.

⁶ Road development projects may not be supported as standalone operations, only as part of complex projects contributing to the specific objective

- Actions to improve access to health infrastructure by disadvantaged groups;
- Exchange of know-how and capacity building activities (training courses, workshops, conferences, internships);
- Harmonized development of specialized services;
- Development of telemedical and e-health infrastructure for diagnosis and treatment in order to achieve better patient information system and to reduce health inequalities in access to health services;
- Improving cross-border accessibility of health-care services through construction, upgrading / modernization of roads with cross-border impact⁷.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip9/a: EUR 57,034,498.00

Priority axis 5: Improve risk-prevention and disaster management (Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management)

Investment Priority 5/b

Specific objective: Improved cross-border disasters and risk management

In the eligible area, various natural hazards carry a significant risk of disasters or sudden emergency situations, potentially having a great impact on the human population, property and environment. The most significant risk factors are floods, excess inland water, landslides and earthquakes. The flood vulnerability of the counties of the eligible area is actually very high both in national and in international comparison. Man-made disaster risks – like industrial, environmental, water pollution, transport accidents – are also present, requiring effective joint actions. As risks and emergency situations in most cases do not stop at the state border, they can be best dealt with in a coordinated manner, relying on the joint emergency response capacities of the two countries.

In response to these challenges, the following types of actions are foreseen:

- Development and implementation of harmonized standards and systems for better forecasting and natural / anthropogenic risk management in the cross-border area;
- Land improvement for regions with high and average hazard natural risk level;
- Setting up the harmonized and integrated tools for risk prevention and mitigation in order to provide a joint response to emergency situations;
- Development of regional level cross-border infrastructure in the field of emergency preparedness;
- Exchange of experience on efficient risk prevention and management in the cross-border area;
- Awareness-raising activities targeted at specific groups;
- Elaboration of detailed maps and data bases indicating natural and technological risks;
- Purchasing special vehicles, equipment and materials for public emergency response services;
- Purchasing equipment for measuring/monitoring environmental parameters;
- Establishing common rules/legislation and protocols related to risk prevention and disaster management.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip5/b: EUR 9,548,042.00

⁷ Road development projects may not be supported as standalone operations, only as part of complex projects contributing to the specific objective

Priority axis 6: Promoting cross-border cooperation between institutions and citizens (Cooperation of institutions and communities)

Investment Priority 11/b

Specific objective: Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities

There are various “soft” bottlenecks (differences in the regulatory framework, excessive administrative burden, lack of services related to cross-border activities, drastically differing protocols of institutions, inefficient information flow between regional and local public administration) that can reduce the effectiveness of cooperation. Social and cultural links, on the other hand, can give a strong basis for building joint social capital in the involved communities. Therefore, cooperation initiatives for institutions and citizens, bringing institutions and communities closer to each other play a crucial role in enhancing cross-border cooperation in the eligible area.

The types of actions foreseen to enhance the cooperation for institutions are as follows:

- Analysis of the regulatory background in different fields, proposing solutions and actions to harmonize relevant regulations
- Initiatives aimed at the reducing of administrative burdens of cross-border activities of people, enterprises and other organizations
- Needs assessment, identification of legal, social and economic conditions and obstacles of service provision
- Elaboration and introduction of institutional cooperation models
- Capacity development of regional and local public administration bodies to facilitate more active participation in cross-border cooperation
- Institutional capacity building and promotion of the EU legislation through training courses, dissemination actions
- Activities focusing on the improvement of cross-border services, development of necessary small-scale works and equipment

The types of actions foreseen to enhance the cooperation for citizens are as follows:

- Small-scale joint initiatives in the fields of sport, culture and leisure - *cultural events, performances, festivals, sports competitions, extracurricular cooperation of schoolchildren* – exchange programmes, *trainings* promoting cultural diversity and joint traditions, with the aim of creating sustainable networks and cooperation.

Instead of one-off cooperation initiatives, projects that can sustain cooperation in the long-run are favoured.

Total funding available for supporting projects under Ip11/b: EUR 4,013,379.00

For further information on the programme please visit

<http://www.mdrap.ro/dezvoltare-regionala/-4970/-7572/-1369>