

FACTSHEET 1_Priority axis PA1_Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources (Cooperating on common values and resources)

Investment priority 6/c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage



Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

The area is rich in natural 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 heritage is also important from the perspective of sustainable development.



Focus of interventions:

Projects selected within the present call are State Aid free, therefore, for Ip 6/c only project proposals that address conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural heritage will be financed.

Taking into account the differentiating elements of the eligible area's natural touristic offer, as well as the focus of the corresponding investment priority (hereinafter: Ip), the focus of tourism development should be the development of thematic routes built around natural sites.

In order to use the joint touristic potential offered by the area better and in a more sustainable manner, concerted actions are necessary to protect and rehabilitate the key natural values on both sides of the border, their accessibility needs to be improved, attractive and internationally competitive thematic routes need to be developed, joint tourism destinations have to be established, managed and promoted. There are some similar initiatives funded from the previous programme, aimed at the creation attractive cross-border thematic routes; interventions can build on these initiatives.

This, however, requires a truly integrated approach: instead of standalone investments, complex developments that are parts of a wider concept need to be implemented; natural values to be rehabilitated that together are able to attract a critical mass of visitors and operate sustainably (major increase in visitors number is an expectation), and there needs to be closely cooperating institutional structures in place that ensure destination management and promotions.

It is necessary to note that any intervention affecting NATURA 2000 sites needs to be in line with Article 6, paragraphs 2-4 of the Habitats Directive, stipulating how NATURA 2000 sites¹ are managed and protected.



Indicative actions:

The indicative actions will be related to rehabilitation, conservation and promotion of natural heritage that can be promoted and sustainably exploited. Support can be provided to complex interventions, including the rehabilitation of various natural, as well as of facilities contributing to the protection of the joint natural heritage on both sides of the border. Support can also be provided to creating competitive thematic routes for the rehabilitated values and facilities, as well as to the promotion of these routes and to improving their accessibility.



Types of activities:

- ✓ Preparation of studies, strategies, plans etc. in the field of preservation, development and utilization of natural heritage
- ✓ Training, exchange of good practices and awareness-raising campaigns regarding the protection, promotion and development of natural heritage
- ✓ Setting up new cross-border platforms, groupings and networks focusing on safeguarding and developing the joint natural heritage
- ✓ Improving the state of conservation of territories that are part of the area's natural (, natural parks, nature protection areas²)
- ✓ Preservation of natural values
- ✓ Conservation and safeguarding of natural and national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas
- ✓ Creation of thematic routes
- ✓ Improving the accessibility of natural heritages (construction, upgrading / modernization of roads and ensuring accessibility by bicycle)
- ✓ The promotion and utilization of natural heritage potential by investments in sustainable touristic infrastructure

When designing your project, please keep in mind that any investment in the natural infrastructure will have to be part of a wider, more complex intervention, including among others:

- ✓ **the promotion of the area,**
- ✓ **raising the number of visiting tourists,**

¹ For details see Figure 46 – Natura 2000 areas – in the Strategic Territorial Analysis.

² See Map 4 of the SEA Report - Protected areas of the eligible counties

- ✓ creating job opportunities at local level,
- ✓ creating/participating to thematic routes,
- ✓ involving the local relevant stakeholders and thus creating/developing new opportunities of sustainable growth of the eligible area

NO SUPPORT will be provided to projects envisaging exclusively:

- ✓ investments in natural heritage infrastructure/endowment OR
- ✓ marketing activities & promotional activities, including digital infrastructure

Investment in roads cannot be supported as standalone operations; such investments need to be ancillary to investment in natural heritage and shall contribute directly to reaching the selected thematic objective and investment priority under this specific objective. This means that total cost of such investments in roads cannot exceed 30% of the total budget of an operation (project).

The scope of the project and the related activities will have to ensure the fulfilment of the programme's specific objective related to the *Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural heritage*, in a way that will raise the number of visitors following the investments made and contribute to the overall growth of the targeted area.



List of potential beneficiaries:

- ✓ Local and county governments / administrations and their institutions
- ✓ National ministries and their specialized institutions, regional offices
- ✓ National/Natural Parks administrations
- ✓ Environmental protection institutions
- ✓ Non-profit NGOs
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ EGTC



Target groups:

People living in the eligible area and tourists visiting the area from outside.



Methodology for defining and calculating the OUTPUT indicators:

Summary of key information

<i>ERDF funds allocated</i>	EUR 30,477,417
<i>Total available budget</i>	EUR 35,855,785
<i>ERDF funds allocated for conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural heritage</i>	EUR 12,190,966
<i>ERDF funds allocated under this Call</i>	EUR 7,500,000
<i>Total available budget under this Call</i>	EUR 8,823,529

Categories of intervention:

Code	Amount (€)
085. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	7,500,000
086. Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	

For measuring the outputs under this Ip, 1 output indicator have been identified; the surface area of habitats supported to attain better conservation status, which is a programme specific output indicator.

ID Indicator	Measurement unit	Target (2023)	value
6/c 2 Surface of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (Common output indicator)	Hectares	4,000	

The financial allocation per 6/c2 indicator is up to 40% of the total ERDF budget for this Ip. Therefore, *4,000 hectares of Surface of habitats will have to be supported in order to attain a better conservation status*, with a total cost of EUR 14,342,314.00. The calculations show that the maximum costs per hectare ranges between EUR 3,500.00 – EUR 3,600.00. Thus, no matter what activities or investments your project involves, in the end, the spent budget will have to be proportional with the number of hectares of surface affected.

Definition

This indicator measures the surface of restored or preserved areas aimed to improve the conservation status of threatened species. The operations may be carried out both in or outside of Natura 2000 areas, capable of improving the conservation status of targeted species, habitats or ecosystems for biodiversity and the provisioning of ecosystem-services.

The development of the natural heritage sites - aimed at improving their conservation status – must clearly make a contribution towards the specific objective of this Ip, while in line with the intervention logic.

Methodology for estimating the target value

In order to provide an estimation of the unit costs, information about LIFE projects with similar content has been collected. In addition, nature protection organizations both in Romania and Hungary have been asked to provide information about their recent projects in the field of habitat protection. Although this is not a representative review, it still provides a good overview and data to support the estimation of the unit cost.

Areas that receive support repeatedly should be counted only once.

It is important to take into account that:

- ✓ the focus of interventions needs to be the improvement of conservation status.
- ✓ each project is required to demonstrate its contribution to the target value of the output indicator.
- ✓ **in case a project *also* results in the increase of the number of visits, it needs to be reported as well.**
- ✓ areas that may receive repeated support should be counted only once.



Methodology for defining and calculating the RESULT indicators:

It is mandatory to be mentioned in your application form, how the output indicators will contribute to the achievement of the result indicators of the programme. The result indicator for this Ip is:

Specific objective	SO6/c - Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area					
Indicator	Measure- ment unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area	visitor nights	4,885,294.00	2013	5,485,294.00	National Statistical Offices: KSH, INS	2019, 2021, 2023

Definition of the indicator:

The **number of overnight stays** covers the nights that tourists spent at registered tourist accommodations in the reference year. The county level data are summarized to produce data for the eligible area.

Relation to the specific objective and actions:

The specific objective is the sustainable use of joint natural, historic and cultural heritage within the eligible area. If joint historic, cultural and natural heritage elements are improved, they become more attractive for tourists, resulting in increase in the number of tourists visiting.

In order to ensure all aspects of sustainability, it is important that the supported natural/cultural heritage sites and facilities need to be used for touristic purposes on long-term.

The sustainable touristic use may be best measured using the number of overnight stays – this is a widely accepted statistical indicator measuring the results of tourism-related activities. The indicator has a close link to the activities and to the output indicator. If the number of visitors to specific sites is increasing, as well as the number of sites worth visiting, tourists spend a longer time in the area and are motivated to stay for more than one day. This expectation certainly highlights the importance of the integrated development of tourist destinations instead of the development of individual sites not linked to each other.

! Special attention to horizontal principles

Special attention is needed under Ip 6/c, regarding the sustainable development (please see chapter 8 of Interreg V-A RO-HU CP and Chapter 1.2.3 Horizontal Principles of the Guide for Applicants).

The proposed projects should make specific contributions to climate change mitigation through interventions regarding safeguarding natural values.

Projects with a direct negative impact on the environment and sustainable development will not be selected for financing.

It will also be ensured that projects affecting NATURA 2000 sites are in line with Article 6, paragraphs 2-4 of the Habitats Directive, stipulating how NATURA 2000 sites are managed and protected.