

INTERREG PROGRAMME SK-AT 2021-2027

DRAFT PROGRAMME CHAPTERS 1 – 8

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Index

1.	Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses	7
1.1	Programme area	7
1.2	Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.....	7
	Introduction	7
	A more competitive and smarter Europe	8
	A greener and low carbon Europe	11
	A More connected Europe.....	14
	A More social and inclusive Europe	15
	Cooperation Governance.....	18
	Compliance with the “do no significant harm” principle	20
	Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments	20
	Link with existing macro-regional strategies and other cohesion policy programmes	20
1.3	Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure.....	23
2.	Priorities	35
2.1	Priority 1: A more competitive and smarter SK-AT border region.....	35
	2.1.1. (i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	35
2.2	Priority 2: A greener SK-AT border region	38
	2.2.1. (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	38
	2.2.2. (vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.....	42
2.3	Priority 3: A more social SK-AT border region	47
	2.3.1. (ii) improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	47
	2.3.2. iv) ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care	50
	2.3.3. vi) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation.....	53

2.4	Priority 4: A better cooperating SK-AT border region	56
2.4.1.	b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	56
2.4.2.	c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to people actions	59
3.	Financing plan	62
3.1	Financial appropriations by year	62
3.2	Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing	63
4.	Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation	64
	The role of the programme partners in the preparation of the Programme	65
	The role of the programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme.....	66
5.	Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)	67
	Communication objectives	67
	Target audiences	67
	Communication channels/tools	68
	Planned budget.....	68
	Monitoring, evaluation and indicators	68
6.	Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds	69
	Background information.....	69
	Small project fund	69
	Support to small-scale projects.....	71
7.	Implementing provisions.....	72
7.1.	Programme authorities	72
7.2.	Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat.....	72
7.3.	Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission	74
8.	Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs.....	76
	Annex	77

1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1 Programme area

The **SK-AT programme area** is set up by the NUTS 3 regions Bratislavský kraj, Trnavský kraj, Nordburgenland, Niederösterreich-Süd, St. Pölten, Waldviertel, Weinviertel, Wiener Umland/Nordteil, Wiener Umland/Südteil and Wien.

The region consists of a broad variety of urban agglomerations, small- and medium-sized towns and several rural communalities. According to the urban-rural topology of Eurostat, Wien, Wiener Umland/Nordteil and Südteil and Bratislavský kraj are predominantly urban regions, all other rural regions. (Eurostat 2016)

The largest cities in the region are Wien (1,9 million inhabitants), Bratislava (437.725), Trnava (65.033), St. Pölten (55.040), Wiener Neustadt (45.277), Klosterneuburg (27.368), Piešťany (27.336), Baden (25.906) and Krems (24.876). (Statistik Austria 2019a; Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky 2020)

Wien and Bratislava are twin cities with two urban agglomerations and capital cities being in close proximity (60 km) with urban sprawl in the surrounding areas; both agglomerations are also transport and innovation hubs from a national perspective. The smaller cities act as local and regional growth poles.

The characteristic landscape elements are the Alps in the south and the Carpathians in the east, the Vienna Basin in between, the Bohemian Massif in the northwest and the Pannonian Plain in the east.

The region is embedded in the "Centropo" and "Danube Region Strategy" initiatives.

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

Introduction

In the preparation phase of the IP SK-AT 2021-2027, a detailed socio-economic analysis on the programme area was carried out, summarizing relevant data, the main results of relevant studies and analyses such as the mid-term evaluation of the cooperation programme Interreg V-A SK-AT and the relevant strategies on European, national and – if available – regional level. Its main findings were discussed by the Programming Group. The following description of the main joint challenges and needs of the border region follows the ERDF policy objectives.

A more competitive and smarter Europe

Economy

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

In terms of GDP per capita, Bratislavský kraj (173%), Wien (149%), Wiener Umland/Südteil (147%) and St. Pölten (133%) reach values above or around 130% of the EU-28 average, making them the strongest regions in the programme area.

All other regions are below the EU-28 average: Nordburgenland (99%), Niederösterreich-Süd (93%), Waldviertel (89%), Wiener Umland/Nordteil (84%), Trnavský kraj (77%) and Weinviertel (69%).

Vienna/Wien and Bratislava (the Twin City region) are the economic centres of the cross-border area. Vienna/Wien is the economic heart of Austria and home to over 200 multinational corporation headquarters. It ranks among the top EU regions in terms of productivity and also leads the Mercer Quality of Living Ranking for the 10th consecutive year.

Bratislavský kraj accounts for the highest GDP per capita, wage and employment levels in Slovakia. In the last years, Bratislavský kraj has benefited from its good infrastructure compared to the rest of the country, considerable stock of human capital and influx of foreign direct investment (FDI). High economic performance of Bratislavský kraj measured in GDP per capita in PPS is partly due to statistical effects, which occur often in capital/metropolitan regions. The effects result from concentration of inter/national companies in the capital and the fact that considerable part of companies register their official seat in the capital while operating in other regions. Additionally, part of Bratislava population does not have official residence in the city and approximately 200.000 persons commute to the capital for work on daily basis.

The Twin City region also reports the majority of SMEs situated in the programme area. It is among the EU's major growth poles and is an important hub in the European urban and transport system. However, the opportunities arising from the Twin City concept have not been intensively exploited in the previous programming periods. Therefore, stronger focus and tailoring on the reasons of non-functionality of this concept should be made.

Based on the **Regional Competitiveness Index 2019**, the competitiveness in all regions in Austria and Bratislavský kraj is (strongly) above EU-average. However, Západné Slovensko¹ is well below the EU-average. In all regions except Západné Slovensko, competitiveness has improved since 2010 in comparison with the EU.

Vienna/Wien and its commuting area is above EU-average in all indicators of the Regional Competitiveness Index. Bratislavský kraj performs well, but is below EU-average regarding the indicators "institutions", "health" and "technological readiness".

The tertiary sector is the main economic sector in almost all regions (two-thirds of employees work in the sector), while the primary sector plays only a minor role. Niederösterreich, Burgenland and Trnavský kraj are productive in agriculture. The industrial sector is strong in Niederösterreich and the Slovak regions.

¹ Západné Slovensko (NUTS 2 level)

Key sectors in the Austrian regions are life sciences, ICT, renewable energy/environmental technology/green building/ mechanical engineering and metal processing, chemical industry and plastics, mobility, logistics, tourism, creative industries and food industries (Vienna Region Marketing GmbH 2019).

Important branches in Bratislavský kraj include chemical, automobile, machine, electro-technical and food industries. With a strong automotive base, the region is expected to upgrade its production capabilities by focusing the research on new materials for the car industry.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

As highlighted in the Mid-term evaluation of the SK-AT programme 2014 – 2020 it is important to also take into consideration the intra-regional disparities within the cross-border programming area. Especially on the Austrian side - remote, rural areas are lagging behind and are facing decreasing population (brain drain of young people and demographic challenges due to ageing). Therefore, the programme shall put stronger emphasis on balanced territorial development within the area. For example, the programme can contribute to strengthen the regional centres in the area (e.g. Eisenstadt, St. Pölten) and support services of general economic interest in more rural areas outside the development corridor of the Danube.

Joint investment needs

With respect to the economic potential, there is a particular need to:

- better and further explore the opportunities arising from the Twin City concept (Vienna/Wien - Bratislava)²;
- support the growth of SMEs by promoting cross-border cooperation; to increase internationalisation of enterprises;
- build the capacity of small companies which help to maintain employment levels in promising sectors;
- promote digitalization in the business sector on both sides of the border and foster SMEs access to R&D&I

Research & innovation and SMEs

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

Research and Innovation is of **cross-border-relevance** especially in the Twin City region Vienna/Wien-Bratislava. The capital regions have a high share of innovative, high growth companies, research institutions and universities, complemented by other regions such as Lower Austria, Burgenland and the Trnavský kraj as locations with tertiary education and research.

However, **cross-border links are not developed enough to be reflected in the functional region**. Research and innovation systems are at **different development stages**, with the Vienna/Wien innovation system being more efficient than the Bratislava innovation system. In addition, there are differences in starting conditions and institutional settings of innovation systems in the cross-border area.

² Source: Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report (2020); Border orientation paper AT-SK (2019); The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2018). Bratislava and Vienna: Twin Cities with big Potentials (Authors: Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner & Römisch)

Referring to the European Innovation Scoreboard 2020 and the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2019, Austria and its three regions Wien, Niederösterreich and Burgenland are classified as “Strong Innovators” (second best category out of four) whereas Slovakia and the Slovak regions Bratislavský kraj and Západné Slovensko as “Moderate Innovators” (the third category).

In addition, there is an **unbalanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel** mainly concentrated in the Twin City region, which requires more efforts to effectively enhance the innovation capacities of the whole area.

On national level, Austria has a higher level of R&D expenditure (3,05%,) compared to Slovakia (0,89%), and to the EU-27 average (2,15 %). At NUTS 2 level the value is below the EU average in all regions except Vienna/Wien.

In Austria, the total expenditure on R&D carried out by the private sector (49%) is almost equal to the R&D expenditure carried out by the public and regional institutions (51%). In Slovakia approximately 64 % of R&D expenditure come from the private sector and 36% from the public sector.

With respect to **small and medium sized enterprises** (SMEs), 30,5 % of active enterprises in the programme area are SMEs with less than 10 employees (123.565), and 63,5% one-person-companies (total: 257.279). Overall, 94 % of the companies have 0-9 employees. The share of one-person-companies is higher in Slovakia (up to 73% in Trnavský kraj), while the share of SMEs with 1-9 employees is higher in the Austrian regions (up to 35 % in Waldviertel).

Digitalisation infrastructure is of high quality in both countries and in the centre of the Interreg regions. Only some rural areas, particularly in Austria have a less favourable accessibility. Nevertheless, digitalisation skills and utilisation are still a matter of improvement especially in SMEs.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

In the 2014-2020 programming period the issue of **research and innovation** has been rising awareness more than in the programming period 2007-2013.

The high number of public research institutions in both capitals provides very good opportunity for international cooperation for excellent research teams on both sides. Furthermore, activities related to the creation or maintenance of networks especially by research institutions is likely to continue without programme funding to some extent.

Direct **SME** support under Interreg has limited success due to the administrative burden of Interreg projects. Therefore, it is recommended to support projects, which address the needs of SMEs and/or provide research infrastructure for SMEs.

As regards **Digitisation**, this topic can be addressed horizontally within various relevant areas of the cross-border region.

Joint investment needs

There are restrictions and **obstacles to directly support the business sector** under Interreg. However other types of support can be provided in the context of cross-border cooperation. Projects addressing the needs of SMEs and/or providing **research infrastructure for SMEs** for better involvement in R&D activities, and improvement of their access to R&D&I results can be of high cross-border relevance. Improvement with respect to **digitisation in businesses** remains necessary for both countries. In addition,

digitalisation can be addressed horizontally within other relevant areas related to labour market, tourism, environment, etc.

In addition, **cross-border networking** between enterprises in similar and different sectors, as well as cluster development and cooperation in innovation activities need to be promoted. There is a considerable number of clusters that could possibly cooperate on themes of common interest (e.g. plastics industry, "green" technologies, etc.)

Stronger cross-border cooperation in science and technology, economic cooperation (e.g. by using synergies of services and manufacturing) and improved connectivity across borders (Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report 2020) can support the economic growth, competitiveness and innovation of the whole cross-border area.

In particular, the geographic proximity and the relative strength of the two capitals Wien-Bratislava on 'Professional, scientific and technical activities' provide good opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation and cross-border cooperation.

In summary, there is a need for:

- harmonisation of unbalanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel in the regions;
- acceleration of cross-border links on research and innovation;
- harmonisation of development stages of innovation systems; heterogeneous starting conditions and institutional settings;
- development of a cross-border research and innovation strategy;
- involvement of SMEs in R&D activities and R&D&I results;
- cluster development and cooperation, especially in innovation activities regarding issues specific for SK-AT area according to the smart specialization strategies;
- improvement of digitalisation infrastructure and skills;
- core facilities, jointly developed services for research purposes

A greener and low carbon Europe

Climate change and Biodiversity

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

The programme area SK-AT has a medium environmental sensitivity to **climate change**. Both sides of the border are expected to be affected in similar ways by climate change, including an increase in warm temperature extremes and water temperature, decrease in summer precipitation, increase in the risk of forest fires and decrease in economic value of forests.

While climate change adaptation and risk management is strongly backed by strategies on European and national level (e.g. The European Green Deal and the upcoming EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, EU Floods and Water Directives, etc.), **policies on a regional level on climate change adaptation and mitigation are not yet fully implemented.**

The Austrian-Slovak border region is strongly dominated by a river system. The Danube and Morava Rivers run along the border between the two countries. The Danube is of great economic importance to both countries, especially in the fields of freight transport, hydropower, industrial and residential water supplies, irrigation and fishing.

Therefore, **water management** remains a common issue with respect to climate change and risk management. There are existing platforms and networks (e.g. permanent Austro-

Slovak Border Water Commission) which should be considered and taken up by the programme and better utilised to improve the programme implementation in this matter. In the 2014-2020 programming period a few Interreg SK-AT projects address the cross-border cooperation between public authorities in relation to water management of the Danube (e.g. Dream³, PlasticFreeDanube, etc.) upon which future cooperation could be built.

Biodiversity and reduced environmental pollution are central issues on European level and will be increasingly in focus in the coming years with the European Green Deal as the central road map of the new EU Commission on a sustainable economy.

Characterized by a rich biodiversity and a large number of natural areas, environment protection and promotion of biodiversity have been prominent in the cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia. The common river system of the programme area provides green infrastructure and a large number of protected areas. Main sources of biodiversity are the wetlands along the Danube and Morava, Lake Neusiedl, the Wienerwald and the Small Carpathians. There are three national parks in the region: Donauauen (Wien and Niederösterreich), Thayatal (Niederösterreich) and Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (Burgenland).

56 sites in the Austrian part of the programme area and 98 sites on the Slovak side are protected under Natura 2000. There are still gaps in the coverage of Natura 2000 sites with 89% of the proposed areas being implemented in Austria, compared to 74% in Slovakia. (European Commission - DG REGIO 2019, p. 14).

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

While activities related to **renewable energy** are considered as relevant for the programming period 2021 – 2027 (Interreg SK-AT mid-term evaluation report 2020), flexible approaches and cross-border challenges should be taken into account.

Water management and climate change adaptation and mitigation have been important topics during the 2014 – 2020 programming period, with related activities focused on strengthening the cross-border integration of functional ecological networks and green infrastructures. Taking into account the projects that are being implemented, the upcoming interventions related to water management and climate change adaptation and mitigation should build upon the lessons learnt and results of these projects (e.g. one strategic project on research and management of Danube river aiming at strengthening the institutional cross-border cooperation).

In addition, common interventions in the border area related to the environmental protection and flood risk management will also remain of high cross-border relevance for the programming period 2021-2027.

On **waste management**, one project has been approved aimed at finding solution on macro-plastic waste along Danube river, and another project has been financed under the specific objective "Strengthen collaboration in the innovation system" focused on know-how in waste management. This topic offers good opportunities for know-how exchange and cooperation on common problems, which should be built upon the lessons learnt and results of the projects of the 2014-2020 programming period.

³ Approved under SO 1.1

The issue of **biodiversity** has been very attractive in previous programming periods. This importance has been underlined by 8 projects approved under the Interreg programme 2014 - 2020, aiming at protecting and developing river biotopes, flowering country for butterflies, installing floating islands for nesting birds, managing biotopes and strengthening biodiversity, developing ecosystem tools and services for the biodiversity protection and restoration, and reducing the risk of wine diseases.

The area of nature conservation is of key importance for a thorough conservation and restoration of biodiversity together with the nature protection, all aiming to achieve a favourable condition of all habitats and species of European and national interest. Interventions in the area of nature protection as well as those aiming on ecological and environmental education are still of high priority for the programming period 2021-2027.

As regards **circular economy**, this topic is mainly national and/or regional driven. Possibilities and need of cross-border waste streams and joint waste treatment are still unclear and a better cooperation between public authorities may be needed. Cross-border cooperation in the SK-AT region may also include “soft” measures aiming at reduction of waste production, shared economy, repair, refurbishment and reuse of used goods, use of recyclable materials, reduction of food waste etc.

Likewise, investing in **renewable energy** is a national/regional matter of high-level infrastructure projects, which are less adequate under Interreg programmes. Interreg with its limited budget and relatively soft approach seems to be less suitable for implementing and/or achieving the renewable energy objectives of the Member States. In this context, soft cross-border measures could be supported, taking into account cross-border challenges.

Joint investment needs

Promoting and strengthening coordination and cooperation across the border is necessary to better adapt to the climate change impact and improve climate change mitigation. Cross-border climate change prevention measures should be promoted, such as actions to improve the knowledge base, as well as the preparation and implementation of disaster risk management strategies (i.e. flood, biodiversity loss and forest fires).

Green infrastructure is especially important between the growth poles of the Twin City Wien-Bratislava. The increasing pressure on settlements in the Twin City Region puts further pressure on land-use, which in its current approach considerably reduces biodiversity.

Cooperation among public authorities to improve the growth-pole and agglomeration between the two capital cities and its hinterland (as well as other urban and cross-border growth poles) are important to reduce the land use pressure and jointly manage settlement and protected areas in a more sustainable way.

In summary, there is a need for:

- joint actions to adapt to climate change impacts in the CBC region especially in terms of floods and droughts and promote cross-border climate change prevention measures;
- climate change measurements in urban areas;
- joint actions to preserve the rich biodiversity and fight against invasive species which harm the environment;
- joint strategies to protect natural heritage, Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas;

- joint efforts to protect the green infrastructure in the twin city region and in the whole cross-border area;
- joint actions to fight against pollution (e.g. river pollution);
- joint efforts to improve the accessibility of green infrastructure, natural heritage for recreational purpose;
- measures to preserve biodiversity and nature conservation/protection in urban areas.

A More connected Europe

Sustainable mobility

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

On public transport and **sustainable mobility**, local and regional accessibility shows significant gaps across border. Apart from some key links (i.e. Wien-Bratislava; Hainburg-Bratislava), cross-border public transport links remain weak. Main reasons are the missing electrification of railway link Bratislava – Marchegg and its limited capacity, especially on the Slovak side of the border, as well as the lack of a high-level bridge connection over March between Devínska Nová Ves and Marchegg.

Currently there are some extensions with cross-border relevance under construction and planned. In the light of the Green Deal and the demand to reduce CO₂ emission, multimodal transport nodes and harmonised railway systems will remain an important topic. The share of public transport is higher in Slovakia than in Austria, but significantly lost ground over the last years in both countries.

Cross-border **bicycle networks** improved, particularly supported by the Interreg programmes. However, there are still gaps in the system, which need to be filled. Several European cycle routes are passing through the region (e.g. EuroVelo6, EuroVelo13), as well as EuroVelo9⁴, Moravská cyklotrasa⁵ and are of importance for a sustainable tourism industry as well as a core cycle network for sustainable mobility/commuting for work purposes.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Trans-European Transport Network (**TEN-T**) infrastructure investments are of no high relevance due to time and financial burden. On **sustainable mobility**, the main focus in the programming period 2014-2020 was given under the priority axis 3 Supporting sustainable transport solutions. The initial focus was on sustainable forms of transport that would reduce air and noise pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.

As regards the **TEN-T**, the cross-border region is well-connected. It lies at the intersection of three rail and road corridors of the TEN-T consisting of motorway, railway and waterway axes. Considering the time and financial burden, infrastructure projects at the level of TEN-T are beyond the scope of an Interreg programme.

⁴ EuroVelo9 can be reached from Slovakia through Moravský Sv. Ján – Hohenau border bridge where Moravská cyklotrasa and EuroVelo13 meet.

⁵ Moravská cyklotrasa connects to EuroVelo13 at the Slovak-Austrian border crossing and runs along the Morava River and passes the three borders geo point/tripoint (AT-SK-CZ)/Drei Grenzen/Trojštátie

One approved project - Cleanmobility - aims at future synchronisation of the transport schedules in the programme area. Another project for constructing the bridge as part of the cycle-path crossing the border between Vysoká pri Morave and Marchegg has been approved and implemented in the 2014 – 2020 programming period. However, the significant amount of funds, time required for the preparation of such investment projects and the narrow target group limit the absorption capacity in this area.

Joint investment needs

In the scope of the Interreg programme only sustainable mobility including cycling needs to be addressed.

In summary, there is a need for:

- improvement of local and regional level cross-border accessibility, e.g. by cycle bridge Gajary-Dürnkrot and Angern- Záhorská Ves bridge;
- accelerating the shift of the modal split towards public transport means;
- joint actions to establish cross-border transport plan as well as to harmonise the transport plan;
- closing cross-border public transport gaps and solving last mile issues;
- further embedding the cross-border cycle routes in high level international bike trails;
- improvement, elaboration of concepts and awareness raising regarding sustainable and multimodal mobility in rural and urban areas.

A More social and inclusive Europe

Labour market and social services

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

While the employment rates do not differ significantly, there are **considerable asymmetries on cross-border labour markets**, especially in labour productivity, labour market efficiency and wages.

As regards labour productivity, the Austrian regions have a productivity rate between 100-125% of the EU average, compared to 75% of the EU average for Bratislavský kraj and Západné Slovensko. In addition, overall wages and salaries in the industry, construction and services sector are three times higher in Austria, being one of the drivers behind an asymmetrical flow of people across the border for work or business purposes with significantly higher number of people from the Slovak regions crossing the border to Austria for this purpose.

There is a **strong potential for cross-border labour mobility**, including recognition of skills/ qualifications/ diplomas, social services, pensions, transport, schools/ kindergarten, etc. Several relevant institutions have established 'offices' to help workers and businesses in this regard. In the cross-border region there are EURES offices operating in Wien and Bratislava. Ensuring operability and sustainability of the **EURES Info Points** is important to reduce labour mobility asymmetry between the Austrian and Slovak regions.

Furthermore, there is a **lack of foreign language skills** in both countries, namely the Slovak language skills on the Austrian side while the German language is more widespread in the Slovak Republic. The weak language and thus intercultural skills are hindering cooperation and the necessary change of mindsets.

Overall, the population is well **educated** in the cross-border region. Proportion of people with upper secondary education is higher than the EU-28 average in almost the whole programme area. All regions have also made progress regarding the number of highly educated people. However, at the peripheral parts of the programme region the share of high-level education decreases. There is a **low cross-border student exchange** due to lacking attractiveness of universities. High-quality education and research facilities are mainly concentrated in Wien and Bratislava.

Lifelong learning is more widespread in Austria than in Slovakia. Slovakia is one of the countries with the lowest education budget in the EU, while Austria stays above the EU average. However, Austrian regions need to pay attention to counter steer against gaps between the young population with a migrant background and their native peers. (European Commission - DG REGIO 2019, p. 17).

The **health system** in the region is well developed, especially in urban areas. The Austrian health system, and especially the health services are increasingly depending on immigrant labour force, with a considerable share from the Slovak Republic.

Health and social services have **different legislative framework and competencies arrangements** in both countries, which causes many restrictions and makes cross-border cooperation and project implementation rather complicated. On the other hand, such projects can be feasible if they are inspired by good examples from other countries.

The **ageing population** also presents growing challenges for the social health services, the care system for the elderly people and financing of the public pension system.

In this context, **transition from institutional to family- and community-based care** is relevant and could be promoted for example through joint research activities, knowledge sharing, exchange of good practices and training of service providers and personnel, among others.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Although, the **labour market** issue is not directly addressed by the cross-border interventions under the 2014 – 2020 programme, they are closely linked to other topics like education and training. Based on the current situation, better alignment of interventions addressing labour market issue and needs and education and training should be ensured in the future.

In the programming period 2014-2020, after the 8-th round of call for proposals 5 projects have been approved/committed within the specific objective 1.2 to Improve higher education and lifelong learning. Considering the importance of **education activities** in safeguarding competitiveness in the long run period, it is necessary to underline their relevance also in the new cross-border programme SK-AT for the programming period 2021-2027.

Healthcare activities in the programming period 2014-2020 have been supported under the priority axis 4 Strengthening cross-border governance and institutional cooperation, specific objective 4.1. Strengthen the institutional cooperation. 2 projects have been approved aiming on active ageing and creating competence centre for health of seniors. In addition, one project has been approved with the aim to further strengthen the care of newborns in the border region. At the same time one project has been approved in the specific objective 1.1 aiming on nutrition and healthy aging, as well as another one aiming on development of more favorable system of treatment for early remobilization after total

knee and hip endoprosthesis. While there are significant differences in legislation and public competences between both countries which hamper cooperation, projects in this area can be feasible if they are inspired by good examples from other countries.

Social inclusion and poverty are less addressed in the cross-border region with no approved projects/interventions dealing specifically with these topics during the programming period 2014 – 2020.

Joint investment needs

Different interventions of high cross-border relevance in the field of employment include among other institutional cooperation, education and training and better access to research and innovation. However, the situation is different at the moment due to COVID-19 and assessing future developments on this topic is specifically difficult.

Considering the labour shortage in different sectors, **lifelong learning and an adequate educational response** show room for improvement. In addition, the current crisis will most probably shift the labour market demands in different sectors which might lead to new demands in sectors and/or skills.

Cross-border interventions will be necessary to support synergies between universities and vocational bodies to increase the attractiveness of tertiary education curricula and identify new professional opportunities that could address the labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility. In addition, joint measures are needed to facilitate student exchanges and increase foreign language skills on both sides of the border. The pandemic particularly unveiled the importance of **sufficient health infrastructure**, as well as of the **cross-border cooperation** in case of emergencies.

Cross-border cooperation will be crucial for better tackling these challenges of an **ageing population**. In addition, improved communication on health services available on both sides of the border, including on the procedures of cost reimbursement will allow better public services across the border.

In summary, there is a particular need to:

- address labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility;
- support cooperation between educational, training, research institutions and the labour market;
- continuously address language barriers in the border region to improve the cross-border understanding and the change of mindsets;
- improve cooperation among health services across the border with regards to establishing a legislative framework for cross-border emergency services;
- jointly address challenges regarding the aging population;
- promote the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care.

Tourism and cultural heritage

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

The programme region offers a unique diversity of **cultural heritage** with strong potentials for further cross-border cooperation. In terms of tourist visits, the programme area reports around 30 million overnight stays yearly, which clearly shows the importance of tourism in the region. However, **seasonal dependency** remains an issue, especially in rural areas.

Well-known UNESCO World Heritage sites situated in the programme area include the Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn, the Historic Centre of Wien, and the Lake Neusiedl Cultural Landscape. Moreover, three sites in the Bratislavský kraj and Trnavský kraj are currently on the so-called 'Tentative List' of UNESCO, which is the first step in the registration process for the World Heritage List (i.e. the Memorial of Chatam Sófer; Limes Romanus - Roman Ancient Monuments on the Central Danube and Sites of Great Moravia; Slavonic Fortified Settlement at Mikulčice – Church of St. Margaret at Kopčany).

There is a lack of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products (gastro tourism and wine production) which should be addressed through cooperation among actors on both sides of the border. In the context of the current crisis, this cooperation becomes even more important in addressing the significant decline in tourism and the future challenges arising from the pandemic.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

As regards cultural heritage, this has been a very popular topic in previous programming periods. Promotion of tourism and cultural heritage of the cross-border region will also remain important for the programming period 2021-2027, with strong potentials on ecotourism, cycling, agro-tourism, wine culture, antique Roman culture and other similar activities.

Joint investment needs

Some cross-border interactive **cultural and tourism** databases or travel guides have been established in recent years. However, other common approaches should be established and strengthened to better develop promising sites, theme paths and joint products, paying particular attention to small and family businesses. Fields of cross-border relevance include inter alia eco - and agro-tourism, wine culture, cycling, antique Roman culture and similar activities.

In summary, there is a need for:

- establishment of common approaches to cultural and sustainable tourism;
- joint tourism strategy in the border region to better utilise the cross-border assets;
- better promotion of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products including awareness raising for natural assets and the cultural ties among citizens;
- joint investments in common natural and cultural heritage products, sites and services, with a strong focus on supporting small and family businesses

Cooperation Governance

Cross-border Governance

Challenges, disparities and inequalities in the region

Cooperation between state, municipalities and other public institutions in the programme area is already taking place to some extent. However, there is still a considerable need for further qualitative development and deepening of **institutional cooperation**.

Legal, administrative differences and differences in institutional capacity are a major source of bottlenecks hindering the cross-border cooperation in the programme area. This concerns inter alia the relationship between federal administration and municipalities in Austria and between ministries and self-governing regions and municipalities in the Slovak Republic and different legislative levels.

In addition, the **use of different languages** on both sides of the border is another important issue that impedes cross-border cooperation.

Although there is a strong functional area in the Twin City Region Vienna/Wien-Bratislava with an increasing interdependency, there are **no joint strategies**, nor sufficient functioning cross-border structures like organisations and institutions. The pressure to work together might increase with an upcoming economic crisis and environmental challenges.

Lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period

Interventions under the specific objective 4.1 Strengthen the institutional cooperation have been mainly dedicated to cooperation of public and private institutions in the cross-border region with the aim of improving institutional coordination and strategic planning through development of common planning processes and databases, enhancing institutional cooperation in areas with major societal challenges and building up more effective frameworks to support small scale projects.

Institutional cooperation, strategic planning and reducing administrative barriers in various areas (i.e. health and social services) will remain important for the programming period 2021- 2027. The main benefit should be in the form of mutual cooperation of the institutions across border bringing common solutions of the main challenges in the border region.

The Small Projects Fund is a tool with significant contribution to the visibility of the cross-border programmes. The small projects are very popular and visible among the population of the cross-border regions (such as common sport or cultural events, fairs, etc.). Unfortunately, this opportunity to gain wider publicity through a Small Project Fund was not used in the previous programming period. It is recommended to include a Small Project Fund scheme into the next programme to facilitate participation of small municipalities in the programme activities.

Joint investment needs

Better institutional coordination, reduction of administrative barriers and awareness rising of public authorities about the benefits of cross-border cooperation are necessary in addressing common challenges in key areas such as in environmental protection and disaster risk management, healthcare, public transport, cross-border labour market obstacles, use of languages etc. Shared use of health care or educational facilities could contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in border regions.

Further development and strengthening of cooperation between the authorities and in the administration, despite different structures, is an ongoing challenge to which the cooperation programme can contribute, taking into consideration the legal framework (cooperation in the programme area has no influence on national and European legislation).

In summary, there is a need for:

- joint strategies in various areas (e.g. water management, mobility, tourism, health and social care, regional development, labour market);
- enhanced cooperation among public institutions to jointly address the upcoming challenges regarding economic and ecological changes;
- improvement of data exchange in regard to environmental data, security, labour market, etc.;

- joint fight against preconceptions among the population in the border region;
- joint efforts to overcome the legislative obstacles of the cross-border cooperation.

Compliance with the “do no significant harm” principle

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

All types of actions defined in chapter 2 will be assessed if they are compatible with the DNSH principle. The methodology used will be based on the provisions of the RRF DNSH technical guidance.

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

Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

During programming the IP SK-AT 2021-2027, complementarities and synergies with European, national and regional strategies and programmes have been considered in the strategy building process, based on the findings of the socio-economic analysis. Moreover, the members of the SK-AT programming group are also participating in the programming task forces of other programmes and have national and regional coordination responsibilities, thus enabling complementarity with other initiatives, coordination with fellow Interreg cross-border or transnational programmes, regional-, national-, and other EU programmes.

To ensure that synergies and complementarities are used also during implementation, all projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level (please see further descriptions in section 2 for each SO).

The IP SK-AT 2021-2027 shall account for complementarity and synergies also with fellow Interreg cross-border or transnational programmes, regional-, national-, and other EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, Smart Specialisation Strategies platform, SMEs programmes or instruments deriving from the European Green Deal among others, yet most of them are still under development.

Link with existing macro-regional strategies and other cohesion policy programmes

Cross-border cooperation programmes and macro-regional strategies require trust and confidence between partners (EU Member States, regions, stakeholders, etc.) in order to share a common vision which brings concrete measures and projects. These strategies and the action plans currently being drafted offer a high degree of flexibility in terms of thematic diversity.

For the programme area one macro regional strategy is relevant: the EU Macro-regional strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR). In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the

Interreg programme Slovakia-Austria has made some contribution to the implementation of the Danube Strategy. However, further can be done to strengthen convergence between the strategy and the cross-border programme.

The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Slovakia-Austria could support actions arising from the EUSDR, which also contribute to the specific objectives of the cross-border area. The following topics described in the strategy are considered to be relevant to the SK-AT programme:

Priority Area 4 “To restore and maintain the quality of waters”, aiming at realising of integrated river basin management measures in the Danube Region, and specifically inter alia:

- contributing to the implementation of the DRBMP and its Joint Programme of Measures
- contributing to preventing and reducing water pollution from point and diffuse sources in the Danube Region, especially related to organic substances, nutrients, hazardous and emerging substances inter alia by enhancing wastewater treatment and
- promoting best management practices, by contributing to protecting water resources and safeguarding drinking water supply

Priority Area 5 “To manage environmental risks” inter alia:

- addressing the challenges of water scarcity and droughts in line with the Danube River Basin Management Plan and the ongoing work in the field of climate adaptation,
- providing and enhancing continuous support to the implementation of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan, also taking into account potential impacts of climate change and adaptation strategies and
- supporting the assessment of disaster risks in the Danube Region, encouraging actions to promote disaster resilience, preparedness and response activities.

Priority Area 6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils”, aiming among other at:

- improving management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas through transnational cooperation and capacity building.
- strengthening the efforts to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats occurring in the Danube Region and covered by EU nature legislation and in particular to continue the ongoing work and efforts to securing viable populations of Danube sturgeon species.
- reducing the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region
- maintaining and restoring Green and Blue Infrastructure elements through integrated spatial development and conservation planning.
- improving and/or maintaining the soil quality in the Danube Region

Priority Area 7 “To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)” aiming among other at:

- supporting education, research and ICT in the Danube Region by improvement of framework conditions for building a knowledge society,
- contributing to an increasing level and quality of network activities, at strengthening the existing links and fostering new cooperation in the Danube Region,
- strengthening the realization of the European Research Area in the Danube Region,

- reverting brain drain and foster brain circulation and
- further implementing Smart Specialization Strategies in all Danube countries.

Priority Area 9 “To invest in people and skills” aiming at:

- contributing to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, active citizenship and well-being
- contributing to increased higher quality and efficiency of education, training and labour market systems
- contributing to ensuring inclusive education and training and promoting inclusive labour markets, equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as the promotion of civic competences and lifelong learning opportunities for all
- contributing to closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions

Priority Area 10 “to step up institutional capacity and cooperation” aiming at:

- strengthening institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance.
- increasing involvement of civil society and local actors for effective policy-making and implementation.
- enhancing coordination and knowledge for better use of funding and to develop needs-based funding instruments.

To ensure better synergies and collaboration, good coordination will be needed with the National Coordinators of the EU Macro-regional strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR). Furthermore, the cross-border programme may develop and apply specific project selection criteria to encourage the development of projects that support the priorities of the EUSDR.

Linking with the EUSDR will allow the cross-border programme to reach a bigger impact (on a wider territory), as well as to have good projects with a political support and better visibility. In addition, stronger links with the neighbouring CBC programmes can be built where Slovak and Austrian regions are involved in overlapping cross-border programmes. Establishing close working relationships among the programmes (SK – CZ, SK – HU) with the aim of supporting multi-lateral cooperation (where appropriate) can be of great benefit in addressing joint challenges.

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

The justification for the selection of priorities and specific objectives and related priorities is based on a sound analysis of data, strategies and interests of programme partners and stakeholders. Different points of view in favour of a SO are explained in the format of a comparative analysis, including also few key "challenges and needs" presented under section 1.2 to avoid repetition.

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity (PO 1)	(i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	Priority 1	<p>The socio-economic-analysis, the border orientation paper as well as the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme among others, have shown that the PO1 and specifically SO i) Research and innovation has high potential for cooperation among different actors in the programme area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 highlights the potential that the Vienna/Wien – Bratislava Twin City region has on research and innovation, while cross-border links are still very limited. • The socio-economic-analysis clearly shows the need for more support towards a more balanced distribution of R&D expenditures and personnel in the whole programme area. • There is still unused potential for developing cross-sectoral collaboration in R&D and innovation through clusters and cross-border networking, fostering

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, and Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>knowledge transfer between academia and businesses.</p> <p>Within SO i) it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at exploiting the potential of cross-border cooperation of partners on research and innovation, including their application in business and the use of R&I results by SMEs in areas relevant for cross-border region.</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility (PO 2)</p>	<p>(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches</p>	<p>Priority 2</p>	<p>The SK-AT border region is strongly dominated by a river system. Therefore, climate change adaption and risk management and water management remain important common issues which can be addressed under this specific objective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 clearly supports the promotion of climate change prevention measures (e.g. improvement of the knowledge base, development of disaster risk management strategies related to floods and other disasters etc.). • A likely stronger involvement of the climate change topic for all regions is also stated in the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme. • In addition, existing platforms and networks (e.g. permanent Austro-Slovak

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Border Water Commission) can be taken up by the programme and better utilised to improve the programme implementation in this matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lessons learned and results from the projects of the 2014-2020 programming period on water management form a very good basis for future cooperation. <p>Within SO i) it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at promoting and strengthening coordination and cooperation across the borders to better adapt to climate change impact and improve disaster risk management, especially floods.</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and</p>	<p>(vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>	<p>Priority 2</p>	<p>The cross-border area is characterized by a rich biodiversity and a large number of natural areas. In this context, environment protection and promotion of biodiversity remain important topics with respect to cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In particular, the increasing pressure on settlements in the Twin City Region puts further pressure on land-use, which in its current approach considerably reduces biodiversity.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
sustainable urban mobility (PO 2)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for elaboration and implementation of concepts for preservation of biodiversity and nature protection in urban areas. • There are still gaps in the coverage of Natura 2000 sites in both countries which could be addressed under this specific objective. • The Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 also recommends the development of common and/or joint approaches among regional/local agencies or institutions in the programme area to manage nature protection areas along the border. • Within this SO it is possible to implement a number of measures to promote cooperation among public authorities to improve the growth-pole and agglomeration between the two capital cities and its hinterland (as well as other urban and cross-border growth poles) to reduce land use pressure and jointly manage settlement as well as protected areas in a more sustainable way.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the	(ii) Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing	Priority 3	As stated in the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT, activities related to education are preconditions in safeguarding the competitiveness of the programme area in the

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)	accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training		<p>long run period. Therefore, it is necessary to underline their relevance for the programming period 2021-2027.</p> <p>Some of the key challenges that can be addressed under these specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour shortage in different sectors, which shows room for improvement with respect to lifelong learning and an adequate educational response, as well as closer cooperation with SMEs. • The current crisis which will most probably shift the labour market demands in different sectors and might lead to new demands in sectors and/or skills. • Better cross-border cooperation between educational institutions. • Low expenditure on education and training (in Slovakia) and achievement gaps between young migrants and their native peers (in Austria), as stated in the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019. • Cross-border student exchange, and • Foreign language skills, which is considered as a core cross-border issue in various studies and analyses. As suggested by the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019, bilingualism could be promoted starting with basic education,

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>as well through more extensive and structured language-learning activities across the border.</p> <p>Under this SO various cross-border interventions can be carried out to support synergies between universities and vocational bodies, to increase the attractiveness of tertiary education curricula and identify new professional opportunities that could address the labour shortage and professions concerned in cross-border mobility. In addition, other joint measures can be implemented to facilitate student exchanges and increase foreign language skills on both sides of the border.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)</p>	<p>(v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care</p>	<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>The analysed documents for the cross-border region highlight the relevance of cross-border cooperation with respect to healthcare activities, including in particular the Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019 and the Mid-term evaluation report of SK-AT programme.</p> <p>Under this specific objective several issues can be addressed including among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant differences in the legislative framework and the public competences between Austria and Slovakia, which could be reduced through cross-border interventions.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing challenges arising from the ageing population, which make cross-border cooperation crucial for better tackling these challenges (Socio-economic-analysis; Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019). • Improved communication on health services available on both sides of the border, including on the procedures of cost reimbursement to allow better public services across the border. • The current pandemic particularly unveiled the importance of sufficient health infrastructure, as well as of the cross-border cooperation in case of emergencies. • Cooperation between educational and research institutions and (regional) institutions in implementation
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4)	(vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	Priority 3	The programme region offers a unique diversity of cultural heritage with strong potentials for further cross-border cooperation. The support of tourism and culture is considered as an important development factor in the cross-border area in the previous programming periods, which stresses the relevance of this topic on both sides of the border.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Cross-border cooperation on culture and tourism is supported by various documents (e.g. Mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme, Border Orientation paper SK-AT 2019, etc.) as well as by the stakeholders of the programming groups.</p> <p>Within this specific objective, several cross-border issues can be addressed linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal dependency which remains an issue especially in rural areas. • Better development of promising sites, theme paths and joint products, paying particular attention to small and family businesses. • Lack of cross-border destination management and marketing of tourist products which could be addressed through cooperation among actors on both sides of the border. • Further exploiting opportunities in fields of cross-border relevance such as eco- and agro-tourism, wine culture, cycling, antique Roman culture and similar activities through common products and services. • Coordination of cultural and natural heritage development plans and common initiatives.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the context of the current crisis, cross-border cooperation becomes even more important in addressing the significant decline in tourism and the future challenges arising from the pandemic.
Interreg-specific objective (ISO) 'a better cooperation governance'	b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	Priority 4	<p>Institutional cooperation, strategic planning and reducing administrative barriers in various areas (i.e. health and social services, environmental protection and disaster risk management, public transport, cross-border labour market, use of languages) will remain important topics during the programming period 2021- 2027.</p> <p>As highlighted in the socio-economic-analysis, the border orientation paper as well as the mid-term evaluation report of the SK-AT programme among others, a better cooperation governance will help both countries to address common challenges in the border region, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal, administrative differences and differences in institutional capacity, which concerns inter alia the relationship between federal administration and municipalities in Austria and between ministries and self-governing regions and municipalities in Slovakia, and different legislative levels.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further qualitative development and deepening of institutional cooperation between state, municipalities and other public institutions in the programme area. • Despite a strong functional area in the Twin City Region, there are neither joint strategies, nor sufficient functioning cross-border structures like organisations and institutions. The pressure to work together might increase with an upcoming economic crisis and common environmental challenges. • Use of different languages on both sides is another administrative obstacle to be tackled through cross-border interventions. • Shared use of health care or educational facilities could also contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in border regions. <p>Further development and strengthening of cooperation between authorities and in the administration, despite different structures, is an ongoing challenge to which the cooperation programme can contribute, taking into consideration their legal frameworks (cooperation in the programme area has no influence on national and European legislation).</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective ⁶	Selected specific objective ⁶	Priority	Justification for selection
	c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to people actions	Priority 4	<p>Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to people actions will remain important during the programming period 2021-2027. These actions will help both countries to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better address common challenges in the programme area and reduce preconceptions, • promote the exchange of good practices of trust building initiatives, implement dialogue platforms, trainings and mutual learning. Various dialogue formats should also enhance capacities to engage in participatory processes • link up various organisations such as sports clubs, cultural organisations, schools, etc. <p>Within this SO it is possible to implement a number of measures aimed at supporting bottom-up cooperation among citizens in the programme area and reducing negative mindsets as well as drawing people across the border together.</p>

2. Priorities

2.1 Priority 1: A more competitive and smarter SK-AT border region

2.1.1. (i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

The aim of the specific objective is to promote cross-border cooperation in research and innovation in line with the national smart specialisation strategies.

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

Contribution to specific objective

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

- promoting cross-, multi- and interdisciplinary cooperation activities, i.e. cooperation between multiple sectors in line with the SK and AT smart specialisation strategies
- sharing and transfer of research and innovation results into practice
- raising awareness of both professionals and the wider public towards cross-border R&I

Related types of action

Type of action 1.1.1 Interdisciplinary cross-border cooperation in research and innovation

The aim of the type of action is to strengthen cross-border research and development in fields of common interest, such as life sciences (including biomedicine and biotechnology), (digital) health (including ageing society, food and nutrition), sustainability and environment (including eco-innovation, waste management, climate change and sustainable energy), creative industries, and digital transformation (including smart technologies and services and industry 4.0).

Indicative actions:

- joint research and innovation activities in the fields of common interest
- cooperation activities of Universities with SME/with the private sector to transfer technologies and knowledge from research to practice
- cross-border mobility of researchers, for example by postdoc fellowships and staff exchange

Type of action 1.1.2 Implementing actions including small-scale investments in shared research facilities

The aim of the type of action is to develop or improve shared (digital) research and transfer infrastructure and services.

Indicative actions:

- investments in new or improved shared research and innovation facilities and services of cross-border interest
- developing joint transfer and technology facilities including social innovation such as clusters, high-quality R&D hubs or cross-border incubators
- fostering (digital) social innovation by e.g. setting up digital innovation hubs, accelerators or co-working & technopreneur campus

Type of action 1.1.3 Science education and awareness raising activities

The aim of this type of action is to raise awareness of local and regional actors and of the general public towards R&I.

Indicative actions:

- awareness raising and capacity building activities on local and regional level such as field trips, (digital) trainings or other information activities
- science education in schools and other education institutions including know-how exchange

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to priority area 7 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), for example to the improvement of framework conditions for building a knowledge society, to an increasing level and quality of network activities, to strengthening the existing links and fostering new cooperation in the Danube Region, to strengthening the realization of the European Research Area in the Danube Region, to revert brain drain and foster brain circulation and to implement Smart Specialisation Strategies in all Danube countries.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the Renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation (2018), the Open Innovation Strategy for Austria (2016) or the Slovak Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization (2013) as well as the Action Plan of the Research and Innovation Strategy for the Smart Specialization of the Slovak Republic (2015). They shall use synergies with related initiatives and projects wherever possible and take into account especially results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
1	PO1 i)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	19
1	PO1 i)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	4

1	PO1 i)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0		463	
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Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	PO1 i)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	6	Monitoring / survey	
1	PO1 i)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
1	PO1 i)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	93	Monitoring / survey	

2.1.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from research and innovation activities put into practice
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from better access to research and innovation results
- public and private institutions in the field of R&I by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions, sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, institutions for higher education and research, educational institutions, training centres and schools, SMEs or economic development institutions

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	28	4.073.515 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	29	740.639 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	30	1.110.959 €
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	171	1.481.278 €

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	01	7.406.391 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF	PO1 i)	32	7.406.391 €

2.2 Priority 2: A greener SK-AT border region**2.2.1. (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches**

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance know-how about and resilience towards climate change impacts and risks on regional and local level, including natural hazards.

2.2.1.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate**Contribution to specific objective**

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

- supporting the identification of climate risks and the development of appropriate measures of climate change adaptation and mitigation with a focus on areas particularly affected such as forestry, agriculture, urban development, water management and tourism in the SK-AT border region,
- fostering prevention of natural hazards imposed by climate change such as flood and forest fires, helping to mitigate threats to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods and human lives,
- promoting climate resilient cities and communities by finding optimal, cost-effective, scientifically sound and consistent solutions for sustainable, future-oriented communities and informing authorities and stakeholders as well as the

general public about measures they can take to pro-actively adapt to climate change.

Related types of action

Type of action 2.1.1 Data collection and analysis, know-how exchange and strategy development

The aim of the type of action is to enhance and coordinate know-how and preparedness towards climate change impacts and risks on regional and local level with an interdisciplinary focus.

Indicative actions:

- data collection and data harmonising on climate-related risks in the border region, such as extreme weather, heat or pests or to assess the impact of climate mitigation measures, including open data activities
- studies and analysis on climate change to better understand the interrelation of vulnerability and adaptive capacity in the programme region
- (digital) citizen science activities, for example phenological observations
- (digital) workshops, conferences, discussion panels on possible climate-change adaptation measures involving different types of target groups and stakeholders on local and regional level, including match making activities between technology providers and lead users.
- interdisciplinary strategy development for climate related actions such as soil protection or green and open spaces for recreation and leisure uses under changing climatic conditions
- risk management plans addressing specific sectors in the cross-border region (e.g. water management, agriculture and forestry, tourism, housing, services and infrastructure...), also involving response organisations

Type of action 2.1.2 Implementing joint (pilot) actions including small-scale investments

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

Indicative actions:

- specific local mitigation measures such as greening and shading measures in residential areas or maintenance of water in rural and urban areas
- actions implementing new research results or innovative solutions into practice
- developing toolboxes with different adaptation measures for urban areas, communities and businesses aiming at e.g. reducing heat islands, cooling buildings or adapting infrastructure towards more energy efficiency and reduction of CO₂ emission
- implementing joint (digital) risk management systems and tools, e.g. flood warning
- pilot measures to improve the Danube River management with respect to sediment transport and river morphodynamics for adaptation to climate change

Type of action 2.1.3 Awareness raising activities and capacity building

The aim of the type of action is to raise the awareness and capacity of - predominantly local - decision makers and the wider public on climate change impacts and risks and related adaptation measures

Indicative actions:

- general awareness raising activities on local level addressing the wider public e.g. gaming events, urban gardening activities, fieldtrips, trainings, school and community events
- (digital) seminars or other specific information activities addressing local decision makers on climate-related health risks such as heat, the spread of allergenic and toxic species or outbreaks of infectious diseases, taking into account the learnings of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as on civil protection measures and on natural hazards
- (digital) trainings or field exercises on civil protection to improve the preparedness of the region against climate change related hazards

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) priority area 4 (PA4) "Climate change" strategic topic and to PA5, for example to the development and execution of risk management plans for different hazards, strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness among governmental and non-governmental organizations and anticipating regional and local impacts of climate change.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as the EU Adaptation Strategy (2021), the Austrian Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation (2017) or the Action plan for adaptation to the adverse consequences of climate change in the capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava for the years 2017-2020. They shall use synergies with related initiatives and projects wherever possible and take into account especially results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.2.1.2. Indicators

Table 7: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
2	PO2 iv)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	17
2	PO2 iv)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	3
2	PO2 iv)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	3

2	PO2 iv)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0		320	
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Table 8: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	PO2 iv)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	5	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 iv)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	64	Monitoring / survey	

2.2.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from adaptation and mitigation measures
- public and private institutions in the programme area, especially those in the field of forestry and agriculture, civil protection, tourism and economic development, urban environment and regional development by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience, such as local, regional or national public authorities, sectoral agencies such as local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies, service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services, interest groups including NGOs such as volunteer rescue teams or fire brigades, institutions for higher

education and research, educational institutions, training centres and schools or economic development institutions

- a wide range of further public and private institutions in the programme area taking up solutions and/or improving their resilience to climate change impacts, such as public service providers or SMEs

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

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

No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.2.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

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

Table 9: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	58	4.307.205 €
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	60	1.230.630 €
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	171	615.315 €

Table 10: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	01	6.153.150 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 iv)	32	6.153.150 €

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

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance the region’s overall ecological status and reducing threats to its natural assets, including also circular economy and green technology approaches.

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

Contribution to specific objective

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

- preserving and strengthening biodiversity and cross-border ecological connectivity focusing on "unprotected" areas between already protected sites
- promoting integrated approaches to nature protection and green infrastructure in the urban and rural environment as a main asset for the regional population
- fostering the sustainable use of natural resources and fighting against pollution, including river pollution

Related types of action

Type of action 2.2.1. Data collection and analysis, know-how exchange and interdisciplinary strategy development

The aim of the action is to establish a coordinated knowledge base and interdisciplinary approach in enhancing the region's overall ecological status and reducing threats to its natural assets.

Indicative actions:

- data collection/harmonization, analyses and studies relevant for protection or enhancement of the natural assets of the cross-border region, for example on invasive species or on plastic waste or relevant for protection or restoration of the region's water bodies including floodplains and tributaries
- (digital) citizen science activities, e.g. bird sightings
- interdisciplinary know-how exchange on nature protection, natural heritage and green infrastructure or on (river) pollution and circular economy
- workshops, conferences or fieldtrips or other forms of (digital) know-how exchange among research institutions, local and regional authorities and organisations managing protected areas and sectoral stakeholders
- specific action plans, for example on the conservation and valorisation of special habitats such as meadow orchards
- (interdisciplinary) strategy development addressing nature protection, circular economy or sustainable water management

Type of action 2.2.2 Implementing joint (pilot) actions including small scale investments

The aim of the type of action is the implementation of measures specifically contributing to preserve and restore biodiversity, green infrastructure or to reduce pollution, including also circular economy and green technology approaches.

Indicative actions:

- specific actions improving biodiversity and ecological connectivity, for example renaturation of the river systems, creation of permanent steppingstone biotopes for the interconnection of protected areas or preservation of local orchard trees
- establishing or enhancing green infrastructure for public recreation

- pilot projects in the field of circular economy and green technology, for example developing tool boxes for local business and communities on food or plastic waste management or developing and testing of new processes for waste treatment
- technological digitalisation models on sustainable development and resource awareness

Type of action 2.2.3 Awareness raising and capacity building activities

The aim of the type of action is to improve the awareness of decision makers and stakeholders, local actors and of the general public towards improving the knowledge and level of acceptance on eco-system services and environmental issues, aiming at changes of attitude and behaviour.

Indicative actions:

- awareness raising activities on local level addressing the wider public such as gaming events, urban gardening activities, fieldtrips, trainings, school and community events
- eco-education in (pre-)schools
- (digital) trainings and information activities improving capabilities and skills of different types of stakeholders such as communities, local decision makers or sectoral stakeholders, for example in the field of forestry, tourism, transport, education, water management, regional and urban planning or local SMEs

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EUSDR PA6 Action 3, 4, 5 and 7, for example to improve the management of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas, to halt the deterioration in the status of species and habitats, to reduce the introductions and spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Danube Region or to maintain and restore Green Infrastructure elements.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, especially the European Green Deal (2019), the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy 2030. They shall use synergies with related initiatives and projects wherever possible and take into account especially results from previous INTERREG V-A SK-AT projects and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon 2020.

2.2.2.2. Indicators

Table 12: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
2	PO2 vii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	28
2	PO2 vii)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	4
2	PO2 vii)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions	0	4

				from joint pilot actions		
2	PO2 vii)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	518

Table 13: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	PO2 vii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	8	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
2	PO2 vii)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	104	Monitoring / survey	

2.2.2.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution
- public and private institutions in all sectors directly benefitting from improved green infrastructure and induced eco-system services and reduced pollution, for example in the field of agriculture, forestry, tourism and water management
- public and private institutions in the programme area, for example in the fields of nature protection, forestry, education, hunting, tourism, transport, water management or regional development, material management or green economy

by being involved in the actions or taking up solutions, such as local, regional or national public authorities, sectoral agencies (local or regional development agencies, environmental associations or energy agencies), service providers for infrastructure and/or (public) services, interest groups including NGOs (including Nature parks), institutions for higher education and research, education and training organisations including kindergartens or economic development institutions

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

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

Regarding preserving and restoring biodiversity, a special focus shall be given to the region's sensitive but unprotected areas, such as humid biotopes and wetlands along the region's water bodies as they are crucial to enhance the cross-border connectivity of protected areas and biotopes. Additionally, all areas with valuable natural assets, particularly affected by environmental pressure and/or having potential for restoring the region's biodiversity are to be given priority.

No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.2.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

2.2.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 14: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	79	8.943.021 €
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	171	993.669 €

Table 15: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	01	9.936.690 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ERDF	PO2 vii)	32	9.936.690 €

2.3 Priority 3: A more social SK-AT border region

2.3.1. (ii) improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

The aim of the specific objective is to improve the mutual understanding and to enhance educational capacities.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by strengthening cross-border links through educational activities focused on language, skills and cultural competences.

Related types of action

Type of action 2.3.1 Developing joint strategies and implementing joint solutions including small-scale investments to foster cooperation in the field of education

The main aim of the type of action is to improve joint education, training and lifelong learning activities in order to improve the mutual understanding.

Indicative actions:

- setting up a joint data base by collecting, harmonizing, sharing of data relevant for education, training and lifelong learning
- development of educational programmes improving skills and competences (language and culture; environmental, technical and digital education)
- developing a regional/sub-regional education and training strategy
- developing a strategy for closer cooperation allowing teacher and student exchanges

Type of action 2.3.2 Know-how exchange and training of relevant stakeholders actively involved in educational process

The main aim of the type of action is to support synergies between educational institutions, universities and vocational training institutions to enhance educational capacities.

Indicative actions:

- know-how exchange on effective approaches and methods in education, e.g. language and cultural education, environmental, technical and digital education or inclusive learning
- joint training activities for teachers
- cooperation among organisations providing vocational education

- cooperation among educational institutions in the programme region or between education institutions and the business sector
- job orientation courses

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EUSDR priority area 7 “To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)” and especially to priority Area 9 “To invest in people and skills” aiming on contributing to improved educational outcomes, skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, active citizenship and well-being, contributing to increased higher quality and efficiency of education, ensuring inclusive education, equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as the promotion of civic competences and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Besides, closer cooperation between educational, training and labour market and research institutions is strongly envisaged.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as Education for Sustainable Development, Austrian Life Long Learning Strategy, Qualification Plan (Qualifikationsplan Wien 2030, 2018), Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy 2019-2050 (Smart City Rahmenstrategie 2019-2050, 2019) as well as National Programme for Education and Training Development (2018), Strategy of Lifelong Learning (2011), Action Plan for Lifelong Learning (2011) and Regional Strategy of Education and Learning in the High Schools in Bratislavský samosprávny kraj region for the years 2019-2022 (2019) and Strategy for Education and Learning Development in Trnavský samosprávny kraj (2019) on the Slovak side.

2.3.1.2. Indicators

Table 17: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	PO4 ii)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	15
3	PO4 ii)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2
3	PO4 ii)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	2
3	PO4 ii)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	0	284

Table 18: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	PO4 ii)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across	Nr of organisations	0	2021	4	Monitoring / survey	

			borders after project completion						
3	PO4 ii)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 ii)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 ii)	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of participations	0	2021	57	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.1.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved educational system
- educational institutions such as elementary, primary, secondary and tertiary schools
- institutions for higher education, education and training organizations including kindergartens
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area
- interest groups including NGOs

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

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

Table 19: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	171	5.444.679 €

Table 20: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	01	5.444.679 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 ii)	32	5.444.679 €

2.3.2. iv) ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

The aim of the specific objective is to enhance the cross-border accessibility of healthcare and social services.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by closer and systemic cooperation for better accessibility of health care and social services in the cross-border region.

Related types of action

Type of action 2.4.1 Developing and implementing cross-border strategies and action plans to strengthen cooperation of health care and social services providers

The aim of the type of action is to develop joint strategies and action plans to overcome the different legislative framework, and provide quality health and social services.

Indicative actions:

- data collection and joint research projects, e.g. digital health, etc.
- developing joint strategies and action plans on cooperation between health care providers and educational/research institutions, cooperation between social care providers or between client-oriented health and social services
- innovative concepts of regional health care structures or regarding transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

Type of action 2.4.2 Implementing solutions including small-scale investments to facilitate cross-border cooperation in provision of health care and social services

The aim of the type of action is to strengthen cooperation and provide better access for the health and social services providers across the border.

Indicative actions:

- joint actions for better access to emergency health services across the border
- pilot actions for cooperation of relevant stakeholders providing health care and social services
- activities aiming at joint standards for health care and social services
- joint cross-border awareness raising campaigns

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

There is no direct link of the actions to the EUSDR; however, the actions in the priority shall follow the Commission Priority for 2019-2024 (2019) which focuses on “An economy that works for people targeting inter alia at a social Europa (social protection and inclusion)” and on “Promoting our European Way of Life targeting inter alia at protecting health”.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, for example Health Targets Austria (Gesundheitsziele Österreich, 2017), Masterplan Care Services – draft (Masterplan Pflege - Entwurf, 2018), Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy 2019-2050 (Smart City Rahmenstrategie 2019-2050, 2019), Digital Agenda (Digitale Agenda Wien, 2019) on the Austrian side as well as Strategy of Long Term Social and Healthcare in Slovakia (2019) on the Slovak side.

2.3.2.2. Indicators

Table 22: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	PO4 iv)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	5
3	PO4 iv)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2
3	PO4 iv)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	2

Table 23: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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3	PO4 iv)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 iv)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies / action plans	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 iv)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.2.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved health and social care system
- educational institutions actively working in the field of health and social care
- research institutions benefitting from the results of the joint health research
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area such as hospitals, emergency and rescue systems
- NGOs working in the field of health and social care

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

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

Table 24: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	171	3.859.813 €

Table 25: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	01	3.859.813 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 iv)	32	3.859.813 €

2.3.3. vi) enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

The aim of the specific objective is to valorise the regions touristic assets and sites in a coordinated and sustainable way and to enhance their accessibility.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by preservation, maintenance and valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the cross-border region through sustainable tourism and by connections across the border fostering sustainable forms of mobility.

Related types of action

Type of action 2.5.1 Developing and implementing cross-border strategies and action plans for sustainable tourism development

The main aim of the type of action is to implement cross border tourism strategies and to improve the development of the sustainable tourism.

Indicative actions:

- studies on sustainable and effective valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage in tourism
- initiatives coordinating cultural and natural heritage development plans, e.g. common preparation of exhibitions, joint research initiatives
- action plans developing quality labels in services and products
- development of new innovative mediation/digital formats
- common approaches to valorisation of promising sites and attractions, to promotional activities or to education of public and volunteers
- development of joint thematic tourism routes and offers based on the natural and cultural heritage (e.g. wine, biking, architecture, history, etc.)

Type of action 2.5.2 Implementing joint solutions including small-scale investments in natural and cultural heritage sites and joint tourism services

The main aim of the type of action is to support projects that can contribute to variety of tourism offers and products in a more strategic approach achieving synergies among them.

Indicative actions:

- cross-border destination management and marketing activities such as promotional actions of natural or cultural heritage sites (joint tourism guides, information boards, touristic tours)
- implementation of thematic offers such as routes on joint topics (e.g. the Route of aristocratic families, Iron Curtain Trail, Water paths, Geopark Little Carpathians, Historical parks route)
- preservation and maintenance of the cultural heritage monuments, sites and landmarks including investments in the tourist infrastructure, e.g. visitor centres
- activities related to cross border tourism mobility including small scale investment
- educational activities for relevant bodies/owners of historical sites or volunteers
- awareness raising activities for the general public on natural and cultural heritage
- exchange of know-how, improvement of cooperation and promotion of culture, arts and artists

Type of action 2.5.3 Investments in infrastructure to enhance accessibility of cross-border regions and sites to citizens and tourists

The main aim of the type of action is to improve the local and regional level of cross-border accessibility.

Indicative actions:

- planning process and implementation of sustainable cross-border connections (e.g. Angern – Záhorská Ves, Dürnkrot – Gajary)
- filling the gaps in cycle routes embedded in tourism projects

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) priority area 3 “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts” mainly by:

- developing sustainable forms of tourism (green tourist products and sustainable mobility solutions) and ensuring the sustainable preservation, conservation, socialization and contemporary interpretation of cultural heritage and natural values;
- supporting science, research and new technologies in culture, tourism and people to people contacts by supporting the implementation of a harmonised monitoring system dedicated to sustainable tourism and cultural/natural heritage and promoting the exchange of practices and networking in the field of Arts, further support of creation of linkages and synergies between the cultural and creative sectors and the tourism sector;
- valorizing, promoting and protecting the cultural heritage, inter alia by establishing the Danube Region as important European tourist destination, by promoting the development of quality products, infrastructure and innovative forms of tourism and culture by SMEs and public private partnerships.

All implemented projects shall consider related strategies and action plans on regional, national and EU level, such as Masterplan on Tourism (Plan T – Masterplan für Tourismus, 2019) and Strategy of Tourism Development in Slovakia until 2020 (2013), Marketing Strategy of the Slovak Tourism Board for the years 2014-2020 (2013) on the national level. Furthermore, on the regional level Tourism Strategy (Tourismusstrategie Burgenland 2022+, 2018), Cultural Strategy (Strategie für Kunst und Kultur des Landes Niederösterreich, 2016), Tourism Strategy 2020 (Tourismusstrategie 2020, 2017), Shaping Vienna – Visitor Economy Strategy 2025 (2019) as well as Programme of

Economic and Social Development of Bratislavský samosprávny kraj 2014-2020, Programme of Economic and Social Development of Trnavský samosprávny kraj 2016-2020, Strategy of Tourism Development in Bratislavský samosprávny kraj (2015) and Strategy of Tourism Development in Trnavský samosprávny kraj (2015)

2.3.3.2. Indicators

Table 27: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
3	PO4 vi)	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	3
3	PO4 vi)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	16
3	PO4 vi)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	10

Table 28: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	PO4 vi)	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Nr. of joint strategies and actions plans	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 vi)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	5	Monitoring / survey	
3	PO4 vi)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr of solutions	0	2021	8	Monitoring / survey	

2.3.3.3. The main target groups

The main target groups are:

- the population in the programme area directly benefitting from improved culture and tourism offers and mobility connections
- local tourism service providers
- local business actors actively participating in tourism services
- owners of local cultural sites
- public, regional and local authorities in the programme area
- NGOs actively working/providing services in the field of tourism and culture

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

The whole programme area is targeted by these actions. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.3.3.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

2.3.3.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 29: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	165	2.371.420 €
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	166	7.114.260 €
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	171	2.371.420 €

Table 30: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	01	11.857.100 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ERDF	PO4 vi)	32	11.857.100 €

2.4 Priority 4: A better cooperating SK-AT border region**2.4.1. b) enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions**

The aim of the specific objective is to remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation and fostering institutional cooperation and improving the joint strategy development in areas of cross-border relevance.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by allowing stakeholders at all levels to address cross-border aspects, remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation for long-term development of the programme area and improve know-how and data exchange.

Particular emphasis could be put on strengthening the functional area of the Twin-City region and its hinterland by fostering institutional cooperation and improving the joint strategy development in areas of cross-border relevance. The joint administrative cooperation should address needs and dynamics evolving in the Twin-City region. This is especially important in thematic fields such as mobility, housing, labour market, health and social services.

Related types of action

Type of action 6.1.1: Know-how and data exchange to improve strategy development in the cross border region

The aim of the type of action is to enhance the information and data exchange across border to support joint administrative and legal activities addressing, for example, border obstacles.

Indicative actions are:

- exchange of experience to share solutions and increase their impact
- studies to understand cross-border obstacles, processes and gather expertise
- data collection and harmonization to build a solid data base
- strategy development (e.g. transport and mobility, housing, labour market, demographic change, business development, RTI, rescue services, health education, regional development)

Type of action 6.1.2 joint pilot actions addressing the removal of border obstacles

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

Indicative actions:

- joint activities and know-how exchange among public actors in relevant thematic fields, e.g. in housing, mobility, environmental protection or tourism, etc.

Type of action 6.1.3 strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities/organisations

The aim of the type of action is to improve the institutional capacity towards cross-border cooperation information and skill development in order to understand each other better.

Indicative actions are:

- joint actions promoting skill development of public authorities
- trainings, peer reviews, language training and staff exchanges

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to initiatives in priority area 10 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), for example by aligning the regulatory framework and strengthening cross-border governance, supporting more effective cooperation between administrations, providing support for actions that contribute to the strengthening of institutional capacities to improve decision-making and administrative performance in the border region in the specified topics and increasing the involvement of civil society and local actors for a more effective policy-making and implementation at regional level in the programme area.

The actions shall contribute to 4th objective of the EU strategy of the Alpine region EUSALP "Improving cooperation and the coordination of action in the Alpine Region".

2.4.1.2. Indicators

Table 32: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
4	ISO b)	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Nr of organisations	0	10
4	ISO b)	RCO117	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles identified	Number of solutions identified	0	2
4	ISO b)	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Nr. of solutions from joint pilot actions	0	2

Table 33: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
4	ISO b)	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	3	Monitoring / survey	
4	ISO b)	RCR82	Legal or administrative obstacles across borders	Nr. of obstacles alleviated or resolved	0	2021	1	Monitoring / survey	

			alleviated or resolved						
4	ISO b)	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Nr. of solutions	0	2021	2	Monitoring / survey	

2.4.1.3. The main target groups

According to their thematic scope the main target group comprises local, regional and national public authorities/institutions, intermediary organizations, EGTC and non-governmental organisations in the programme area.

An additional target group is the general public benefitting from cross-border achievements such as better coordinated approaches to effectively address major societal challenges and obstacles in the programme area and to provide services of general interest in a more efficient way.

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.4.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

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

Table 34: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	171	847.151 €
4	ERDF	ISO b)	173	3.388.604 €

Table 35: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	01	4.235.755 €

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

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	32	4.235.755 €

2.4.2. c) build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

The aim of the specific objective is to deepen the cooperation of citizens in the programme area.

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

Contribution to specific objective

The types of action indicated in this section contribute to the specific objective predominantly by supporting bottom-up cooperation among citizens in the programme area and reducing negative mindsets and drawing people across the border together.

Related types of action

Type of action 6.2.1 Joint actions to build up mutual trust and promote citizens' cooperation

The aim of the type of action is to improve the local interaction between citizens across the border and to reduce negative mindsets and improve communication among people in the border area.

Indicative actions:

- people-to-people activities for improving cultural, social and economic relations with a clear cross-border focus by particularly supporting trust and capacity building in the programme area (e.g. educational exchange visits, cultural events, conferences, tourist trips/excursions etc.)
- jointly explore and develop solutions at local level, e.g. for overcoming obstacles in the fields of public administration or facilitating exchange between associations, e.g. in the fields of education or natural and cultural heritage, etc.

Contribution to macro-regional strategies

The actions shall contribute to initiatives in priority area 3 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region according to the EUSDR - Action Plan (2020), with supporting local initiatives related to culture and tourism and related social activities.

2.4.2.2. Indicators

Table 37: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Final target (2029)
4	ISO c)	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Nr of participations	tbd	tbd
4	ISO c)	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Nr of events	tbd	tbd

Table 38: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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4	ISO c)	6.2.1 Joint actions to build up mutual trust and promote citizens' cooperation	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Nr of organisations	0	2021	Monitoring / survey	
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2.4.2.3. The main target groups

The main target group among others are citizens of the cross-border region, local public authorities/institutions, bodies governed by public law, intermediary organisations, EGTC, who can contribute to a common understanding and a common identity in the border region.

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

The entire programme area is targeted. No use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools has been planned.

2.4.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

n/a

2.4.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 39: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	171	2.975.580 €

Table 40: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	01	2.975.580 €

Table 41: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ERDF	ISO b)	32	2.975.580 €

3. Financing plan

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

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

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

Table 42

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)	0 €	9.481.075 €	9.633.371 €	9.788.710 €	9.947.158 €	8.242.421 €	8.407.265 €	55.500.000,00 €
IPA III CBC⁷								
NDICI-CBC⁷								
IPA III⁸								
NDICI²								
OCTP⁹								
Interreg funds¹⁰								
Total								

⁷Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation.

⁸Interreg B and C.

⁹Interreg B, C and D.

¹⁰ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C.

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

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

Table 43

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
PO 1	Priority 1	ERDF	total eligible	7.924.839 €	7.406.392 €	518.447 €	1.981.210 €	1.981.210 €		9.906.049 €	80%	
PO 2	Priority 2	ERDF	total eligible	17.216.129 €	16.089.840 €	1.126.289 €	4.304.033 €	4.304.033 €		21.520.162 €	80%	
PO 4	Priority 3	ERDF	total eligible	22.642.903 €	21.161.592 €	1.481.311 €	5.660.726 €	5.660.726 €		28.303.629 €	80%	
ISO 1	Priority 4	ERDF	total eligible	7.716.129 €	7.211.336 €	504.793 €	1.929.033 €	1.929.033 €		9.645.162 €	80%	
	Total	All funds		55.500.000 €	51.869.160 €	3.630.840 €	13.875.002 €	13.875.002 €		69.375.002 €	80%	

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

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

Text field [10 000/9 215/7 896]

Developing the Interreg programme in line with the partnership and multi-level governance principle, and a bottom-up approach is a distinct requirement set by the EU legislation. In this regard, involvement of a broad range of competent local, regional and national stakeholders as well as contracted experts throughout the entire programming process was a central component of preparation of the 2021-2027 Interreg SK-AT Cross-border cooperation programme (hereinafter referred to as "Interreg Programme" or "Programme").

The programming process of the Interreg 2021-2027 Programme was coordinated by the Programming Group (hereinafter referred to as "PG"). The PG was formed as a platform, where the members of the Task Force of the Interreg SK-AT Programme together with contracted external experts guided the overall programming process of the 2021-2027 Programme.

More specifically, the following partners participated in preparation of the SK-AT cooperation programme as members of the Programming Group:

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as the Managing Authority;
- City of Vienna, Magistrat der Stadt Wien, MA 27 - Europäische Angelegenheiten, Dezernat für EU-Förderungen;
- Lower Austria, Amt d. NÖ Landesregierung, Abt. Raumordnung und Regionalpolitik, Geschäftsstelle für EU-Regionalpolitik;
- Burgenland, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH;
- Bratislava self-governing region;
- Trnava self-governing region;
- City of Bratislava;
- External experts, namely a consortium of 3 consultancy companies: Mecca consulting, M&E factory GmbH, and Consulting Associates, s.r.o.;
- Representative of the European Commission;
- Representatives of the Joint Secretariat of the Slovakia-Austria Programme in Bratislava (hereinafter referred to as „JS“) and representatives of the Joint Secretariat Point in Vienna (hereinafter referred to as „JSP-V“);
- Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic.

In addition, these partners were involved in preparation of the 2021-2027 Programme:

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as Central Coordinating Body;
- Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic;
- Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Vienna;

- Association of Slovak towns and municipalities;
- Federal Chancellery of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism of Austria;
- Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria;
- Embassy of Austria;
- Alliance of Environmental NGOs.

The main task of the Programming Group was to ensure an effective preparation of the Programme, to set its directions and priorities. Besides steering and coordinating the process of programming, the responsibility of the PG was to discuss and agree on relevant documents and major outputs related to the process of programming (territorial analysis, draft Programme document, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and other content-related strategic documents). For particular themes, e. g. simplified cost options, small-scale projects and small project fund, ad-hoc Small Programming Working Groups (hereinafter referred to as "SPWG") were organized in order to support the work of the Programming Group in an effective way.

In overall, the Programming Group for preparation of the 2021-2027 Programme held 12 meetings in the period of September 2020 – January 2022, and 10 SPWG meetings in the period of April 2021 – January 2022.

Regular meetings of the Programming Group were thus a key element in creation of the 2021-2027 Programme. However, due to an unfavourable epidemic situation linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and related introduction of travel restrictions, the involvement of the partners was carried out mainly through a series of online meetings, workshops, interviews and online stakeholder consultations. Regardless of the unusual situation, an active dialogue with a wide range of partners was generated with the aim to identify local challenges and development needs, concrete actions and project ideas, existing and potential applicants, and cooperation networks. In this regard, experience of the Programme partners from 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 Programme implementation periods, valuable information and guidance provided by colleagues from Interact as well as a constant feedback from the representative of the European Commission generated a solid base of knowledge for the 2021-2027 programming process.

The role of the programme partners in the preparation of the Programme

Within the framework of preparation of the Interreg SK-AT 2021-2027 Programme, the contracted experts first elaborated a socio-economic/regional analysis and a SWOT analysis describing the geographical and socio-economic development and the specifics of the Programme area. In addition, the five regions were responsible for ongoing surveys among social and economic actors in respective regions, which served as another important input for the programming, especially in identifying investment priorities, verification of demand for various types of activities and establishing the financial plan.

In the next step, an online stakeholder consultation was conducted by the experts, which offered a unique opportunity to discuss the Programme strategy and its priorities with a wide range of stakeholders during the Programme development phase. The online survey was open in the period of 6th May – 28th May 2021. Altogether, 104 stakeholders from Wien (45), Niederösterreich (17), Bratislava (11), Bratislavský kraj (11), Burgenland (11), Trnavský kraj (7) and from other institutions outside of Programme area (2) participated in the online survey. The mostly represented types of institution were institutions for higher

education and research (31), local, regional or national public authorities (27), educational institutions, training centres and schools (13), sectorial agencies (9) and interest groups including NGOs (8). Results of the stakeholder survey were discussed in the eight meeting of the Programming Group (PG8).

In order to support the ongoing programming, public inquiries and attitude surveys among residents in the cross-border region were carried out, and workshops with potential beneficiaries were organized within the framework of the RegioCoop project.

Based on the results of multiple opinion surveys, stakeholder consultations and public inquiries, the Programme strategy (Chapter 1), Programme priorities (Chapter 2) and Financial plan (Chapter 3) were elaborated by the experts and discussed by the Programming Group in the period of June 2021 – July 2021. All comments received from the PG members were compiled in a list of comments and incorporated in the revised draft version, which was presented in the ninth meeting of the Programming Group (PG9). The remainder chapters of the Programme document were elaborated by the Managing Authority of Interreg SK-AT Programme.

Accompanying the drafting process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (hereinafter referred to as "SEA") was conducted in order to provide information about the potential effects of the Programme on the environment (December 2021 – xxx 2022). In this regard, environmental authorities played an important role and were consulted at several stages to provide input to the assessments. XY workshops with the environmental authorities were organised until the SEA report was published for public consultations on the relevant website and in print media (xxx).

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

The main reason for involving stakeholders in programming is to identify the mutual interests and needs, secure commitment and ownership for the Programme and ensure its smooth practical implementation. According to Article 8 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, partners from competent public authorities, economic and social partners, and civil society partners from all member states shall be involved in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme, and be represented in the Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as „MC"), which is the Programme´s supervisory and decision making body.

Among others, members of the MC are responsible for examination of the progress in Programme implementation, in achieving its milestones and targets, investigation of issues that hinder its performance and measures to address them, evaluation of the implementation of communication and visibility actions as well as for selection of projects and operations.

The composition of the MC shall be ensured by nomination of the participating member states in agreement with the Managing Authority. Consequently, the MC shall adopt its rules of procedure, which shall include provisions on its functioning, its rights and obligations, voting rights of its members and other rules for attending the meetings as well as means and tools for prevention and elimination of potential conflict of interest. The rules of procedures together with the list of MC members shall be published on the Programme website as referred to in Article 36(2) of the Interreg Regulation.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

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

Text field [4 500/4 500/3 903]

Effective communication is key for successful cooperation. Therefore, with the aim to help the Programme achieve its operational objectives and disseminate funding opportunities widely to potential beneficiaries and other interest groups, a communication strategy is to be designed at the outset of the 2021-2027 Programme period.

In overall, the communication strategy shall be mission driven, audience focused and action oriented. For it to be effective, communication objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound. To achieve this, effective internal and external multi-level communication strategy shall be maintained.

Communication objectives

The overriding objective of the communication strategy of the 2021-2027 Programme is to raise the public awareness of the EU-funded projects, ensure transparency and contribute to economic and social cohesion in the cross-border cooperation through effective use of the appropriate range of communication tools.

On the Programme and project level, the communication objective is to ensure timely preparation and implementation of successful CBC projects through well-structured communication with (potential) applicants and project beneficiaries. At this level, communication and promotion activities shall be in part performed within the framework of a small project fund and a project aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area that are both of a strategic importance for the Programme.

The key results of an effective realisation of communication strategy related to the Programme are:

- Programme is a well-known and trusted actor in CBC and information about funding opportunities is easily available;
- Programme is implemented efficiently and transparently, internal communication works well, project best practices are shared with all projects, and information on Programmes' current situation is available;
- Results of the Programme are widely disseminated and easily found.

Target audiences

Accurate identification of the main target audiences is indispensable for successful communication of the Programmes' objectives. After making a thorough segmentation into target audiences, analysis of their specific needs is fundamental for introduction of adequate communication measures.

In the SK-AT Programme, these include:

- Potential applicants that are timely informed about the Programme and calls for proposals, understand the administrative processes and implementation mechanisms;
- Beneficiaries that know and respect the necessary information in the implementation process; and
- Other target audiences, e. g. general public, national, regional, and local authorities, regional agencies, universities, knowledge and research institutes, NGOs and relevant private non-profit organisations and other influential figures that learn about the Programme/project results, and/or are affected by the EU-financed action, and act as multipliers of the information provided.

Communication channels/tools

Efficient communication channels shall be the following:

- (Programme) websites
- Communication campaigns
- European Cooperation Day
- Social media
- Videos/Photographs
- Seminars/workshops/open days for potential beneficiaries (linked to open calls)
- Trainings/meetings for beneficiaries, etc.
- Participation in 3rd-party events
- Traditional media (by default disseminated in e-form).

With the increased uptake of digital engagement, development of a robust digital strategy is critical to a successful communication. One of the most recent and promising external communication tendencies is the use of social media for information and visibility purposes. Social media have proven to be a very cost-effective tool intended for promotion of the Programme that has the potential to reach a variety of target audiences.

Planned budget

The intensity of certain communication activities will depend on the Programmes' implementation phase. In general, á 0,25-1 % of the Programme allocation shall be allocated to communication activities.

Monitoring, evaluation and indicators

The communication objectives shall be measured by several output indicators, e.g. by the number of visitors to Programme website and number of appearances in media. The output indicators and the proposed approach to communication shall be elaborated in detail in the Programme Communication Strategy. In order to evaluate the progress regularly, an Annual Communication Plan shall be elaborated by the nominated communication officer.

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

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

Text field [7 000/6 394/5 457]

Background information

In the previous Programme periods, neither a small project fund (hereinafter referred to as „SPF“) nor another simplified solution for small cross-border initiatives was implemented in the Programme region. Yet, a survey carried out by the project RegioCoop SKAT as well as a workshop on small projects showed a great interest among regional actors for implementation of projects of small volume in the cross-border area. Considering also a substantial decrease in funds that are at disposal in the 2021-2027 Programme, while following the overarching aim of maintaining the number of supported operations, promoting direct cooperation between citizens and institutions, increasing visibility of the Interreg in the whole region and improving the outreach of the Programme by attracting new beneficiaries to the cross-border cooperation as well as offering an easier management with fewer administrative burden for less experienced potential beneficiaries, the Programme partners foresee a great potential for supporting the small projects through establishment of the small project fund (as referred to the Article 24 (1) (b) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059; hereinafter referred to as also “Interreg regulation”).

Small project fund

In the 2021-2027 Programme period, one SPF covering the whole Programme area shall be established in ISO 1 under the administration of the NÖ.Regional. In practical terms, the main goal of SPF implemented under this specific objective is to open up the Programme to small local initiatives and to strengthen the cross-border social cohesion by supporting local cooperation, social, sports and cultural contact and trust building activities, establishing and deepening long-term partnerships, and realisation of other people to people initiatives. In order to develop an attractive system of SPF and achieve the foreseen objectives, sound cooperation between the SPF administrator, the MA/JS, regional bodies and other relevant Programme partners is envisaged.

With respect to provisions governing the maximum ERDF contribution to SPF within an Interreg Programme, approximately EUR 3.2 Mio from ERDF shall be allocated to administration of the SPF, out of which around 0.64 Mio from ERDF shall cover the management costs of the SPF administrator (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (1), (3) and (5)).

As provided for in Article 25 (3) of Interreg Regulation, the SPF administrator is in the first place responsible for preparation and implementation of the SPF project, setting up criteria and procedures for selection of small projects, contracting, monitoring, check of results and closure of the small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (3)).

Despite the fact that tasks such as information, motivation, activation, supervision and guidance of potential project applicants are not explicitly mentioned as primary tasks of the SPF administrator, they are pivotal for a successful implementation of small projects. Due to limited financial resources provided for administration of the SPF, such activities cannot be covered within the SPF budget; however, they could be covered within a project

aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area. Since both projects would be of particular importance for the Programme, their classification as an operation of strategic importance should be considered, and they might be submitted in a joint application.

After deducting the costs for administration of the SPF, approximately EUR 2.56 Mio ERDF shall be available for realisation of small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (5)). The supported small projects shall involve at least one Slovak and one Austrian partner, but not more than three project partners altogether. The total eligible budget shall not exceed EUR 50.000 per project, or EUR 25.000 per project partner. Since especially newcomers, small sized institutions and local communities are invited to implement their cross-border initiatives which might, however, lack previous experience with cross-border project realization, the Programme shall provide its beneficiaries with the opportunity to implement small projects under simplified conditions. In order to make SPF an attractive tool for the administrator and the future project applicants, and thus achieve its full potential, standardized and simplified processes as well as SCOs shall be applied as much as possible.

The foreseen implementation period of the SPF starts from January 2023 until December 2029. Calculated over a period of 7 years, about 130 – 170 cross-border small projects might be implemented.

The following basic requirements shall be fulfilled for realisation of small projects through the SPF in the Interreg SK-AT Programme:

Duration: 12 months for implementation + 1-2 month for accounting;

Partnership: 1 (or more) partner(s) from Slovakia + 1 (or more) partner(s) from Austria, altogether max. 3 partners;

Beneficiaries: All target groups of ISO1 (mutual trust building and people to people actions), but especially Programme newcomers, local border communities and small sized institutions are invited to participate;

Activities: Mutual trust building and people to people actions (ISO1);

Project size: Up to EUR 50.000 total eligible costs per project / EUR 40.000 ERDF per project, but max. EUR 25.000 total eligible costs per project partner / max. EUR 20.000 ERDF per project partner;

Financing: Up to 80% ERDF financing, min. 20 % national contribution to the financing (public or private);

Eligible costs: According to the general eligibility rules of the Programme, i. e. staff costs, office & administration costs, travel & accommodation costs, external expertise & services costs, equipment costs (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 39-43), except from costs of infrastructure and works (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 44);

Use of SCOs: All Programme bodies acknowledge that application of SCOs would considerably reduce the burden for the SPF administrator, small project beneficiaries and FLC's. Any concrete proposals for application of SCOs are to be discussed (TBD);

Project selection: TBD;

Contracting: TBD;

Reporting: TBD.

Support to small-scale projects

In addition to small projects administered by the SPF (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25), support to small-scale projects might be provided in the framework of the 2021-2027 SK-AT Programme (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 24).

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

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

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, Section of Cross-border cooperation programmes	<i>Ing. Lea Malá</i>	<i>lea.mala@mirri.gov.sk</i>
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)	<i>Not relevant</i>		
Audit authority	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Audit and Control Section	<i>Ing. Vladimíra Zacharidesová</i>	<i>vladimira.zacharidesova@mfsr.sk</i>
Group of auditors representatives	<i>Not relevant</i>		
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of European Funds	<i>Ing. Katarína Vallová</i>	<i>katarina.vallova@mfsr.sk</i>

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

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

Text field [3 500/3 107/2 690]

The Managing Authority in agreement with the Programme partners from Austria and Slovakia set up the Joint Secretariat (JS) for the Programme in compliance with the Article 46 (2) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

The head office of the JS is located in the Slovak Republic, within the official structures of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (Managing Authority):

Joint Secretariat for the OP Slovakia-Austria 2021-2027

Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic
Section of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes
Department of Management and Implementation of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes
Unit of Joint Secretariat of Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia – Austria
Račianska 153/A
830 03 Bratislava
Slovak Republic

Next to the head office, a branch office of the JS will be established in Vienna (JS Point Vienna) on the location and under the same organisational and employment structure as the JS Point Vienna of the 2014-2020 programme, i.e.

Municipal Department for European Affairs of the City of Vienna
Kirchberggasse 33-35/9
1070 Vienna
Austria

The main tasks of JS will include in particular:

- providing support to the MA and the MC when performing their functions;
- providing information to potential applicants/beneficiaries regarding financing options within the Programme and assisting beneficiaries when performing operations;
- organizing sessions of the MC, preparing and sending supporting documents;
- technical support to the operation selection process, including processing draft forms for operation appraisal and selection;
- preparing minutes from sessions of the MC and sending them to members of the MC;
- providing information and consultation to potential applicants regarding options to obtain financial support from the Programme;
- supporting search for suitable project partners for project implementation;
- receiving payment requests (at project level);
- performing official registration of payment requests (at project level);
- checking correctness of delivery of payment requests;
- performing administrative check of payment requests;
- arranging expert appraisal of payment requests;
- informing applicants of outcomes of the appraisal process and operation selection process;
- preparing draft contracts on provision of grants from ERDF with lead partners;
- preparing contracts on provision of co-financing from the state budget for Slovak partners;
- processing supporting documents for drawing up annual reports and the final report on Programme implementation;
- being responsible for contents and updates of the official programme web page;
- helping prepare and update any supporting documentation for both applicants and beneficiaries;

- cooperating with the MA when performing tasks related to establishment and operation of the system for recording and storing data about every project in digital form;
- support to the Audit Authority and Accounting functions.

Activities of the JS during the programme period 2021-2027 will be financed from the Technical Assistance resources.

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

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

Text field [10 500/4 881/4 143]

Member State is responsible for preventing, detecting, correcting, and reporting on irregularities including fraud, and for recovering amounts unduly paid. Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities and for recovering amounts unduly paid (according to Article 69 (2) of the CPR), the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Partner. The Project Partners shall repay the Lead Partner the amounts unduly paid in accordance with the agreement existing between them (in line with the Article 52 (1) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

If the Lead Partner fails in securing repayment from other Project Partner(s) or if the Managing Authority fails in securing repayment from the Lead Partner, the Member State on whose territory the Beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to that Lead Partner/Project Partner. The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities between the Member States (according to Article 52 (3) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

Upon request of the responsible Member State, which reimbursed the amount to the Programme budget, the Managing Authority shall provide to this Member State all relevant information concerning the claim of recourse against a Lead Partner and/or a Project Partner within two months from the date of request.

The Managing Authority shall reimburse the funds to the European Union once the amounts are recovered from the Lead partner/ Project Partner/Member State.

For a systemic irregularity or financial correction on Programme level that cannot be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be jointly borne by the Member States in proportion to the ERDF claimed to the European Commission for the period which forms the basis for the financial correction.

For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the Member State, the liability shall be borne by the Member State concerned.

In the case of irregularities that result from the actions taken by the Managing Authority and/or the Joint Technical Secretariat (hereinafter referred to as "JST"), liability towards

the European Commission and the Monitoring Committee shall be borne by the Member State hosting the Managing Authority. In case of irregularities caused by the body hosting and administrating the JTS branch in Vienna, the liability shall be borne by the host institution.

Referring to the Article 52 (4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, once the Member State has reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a Lead Partner/Project Partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that Partner pursuant to its national law. In the event of successful recovery, the Member State may use those amounts for the national co-financing of the Programme. The Member State shall not have any reporting obligations towards the Programme authorities, the Monitoring Committee or the European Commission with regard to such national recoveries.

If a Member State has not reimbursed the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to a Lead Partner/Project Partner pursuant to Article 52 (4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the European Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the Member State in the Programme. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the support from the ERDF or any external financing instrument of the European Union to the Programme. The amount recovered shall constitute assigned revenue in accordance with Article 21 (3) of the Financial Regulation.

With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the Managing Authority by a Member State, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the Programme. The Managing Authority shall then offset with regard to that Member State in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States set out in the Programme in the event of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the European Commission.

Member States agree that neither the Lead Partner nor the Programme's Managing Authority shall be obliged to recover an amount unduly paid that does not exceed EUR 250, not including interest, in contribution from ERDF funds to an operation cumulatively in an accounting year.

Detailed provisions on the division of responsibilities between the Member States in case of irregularities will be provided in the description of the programme management and control system that shall be established in accordance with Article 69 (12) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and if applicable, in other Programme documentation.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

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

Table 10

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






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


Annex

Map 1: Map of the programme area



Sources: Centropemap, Openstreetmap
Cartography and geoinformation: www.mecca-consulting.at
December 2021

-  major rivers
-  National borders
-  NUTS 2
-  NUTS 3 of the programme area
-  other NUTS 3 regions

0 20 40 80
 km

Appendix 3

List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable (Article 22(3) CPR)

Please note that the List is indicative and may be subject of future changes.

Small project fund & 'Mobilization of potential in the cross-border area' project

In the 2021-2027 Programme period, one **SPF covering the whole Programme area** shall be established **in ISO 1 under the administration of the NÖ.Regional**. In practical terms, the main goal of SPF implemented under this specific objective is to open up the Programme to small local initiatives and to strengthen the cross-border social cohesion by supporting local cooperation, social, sports and cultural contact and trust building activities, establishing and deepening long-term partnerships, and realisation of other people to people initiatives.

For a SPF in ISO 1, the following initial framework conditions are being discussed:

<i>Spatial effect of the SPF:</i>	Programme area of Interreg SKAT 2021-2027
<i>Foreseen implementation:</i>	01/2023 – 12/2029
<i>Financial volume of the SPF:</i>	€ 3,2 Mio ERDF (i. e. 2.56 Mio ERDF for realisation of small projects and 0.64 Mio ERDF for management costs)

As provided for in Article 25 (3) of Interreg Regulation, the SPF administrator is in the first place responsible for preparation and implementation of the SPF project, setting up criteria and procedures for selection of small projects, contracting, monitoring, check of results and closure of the small projects (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Art. 25 (3)).

Despite the fact that tasks such as **information, motivation, activation, supervision and guidance of potential project applicants** are not explicitly mentioned as primary tasks of the SPF administrator, they are pivotal for a successful implementation of small projects. Due to limited financial resources provided for administration of the SPF, such activities cannot be covered within the SPF budget; however, they **could be covered within a project aimed at mobilization of potential in the cross-border area**. Since both projects would be of particular importance for the Programme, their classification as an operation of strategic importance should be considered, and they might be submitted in a joint application.