

Annual Implementation Report 2018

of the

COOPERATION PROGRAMME
INTERREG V-A SLOVAK REPUBLIC -AUSTRIA

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1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

The Annual Report 2018 of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Austria Cross-border Cooperation Programme has been prepared pursuant to Annex X of Commission implementing regulation (EU) 2015/207. The report is intended to give an overview of the activities that were undertaken in the frame of the implementation process, focusing on the year 2018.

In the year 2018, the stress of the Managing Authority (MA) with the involvement of all management bodies was given mostly on the acceleration of the implementation process, with the focus on commitment and disbursement of funds. Actually, the year 2018 was the first year when disbursement of funds could be reported. Following the decision made in the end of 2018, the steps have been taken to shorten the pre-implementation phase - from project approval to its contracting to a maximum of 6 months. As of the end of the reporting period, 32 projects have been approved by the Monitoring Committee (MC) under the Programme in the total amount of EUR 49.43 mn from ERDF, which represents 65.13 % of the programme allocation. For 25 projects, decisions on their approval have been issued. The level of contracting represents EUR 36.61 mn from ERDF – 48.24 % of the programme allocation. Disbursement rate remains rather low and has reached EUR 1,91 mn from ERDF, i.e. 2.52 % of the programme allocation. All the implemented measures have lead, among others, to the successful fulfilment of the N+3 rule, which represents one of the key achievements of the Programme in 2018.

The Programme bodies had several meetings including 2 Monitoring Committee (MC) meetings, 4 Task Force meetings and more than 30 technical meetings with the relevant stakeholders (including representatives of MA, RB's, JS, national, regional authorities, EC and relevant Ministries).

During the 2 MC meetings organised in 2018, the key decisions related to the implementation were made. During the 5th MC meeting (held on 20th-21st March 2018 in Trnava, Slovakia) the 2nd selection of project proposals was done. The 6th MC meeting (held on 24th-25th October 2018 in Vienna, Austria) the projects from the 3rd round of call for proposals were approved.

Four open Calls for proposals (hereinafter referred to as CfP) were launched in December 2016, covering the complete budget of the programme for Priority axes 1, 2, 3 and 4, i.e. EUR 71,339,118 of ERDF. After 2 rounds of CfP in 2017 with 39 project proposals submitted, the 3rd round followed in 2018 with the deadline on 29th June 2018, under which 8 applications were submitted. The deadlines of 4th and 5th round

of CfP were approved during the 6th MC meeting and set on 31st January 2019 and 28th June 2019 respectively.

The selection of project proposals submitted in 2nd assessment round of CfP was executed during the 5th MC meeting in March 2018. Out of 13 project proposals in the amount of EUR 13.83 mn from ERDF 8 projects were approved in the overall sum of EUR 8.46 mn from ERDF. The 6th MC meeting dealt, among others, with assessment of the 3rd round of CfP and out of 8 submitted projects totalling EUR 12.6 mn from ERDF 4 were approved in the amount of EUR 4.18 mn from ERDF.

As for the CfP for the Technical Assistance (Priority axis 5), which was launched in May 2017, the last project application (project of the MA/JS) was approved within *per rollam* procedure in January 2018.

The performance framework shows rather mixed results, esp. as regards fulfilment of milestones for 2018 of key implementation steps, as this was achieved only for PA2 (6d) and PA4. No difficulties to be reported in fulfilment of output indicators, as milestones for 2018 were set for 0, thus these were over performed. Rather disappointing results were achieved in financial indicators, as these were all underperformed.

Re-design of the website (www.sk-at.eu) was completed in the end of 2018. The website has a modern user-friendly layout and along with the information about the Programme, including all relevant programme documentation as well as guidelines for applicants/beneficiaries, it provides up-to-date information about upcoming events. At the same time, a webspace for each beneficiary/partner is under development.

Regarding the information and publicity activities, 5 newsletters were sent out to the subscribed readers in 2018. The MA/JS continuously informed the target groups about the stages of the implementation, provided useful information, downloadable documents and project news via the programme website and through Facebook. In addition, Keep database with project information is regularly updated.

In order to support the effective implementation of projects and of the Cooperation programme the MA in close cooperation with JS organized the so-called “Lead beneficiary and partner seminar” in Bratislava on 15th May 2018. The attendance reached more than 60 participants from both countries.

On 27th September 2018, the Annual Event of the Programme with the title “*Competencies without Borders*” took place in Vienna at the Museum of Applied Arts. The event was co-organised by 3 Interreg V-A Programmes, namely Interreg V-A Austria - Hungary, Interreg V-A Austria - Czech Republic and Interreg V-A Slovakia – Austria. Due to its scope and preparation needs, the event was combined with the EC DAY. During the event, which was attended by more than 180 visitors, many interesting expert inputs were presented and discussed, focusing on projects aimed at education and research.

In the reporting year, evaluation activities have been initiated in the form of preparation of Terms of Reference for the mid-term evaluation, which is expected to commence early 2019. The Evaluation Plan was subject to revision in three areas: timeline, budget allocation, as well as the description of the scope of mid-term evaluation. The revised document was approved by the MC at its 6th meeting in October 2018.

Reimbursement of funds

In the year 2018 there was only one summary request for payment (RfP) submitted to the Certifying Authority (CA) amounting to EUR 2,375, 260.35 (EUR 1,909,376.19 from ERDF), which was approved.

Especially the last quarter of 2018 required a very close cooperation among programme management bodies including the MA, RB s, JS, FLC s and Beneficiaries. Weekly status reports, daily personal consultations and email/phone communication took place to ensure that the target numbers could be reached by the end of the year.

In 2018, an interest of EUR 425.49 was generated on the CA's account.

The cumulative amount of generated interest as of 31th December 2018 is EUR 1,090.21, which is used to finance the program on an ongoing basis.

In 2018 the CA declared to the EC the total eligible expenditure of EUR 2,018,971.18 from ERDF, which represents 2.66 % of the total programme allocation.

The received payments on the CA account from the EC represent for the EU source EUR 1,911, 939.91, out of which EUR 94,865.85 constitutes the pre-financing for the year 2018 (reduced by non-cleared prepayment for 2017) and EUR 1,817,074.06 represents 90 % of the reimbursement of the 1st interim payment application submitted to the EC.

EC cumulative payments of EUR 6,180,903.22 were received for this programming period under the Programme.

The CA registered no irregularities in the reported period. At the same time no certification verifications were performed during the reporting period.

Since the Cooperation Programme was approved by the European Commission on 28th July 2015, the financial commitment for 2015 in the amount of EUR 1.39 mn had to be fulfilled (according to the N+3 rule methodology) by the end of 2018, which was successfully achieved.

Progress in the designation process

Pursuant to the elaboration and update of the key documents (mainly in 2017), such as Description of the Management and Control System, ERDF contract templates, Manuals for Applicants and Beneficiaries, Manual for Technical Assistance (TA), Eligibility rules, Internal manuals (procedures) within MA, Joint Secretariat (JS) in Bratislava, as well as within FLC-body and the decision to use the ITMS2014+ as the only monitoring system (translated also into German), the MA informed the Audit Authority (AA) on 28th February 2018 about the possibility to re-open the designation audit.

The letter sent to the EC on 5th September 2018 issuing an unqualified opinion confirmed the successful designation of the Programme, which could be assessed as a key precondition for the Programme implementation. As a next step, the system audit was launched by the AA in December 2018.

Implementation Process and Measures taken

After a rather sluggish start of the Programme (with reasons explained in previous AIRs), in 2018 the Programme achieved a significant progress in implementation with the first requests for payment being reimbursed.

In addition, the MA together with programme partners have taken further measures to accelerate the implementation process. For instance, the MC agreed to reduce the period of 45 calendar days for fulfilment of conditions set by the MC and/or required in order to prepare and sign the decision letters to 25 calendar days, with the aim to achieve successful contracting in less than 6 months from project approval. In addition, the periods for commenting and approving the minutes from the MC meeting were reduced from 3 weeks to 2 weeks.

Regarding the monitoring system, which is one of the key aspects of successful implementation, the relevant parts of the ITMS2014+ system were adjusted for specific needs of the Programme and progressively translated into German (in the light of financial target of the Programme, namely n+3 goal, those parts dealing with financial implementation had priority). The MA organised training sessions on use of ITMS2014+ and provided necessary assistance to its users, with the specific focus on beneficiaries and FLC's from Austria. At the same time, programme documents were updated to comply with the OMNIBUS regulation 2018/2046.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS

3.1 Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
PA 1	Contributing to a smart cross-border-region	<p>Open call for proposal (hereinafter referred to as CfP) was launched on 9th December 2016 with the total amount of EUR 19,683,142 from ERDF (25,90 % out of the total programme allocation).</p> <p>The Priority Axis rests on Investment Priority 1b)¹. The corresponding specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the collaboration of key actors in the regional innovation system in order to enhance knowledge transfer, capacity building and the establishment of common frameworks, common research and innovation activities and joint research facilities. ▪ Improve the capacity of the cross-border educational system to provide human resources knowledge and skills demanded by the regional innovation system.

¹ In accordance with the Regulation (EU) 1301/2013, Article 5

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
		<p>The 1st and 2nd assessment rounds were closed in 2017 with 15 project applications submitted (EUR 24.9 mn) and 3 projects approved by the MC in 2017 (EUR 11.2 mn). 2 projects were approved with conditions at the 5th MC meeting in the amount of EUR 1.4 mn under the 2nd round of CfP in 2018.</p> <p>Under the 3rd and 4th rounds launched in 2018, 4 and 1 projects were submitted respectively in the total amount of EUR 5.9 mn. At the 6th MC meeting 2 projects (one with conditions) under the 3rd round of CfP were approved in the overall sum of EUR 1.6 mn. The deadline for the 4th round of CfP is set to 31st January 2019, while the projects will be selected at the 7th MC meeting in May 2019.</p> <p>Overall, 14.21 mn EUR from ERDF was allocated to 7 selected projects until the end of the year 2018.</p> <p>The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “4” projects. Based on the results from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd assessment rounds there were 7 project application approved, however, only 3 contracted, which means that the milestone was not achieved (4 projects in the contracting phase), i.e. (75 %).</p> <p>Moreover, the related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved. Only EUR 524,185.09 was certified, which represents 17.41% of the target value for 2018 – EUR 3,010,363.</p> <p>The delay has been caused by several factors, such as implementation of legislative changes into programme documents (contract template approved only in January 2018), adaptation of the ITMS2014+ to the specific needs of the Programme, the extended length for approving the minutes (inquiry to partially improve the formulation of project conditions), the deadlines given to the applicants for meeting the conditions (call for completion) and preoccupation of MA capacities with fulfilment of the N+3 rule.</p>
PA 2	Fostering natural and cultural heritage and biodiversity	<p>Open call for proposal was launched on 9th December 2016 with the total amount of EUR 27,820,000 from ERDF (36,70 % out of the total programme allocation).</p> <p>The Priority Axis rests on the Investment Priorities 6c) and 6d)². The corresponding specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen common approaches to valorise the natural and cultural heritage in a sustainable way in order to further develop the programme area as an attractive tourism destination.

² In accordance with the Regulation (EU) 1301/2013, Article 5

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the cross-border integration of functional ecological networks and green infrastructures in order to preserve biodiversity and to contribute to the stability of ecosystems. <p>The 1st and 2nd assessment rounds were closed in 2017 with 14 project applications submitted (EUR 21.3 mn) and 8 projects approved by the MC in 2017 (EUR 15.9 mn). 3 projects were approved with conditions at the 5th MC meeting in the amount of EUR 2.7 mn under the 2nd round of CfP in 2018.</p> <p>Under the 3rd and 4th rounds launched in 2018, 3 and 1 projects were submitted respectively in the total amount of EUR 3.8 mn. At the 6th MC meeting 2 projects under the 3rd round of CfP were approved with conditions in the overall sum of EUR 2.6 mn. The deadline for the 4th round of CfP is set to 31st January 2019, while the projects will be selected at the 7th MC meeting in May 2019.</p> <p>Overall, 21.24 mn EUR from ERDF was allocated to 13 selected projects until the end of the year 2018.</p> <p>The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “6” projects for IP 6c and “4” for IP 6d. Based on the results from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd assessment rounds there were 7 project applications approved within IP 6c and 6 project applications approved within IP 6d, however, only 3 and 4 contracted respectively, which means that the milestone was not achieved for IP 6c; and achieved for IP 6d. , (i.e. 50%)</p> <p>The related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved. Only EUR 231,839.61 was certified, which represents 5.45% of the target value for 2018 – EUR 4,254,824.</p> <p>The delay has been caused by several factors, such as implementation of legislative changes into programme documents (contract template approved only in January 2018), adaptation of the ITMS2014+ to the specific needs of the Programme, the extended length for approving the minutes (inquiry to partially improve the formulation of project conditions), the deadlines given to the applicants for meeting the conditions (call for completion) and preoccupation of MA capacities with fulfilment of the N+3 rule.</p>
PA 3	Supporting sustainable transport solutions	Open call for proposal was launched on 9 th December 2016 with the total amount of EUR 9,655,000 from ERDF (12,70% of the total programme allocation).

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
		<p>The Priority Axis rests on Investment Priority 7c)³. The corresponding specific objective is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve joint planning, coordination and practical solutions for an environmentally friendly, low-carbon and safer transport network and services in the programme area. <p>Within 1st and 2nd assessment round of CfP no projects were submitted. In 2018, the first and only project under this PA was submitted within 3rd assessment round of CfP in the amount of EUR 5,1 mn from ERDF. However, the assessment of this project (“VYSOMARCH”) was suspended due to the fact that declarations on property ownership were not submitted within the given deadlines – condition which was valid at the time of the project submission.</p> <p>The same project is expected to be resubmitted within 4th assessment round of CfP, which will undergo selection at the 7th MC meeting in May 2019.</p> <p>The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “3” projects. Based on the results from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd assessment rounds, no application was approved, which means that the milestone was not achieved.</p> <p>The same concerns the related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) as no funds have been certified so far. Therefore, the target value of EUR 764,559.00 was not achieved.</p> <p>Even at this stage (due to performance so far and the number of projects in the pipeline) we can presume some difficulties when reaching the target value of 7 for the year 2023 for the respective output indicator - No of jointly developed major products & services related to environment friendly and low carbon transport systems though set for 0 for 2018.</p> <p>The factors that determine the performance of this PA are, among others, the financial and organisational complexity of projects, which implies that there is only a limited number of potential beneficiaries (almost exclusively from public sector) with the capacity to undergo such challenge. Moreover, the investments in cross-border infrastructure projects are often subject to public opinion of residents concerned, which may vary. In addition, the 2018 municipal elections in Slovakia, which in some cases resulted in changes in municipal management bodies, might have played a role in postponement of realisation of planned projects.</p>

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
PA 4	<p>Strengthening cross-border governance and institutional cooperation</p>	<p>Open call for proposal was launched on 9th December 2016 with the total amount of EUR 14,180,979 from ERDF (18,70 % out of the total programme allocation).</p> <p>The Priority Axis rests on Investment Priority 11⁴. The corresponding specific objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the institutional cooperation in the cross-border area through mobilizing stakeholders and building the capacities for planning and acting in the framework of multi-level governance. ▪ Strengthen the links between institutions providing pre-primary and primary education (kindergartens and primary schools) to jointly develop and implement educational programmes. <p>The 1st and 2nd assessment rounds were closed in 2017 with 10 project applications submitted (EUR 17.4 mn) and 4 projects approved by the MC in 2017 (EUR 5.4 mn). 3 projects were approved with conditions at the 5th MC meeting in the amount of EUR 4.3 mn under the 2nd round of CfP in 2018.</p> <p>Under the 3rd and 4th rounds launched in 2018, no projects were submitted under this PA.</p> <p>Overall, 9.68 mn EUR from ERDF was allocated to 7 selected projects until the end of the year 2018.</p> <p>The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “4” projects. Based on the results from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd assessment rounds there were 7 project applications approved by the MC and 4 contracted, which means that the milestone was achieved.</p> <p>However, the related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved. Only EUR 482,250.33 was certified, which represents 22.24% of the target value for 2018 – EUR 2,168,856.</p> <p>The delay has been caused by several factors, such as implementation of legislative changes into programme documents (contract template approved only in January 2018), adaptation of ITMS2014+ to the specific needs of the Programme, the extended length for approving the minutes (inquiry to partially improve the formulation of project conditions), the deadlines given to the applicants for meeting the conditions (call for completion) and preoccupation of MA capacities with fulfilment of the N+3 rule.</p>

⁴ in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 1301/2013, Article 5

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
PA 5	Technical assistance	<p>The call for proposal was launched on 21st June 2017 with the total amount of EUR 4,553,560 from ERDF (6% out of the total programme allocation).</p> <p>The corresponding specific objective is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the efficient and smooth implementation of the cooperation programme. <p>In 2017 5 project applications in the total amount of EUR 4,3 mn from ERDF were submitted and out of them 4 were approved. The remaining TA project of MA/JS (TA004) in the amount of EUR 1,97 mn from ERDF was approved in January 2018 within <i>per rollam</i> procedure.</p> <p>During the reporting period all 5 TA projects in the total amount of EUR 4,3 mn from ERDF were contracted.</p> <p>TA beneficiaries proceeded with their tasks related to the overall management, implementation, control and audit as well as the publicity of the programme. One of the highlighted tasks of the year was the completion of the n+3 target as a result of the close coordination of relevant programme partners.</p>

3.2 Common and programme specific indicators

Tab 1: Result indicators (by priority axis and specific objective)

Priority Axis	Specific objective	Indicators	Unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Observations
PA1	1.1	Intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in order to strengthen the regional innovation system	Ordinal scale, min 1, max 7	2.8	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)					2.6	Target was not achieved due to early stage of implementation. We expect now intensive cooperation and the improvement at the end of the programme (in addition, less responses were received during the survey)
	1.2	Intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in order to improve higher education and lifelong learning	Ordinal scale, min 1, max 7	2.5	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)					2.2	Target was not achieved due to early stage of implementation. We expect now intensive cooperation and the improvement at the end of the programme (in addition, less responses were received during the survey)
PA2	2.1	Monthly average of cyclists and pedestrians at the counting point "Freiheitsbrücke" (Morava/March)	persons	15,066	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)					21,020	Target was achieved
	2.2	Number of major bottlenecks along the Alpine-Carpathian Corridor which interrupt the wildlife corridor	number	12	2014	9 (reduction by 25%)						According to information from project partners, the bottlenecks have been improved, however, the concrete fulfilment of the indicator was not defined,

Priority Axis	Specific objective	Indicators	Unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Observations
												MA expects its fulfilment at the end of the programme
PA3	3.1	Capacity in public cross-border transport on an average work day	Total capacity in person	30,700	2014	31,314					38,280	Target was achieved
PA4	4.1	Intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in order to strengthen institutional capacities	Ordinal scale, min 1, max 7	2.9	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)					2.2	Target was not achieved due to early stage of implementation. We expect now intensive cooperation and the improvement at the end of the programme (in addition, less responses were received during the survey)
	4.2	Intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in order to strengthen the cooperation between educational institutions	Ordinal scale, min 1, max 7	2.3	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)					2.0	Target was not achieved due to early stage of implementation. We expect now intensive cooperation and the improvement at the end of the programme (in addition, less responses were received during the survey)

Tab. 2: Common and programme specific output indicators (by priority axis, investment priority)

Priority Axis	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
PA1	1b.1.1	No of organisations/entities participating in research & innovation related collaboration activities (P)	number	25		0	0	0	2						
	1b.1.2	No of jointly developed major products & services related to research & innovation (P)	number	5		0	0	0	0,1 ⁵						
	1b.1.3	No of participants in joint training schemes related to research & innovation (P)	number	125		0	0	0	5						
	1b.1.4	No of research facilities developed (P)	number	1		0	0	0	0,1						
	1b.1.5	No of new researchers in supported entities (EU)	number in FTE	20		0	0	0	1						
	1b.1.6	No of research institutions participating in cross-border projects (EU)	number of organisations	6		0	0	0	0						
	1b.2.1	No of jointly developed major products & services related to higher education and lifelong learning (P)	number	4		0	0	0	0						
	1b.2.2	No of institutions directly involved in cooperation aiming at better quality of higher education and lifelong learning (P)	number	20		0	0	0	0						
	1b.2.3	Number of participants in joint education and training schemes to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders (EU)	persons	500		0	0	0	0						

⁵ Value from approved Monitoring report represents a partially developed product.

Priority Axis	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
PA2	6c.1.1	No of organisations/entities participating in cultural & natural heritage development (P)	number	80		0	0	0	9						
	6c.1.2	No of jointly developed major products & services related to cultural & natural heritage development (P)	number	16		0	0	0	2						
	6c.1.3	No of participants in joint training schemes (P)	number	400		0	0	0	0						
	6c.1.4	Increase in expected number of visits at supported sites of cultural or natural heritage and attraction (EU)	number	32,000		0	0	0	0						
	6d.1.1	No of organisations/entities participating in the development of green infrastructures (P)	number	34		0	0	0	0						
	6d.1.2	No of jointly developed major products & services related to ecological networks and green infrastructures (P)	number	8		0	0	0	6						
	6d.1.3	No of participants in joint training schemes (P)	number	194		0	0	0	83						
	6d.1.4	Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status (EU)	hectares	1,000		0	0	0	1.50						

Priority Axis	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
PA3	7c.1.1	No of organisations/entities participating in the development of environment-friendly and low-carbon transport systems (P)	persons	23		0	0	0	0						Despite of the effort of programme bodies and stakeholders no projects approved for this PA in 2018
	7c.1.2	No of jointly developed major products & services related to environment-friendly and low-carbon transport systems (P)	number	7		0	0	0	0						Despite of the effort of programme bodies and stakeholders no projects approved for this PA in 2018
	7c.1.3	No of participants in joint training schemes (P)	number	175		0	0	0	0						Despite of the effort of programme bodies and stakeholders no projects approved for this PA in 2018

Priority Axis	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
PA4	11.1.1	No of organisations/entities participating in institutional cooperation (P)	number	80		0	0	0	23						
	11.1.2	No of jointly developed major products & services related to institutional cooperation, integrated frameworks and planning tools (P)	number	8		0	0	0	0						
	11.1.3	No of participants in joint training schemes (P)	number	200		0	0	0	0						
	11.2.1	No of jointly developed major products & services related to pre-primary and primary education (P)	number	5		0	0	0	0						
	11.2.2	No of educational institutions directly involved in cooperation at pre-primary and primary level of education (P)	number	25		0	0	0	97						
	11.2.3	Number of participants in joint education and training schemes to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders (EU)	number	625		0	0	0	0						

Priority Axis	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
PA5	5.1.1	No of projects committed and successfully closed (P)	number	53		0	0	0	0						
	5.1.2	Number of major publicity events (P)	number	8 (1 per year in the period 2015-2022)		0	0	1	5						
	5.1.3	Number of compulsory information events for beneficiaries at project start (P)	number	10 (2 per year in the period 2015-2019)		0	0	1	5						
	5.1.4	Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA (EU)	number in FTE	18		0	0	9,7	12,9						

3.3. Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework⁶

Tab. 3: Information on the milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

PA	Indicator Type	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	Actual status in 2018	Observations
PA1	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC for Priority axis 1	EUR	3,010,363	23,156,638	524,185.09	The milestone was not achieved Value includes partially implemented projects
	Key implementation step	No of contracted ⁷ projects (1b)	number	4	9	3	The milestone was not achieved
	Output indicator (ID)	No of jointly developed major products & services related to research & innovation	number	0	5	0.1	The milestone was achieved Value includes partially implemented projects
PA2	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC for Priority axis 2	EUR	4,254,824	32,729,412	231,839.61	The milestone was not achieved Value includes partially implemented projects
	Key implementation step	No of contracted projects (6c)	number	6	16	3	The milestone was not achieved
	Output indicator	No of jointly developed major products & services related to cultural & natural heritage development (6c)	number	0	16	2	The milestone was overachieved Value includes partially implemented projects
	Key implementation step	No of contracted projects (6d)	number	4	8	4	The milestone was achieved

⁶ Submitted in Annual Implementation Reports from 2017 onwards

⁷ According to the guidance issued by the European Commission: This indicator should include also operations that have been selected by the MA or its delegated bodies following a selection process. This may typically involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support, which is provided to the beneficiary in accordance with Article 125(3) (c) CPR.

PA	Indicator Type	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	Actual status in 2018	Observations
	Output indicator (ID 6d.1.2)	No of jointly developed major products & services related to ecological networks and green infrastructures (6d)	number	0	8	6	The milestone was overachieved Value includes partially implemented projects
PA3	Financial Indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC for Priority axis 3	EUR	764,559	11,358,824	0	The milestone was not achieved
	Key implementation step	No of contracted projects (7c)	Number	3	7	0	The milestone was not achieved
	Output indicator (ID 7c.1.2)	No of jointly developed major products & services related to environment friendly and low carbon transport systems (7c)	number	0	7	0	The milestone was achieved
PA4	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC for Priority axis 4	EUR	2,168,856	16,683,505	482,250.33	The milestone was not achieved Value includes partially implemented projects
	Key implementation step	No of contracted projects (11)	number	4	13	4	The milestone was achieved
	Output indicator (ID 11.1.2)	No of jointly developed major products & services related to institutional cooperation, integrated frameworks and planning tools	number	0	8	0	The milestone was achieved Value includes partially implemented projects

3.4. Financial data

Tab 4.: Financial information at priority axis and programme level

1. Table

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
The financial allocation of the priority axis based on the Cooperation programme						Cumulative data on the financial progress of the Cooperation programme					
Priority axis	Fund	Category of region	Basis for the calculation of Union support* (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Total funding (EUR)	Co-financing rate (%)	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations (%) [column 7/ column 5 × 100]	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR) ERDF	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries (%) [column 10/ column 5 × 100]	Number of operations selected
PA1	ERDF		Total eligible cost	23,156,638.00	85	16 944 786,35 €	73,17	16 885 292,81 €	609 570,50 €	2,63	3
PA2	ERDF		Total eligible cost	32,729,412.00	85	17 740 914,03 €	54,20	17 495 873,56 €	293 508,12 €	0,90	7
PA3	ERDF		Total eligible cost	11,358,824.00	85	0,00 €	0,00	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00	0
PA4	ERDF		Total eligible cost	16,683,505.00	85	7 046 237,06 €	42,23	6 941 364,69 €	551 678,83 €	3,31	4
PA5	ERDF		Total eligible cost	5,357,130.00	85	5 313 573,80 €	99,19	5 313 573,80 €	1 237 913,50 €	23,11	5
Total				89,285,509.00		47 045 511,24 €	52,69	46 636 104,86 €	2 692 670,95 €	3,02	19

Tab. 5: Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention for the transmission made by 31 January

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohesion Fund	6 ESF secondary theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA1	ERDF		58 Research and innovation infrastructure (public)	01 – Non-repayable grant	07 – Not applicable	07 – Not applicable					13,511,287.64	13,511,287.64	548,718.78	1
			60 Research and innovation activities in public research centres and centres of competence including networking								1,308,733.61	1,308,733.61	60,851.72	1
			62 Technology transfer and university-enterprise cooperation primarily benefiting SMEs								0	0	0	0
			63 Cluster support and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs								0	0	0	0
			65 Research and innovation infrastructure, processes, technology transfer and cooperation in enterprises focusing on low carbon economy and on resilience to climate change								2,124,765.10	2,065,271.55	0	1
			66 Advanced support services for SMEs and groups of SMEs (including management, marketing and design services)								0	0	0	0
			117 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences								0	0	0	0
			118 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes								0	0	0	0

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohesion Fund	6 ESF secondary theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA2	ERDF		85 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	01 – Non-repayable grant	07 – Not applicable	07 – Not applicable					7,455,887.66	7,261,345.55	191,048.60	4
			86 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites								0	0	0	0
			90 Cycle tracks and footpaths								0	0	0	0
			91 Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas								1,450,160.62	1,450,160.62	0	1
			94 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural heritage assets								8,834,865.75	8,784,367.39	102,459.52	3

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohesion Fund	6 ESF secondary theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA3	ERDF		36 Multimodal transport	01 – Non-repayable grant	07 – Not applicable	07 – Not applicable					0	0	0	0
			43 Clean urban transport infrastructure and promotion								0	0	0	0
			44 Intelligent transport systems (including the introduction of demand management, tolling systems, IT monitoring control and information systems)								0	0	0	0

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohesion Fund	6 ESF secondary theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA4	ERDF		115 Reducing and preventing early school leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal pathways for reintegrating into education and training	01 – Non-repayable grant	07 – Not applicable	07 – Not applicable					4,273,354.07	4,168,481.70	316,114.52	1
			119 Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance								2,772,882.99	2,772,882.99	235,564.31	3
			120 Capacity building for stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectorial and territorial pacts to mobilize for reform at national, regional and local level								0	0	0	0

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohesion Fund	6 ESF secondary theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA5	ERDF		121 Preparation, implementation, monitoring, inspection	01 – Non-repayable grant	07 – Not applicable	07 – Not applicable					3,420,407.30	3,420,407.38	753,418.24	5
			122 Evaluation and studies								946,583.22	946,583.22	242,247.64	2
			123 Information and communication								946,583.22	946,583.22	242,247.6	2

Tab. 6: Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1	2	3	4	5
	The amount of ERDF support ⁸ envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)	Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)
All or part of an operation outside the Union part of the programme area	0	0	0	0

⁸ ERDF support is fixed in the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS

There were no evaluations performed during the reporting period. For more information on the intended evaluation steps and progress in implementation of the evaluation plan please see chapter 10.1.

5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN

5. a) Issues and measures taken

After a rather sluggish start of the Programme (with reasons explained in previous AIRs), in 2018 the Programme achieved a significant progress in implementation with the first request for payment being reimbursed.

During the reporting year, several pre-conditions were fulfilled to enable the actual implementation of the Programme. Pursuant to the elaboration and update of the key documents, it was possible to re-open the designation audit at the end of February 2018. Successful designation of the Programme was confirmed by the letter sent to the EC on 4th September 2018. . As a next step, the system audit has been launched by the AA in December 2018.

Since the Cooperation Programme was approved by the European Commission on 28th July 2015, the financial commitment for 2015 in the amount of EUR 1.39 mn had to be fulfilled (according to the N+3 rule methodology,) by the end of 2018, which was successfully achieved.

In addition, the MA together with programme partners have taken further measures to accelerate the implementation process. For instance, the MC agreed to reduce the period of 45 calendar days for fulfilment of conditions set by the MC and/or required in order to prepare and sign the decision letters to 25 calendar days, with the aim to achieve successful contracting in less than 6 months from project approval. Also the periods for commenting and approving the minutes from the MC meeting were reduced from 3 weeks to 2 weeks.

Regarding the monitoring system, which is one of the key aspects of successful implementation, the after decision to use the ITMS2014+ for Programme purposes ,relevant parts of the ITMS2014+ system were adjusted for specific needs of the Programme and progressively translated into German (in the light of financial target of the Programme, namely n+3 goal, those parts dealing with financial implementation had priority). The MA organised training sessions on use of ITMS2014+ and the JS provided necessary ad-hoc assistance to its users, with the specific focus on beneficiaries and FLC´s from Austria. At the same time, programme documents were updated to comply with the OMNIBUS regulation 2018/2046.

With regard to low number of projects under PA3, the MA has launched negotiations with programme partners with the aim to re-identify needs of programme area and discussions with representatives of regions about possible project proposals in order to distribute the resources in a way that they cover the needs of the region in accordance with Cooperation Programme. For this purpose, during 2019 the MA will organise meetings and prepare indicative list of potential projects. In case of need, it will initiate, in agreement with programme partners, the revision of Cooperation Programme

5. b) Assessment whether progress is sufficient

During the reporting year significant progress has been made in the finalisation of the fundamental requirements to implement the Cooperation programme (as described in previous section), esp. the designation of the Programme, as well as the actual use of the monitoring system ITMS2014+ by beneficiaries.

However, it must be stated that the implementation of the programme is delayed. This is reflected in fulfilling the financial indicators of individual PAs. On the one hand, the commitment rate of the Programme shows rather satisfactory results – 65.1% of the Programme allocation; on the other hand, the disbursement rate of 2.52% remains rather low. The main reasons for the delays within the programme are explained in the chapter 2. From the information and data mentioned above it is evident that there was significant effort made to ensure progress in programme implementation.

As concerns administrative capacities, in 2018 the MA/JS in Bratislava increased the number of project managers to 2, reflecting the increased number of projects in the implementation phase.

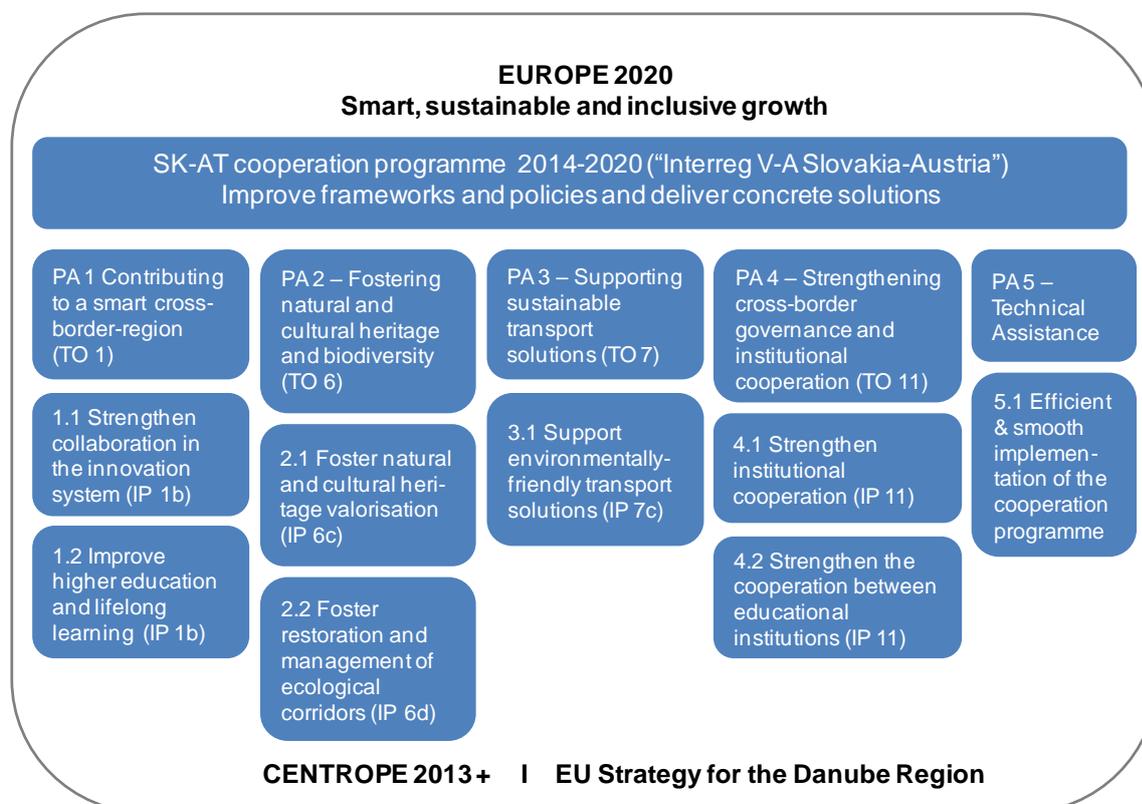
6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY

A citizen's summary of the contents of the Annual Report has been made public and uploaded as an annex to the Annual Implementation Report.

The Annual Report 2018 of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Austria Cooperation Programme has been prepared pursuant to Annex X of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/207. The report is intended to give an overview of the activities that were undertaken in the frame of the programming process, focusing on the year 2018.

Regarding its structure, the Interreg V-A SK-AT cooperation programme addresses five investment priorities (IP) under four priority axes (PA). In addition, a fifth priority axis on technical assistance has been introduced.

Composition of the cooperation programme (priority axes and investment priorities)



The total funding of the Programme represents EUR 89.3 mn, out of which EUR 75,9 mn from ERDF.

Funding of the cooperation programme (priority axes and investment priorities) (EUR)

Priority axis	Thematic objective	EU support (€)	National sources (€)	Total financial sources (€)
PA 1	TO 1	19,683,142	3,473,496	23,156,638
PA 2	TO 6	27,820,000	4,909,412	32,729,412
PA 3	TO 7	9,655,000	1,703,824	11,358,824
PA 4	TO 11	14,180,979	2,502,526	16,683,505
PA 5	Technical assistance	4,553,560	803,570	5,357,130
Total		75,892,681	13,392,828	89,285,509

The programme area consists of the Austrian Länder: Wien, Niederösterreich, Burgenland (only Nordburgenland and Mittelburgenland) and of the Bratislavský kraj and Trnavský kraj on the Slovak side.

The programme area



Pursuant to the approval of the Cooperation Programme by the European Commission on 28th July 2015, throughout the years 2016 - 2018 the Managing Authority supported by the Joint Secretariat and the partners elaborated and updated key programme documents. In 2018 the emphasis was put on the adjustment of ITMS2014+, revision of Programme's Manuals and other programme documents and handouts. The efforts resulted into successful designation of the Programme in September 2018, which was a crucial step in kicking-off the implementation of the Programme allowing the first expenditures of beneficiaries to be certified and declared to the EC at the end of 2018.

Four open Calls for proposals were launched in December 2016, covering the complete budget of the programme for Priority axes 1, 2, 3 and 4, i.e. EUR 71,339,118 of ERDF. After 2 rounds of Call for proposals in 2017 with 39 project proposals submitted, the 3rd round followed in 2018 with the deadline on 29th June 2018, under which 8 applications were submitted. The deadlines of 4th and 5th round of Call for proposals were approved during the 6th MC meeting and set on 31st January 2019 and 28th June 2019 respectively.

As of the end of the reporting period, 32 projects have been approved by the Monitoring Committee under the Programme in the total amount of EUR 49.43 mn from ERDF, which represents 65.13 % of the programme allocation. For 25 projects decisions about their approval have been issued. The level of contracting represents EUR 36.61 mn from ERDF – 48.24 % of the programme allocation. Disbursement rate remains rather low and has reached EUR 1,91 mn, from ERDF, i.e. 2.52 % of the programme allocation. All the implemented measures have lead, among others, to the successful fulfilment of the N+3 rule, which represents one of the key achievements of the Programme in 2018.

Re-design of the website (www.sk-at.eu) was completed in the end of 2018. The site has a modern user-friendly layout and along with the information about the Programme, including all relevant programme documentation as well as guidelines for applicants/beneficiaries, it provides up-to-date information about upcoming events. At the same time, a webspace for each beneficiary/partner is under development.

In order to support the effective implementation of projects and of the Cooperation programme the MA in close cooperation with JS organized the so-called “Lead beneficiary and partner seminar” in Bratislava on 15th May 2018. The attendance reached more than 60 participants from both countries.

On 27th September 2018 the Annual Event of the Programme with the title “Competencies without Borders” took place in Vienna at the Museum of Applied Arts. The event was co-organised by 3 Interreg V-A Programmes, namely Interreg V-A Austria - Hungary, Interreg V-A Austria - Czech Republic and Interreg V-A Slovakia – Austria. Due to its scope and preparation needs the event was combined with the EC DAY. During the event, which was attended by more than 180 visitors, many interesting expert inputs were presented and discussed, focusing on projects aimed at education and research.

7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Not relevant.

8. PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS

8.1. Major projects

Not relevant.

8.2. Joint action plans

Not relevant.

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme

Four open Calls for proposal were launched in December 2016, covering the complete budget of the programme for Priority axes 1, 2, 3 and 4, i.e. EUR 71,339,118 of ERDF. During 2018, 1 assessment round was concluded with the deadline on 29th June 2018. The next assessment round is scheduled to end on 31st January 2019 respectively.

After Programme designation in August 2018, the actual implementation of the Programme, including the submission of expenditures by the beneficiaries, could have started.

Performance of the individual priority axis shows mixed results. As regards the specific target indicator No. of projects contracted, no projects were contracted within the PA3 during the reporting period hence none of the indicators could be met (indicator No. of jointly developed major products & services related to environment friendly and low carbon transport systems (7c) was set at 0 in 2018).

Generally, most of the PAs show deficiencies related to the financial indicator due to the late start of the implementation of the programme. As regards the PA5, the targets are not set; anyway, the PA performance is the most satisfactory in terms of commitment and disbursement of funds in 2018.

PA1

The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “4” projects, which was not achieved, as 3 projects were contracted until the end of 2018 (7 project applications were approved as of 31st December 2018, 4 were in the contracting process – contracts shall be effective as of April 2019 at the latest).

The related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved, as only 17.41% of the target value for 2018 was reached.

Nevertheless, given the number of submitted project applications (19 until the end of 2018) and high level of interest of applicants in project consultations, it is very likely that this PA will be successfully implemented and the targets will be fulfilled.

From the approved projects the key role plays the project DREAM SK-AT (ERDF budget of EUR 8.3 mn), with clear links to EUSDR, therefore being selected as a strategic one as well. Positive outcomes of the project shall contribute to the improved water management of the Danube river, together with the river and wetlands conservation.

PA2

The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “6” projects for IP 6c and “4” for IP 6d, which was partially achieved, as 3 only were contracted for IP 6c (7 project applications were approved) and 4 for IP 6d, thus the respective milestone was achieved (6 project applications were approved) as of 31st December 2018). The output indicators were overachieved in both cases.

The related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved, as only 5.45% of the target value for 2018 was reached.

It is worth mentioning that in spite of relatively high number of approved projects so far, the target for 2023 of 16 projects within IP 6c and 8 projects within 6d might not be achieved. On the other hand, projects within this PA are complex in their nature, which means that other programme indicators related to this PA are likely to be fulfilled even with lower number of contracted projects.

For example, approved projects, such as Treasures, Heritage SK-AT or 3EMoravaNature have a clear potential to positively contribute to the set indicators via promotion of tourism, cultural heritage or conservation of biodiversity along the Morava river.

PA3

As mentioned above, this PA shows zero performance and doesn't fulfil any of the respective indicators at the present.

However, the strategic investment project VYSOMARCH (ERDF budget of EUR 5 mn), under which the construction of cycle bridge Vysoká pri Morave – Marchegg is planned and shall enhance the sustainable transport solutions for the inhabitants in the cross border region and contribute to the objectives and targets set.

As is stated above, given the low number of projects under PA3 the MA has launched negotiations with programme partners with the aim to re-identify needs of programme area and discussions with representatives of regions about possible project proposals in order to distribute the resources in a way that they cover the needs of the region in accordance with Cooperation Programme. For this purpose, during 2019 the MA will organise meetings and prepare indicative list of potential projects. In case of need, it will initiate, in agreement with programme partners, the revision of Cooperation Programme

PA4

The milestone for 2018 for the key implementation step (number of contracted projects) was set on “4” projects, which was achieved, as 4 projects were contracted (7 project applications were approved) as of 31st December 2018.

The related financial indicator (total expenditure certified to EC) was not achieved, as only 22.24% of the target value for 2018 was reached.

From the approved projects the key drivers represent the projects BIG (total budget EUR 3.6 mn from ERDF) focusing on language training for children and ProDam (total budget EUR 1.1 mn from ERDF) focused on flood protection along the Morava and Danube rivers.

PA5

The PA of TA is performing well with the commitment rate at 94,4% and disbursement rate of 21.2%.

9.2 Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

The programme and each project have to act in respect of Horizontal principles. The three principles are the Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women and Sustainable development.

The potential applicants during the consultations process of project preparation were informed about the obligatory requirements relating to HPs.

It is ensured that all projects and their activities are in accordance with these principles. The respective monitoring of compliance rests on the following elements:

- Information sheet as part of the Application Package
- Explanatory text provided by the applicant as part of the Application Form
- Compliance check by the JS as part of the Eligibility Check

- Briefing on options to actively support these principles
- Specific section on the compliance with respectively the contribution to these principles as part of the regular progress reports provided by the projects

In practice, each project is subject to the verification of compliance with equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles defined in EU and national legislation within the assessment and selection procedure. In order to increase the efficiency of the implementation of these principles, internal and external assessors participated in a special training on this issue. Compliance with equal opportunities and non-discrimination is part of the assessment criteria.

With regard to support for persons with disabilities, it is important to note that the building regulations of both participating Member States foresee the compulsory requirement for barrier-free access to public buildings. In case of investment projects, it is checked whether the intended investments consider this aspect.

Attempts have been made to identify a suitable organisation to represent the principle of non-discrimination and equality between men and women in the MC but so far these attempts have not been successful.

9.3 Sustainable development

The Priority Axis 2 – based on Investment Priorities 6c and 6d of the Programme is intended to support projects, which pro-actively support the principle of sustainable development; i.e. a considerable part (about 37%) of the total ERDF-allocation of the programme is dedicated to it. The significant financial weight of the Priority illustrates the willingness of the programme partners to contribute to sustainable development. In case of projects including support for tourism environmentally friendly transport is an important issue in consultation and quality assessment. Similar to the other two horizontal principles, the monitoring of compliance rests on the following elements:

- Information sheet as part of the Application Package
- Explanatory text provided by the applicant as part of the Application Form
- Compliance check by the JS as part of the Eligibility Check
- Briefing on options to actively support these principles
- Specific section on the compliance with respectively the contribution to these principles as part of the regular progress reports provided by the projects

Also in institutional terms environmental sustainability is strongly anchored in the programme. The involvement of environmental authorities and partners in the programme respectively the project cycle is as follows:

- National environmental authorities (i.e. the respective Ministries and a NGO) are members of the MC
- On Austrian side national and regional environmental authorities act in this period as co-financing bodies, thus demonstrating their commitment and consent to those project applications which in their view meet best the national and regional interests and legal provisions

- On Slovak side the State Nature Conservancy has acted frequently as beneficiary in projects and will continue to act as applicant respectively beneficiary; the Slovak Ministry of Environment has also the option to act as Strategic Partner in projects or to provide a Letter of Interest

So far EUR 21.2 mn from ERDF have been committed within this PA. Examples of the supported projects include, for instance, Treasures (total budget EUR 4.4 mn from ERDF), which focuses on promotion of tourism, Heritage SK-AT (total budget EUR 3.1 mn from ERDF), which promotes cultural heritage in the field of winery or 3EMoravaNature (total budget EUR 2.3 mn from ERDF) with the focus on conservation of biodiversity along the Morava river.

9.4 Reporting on support used for climate change objectives

Figures calculated automatically by the SFC2014 based on categorisation data

The indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives is EUR 15,739,030 which represents 20,8% from ERDF allocation of the Programme, mainly in the PA2.

Tab. 7: Calculated amount of support to be used for climate change objectives based on the cumulative financial data by category of intervention

Priority axis	Amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (EUR)	Proportion of total allocation to the operational programme (%)
1	1,806,050.31	9.18%
2	2,535,001.79	9.11%
Total	4,341,052.09	5.72%

The achieved values are in line with the overall Programme performance; however, MA remain positive when forecasting the fulfilment of the goal until the end of the Programme.

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme

The partnership principle has been adequately applied in the implementation process. The main option to actively contribute to monitoring and evaluation of the Programme is the representation in the MC. The MC currently includes representatives of the local and regional levels, as well as a NGO's representing environmental protection and sustainability. The role of partners is also crucial in the process of project's approval, as within the Programme the MC possesses the final word in this respect.

The decision on the selection of partners invited to the MC was taken by the Programming Group. The major objective was to include representatives for the Horizontal Principles (HP), as well as the local level in the MC.

As full Members of the MC, the partners receive all information accessible for MC Members and are entitled to express their wish for further information on all aspects of the implementation process. Furthermore, representatives of civil society organisations and institutions which are in charge of the

thematic issues i.e. economic and social partners, equal opportunities, environmental sustainability, local agenda can be invited to participate as members in an advisory capacity.

During the reporting period, 2 sessions of the MC were held, the first one on 20th -21st March in Trnava, Slovakia and the second one on 24th -25th October in Vienna.

Experience has shown that the interest of other potentially important stakeholders to act as MC members is quite limited since most of social partners as well as many NGOs pro-actively supporting civic society concerns - such as those formulated as horizontal principles of the programme – prefer to act as beneficiaries instead of joining the MC.

Besides the MC the Task Force (TF) has been established to support the programme implementation in all aspects, to discuss and to elaborate templates and documents. Focus has been put also on the discussion and the eventual adjustment of programme procedures. The TF members are nominated by MC and consist of the representatives of MA, representatives of member states, regions, FLC and JS. Other institutions or experts may participate upon request of the MA or upon request of the members of the TF.

During the reporting period 4 meetings of the TF were held, notably on 7th May in Bratislava, on 9th July in Vienna, on 18th September in Vienna and on 10th December in Bratislava.

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

The MA of the Interreg V-A Slovak Republic - Austria has established an Evaluation plan in order to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme. In line with Article 114 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, the Evaluation Plan was submitted and approved by the MC in 2016.

Given the delay in the implementation of the Programme, a modification of the Evaluation plan was approved by the MC at its 6th meeting in October 2018. The Evaluation Plan was revised in three areas: timeline, budget allocation, as well as the description of the scope of mid-term evaluation.

Current Evaluation plan foresees an evaluation in two phases:

- 1st phase (2018-2019): focus on three main tasks: a) revisiting the programme strategy; b) investigating options to reduce the administrative burden and c) evaluating and illustrating key impacts of the programme. If possible at this stage, the evaluation will seek to build a bridge to the strategic objectives of the forthcoming period 2021-2027. In the reporting year, evaluation activities have been initiated in the form of preparation of Terms of Reference for **procurement of the mid-term evaluation**, which is expected to commence **early 2019**.
- 2nd phase (2021-2022): focus on programme impacts and achievements towards specific objectives. In the second stage, it is intended to assess the achievements also from a broader perspective, i.e. from the perspective of the strategic EU objectives.

The indicative budget for both evaluation stages amounts to EUR 60 000 (budgeted in TA as part of the intended TA-project for MA/JS Bratislava).

10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

The communication strategy of the Interreg V-A SK-AT was approved at the 2nd MC Meeting in Bratislava in 2016 and has not been revised so far.

In 2018 key activities (besides the EC Day – reported separately) included the following:

Seminar for Lead beneficiaries and partners (LB/PP Seminar) – on 15th May, at the premises of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development SR. Representatives of the MA, JS and the FLC from Slovakia and from Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland presented the most important information and guidance in the context of the preparation and signature of the contract, the obligations of the beneficiaries/partners resulting from the implementation and monitoring of projects and the submission of payment requests, as well as information on project-level communication. In the afternoon, each project received individual consultation by JS and FLC.

- OPEN DAYS - held on 29th May and 6th June in Bratislava and on 23rd May and 7th June in Vienna. These consultation days were intended for future applicants and partners and were conducted in the form of personal consultations in the presence of representatives of JS/MA, Bratislava and Trnava regions and Austrian states Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland.
- ITMS2014+ trainings - MA has initiated several ITMS2014+ training sessions for beneficiaries. The purpose of these training sessions was to provide guidance on how to work with ITMS2014+ to ensure a smooth programme implementation process. Representatives of MA/JS and FLC also received separate training.
- Europe Day - On 9th May, Bratislava hosted an event opened to the general public, organised by representatives of the EC in Slovakia and the European Parliament, where the Interreg V-A SK-AT Cooperation Programme was presented as well. As part of the accompanying program, visitors could take quizzes, compete in competitions and engage in creative activities related to the EU and the current European Year of Cultural Heritage. Information leaflets on the framework conditions and calls, as well as promotional materials and information to potential applicants regarding the Interreg V-A SK-AT programme were provided.
- New website and its subsequent redesign - a new programme page was launched in 2018 with all necessary information and contacts published. A redesign of the programme website (www.sk-at.eu) was carried out at the end of 2018 in order to provide a more user-friendly layout with all the necessary information and documentation readily accessible. The event calendar has been added to the page to search for all planned activities. Preparation of webspace for individual project beneficiaries/partners on the webpage has started with the assumption of publishing this part of the page in the first half of 2019.

- Facebook - in 2018, online communication via Facebook was more active. Important program information including call for proposal deadlines, up-to-date information about current programme events were published. At the same time FB platform is seen as an important tool for disseminating information about ongoing projects to the general public. In 2019, a more active project related presentation on FB is expected, especially with regard to invitations to project events and information with photo documentation.

Communication objectives and indicators

Bearing in mind the stage of the Programme implementation with actual implementation to be reported in 2018, the achieved values of respective indicators show rather promising results. Almost all of the planned indicators are showing good progress, two of them were fulfilled already in this year (number of website visitors, number of published news). Examples of best practices, as well as information about the progress at the programme level (project related) are examples of future measure especially in regard to the distribution of information publications since this indicator (number of distributed information publications) is still rather low. Generally, at this stage of program implementation, the measures in publicity and communication are linked closely to the project implementation and presentation of project results. The target number of projects to be submitted until 2020 is set for 120 projects; 52 projects were submitted until 2018. A more intense publicity and project consultation work might be necessary in order to attract partners and beneficiaries from the cross border area and to achieve the planned target (120).

Tab. 8 Overview of output indicators to measure and evaluate information and publicity activities for the period 2014 - 2020

Evaluation Criterion	Indicator	Detection Method	Values achieved in 2018	Cumulative values till 31.12.2018	Indicative values for 2014-2020
Level of yearly communication Plan activities					
Output Indicators					
No. of organised information activities	No. of information activities	Internal data summary	12⁹	24	35
EC Day event	No. of events	Implemented events	1¹⁰	2	7
No. of participants at information activities	No. of participants	List of participants	412¹¹	793	2,000
No. of published information publications	Actual No.	Internal data summary	1	1	2

⁹ Information activities implemented in 2018: Seminar for Lead beneficiaries, EC DAY + annual Event, Europe Day, 4x OPEN DAYS, 8x ITMS2014+ training, ad hoc meetings/consultations

¹⁰ EC Day realised by Interact III (Bratislava Self-governing Region) Programme, included promotion of Interreg IV-A SK-AT projects (Bridge of Freedom)

¹¹ List of Participants

No. of distributed information publications	Actual No.	Internal data summary	300	300	6,000
No. of website visitors	No. of accesses	Internal data summary	2,166 ¹²	5,093	2,000
No. of published news, interviews, contributions, etc.	No. of advertisements, PR articles	Internal data summary	41 ¹³	78	50
No. of submitted project applications	Actual No.	No. of registered project applications at JS	8 ¹⁴	52	120

Major annual information activity

On 27th September 2018 the Annual Event of the Programme with the title “*Competencies without Borders*” took place in Vienna at the Museum of Applied Arts. The event was co-organised by 3 Interreg V-A Programmes, namely Interreg V-A Austria - Hungary, Interreg V-A Austria - Czech Republic and Interreg V-A Slovakia – Austria. Due to its scope and preparation needs, the event was combined with the EC DAY. During the event, which was attended by more than 180 visitors, many interesting expert inputs were presented and discussed, focusing on projects aimed at education and research.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

11.1. Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme

The programme has decided to foster integrated development in three so-called focus areas:

- Supporting cooperation in spatial planning and social infrastructure provision in the *Bratislava cross-border agglomeration* (focus area 1); cross-border urban sprawl poses a multi-faceted challenge for local and regional governance in the urban territories of Bratislava and the adjacent municipalities on Austrian side.
- Strengthening coordinated planning, funding and project implementation in the *Danube-March-Thaya Region* (focus area 2) where the differing demands of nature protection, flood protection, agriculture and forestry, transportation and settlement areas require prudent strategy development and negotiation of compromises.
- Strengthening the *Smart City cooperation Vienna-Bratislava* (focus area 3).

¹² Google Analytics

¹³ No. of published articles, contributions, press releases

¹⁴ Includes projects submitted under the 3rd round of CFP, no TA projects.

Several projects that are potentially relevant for these focal areas are already in the implementation phase. Examples include: project BAUM2020 (total budget EUR 0,57 mn from ERDF), project ProDaM (total budget EUR 1,1 mn from ERDF), project AKK river (total budget EUR 1,79 mn from ERDF) and project DREAM SK-AT (total budget EUR 8,33 mn from ERDF).

11.2. Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF

Regarding the strengthening of administrative capacities of authorities, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the SR, acting as the MA of the Interreg V-A SK-AT programme in accordance with the Slovak Government Resolution¹⁵, organised several meetings with the relevant programme bodies, including the Slovak Government Office and the external consulting company, with the request to increase the administrative capacities of the ETC programmes.

Seminar for Lead beneficiaries and partners (LB/PP Seminar) was organised on 15th May. Representatives of the MA, JS and the FLC from Slovakia and from Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland presented the most important information and guidance in the context of the preparation and signature of the contract, the obligations of the beneficiaries/partners resulting from the implementation and monitoring of projects and the submission of payment requests, as well as information on project-level communication. In the afternoon, each project received individual consultation by JS and FLC.

MA has initiated several ITMS2014+ training sessions for beneficiaries. The purpose of these training sessions was to provide guidance on how to work with ITMS2014+ to ensure a smooth programme implementation process. Representatives of MA/JS and FLC received separate training. The JS provided necessary ad-hoc assistance to its users, with the specific focus on beneficiaries and FLC's from Austria.

Slovak beneficiaries implementing projects under Interreg V-A 2014-2020 have the possibility to ask the MA for consultation on the public procurement process concerning approved projects in the premises of the Ministry of Regional Development SR within the consultation hours.

In order to provide up-to-date information on financial management, focusing on the specifics of the ETC programmes, in September 2018, the CA lead a training under the title "Financial Management and Control System for ETC Programs", covering financial management on national level and towards the EC, as well as a practical presentations of processing the payment claim from beneficiary, summary request for payment submitted to CA and payment application/Account submitted to the EC (in the public and non-public part of the ITMS2014+).

¹⁵ According to the Slovak Government Resolution No. 519/2014 from October 2014.

11.3. Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

Given the programme area, the relevant macro-regional strategy is the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The flagship project in this field is DREAM SK-AT (Danube River Research and Management in Slovakia and Austria), which was selected as a strategic one.

As stated in the CP, during the implementation, the cooperation programme Interreg V-A SK-AT ensures appropriate coordination with EUSDR by

- Governance arrangements for ongoing mutual information exchange, coordination and joint planning in areas of joint interest during the programme implementation: on Austrian side the “working group CBC” in the framework of ÖROK (the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning) acts as national committee and ensures a continuous and regular, institutionalised exchange of information on macro-regional strategies among programme partners; vice versa information about programme activities are reported to the established national coordination platform for the EUSDR (and eventual future macro-regional strategies with AT participation). Furthermore, the implementation of the cross-border cooperation programme is embedded into the strategic monitoring process STRAT.AT 2020 and the Partnership Agreement of the Slovak Republic. The coordination is ensured by the Office of Government, which acts as coordinator of EUSDR and ESIF in the country.
- During the inception phase of the programme closer working relationships between programme partners and EUSDR stakeholders were sought in order to identify issues and activities of joint interest in the implementation phase; this should foster the awareness among programme partners who are involved in project generation as well as prepare the ground for capitalisation actions at a later stage (i.e. once the programme can show relevant results).
- Establishing a EUSDR specific category in the monitoring system. Consequently, funding activities and/or projects contributing to the EUSDR are identified in an appropriate way. This approach includes the consideration of EUSDR aspects in programme evaluations and reports, specifying how the cooperation programme contributes to the challenges and priority actions identified by the EUSDR. At project level, during the project application stage, the applicants are asked in the Application form to describe the potential contribution to macro-regional strategies. The intended contribution is assessed during the quality assessment of the project applications. It is part of the assessment of the application’s relevance for EU respectively national and regional strategies.

11.4. Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

Not relevant for Interreg V-A SK-AT.

12. FINANCIAL INFORMATION AT PRIORITY AXIS AND PROGRAMME LEVEL

For the purpose of assessing progress towards the achievement of milestones and targets set for financial indicators in the years 2018 and 2023.

Tab.9

	13	14
	Data for the purpose of the performance review and performance framework	
	Only for report submitted in 2019: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries and certified to the Commission by 31/12/2018 Article 21(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013	Only for final implementation report: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries by 31/12/2023 and certified to the Commission Article 22(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
Priority axis 1	524,185.09 EUR	-
Priority axis 2	231,839.61 EUR	-
Priority axis 3	0,00 EUR	-
Priority axis 4	482,250.33 EUR	-
Priority axis 5	1,136,985.32 EUR	-
Total	2,375,260.35 EUR	-

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The link of the cooperation programme to the Europe 2020 strategy goals is ensured through the definition of thematic objectives (Article 9, Reg. (EU) 1303/2013) and the requirement for thematic concentration (Article 6, Reg. (EU) 1299/2013).

The thematic objectives are further broken down into investment priorities (Article 5, Reg. 1301/2013) on ERDF) and specific objectives for ETC programmes (Article 7, Reg. 1299/2013 on ETC). Priority axes are set out to combine investment priorities (IPs) from one or from different thematic objectives in order to achieve synergies.

The Interreg V-A SK-AT cooperation programme contributes to Europe 2020 through investing in the following thematic objectives (TOs):

- TO 1) Strengthening research, technological development and innovation (IP 1b)
- TO 6) Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (IPs 6c, 6d)
- TO 7) Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key infrastructure networks (IP 7c)

- TO 11) Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities, and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting cooperation (according to Reg. (EU) 1299/2013, Article 7 (a) iv)

Based on the strong and relatively stable economic and political development of the programme area the Interreg V-A SK-AT cooperation programme aims at further socio-economic and administrative integration for a well-performing European region based on sustainable development.

Targeted cross-border cooperation includes:

- Development of strategic frameworks and shared perspectives in a number of areas where action cannot be taken effectively without coherent frameworks, and
- Where awareness of shared needs, challenges and opportunities exists, pilot actions can enable actors to develop new approaches on a common basis.

Due to the advanced stage of cooperation in most of the policy fields addressed by the programme, the activities are implementation-oriented and – depending on the level of development in a particular field – link following elements:

- the definition of joint objectives,
- the development of concrete action plans,
- the establishment of binding commitments of partners,
- the joint implementation and management of action including training and capacity building.

14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Table No. 10 – Overview of the performance framework

Priority axis	Indicator type	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target for 2023	Actual status in 2018
Priority axis 1: Contributing to a smart cross-border region	Output indicator	Number of jointly developed major products & services related to research & innovation	number	0	5	0,10
	Key implementation step	Number of contracted ¹⁶ projects	number	4	9	3

¹⁶ According to the guidance issued by the European Commission: This indicator should include also operations that have been selected by the MA or its delegated bodies following a selection process. This may typically involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support, which is provided to the beneficiary in accordance with Article 125(3) (c) CPR.

	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC	EUR	3,010,363.00	23,156,638.00	524,185.09
Priority axis 2: Fostering natural and cultural heritage and biodiversity	Output indicator	No of jointly developed major products & services related to ecological networks and green infrastructures	number	0	8	6
	Output indicator	Number of jointly developed major products & services related to cultural & natural heritage development	number	0	16	2
	Key implementation step	Number of contracted projects (6c)	number	6	16	3
	Key implementation step	Number of contracted projects (6d)	number	4	8	4
	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC	EUR	4,254,824.00	32,729,412.00	231,839.61
Priority axis 3: Supporting sustainable transport solutions	Output indicator	Number of jointly developed major products & services related to environment-friendly and low-carbon transport systems	number	0	7	0
	Key implementation step	Number of contracted projects	number	3	7	0
	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC	EUR	764,559.00	11,358,824.00	0
Priority axis 4: Strengthening cross-border governance and institutional cooperation	Output indicator	Number of jointly developed major products & services related to institutional cooperation, integrated frameworks and planning tools	number	0	8	0
	Key implementation step	Number of contracted projects	number	4	13	4
	Financial indicator	Total expenditure certified to EC	EUR	2,168,856.00	16,683,505.00	482,250.33

The reasons for not achieving the financial indicator's milestones for 2018 lie mainly in the delayed implementation of the Programme, which has been caused by several factors, such as implementation of legislative changes into programme documents (contract template approved only in January 2018), adaptation of ITMS2014+ to the specific needs of the Programme, the extended length for approving the minutes (inquiry to partially improve the formulation of project conditions), the deadlines given to the applicants for meeting the conditions (call for completion) and preoccupation of MA capacities with fulfilment of the N+3 rule in the last quarter of 2018. At this stage positive improvements in fulfilment of the performance framework (PF) is forecast based on the number of approved projects by the MC and also the number of projects at the preparatory stage. The PA3, however, jeopardises the respective part of the PF. In addition, there are various factors that determine the performance of PA3: the financial and

organisational complexity of projects, which implies that there is only a limited number of potential beneficiaries (almost exclusively from public sector) with the capacity to undergo such challenge. Moreover, the investments in cross-border infrastructure projects are often subject to public opinion of residents concerned, which may vary. In addition, the 2018 municipal elections in Slovakia, which in some cases resulted in changes in municipal management bodies, might have played a role in postponement of realisation of planned projects. However, positive forecasts to be reported as regards future progress of this PA, due to likelihood of the approval of the first project during the 7th MC meeting in May 2019 and also the existence of the projects in the pipeline.

However, it is necessary to mention, that in accordance with the information from the European Commission, failure to achieve milestones for 2018 does not entail any financial consequences for the Programme. Nevertheless, the Programme is obliged to fulfil programme indicators and final targets for 2023.

In the reporting year, the MA adopted an Action plan comprising the measures to ensure the smooth implementation of the Programme and the fulfilment of n+3 rule and programme indicators:

1. Taking steps for fulfilment of n+3 rule for 2019:

- Further simplification of application package and programme documentation for applicants and beneficiaries
- Setting 2 deadlines for CfP round in 2019 – deadline for 4th round on 31st January 2019 and deadline for 5th round on 28th June 2019
- Increasing frequency of consultations for applicants and beneficiaries
- Interactive communication with applicants and beneficiaries on a daily basis
- Enhance public-awareness about the Programme
- Ongoing monitoring of status of Programme’s implementation on a weekly basis
- Providing active assistance to applicants with the submission of applications, including the organisation of ITMS seminars
- Providing specific assistance to Austrian applicants with ITMS2014+
- Providing active support for beneficiaries during the project’s implementation (mainly with submission of expenditures and payment requests)

2. Implementing measures to improve the efficiency of the implementation and to accelerate the disbursement of funds:

- At the FLC level:
 - Shortening of periods for verification of lists of expenditures from 90 days to shorter periods (currently approximately 40 days on SK side)
 - Providing a possibility to submit expenditures below the set threshold of 10 000 €
 - Active communication with beneficiaries on a daily basis and providing support with submission and completion of necessary documentation
- At the JS level:

- Active communication with beneficiaries on a daily basis with the aim to increase the number of submitted lists of expenditures and payment requests
 - Providing active assistance to beneficiaries with submission of expenditures
 - Providing active support with uploading of relevant documentation into ITSM2014+
 - Providing specific assistance to Austrian beneficiaries with ITMS2014+
 - Accelerating the contracting phase – shortening of periods for commenting and approving MC meeting minutes and for fulfilment of conditions set by the MC and/or required in order to prepare and sign the decision letters
 - Shortening of periods for processing the payment requests (currently approximately 4-6 days)
- At the MA level:
 - Monitoring of the status of submitted and processed lists of expenditures and payment requests on a daily basis
 - Active communication with beneficiaries with the aim to increase the number of submitted lists of expenditures and payment requests
 - Uploading documents into ITMS2014+ together with beneficiaries in order to facilitate and accelerate the process of submission and approval
 - Issuing instructions and guidance for ITMS2014+
3. Ensuring the fulfilment of programme indicators:
- Setting deadlines of CfP rounds in a continuous manner
 - Continuation of publishing CfP rounds on the basis of information from consultations and “open days” with the aim to commit remaining allocation and secure the fulfilment of n+3 rule for remaining years and the fulfilment of programme indicators through approval and implementation of good projects
 - Providing a sufficient number of trainings, seminars and “open days” for applicants and beneficiaries
 - Active communication with applicants, regional partners and other partners within the programme
 - Continuation of intensive communication with beneficiaries with the aim to accelerate the process of submission of expenditures, minimise errors on the beneficiary side and secure the submission of payment requests according to agreed schedules
 - Ongoing monitoring of status of Programme’s implementation on a weekly basis (or shorter if necessary)