

**OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OF THE
ROMANIA-BULGARIA CROSS BORDER
AREA 2014-2020**

Based on the model for preparing cooperation programmes under the
European Territorial Cooperation goal

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SECTION 1. STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

(Reference: Article 27(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and point (a) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council)

1.1. Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. *Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.*

1.1.1. Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion

INTRODUCTION

A. Territory

The Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme covers 19.8 % of the surface of the two countries (69 285 km²), 57.75 % of the area belongs to Romania and 43.25% to Bulgaria.

The border between the two countries is 610 km long, 470 km being delineated by the Danube River which is the main environmental feature in the region and where two distinct sections can be identified:

The first goes from the Iron Gates of Danube, at the border between Romania and Serbia, to the end of the borderline with Bulgaria. This 566 km long section is the core of the programme.

The second, situated only in Romania, is 374 km long. It ends at the beginning of the Delta and is characterized by a Plateau situated between the Danube valley in the West and the Black Sea in the Northeast.

Nearly all forms of relief mark the cross-border territory: hills, plateaus, valleys, plains, and floodplains, lakes.

The 393,200 ha of the Romanian area include 78.21% of agricultural lands, 10.77% of forests and other forest lands, and 4.02% of waters and lakes.

The Bulgarian area main specificity is its unique river network (20 major tributary streams of the Danube) which belongs to the Black Sea drainage area and irrigates agricultural lands that represents 52% of all arable lands in Bulgaria and more than 20% of its vineyard fields.

The cross border area includes only one highway that goes from Bucharest to Constanța (220 km). The secondary and tertiary road networks as well as the railroad network are underdeveloped and poorly maintained. The consequence is an overall low accessibility of the region. The Danube and its tributaries are a potential freight and tourism transport route but the low navigability of the river due to anthropic and natural factors hinders its development.

The energy sources are quite rare on the Bulgarian side of the border, but the Romanian side has some crude oil and natural gas reserves and the cross-border area is rich in terms of minerals, such as border coal, limestone, marble, kaolin, stone, siderite, etc.

The region is a very important location for energy production, both Bulgarian and Romanian nuclear power plants are located along the Danube and major renewable energy production sites are close to the RO-BG cross-border area. For instance the main hydroelectric power station (Iron Gate I and II) along the Danube is located on the Serbian-Romanian border.

Moreover, thanks to its natural assets, the region has significant potential to expand the use of renewable energy. Natural conditions for wind power generation are widely acknowledged making the coastal area already a part of the European Large-Scale Wind Power Zone. The region is also well positioned for photovoltaic power generation and geothermal energy is yet another option for the North-East of the Bulgarian part of the area.

The climate of the area is temperate-continental with very hot summers, small amounts of precipitation, and cold winters marked by irregular intervals with strong snowstorms and frequent warming. In the cross-border region the average annual temperature indicates a significant increasing tendency in the majority of the districts/counties. Indeed, the climate change is felt in the area, through droughts and floods and serious erosion (coastal and Danube bank erosion, land erosion).

Forests which cover a remarkable part of the territory are very important for the erosion protection of agriculture lands, as well as for the biodiversity conservation. The fauna in the area has continental and steppe species (voles, shrews, and other small rodents, bats, toads, snakes, etc.). There are large varieties of birds and fishes: over 200 species of birds in the lake areas, islands and forests close to the Danube.

The cross-border region is therefore characterised by an exceptional biological diversity and by valuable natural landscapes which are uneasily accessible and endangered by climate change.

B. Government/Administration

Bulgaria and Romania are centralized unitary States with only one intermediary level of administration units between the central government and the local/municipal authorities: the Bulgarian districts and the Romanian counties which are both NUTS 3 with a legal personality under public law.

A regional level (NUTS 2) was created only for ERDF management and statistical planning purposes and in the Romanian case is considered as an association with only a legal personality under private law.

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border programme is based on the NUTS 3 units and includes seven Romanian counties and eight Bulgarian districts which are composed mainly of municipalities (LAU2).

The 15 administrative units (NUTS III) included into the Programme Area are parts of six administrative regions (NUTS II), as it follows:

- Mehedinti, Dolj and Olt counties - parts of the Romanian South-West Development Region Oltenia;

- Teleorman, Giurgiu and Călărași counties - parts of the Romanian South Muntenia Development Region;
- Constanta county is part of Romanian South-East Development Region;
- Vidin, Vratsa, Montana and Pleven districts - parts of the Bulgarian North West Planning Region;
- Veliko-Tarnovo, Ruse and Silistra districts - part of the Bulgarian North Central Planning Region;
- Dobrich district is part of the Bulgarian North East Planning Region

In Romania, the city council is elected every four years and has numerous responsibilities in relation to housing, urban planning, environmental protection, waste management and public health, transport infrastructure and roads, water supply, education (except universities), management of cultural heritage (depending on its classification), public order, maintenance and operation of green spaces of the city.

The intermediate administration level consists of counties (NUTS 3) whose councils are elected as well every four years and hold responsibility in culture, public health, specific social services and in its own property management.

In Bulgaria the municipality is the only local authority. The city council and the mayor are elected separately with different voting system every 4 years. Bulgaria has the specificity to apply locally the principle of balance of powers since the council is a body of self-government (legislative) and the mayor the separated executive branch of government with very limited prerogatives.

Municipalities have delegated responsibilities for state affairs -the “first two levels” in the education system (construction and maintenance of school buildings, teacher salary), adult training, social security (protection of children and families and elderly care) and certain duties in the health sector. They have also relevant duties regarding local infrastructure, local networks and public interest services (district heating and electricity, water and sanitation, waste disposal, urban transportation, construction and maintenance of municipal roads etc.); leisure & recreation (tourism, culture and sport, etc.), certain environmental responsibilities, such as those for waste management sites (“waste processing plants”) that were transferred to municipalities in the framework of the 2002 environmental law.

The intermediate administration, the district (NUTS 3) is managed by a Governor directly appointed by the national government. His role is to implement the State policy at a regional level in association with the ministries ‘regional institutions as the region direction of the interior, regional inspection of environment or the regional centre of social security.

C. Population

In the latest 2011 census, the population recorded in the cross-border region was of 4.77 million inhabitant, 3.16 million (66%) in Romania and 1.61 million (34%) in Bulgaria. In 2007, the figure was 4.99 million which underlines the decline characterizing the regional demography.

The distribution of the population and the demographic trends are highly related to the co-existence of urban centres and large rural areas. According to the TerrEvi ESPON project, the demographic changes on the Romanian side are less accentuated in the counties where great

urban centres are located. On the Bulgarian side, however, the population decrease is continuous and unaffected by the existence of main urban centres in the districts.

The highest population density in this area is recorded in Romania for the south-eastern county of Constanța and in Bulgaria for the north-central district of Pleven with respectively 102.3 and 62.8 inhabitants per square/km; contrasting with the south-western county of Mehedinți and the north-western district of Vidin that face each other across the Danube and record respectively 59 and 36 inhabitants per square/km.

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region is highly affected by negative outcomes of the demographic transition. The main demographic phenomenon, common to both sides of the Danube, is an accentuated ageing of populations generated by a strong outward migration and a low birth rate. In 2011 the population aged of 65 years old and over represented in relative value 16.6% in Romania and 21.2% in Bulgaria. The rural areas suffer the most from this trend as the district of Vidin where the lowest population density goes along with the highest percentage of 65 years old and over population (25.9%).

This district is not an exception and all the cross-border counties and districts recorded negative natural growth values with the resulted issues in various domains (increased costs for public finances: pensions, social assistance, health, education).

Regarding cultural diversity, population of the Bulgarian districts is more ethnically diverse than in the Romanian counties. We can define two types of ethnic minorities: the ones that are geographically located in some of the counties/districts as the Turkish minority and the ones that are present in all the counties/districts from both sides of the border as the Roma minority.

D. Economy

These 15 administrative units (NUTS 3), except the Constanta county that includes the port city of Constanta, register less than 50% of the EU average GDP per inhabitant (in PPS) moreover they are part of 6 NUTS 2 region which are out of the 10 poorest in the EU.

This rank is reflected on a national level where they produce less than their relative importance in terms of territory and population e.g. 14.49% of the Romanian territory accounts for ~11% of its GDP (in absolute value 14.7 billion EUR) and 29.38% of the Bulgarian territory accounts for 13.51% of its GDP (in absolute value 4.8 billion EUR).

The report of the Regional Competitiveness Index shows that these NUTS 2 regions (in this case formal aggregate of NUTS 3) are at their first development stage and are ones of the most underdeveloped regions in Europe in terms of basic needs as institutions, macro-economic stability, infrastructure, health and primary education.

At first sight, their economies are structured around a dominant service sector (in terms of turnover) nevertheless the importance of industries (mostly owned by multinational corporations) in non-touristic area, a strong agrarian sector in rural areas (with numerous subsistence farming units) and the weight of the public sector in services (healthcare, education, administration) put a heavy contrast on this assertion.

Furthermore, tourism, which is one of the strong asset of the region in terms of employment and turnover in services, is a seasonal and fragile market unequally split between the Black Sea coast

well known for its resorts for mass summer tourism – Constanta (RO), Dobrich (BG) – and the unexploited rest of the territory.

These poor and still developing economies have major consequences for the social cohesion of the population.

In 2012, the working age population(15-64 years old) in the Romanian counties was of 2 million people (14.5% of the whole country working age population). In the Bulgarian districts, 623,000 people (18.6% of the whole country working age population). For this population the level of activity rates is lower than the combined national averages (63%) which are already below the 70% average of the EU 27.

The main part of the cross-border area is plagued by high unemployment (11 out of the 15 administrative units displayed unemployment rates of around or more than 10%) and the unemployment rates on both Bulgarian and Romanian part of the programme area are constantly and worryingly higher than the national averages. In Romania, the cross-border rate is 30% higher than the one of the overall country. The situation is worse in Bulgaria where the unemployment rate for the cross-border region is 20.18%, which is about 64 % higher than the average for the country (12.3%).

According to the data from the ESPON SIESTA project, the cross-border region falls in the category of regions with a high percentage of the population found at risk of *poverty and social exclusion* due to the importance of subsistence farming, the high old-age dependency rate and the high unemployment rate of less-educated persons.

Analysis of the situation of the programme area

A comprehensive territorial analysis has been elaborated in winter 2013 and is provided in the **Annex xx**.

The territorial analysis aimed to analyse both the internal and external factors that have an effect on the programme area, by identifying trends, forces, and conditions with potential to influence its development, to be able to make the choice of the appropriate strategy. The structure of the report was based on the analysis of the most relevant territorial challenges that the EU is facing according to studies such as Regions 2020¹, Scenar 2020², ESPON 3.2.6³. According to the Territorial Analysis and to these studies, we will describe here the main challenges of the cross border area:

A. Climate Change

According to the definitions of ESPON and of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “vulnerability to climate change is a function of exposure, sensitivity and response capacity”

¹OIR et al. (2011): Regional Challenges in the Perspective of 2020 – Phase 2: Deepening and Broadening the Analysis; research study Commissioned by European Commission, Directorate General for Regional Policy, Unit C1 Conception, forward studies, impact assessment;Vienna/Heisdorf/Bonn

²ECNC et.al. (2007): Scenar 2020: Scenario study on agriculture and the rural world; contract study commissioned by DG Agriculture, Directorate G: Economic analysis and evaluation; Brussels

³ ESPON 3.2 (2006): Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in relation to the ESDP and Cohesion Policy –Final Report, Volume 3: Final Thematic Bases and Scenarios; Brussels

(...), it is “the degree to which a system is susceptible to and unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes”.

In the Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border area, all the regions have a very low capacity to adapt to climate changes (they have among the lowest in the eastern and southern part of Europe). This indicator is influenced by five dimensions such as technology, infrastructure, institutions, economic resources, knowledge and awareness, and the geographical location (ESPON 2013).

In the cross-border region the average annual temperature, as a relevant indicator for climate changes, indicates a significant increasing tendency, both in river-side Romanian counties and Bulgarian districts (over 3.6°C).

The effects of climate changes are already being felt and suffered: dry and hot summers, winters with high volumes of snow; areas with desertification tendencies, floods, storms, landslides, seaside and Danube bank erosion.

The increase of the temperature, together with the decrease of the average annual amount of precipitations during summer months, have a major influence on the accentuation of drought and drought risks, especially in the counties of Olt, Teleorman, Dolj (Romania) and in Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Ruse (Bulgaria) where in 2007 drought severely affected the agriculture sector.

The Romanian coast has been subject to serious beach erosion problems since decades. The northern unit, the deltaic coast of the Danube, is the most affected. According to a study prepared by the European Commission, in the last 35 years the shoreline has retreated inland between 180 to 300 meters and 80 ha/year of beach has been lost. Coastal erosion is not only expected to threaten the tourism industry in the summer season due to loss of beaches but might also endanger the safety of housing and public welfare.

In 2006, severe flooding hit the cross-border region of Romania and Bulgaria where 70-80% of the infrastructures related to flood protection were built in the seventies and eighties. Then the Danube reached its highest level in 30 years, with a record of 9.4 m in the northwest of Vidin city in Bulgaria. The counties of Mehedinți, Dolj, and Olt were severely affected, with several villages that suffered from landslides. The damage was significant: 20 dams failed, thousands of houses were flooded and over 50,000 hectares of arable land was destroyed.

These hazards are inter-connected, erosion can be the cause of pollution of agricultural soils, of a loss of navigability on parts of the river network and of a higher vulnerability to floods and especially landslides, several cross-border areas being in a high risk zone of the latest.

As we can see the consequences are not only geographical but also endanger the economy (accessibility, farming, tourism), the reputation of a region as an investment destination that would be perceived as unsafe and first and foremost the life of the inhabitant. These dangers can be prevented, contained and managed by:

- The reinforcement of the overall low regional mitigation capacity of climate change (infrastructures, equipment, norms, administrative capacity, cross-border cooperation for environmental hazard management)
- A concrete and immediate effort to strengthen the current rescue services
- The continuing implementation of previous programming period projects (such as flood prevention measures and hazard zoning, development of risk management system and cross border rescue common system).

For example, the increasing frequency and scale of climate change related floods in the Danube area call for cooperation concerning research related to the prediction and prevention of floods and a general cross-border approach to the problem has to be undertaken forthwith.

These good practices could be helpful to prevent and manage other hazards as the industrial ones in the so-called Seveso sites where dangerous substances are being processed or deposited. These risks may not only lead to air pollution but also to an above ground and underground pollution of waters and soils or to life-threatening situations for the inhabitants of the surroundings.

As we have seen the vulnerability of this region is dramatically high and calls in first instance for emergency measures for the safety of the population and of the conservation of the territory.

In the horizon of 2020, the combined impacts of projected climate change and of the slow developing pace of the region can lead to high financial and human costs; these damages can be reduced significantly through the implementation of mitigation and adaptation actions in the Cross Border area, along with preventive and emergency actions in order to build a safer region.

B. Environment

The Romania-Bulgaria cross border area is characterised by an exceptional biological diversity and by valuable natural and cultural landscapes, which are subject to a variety of pressures and usage conflicts (e.g. from industry, intensive agriculture, climate change, transport as well as mismanaged tourism flows).

Given the geography, the ecological structure of area (structured around the Danube corridor – a major natural corridor connecting the two national sides) and the common ethnographic and historical evolution of the two national sides, a cross-border approach is highly valuable and coherent in tackling the issue of natural and historical heritage protection and usage.

There are several NATURA 2000 sites in the Romanian cross-border area, which are distributed in a relatively uniform manner, having a bigger territorial incidence in counties with higher variety of relief, climate, and hydrology.

In Mehedinți, 10 sites were created, 7 out of these spread to neighbouring counties Gorj, CarasSeverin, and Dolj where there are 7 NATURA 2000 sites.

In the Bulgarian part, there are a total of 102 protected zones included in the NATURA 2000 network. The distribution of the sites varies from 10 in the Ruse district to 15 in the Dobrich district, spreading also to the neighbouring district of Varna.

Due to the economic pressure and the lack of natural resource management, protected areas are exposed to great risks because of illegal exploitations, tourism, constructions, and poaching.

Because of these serious problems and of the region's vulnerability to climate change, all the protected areas, including NATURA 2000 areas, are facing major challenges regarding natural environment conservation.

Despite the several guidance related to the management and protection of NATURA 2000 sites, which lay down the most important requirements of conservation measures and planning, management plan, thorough contractual framework, and visitor's management strategy are often lacking. Moreover, management authorities of protected areas work often in isolation and not efficiently enough while the ecosystem is often a cross-border one.

The cross-border scale can be optimal for the building of a natural sites network that would share common objectives, as conservation, awareness and promotion and would exchange best practices (on topics as sites administrations; community involvement; visitor management and tourism development; coordinated management planning, implementation and evaluation).

Indeed the conservation of this natural heritage has to be understood in relation with the socio-economic difficulties of the area, the impossible arbitrage between protection and production can be overcome through the identification, implementation and promotion of new ways of sustainable yet viable economic uses of this heritage.

Sustainable tourism seems to be the sector that best combines, given the local conditions, the economic rationale and the protection logic in order to yield sustainable benefits for the local communities.

The linking of tourism development and environmental protection was already a common political and civil society objective included in the 2007-2013 programme. The Cross Border region has created a common territorial brand and Romania and Bulgaria National Authorities are in charge of the EUSDR (European Union Strategy for the Danube Region) Priority Area: “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts”.

A recent inventory of the tourist sites in the whole cross-border territory indicated a variety of 423 tourist sites in both countries. The most important ones are situated in the western part of the region: the “Rocks of Belogradchik” with its third-century fortress, the Magura Cave, the Ledenika Cave, and the stone formations of Ritlite. Two of the nine Bulgarian UNESCO protected world cultural and natural heritage sites are located in the cross-border region – the Ivanovo Rock Churches and the Srebarna Natural Reserve.

Nevertheless tourism is underdeveloped in the area and foremost unevenly distributed between the Black Sea and the whole rest of the region.

The Danube-centred sustainable tourism is still emerging and evolves in a totally different market (quantitatively and qualitatively) than the Black Sea seasonal mass tourism, e.g. in 2012 there were 80,000 bed places in Constanta and 6 000 in Veliko Turnovo which is the highest figure for the rest of the zone, except Dobrich on the Black Sea as well.

An important fact is that while the capacity of Constanta decreased since 2010 there is a category of counties/districts that experienced constant growth of their touristic capacities despite the economic crisis: Veliko Turnovo, Mehedinti, Dolj and Montana. This feature and its divergence from the evolution of the other counties/districts is indicative of the development of a sustainable tourism in these areas. This potential can increase with the development of nautical tourism on the lower Danube along with the creation of cross-border thematic trails and greenways.

Moreover the preservation of natural and cultural heritage is a key to avoid seasonal tourism whose only resource is often limited to the seaside in summertime. Indeed seasonality is a major issue for the tourism industry and for its economic impact on the territory, as the unstable character of tourism revenues dissuades the territory from engaging in further tourism development and the residents to commit themselves directly in tourism linked sectors or indirectly induced through tourists’ spending.

C. Economic Development & Social Cohesion

A smart and sustainable cross-border region has to be inclusive, to foster initiatives in order to create a shift from the co-operation paradigm, which relates two member states through the solving of specific issues in a distinct area, to the integrative approach, to the merging of two systems within a single territory.

The cross-border region needs this shift in regard of critical issues as social cohesion. Indeed, the area knows deep and structural difficulties regarding all the thematic in relation to its social cohesion.

The labour market is one the most urgent and horizontal one since it includes matters as poverty, education, gender equality and is closely related to the overall economic structure of the area. Moreover the problematic of a common market is a cornerstone of inclusiveness and is commonly seen as the first step of a regional integration process

Regarding labour, the area is, without any doubt, stranded in the prevalent vicious circle of under developing regions.

It is a market where the supply is unadapt to match a weak, unorganized demand that gives no positive signals to the environment. In other words it is a market where workers are unskilled and companies isolated from each other and from the educational and training system. As a result we can remark high levels of inactivity and unemployment and a diminished regional level of the average net monthly salary. In Romania the area displayed, in 2012, an average net monthly salary that represented 85% of the national average while the Bulgarian cross-border area was even more underpaid compared to national and capital levels. The territorial inequalities at a national scale are also present within the region where they show under different forms the inadequacy of the regional labour market and its environment to meet the needs and make up the lags of the area.

This combination of unemployment and low wages is commonly understood as a consequence of the lack of qualification of workers. Indeed the level of education is one of the primary factors of exclusion from the regional labour market.

In the Romanian part the difference in the rate of unemployment between the universities educated people and the lower education one is more important than the national rate (apart from Constanta). The unemployment rate in the secondary educated people is also important while the economic sector complains about the lack of well-trained secondary educated human resource.

In the Bulgarian part, the unemployment rate of people with higher education is also more important than at the national level. For example, in the Ruse district in September 2013, the unemployment rates by type of education are as follows: lower education – 39%, secondary – 49% and higher – 12%. This is a worrying tendency taking into consideration that the district is among the best performing ones in the cross-border region.

This whole situation is probably due to a combination of factors such as the lack of local working opportunities for people with lower levels of education, the lower rate of people with higher education than the national average and the “brain drain” phenomenon in the higher-education population in favour of Bucharest or Sofia and other bigger urban centres or even foreign countries for the students with the most sought after trainings.

Despite differences in employment structure and unemployment evolution, the whole cross-border area seems to display similarities in terms of employment opportunities for the persons

with university education level. This indicates a common relative difficulty of the university centres in the cross border area to cater to the real demand on the labour market.

These difficulties that the secondary and university education system have in perceiving the needs of the regional labour market and the brain-drain phenomenon show in return that companies fail to offer concrete perspectives to the most educated as they fail to give positive signals to the overall population in order to value the decision to stay longer in the education system.

The attractiveness of local companies with the creation and the progressive integration of the local markets of goods, services and capitals into a cross-border one is the key to change the negative perceptions or the uncertainties of the population, the education system and even of the investors.

Theoretically this market already exists but in practice several barriers prevent it from being effective and efficient. The first is the need for entrepreneurs and company managers to understand that their regional and cross-border environment is not just an open door to competitors but rather a way to extend a market, diversify an offer and to make strategic decisions such as outsourcing or creating new implantations to follow the expansion of their activities.

This ideal perspective on the cross-border area can only come to reality if initiatives are fostered towards the creation of entrepreneurial and innovation networks, within the region, that will permit to exchange the most basic and fundamental capital, knowledge.

Therefore cross-border networking can contribute to a better entrepreneurial climate by facilitating the transfer and development of business support strategies and solutions to face the regional challenges.

To that purpose business support can focus on removing barriers and bottlenecks for start-ups and existing businesses, for example by facilitating incubator support over distance, promoting innovative funding mechanisms, developing inclusive business models and by targeted use of public procurement.

Business support can also focus on realising the potential of place-based opportunities, such as the programme area's unique cultural and natural heritage, by fostering entrepreneurship in the tourism and experience industries based on the high quality nature and heritage, traditional lifestyles and other authentic experiences.

Furthermore, support and encouragement of entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups and a better gender balance can be a way to stress the importance of the social economy and of the development of social enterprises that combine a social and societal purpose with the entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector.

This framework has the aim to ease entrepreneurship and to create business networks in the cross-border region. Therefore the programme can be a leverage to the integration of the labour market through the provision of technical and informational assistance in order to build a stronger and more structured demand of labour in the area.

In return the cross-border area will have to invest in people and skills and make sure that education and training systems develop learner's creativity and capacity for innovation and

deliver the required skills and knowledge needed in an increasingly macro-regional and globalised labour market.

The main objectives can be to increase the share of population with tertiary education and to encourage the access to professional development, including lifelong learning programs and to language learning programmes that are essential to cross-border worker mobility.

In this respect it will be necessary to promote and assist cross-border initiatives that take into account the need to adapt theoretical education and vocational training to the demands of the cross-border labour market, to increase the relevance of the educational and vocational training offer by anticipating cross-border's private sector requirements at the programme area level, and to ensure the applicability of the learning material.

In this context, new forms of partnerships and cooperation among key stakeholders (labour market, education and training, research and employers) need to be further developed because employers, for instance, have an important role to play in identifying the knowledge, skills and competences needed in working life.

Then to increase the employability and entrepreneurial potential of all learners, communication and active cooperation should be further developed between cross-border education and training institutions on the one hand and regional employers on the other hand.

To that extent the labour market has the means to be inclusive if initiatives as the programme play the role of a matchmaker that facilitates the encounter between innovative companies with a cross-border perspective and workers that have the possibility to have access to an education or a training that fit the needs of these companies.

Furthermore, the creation of common labour market relies on a balance. If educational and training programme succeed in a progressive qualification of the workforce, these efforts will be vain if companies are not yet willing or ready to employ it, the costly qualification of these workers will only be profitable for other areas such as capital cities.

It is necessary to build, on short notice, links between pre-existing structures on both sides of the border and to offer a wide range of information on best practices, business strategies and opportunities but it will be challenging to convince workers to stay if regional companies are not smart and innovative and do not create value or if outside companies still see no interest to invest in a cross-border region with serious mobility issues and where the doubling of regulations is not unfortunately correlated with the doubling of funds, customers and profits

Thus the cross-border development of a common labour market has to become an inclusive and disruptive way to find new solutions, to foster new initiatives, to attract new stakeholders in an area with a proper cross-border developing scale. It will be then possible to pave the way for a beneficial and deep further integration to the national and European markets.

D. Accessibility

In Bulgaria and Romania the most common means of transport are passenger cars in spite of the very low total density of public roads of 22.95 km/100km² in comparison to the EU average of 110 km/100 km². The public road network is more concentrated in Romania than in Bulgaria and the density of roads along the Danube is to a great extent under the national average.

In certain sections, the bad condition of the roads creates serious difficulties for winter maintenance of the road network, which often leads to isolation of settlements. Moreover, some of these roads are exposed to flooding, especially along the Romanian tributaries of the Danube and many have insufficient capacity, leading to congestions and, as a consequence, to increased travelling times, vehicle operating costs, accidents and damage to the environment. Moreover, the lack of connectivity of the hinterland to the Danube is a main hindrance to the multimodality hub/port development and therefore to the economic development of the areas located along the Danube.

The density of operating railways is approximately 46.1 km per 1000 km² in Romania and of 38.9 km per 1000 km² in Bulgaria, being under the average of EU countries (65 km/ 1000 km²). While railways are increasingly used for freight transport in Romania since 2007, this mode of transport decreased in Bulgaria for the same period (its share decreased almost by 50%).

At the moment there are two existing bridges for road transport across the Danube between Romania and Bulgaria (Calafat-Vidin, Giurgiu- Ruse). The latest needs heavy repair and has a currently closed railroad deck which happens to be the main railway connection between Bulgaria and Romania.

In order to improve cross border connectivity, the renovation of the Giurgiu-Ruse Bridge and the construction of one or two new road/traffic bridges crossing the Danube and linking the two countries are currently envisaged.

These new bridges will be built with the aim to decrease the number of the so-called “dead-end” infrastructures, mainly through the common border along the Danube, whose consequences are a low connectivity between the two countries and a low accessibility of cross-border areas to existing national infrastructures and major corridors.

For an example, historical settlements with great potential for mutual cooperation, such as Calarasi-Silistra twin cities still lack the necessary links that would permit to these harbour towns to be efficiently connected to the land transport system.

Therefore, improving internal connectivity with the cross border region’s main urban agglomerations but also with the capital cities situated in its vicinity is critical for addressing territorial disparities in the area.

At the EU scale, the Danube is considered as a major transport axis in Central Europe, connecting Western Europe to the Black Sea but in the same time, due to these great difficulties regarding regional accessibility, the cross border programme area does not take profit of its strategic geographic position and few initiatives are launched at a local level to develop river infrastructures.

The Danube River is crossed by 2 TEN-T European transport corridors on the territory of the cross-border area, linking Central and Northern Europe to the Middle East and the south-eastern part of the continent. It is linked by the Main-Danube canal to the Rhine and therefore connects the cross-border area directly to 9 countries from the North Sea to the Black Sea over a length of 3,500 km which is crucial for 6 out of 9 EUSDR countries “land-locked” without any sea gateways.

The Danube River is therefore more than a valuable asset for the regional economic development and the cross-border cooperation; it is a major stake for the EU and a key leverage of development for its eastern members.

The Danube and its tributaries are traditional freight transport routes and 115 million people live in the Danube catchment area whose countries generated in 2011 € 1,300 billion GDP (excluding Germany). Through the development of combined river and sea transport (the Danube and the Black Sea) or sea/river and road/railroad transport of goods, the port cities situated in the programme area have the potential to become priceless logistics hubs for their countries and for EU and to transform the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border in an Eastern gateway of the EU.

The EU strategy on the Danube region has the aim to fully exploit the potential of the River as a waterway and to increase by 20% its volume of transport by eliminating obstacles to navigation. Though this Community strategy is compromised by a main cross-border issue, the low water levels on the Danube where shipping during dry months has often to be stopped at several points of the cross-border area along the lower Danube (e.g., Iron Gate II – Călărăsi). Nevertheless an important step has been made by Romania and Bulgaria who committed themselves to the improvement of the navigability of the Danube in a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012.

Unfortunately the role of the River and its link to the Black Sea are still underestimated in the economic life of the cross-border area whereas the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region has the potential to become the Eastern gateway of the EU and to reinforce economic and political cooperation between the countries of Central and Western Europe and Asia.

There are concrete means and immediate measures to be taken in order to develop combined river and sea transport (the Danube and the Black Sea) or sea and road/railroad transport of goods, which could become an important sector for the regional economy. The region will thus become more attractive for businesses and for foreign investments because of its strategic location and the high availability of transport infrastructure, such as Pan-European transport corridors, roads and railroads, an international port and international airports in its vicinity.

E. Governance

The cross-border area faces two main institutional issues:

- The most peculiar issue is the effective scale of regional development.

The development of the cross-border area and of its institutional capacity is intricately linked to the complex co-existence of legislative/executive institutions at the territorial level (NUTS 3), on which are based the programme, with *ad hoc* NUTS 2 created by both countries to fit the needed scale of eligibility to the European Regional Policy

These NUTS 2 regions, devoid of any legal personality under public law, are designed to permit, in each country, the implementation of Cohesion and Convergence Policies through the management and allocation of funds by two main structures, the Agencies for Regional Development in Romania (ADR) and the Regional Departments in Bulgaria.

This introduces a wide gap between the real administrative capacity and its associated cooperation mechanisms (that are centred on the NUTS 3 level) and the EU policies objectives and Operational Programs (that are based on the NUTS 2 level).

- The most central issue is the need to create coordination between two centralized states with specific institutions and policies.

The RO-BG cross border programme aims to contribute to knowledge transfer and cooperation among administrations. This is especially important in the Romanian context where the current decentralisation process will give new responsibilities to local public actors which are not always ready to manage previous centralised fields such as health, tourism, etc...

Moreover considering their relative low fiscal autonomy and their heavy dependence on central government subsidies and financial redistribution, both municipal/local and county/district administrative levels remain in a *de facto* subsidiary position towards the central government.

These issues are major concerns for the cross-border development along with transparency and accessibility. They demonstrate the necessity to consider other ways to understand the institutional environment of the area in order to fully stress its fundamental needs and the concrete answers to them.

Therefore the complexity of the area cannot be exhausted with the analysis grid of the administrations/institutions where stakeholders interact and should rather be understood with the more flexible and holistic paradigm of governance where stakeholders participate and cooperate.

Indeed the term governance includes both public and private players as public authorities (central to local), associations of public authorities (e.g. the Regional Development Association), the public-private associations, non-governmental associations, business associations and of course citizens.

Given this diversity of stakeholders, the process of cooperation can be seen as either vertical (in the case of interaction between different levels of public administration on a hierarchical basis) or horizontal (if other public or private stakeholders are involved).

In the current situation, the latest option is not yet fully exploited because of the legal constraints and of the national political and social traditions which does not incite private stakeholders' participation in decision-making and bottom-up approach for public policy formulation.

However the horizontal option is widely considered as essential for ensuring the public policies' effectiveness and efficiency. In that case, the central State, while remaining the main coordinator, regulations-issuer and supplier of public financing to territorial development policies, become, increasingly, just one of the stakeholders in successful territorial governance strategies and policies.

Given its heterogeneous regulatory frameworks and institutional structure and cultures, the cross-border territory requires a governance process based on horizontality, on bottom-up approaches and on subsidiarity in order to ensure a high adaptation to specific local realities.

Governance permits to experience and implement new forms of decision and policy-making which are crucial to cope with driving forces like climate change, globalisation, socio-demographic change and scarcity of public funds. Indeed public administrations will have to enhance their services and processes and to be more prone to cooperate with civil society in order to bridge the financial and human gap between their prerogatives and their resources.

Cross-border cooperation can also facilitate the transfer and the development of innovative solutions to address the viability of public service provision and the provision of basic necessities, for example private-public partnerships, urban-rural cooperation, social enterprises and other innovative ways of pooling competences and resources.

For these purposes the European Union fosters different types of initiatives that are meant to promote at different scales a stronger implication of private stakeholders in local and territorial development.

For example, health and social issues are usually devolved to local and regional authorities that tend to institutionalize them by financing large infrastructures. The EU has recently emphasized the need for new member states to ease the implementation of NGO's in health and social services given the idea that they can provide an equal or even better care to the user through the form of community based services. Disabled people, for example, often live in very large infrastructure whereas their quality of life would be improved by a community based service, a small-scale facility usually run by an Ngo and integrated in the area with the aim to stand against stigmatization and prejudices.

Community based initiatives can be a very good opportunity to implement governance practices in the cross-border area because the private sector will necessarily have to work along with public authorities in matters such as the training of employees and the utmost respect of the legal framework that regulates the provision of services to vulnerable populations as the elderly, toddlers or disabled persons.

The public stakeholders of the cross border area must therefore prepare themselves and the area for the future, for the EU policy stance on the role of private stakeholders in territorial cohesion funding and for the tools already created in that regard.

Moreover, the European Commission has proposed new instruments in order to promote the integrated development at a territorial level. An improvement of the governance practices of the cross-border area, through the implementation of horizontal networks that the cross-border programme aim to foster, would be a key leverage to access this new variety of funds and a step ahead to support and seal the efficiency of the area's governance practices.

At a higher scale, this progressing visibility and activity of governance will be a key advantage to integrate cross-border initiatives in a broader instrument of the EU territorial cohesion policy, the macro-region. Thus it will be possible to highlight the necessary synergies that can be found with programmes such as the EUSDR (Danube Region).

The collaboration of private and public stakeholders as the building of local and cross-border networks is a key element for the success of the programme. Therefore governance can be considered as a genuine horizontal thematic since it has to be taken into account in every other thematic objective.

Nevertheless the region is still mainly governed vertically, for these reasons public stakeholders are central interlocutors in any approaches that want to address the needs of the area. The challenge will be to progressively open and train all stakeholders to the present and future benefits of the horizontal and multi-level practices of governance.

Strategy of the Romania Bulgaria Cross Border Programme

The overall programme strategy has been formulated in direct response to the EU 2020 Strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Within the EU 2020 Strategy, the EU has set ambitious objectives to be reached by 2020 in five main areas:

- Employment: 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed
- Research and development: 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D
- Climate change and energy sustainability: greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990; 20% of energy from renewables, 20% increase in energy efficiency
- Education: Reducing the rates of early school leavers below 10% and at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education
- Fighting poverty and social exclusion: at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

In this framework, the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 aims to expand the regions' horizons, to build on concrete and measurable outcomes and to enable the area to be a region to live, study, work, visit and invest in. The programme must sustain the process of creating competitive and sustainable communities, by harnessing innovation and seizing, in a resource efficient way, the unique growth initiatives and opportunities offered by the development of transversal and horizontal flows on the area's backbone, the Danube/Black Sea corridor.

The vision of the Cross-Border Romania-Bulgaria area as **The Eastern Danube/ Black Sea Gateway**, as a hub in a wider Black Sea- Danube-Rhine-North Sea context, is aimed to support the cross border area development by improving accessibility, fostering institutional cooperation and protecting and developing regional assets.

The protection and the sustainable use of regional natural assets are a necessity that can be mainly fulfilled through an enhanced "fresh and salted" water management designed to support economic development (irrigation, industry, power generation, transport, tourism, etc.), to restore and maintain biodiversity and to manage and prevent environmental & climate change risks.

Improving accessibility is another key issue for the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border region in its path towards becoming the Eastern gateway of the EU and reinforcing economic and political cooperation between the countries of Central and Western Europe and Asia. The region has a real potential to develop combined river and sea transport (the Danube and the Black Sea) or sea and road/railroad transport of goods, which could become an important sector for the economy of the area. The territory will thus become more attractive for businesses and for foreign investments because of its strategic location and its high availability of transport infrastructure.

The tourism sector has a strong potential for supporting biodiversity protection and cross-border economic development through a sustainable and ecotourism positioning. Therefore, supporting the development of a "green and cultural Danube & Black Sea" tourism offer is one of the main opportunities of the cross-border area.

Given the important competitive pressure on tourism industries worldwide, it seems appropriate that the operators of the cross-border area join their assets to develop an offer that is marketed nationally and internationally. The marketing of a distinctive image, based on the unique cross-border natural and cultural heritage and on innovative products and services, needs to be developed to provide a sustainable and highly valuable tourism offer. This would

give several stakeholders, notably the universities and vocational schools, the opportunity to participate in upgrading the skills and the innovation potential of the sector.

A strong collaboration is then necessary in the area of lifelong and distance learning and for the development of joint talent attraction initiatives. Indeed, in weak regions, human capital is a more important precondition for growth than R&D as knowledge embodied in human capital has a higher impact on regional production than R&D expenditure.⁴

At a regional and inclusive scale, a reinforced valorisation of the existing opportunities for joint business and of the complementarities in skills across the border can enhance the competitiveness of both economies and attract FDI.

Indeed, the Cross-Border Romania-Bulgaria area shares similar economic development challenges but do not have the internal resources to address them. Being relatively peripheral in their own national contexts, dominated by traditional industries facing intense international competition and weakened by low added value agriculture and services sectors, the two economies face the necessity to diversify their activities and to build critical mass through the creation of cross-border clusters.

Thus a network of urban hubs, along the Danube, with enhanced institutional collaboration and economic synergies will be a start for articulating common development strategies in order to mutually strengthen the peripheral areas around them.

The enhancement of governance mechanisms as the creation of common strategies between small and medium-sized cross-border cities, such as the twin cities facing each other along the Danube, will be a key factor to improve connections between urban and rural areas and transform small cities into support centres that provide public services to the neighbouring villages in order to fight against the depopulation and ageing trend of the cross border area.

Therefore, according to the EU “Common Strategic Framework”, five Thematic Objectives have been selected, amongst the eleven Thematic Objectives (TOs) corresponding to the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in order to address the identified key challenges and needs.

For each thematic objective, specific investment priorities (IP) have been selected amongst the pre-defined ones. The RO-BG Programme strategy builds on five TOs that are in line with issues identified as being most suitable to be tackled by cross border cooperation:

Thematic objective 5: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management.

- **IP 5.b:** Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems.

Thematic objective 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

- **IP 6.c:** Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;
- **IP 6.d:** Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.

Thematic objective 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures

⁴Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy, ESPON Workshop, 30 September 2013, Brussels

- **IP 7b:** Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes
- **IP 7c:** Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility

Thematic objective 8: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility

- **IP 8. i:** Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training

Thematic objective 11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration

- **IP 11.iv:** Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions

The selected TOs have been translated into five Priority Axes, which reflect the needs and challenges as identified in the analysis of the situation of the programme area. For each IP, one specific objective (SO) was defined.

1.1.2. Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation

Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
Thematic Objective 5 “Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management”	Investment priority 5(b): Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems	<i>The need to increase the cross-border adaptive capacity to climate change is linked to its present and foreseen effects on this already fragile area. Phenomena as droughts, floods, erosion or landslides have very detrimental consequences for the development of the region, in particular for its agriculture, tourism or accessibility. Therefore it is a priority to strengthen joint planning along with the development and implementation of preventive and management actions in order to enhance the cross-border low mitigation capacity.</i>

		<i>This requires the reinforcement of the related cross-border cooperation through the implementation of common projects and initiatives, (e.g., preparation of plans, studies, procedures, and norms) and of awareness raising measures in order to create a more effective mobilization of the cross-border population towards adaptive measures and risk prevention.</i>
Thematic Objective 6 “Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”	Investment priority 6(c): Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	<i>The natural and cultural heritage of the CBC area is subject to a variety of anthropic and natural pressures as industry or climate change. Their consequences are harmful to the whole area since the interaction of landscapes and the continuity of habitats and ecosystems highlight an ecological unity of the region. Therefore it is crucial to enhance the capacity to integrate natural and cultural heritage protection in cross-border socio-economic development strategies and policies. For instance in projects including sustainable tourism areas since it is considered by stakeholders as one of the key sectors of cross border economic development that cannot be jeopardized unthoughtfully. Natural and cultural heritage is a resource to be promoted and prevented from spoiling; to that end it is important to raise public awareness on the concrete socio-economic benefits of environment protection.</i>
Thematic Objective 6 “Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”	Investment priority 6(d): Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure	<i>In the cross-border region, environmental risks and their effects require urgent and concrete measures. Indeed the fostering of a sustainable and inclusive region needs to tackle these issues through a holistic approach since the integration of its economy (with nature related sector as agriculture or tourism) needs a stabilized eco-system. Therefore it is critical to support investments in green infrastructure and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems (eroded and/or exhausted soils, unstable riverbanks, etc.) profitable for the whole area in terms of sustainability but also as an increase of human and technic capital. . For instance to ensure effective restoration of ecosystem, there is a need to take common measures against the endangering of species and their habitats covered by EU nature legislation and against the increase of Invasive Alien Species also recognized by the EUSDR</i>
Thematic Objective 7 “Promoting sustainable	Investment priority 7(b): enhancing regional mobility	<i>As they are the main ways to cross the border but also the main limits for its accessibility, the cross-</i>

<p>transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures”</p>	<p>by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes</p>	<p><i>border region needs to renovate existing Danube crossing infrastructure and to create new, flexible and improved ones.</i></p> <p><i>To that extent the improvement of cross-border transport, with a special emphasis on public transport at regional level, can be one of the solutions to the overall low cross-border accessibility.</i></p> <p><i>Moreover the accessibility to TEN-T infrastructures for the main urban centres is far better than for the small/medium-sized cities, especially along the Danube. It is then a priority to bridge the accessibility gap between peripheral rural regions and regional economic centres.</i></p> <p><i>The Danube twin-cities can play there a major role as TEN-T multimodal nodes if they plan their sustainable accessibility through a cross-border integrated approach.</i></p>
<p>Thematic Objective 7 “Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures”</p>	<p>Investment priority 7(c): Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility</p>	<p><i>The improvement of the Danube Inland waterway navigation is a major cross-border issue correlated to the needs to develop multimodal nodes, a sustainable alternative to road transport and its whole economy.</i></p> <p><i>The EUSDR stressed that the main barrier to the development of sustainable transport on the Danube is its navigability.</i></p> <p><i>Moreover, the low level of intermodal links at cross-border and Danube level asks for solutions in order to increase the accessibility of the territory and the sustainability of the Danube transport potential. For instance, the cross-border waterway transport potential can be enhanced by the overall improvement of the port services which could include leisure functions. This action will be twice beneficial since the lack of eco-friendly river and seaport infrastructures represents a big barrier to the development of a cross-border sustainable tourism.</i></p>
<p>Thematic Objective 8 “Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility”</p>	<p>Investment priority 8(i) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training</p>	<p><i>As the area suffers from high rates of unemployment, low wages and a structural brain drain phenomenon, it is crucial to address the need for a more inclusive cross-border labour market enabling the emergence of new economic opportunities and of improved employment perspectives.</i></p> <p><i>This horizontal priority is critical for public authorities, inhabitants and employers since an efficient labour market is the core of a healthy economy.</i></p>

		<p><i>The challenge is to change the stakeholder’s view on the scale of the market and to lower the barriers between the education system and employers, the workers and companies and first and foremost between the two sides of the border.</i></p> <p><i>An integrated labour market that relies on life-long training, smart and inclusive networks with a better availability of business, strategic and legal information is the cornerstone for qualitative and sustainable employment.</i></p>
<p>Thematic Objective 11 “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration”</p>	<p>Investment priority 11 : Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions</p>	<p><i>The cross-border local public authorities are often considered as bureaucratic, opaque and reluctant to civil society initiatives. This top-down government can be seen as a barrier to its development since some European funds are accessible only to projects conceived by both public and private stakeholders. .</i></p> <p><i>This bottom-up governance can only be possible with public authorities that have the institutional capacity to cooperate with other stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>To that purpose it is crucial to reinforce and create cross-border cooperation networks (e.g. centred on founding opportunities) and to promote initiatives on horizontal management directed towards the public authority.</i></p> <p><i>A transparent and beneficial relation between private and public stakeholders will permit to implement innovative local public policies and to build sustainable cross-border projects</i></p>

1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

The main objective behind the financial allocation to Programme thematic objectives (priorities) is to effectively achieve the Programme results with the resources available.

The Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The total ERDF support to the Programme amounts to 215 745 513 EUR, quite similar to the amount of the previous programming period (217, 8 million Euros). Out of this amount, 6% is dedicated to Technical Assistance.

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and Instrument for PreAccession Assistance (IPA) are not applicable to this Programme as it concerns solely two EU Member States.

The majority of the funding will support operations under the Priority Axis 1 “A well connected region” (38% of the total ERDF allocation), Priority Axis 2 “A green region” (25% of the ERDF allocation) and Priority Axis 3 “A safe region” (19% of the ERDF allocation), corresponding to ERDF Thematic Objectives 7, 6 and 5 respectively.

The emphasis on accessibility/transport infrastructure, environment protection (including heritage protection and promotion) and risk prevention and management is justified by the challenges and needs in the cross-border area and the fact that tackling issues in the above mentioned fields through a cross-border approach can ensure better effectiveness and increased efficiency. This prioritisation of funding allocation is based on the analysis of the expected results to be achieved, the planned types of actions under each priority, as well as the types of investments to be made. In addition, the performance and experience from the previous programming period has been considered.

The funding of Priority Axis 4 “A skilled and inclusive region” has been set to 7% of the total ERDF allocation based on detailed needs analysis concluding on the low cross-border integration of the labour markets and the possibility to unleash highly needed development of the entrepreneurship and employment opportunities by supporting the workforce mobility and the capacity of each national labour force (from the eligible area) to work on the other side of the border.

5 % of the total Union support will be allocated to Priority Axis 5 “An efficient region” in order to answer to the real need and mutual demand of institutional stakeholders to increase the cross-border cooperation capacity and exchange experiences among diverse territorial levels of public administration/institutions and to create incentives and frameworks for institutionalised joint activities.

Table 2: Overview of the programme investment strategy

Priority axis	<u>ERDF support (in EUR)</u>	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic Objective (TO)	<u>Investment priorities (IP)</u>	Specific objectives (SO) corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI (where applicable)	IPA (where applicable)				
Priority axis 1: A well connected region	81,983,295	38%	NA	NA	TO 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	IP 7b: Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes	SO 1.1: To sustain the planning, development and coordination of cross border transport systems for better connections to TEN-T transport network	Cross border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T
						IP 7c: Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility	SO 1.2: To increase the level of coordination in terms of transport safety	% of the RO-BG CBC Danube area and Black Sea area where safety of the navigation has been improved

Priority axis 2: A green region	53,936,378	25%	NA	NA	TO 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	IP 6c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;	SO 2.1: To improve the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage	Number of tourists overnights in the CBC region
						IP 6d: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.	SO 2.2: To enhance the sustainable management of the ecosystems from the cross-border area	NATURA 2000 sites in the cross border area with coordinated management tools
Priority axis 3: A safe region	40,991,647	19%	NA	NA	TO 5 Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	IP 5b: Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems.	SO 3.1: To improve joint risk management in the cross-border area	Increase in the quality of the joint risk management in the CBC area
Priority axis 4: A skilled and inclusive region	15,102,186	7%	NA	NA	TO 8: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	IP 8i: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training	SO 4.1: To encourage the integration of the cross-border area in terms of employment and labour mobility	Number of initiatives (trainings, education schemes, websites, agreements, networks, job-fairs etc.) that activate workforce mobility in the cross border area

Priority axis 5: An efficient region	10,787,276	5%	NA	NA	<p>TO 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration</p>	<p>IP 11iv: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions</p>	<p>SO 5.1: To increase cooperation capacity and the efficiency of public institutions in a CBC context</p>	<p>Level of coordination of the public institutions in the eligible area</p>
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SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

Section 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

2.A.1. Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

PRIORITY AXIS 1: A well connected region

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

(repeated for each fund under the priority axis)

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF</i>
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	<i>Total eligible expenditure</i>

2.A.4. Investment priority

Investment Priority: 7b Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 1.1: To sustain the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems for better connections to TEN-T transport networks

The accessibility and mobility difficulties that are affecting the counties/districts in the cross-border area stem from historical reasons: the local and regional transport grid was built, before the nineties, on the premises that the Danube was a rigid border, a “dead-end” area. At that time, only nodes connectivity to the national capital or major urban areas mattered, generating thus large pockets of low connectivity between rural areas and secondary nodes and between secondary nodes and tertiary nodes at a national level and almost no connectivity at a cross border level. The Cross Border area is currently suffering from the limited connection of the counties/districts infrastructures to the TEN-T ones due to the uncompleted TEN-T corridor major infrastructure in its vicinity or to the deficiencies of existing connections to the TEN-T corridors.

Given that the Danube – a TEN-T and major pan-European transport corridor – is representing the geographical backbone of the cross-border area, the above mentioned deficiencies can be partially tackled by rethinking the territory’s connectivity in a more Danube-centred manner. Given the specificities of the river connectivity, this means a stronger emphasis on mobility synergies between the Romanian and Bulgarian Danube-riparian areas in order to increase in a smart way the Danube based connectivity of the counties/districts in the cross-border area. In other words this means to improve the connectivity of rural areas, secondary and tertiary nodes to the TEN-T infrastructure by adopting a Danube-based approach that will be made operational through cross-border cooperation in the field of transport connectivity to this TEN-T corridor. This approach is complementary to national strategies in Romania and Bulgaria for the next programming period that support the better connection of medium and big urban centres in the cross border region between themselves and with national centres (like Bucharest and Sofia) and are less focused on the connectivity to the Danube.

In terms of connectivity of the cross-border area, a sustainable improvement can be achieved more easily if the county/district transport systems are part of a cross-border system and not mere “dead-end” areas, totally dependent on the national major transport grid. Re-connecting the region, as a cross-border integrated area, will represent a real incentive to local socio-economic development and not a mere increased facility that will mainly benefit to the more powerful economic centres (Bucharest, Sofia, Varna) located in the cross-border territory’s vicinity.

Therefore, with the inclusion of this Investment Priority the Programme seeks to contribute to the following results

- Reduction of the gap between peripheral, badly accessible regions and well-connected urban centres;
- Further development of multi-modal environment-friendly freight and passenger transport within the Danube area;
- Improvement of the connectivity between Romania and Bulgaria: elaboration of feasibility studies, design projects, and environmental assessments on new bridges; road and railway connections; intermodal terminals;
- Development of strategies for effective connection of secondary nodes to the core network TEN-T to reduce transportation time and optimizing logistics;
- Enabling traffic management including route guidance, incidents/emergencies detection and management;
- Improvement of safety, security and environmental performance.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁵	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.1.	% of cross-border population served by modernized infrastructure leading to TEN-T	%					2018 and 2023

⁵ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to sustain the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems for better connections to TEN-T transport networks

The support given through this specific objective contributes to the development of the cross-border transport system and to implement joint solutions and institutional, policy and legal framework mandatory for the emergence and development of a transport-integrated and/or “mobility friendly” cross-border area.

“Soft” measures and “hard” measures/construction/building activities are eligible within the limit of the CBC Programme’s budget allotted to this Specific Objective as they both answer to the need of an enhancing access to TEN-T transport network. All the “soft” activities financed under this Specific Objective (development and implementation of strategies, exchanges of knowledge, tools and pilot applications for improved cross-border mobility and accessibility, etc) are expected to be clear steps towards direct investments in the accessibility of the cross-border area, in coherence with both national investment transport masterplans/strategies and cross-border accessibility challenges and needs.

Taking into consideration the socio-economic situation of the cross-border area as well as the needs to ensure increased workforce mobility (pursued as a distinct objective by the priority axis 4), the cross-border accessibility will be understood as a “public service”. The enhancement of cross border public transport will thus benefit of special attention in any activity financed under this specific objective.

Indicative actions that will be supported under this specific objective:

Soft measures:

1. Development of cross-border/joint action-based solutions, management plans, strategies, feasibility studies, environment impact assessments etc., related to works projects for public infrastructure (waterways, roads etc.) in order to connect secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure and to reduce transportation time and optimising logistics;
2. Developing co-ordinated concepts, standards and tools on the cross-border level for improved mobility services in the public interest (e.g. for disadvantaged groups, for shrinking regions, ...);
3. Facilitate active cooperation among the providers of traffic and travel information and value added services in order to improve the local public transport in the cross-border area and the connection between twin cities (e.g., harmonisation of timetables, provision of bilingual information on cross-border timetables, operating cross-border transport public services especially between twin cities);
4. Exchanges of experience and knowledge, including raising awareness (trainings, seminars, and workshops) in the field of traffic safety measures in the cross-border area (e.g., improved traffic network configurations, introduction of traffic calming measures, utilisation of roundabouts, speed cameras, safety barriers, and speed bumps, improvement

of poor road surfaces to avoid e.g. wet-weather crashes, retro-reflective marking materials).

Hard measures:

5. Improve the cross-border secondary and tertiary nodes connections to TEN-T infrastructure (e.g., improve the quality of the roads, improve/build bicycle routes, build bicycle-sheds, rehabilitation, modernization and extension of road infrastructure);

Integrated measures:

6. Setting up of joint traffic management for smart mobility in the cross-border area (e.g., route guidance, incidents/emergencies detection and management, studies on traffic flows, traffic safety measures, black-spot maps);

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions different types of outputs can be obtained. The first ones are joint strategies and cooperation at cross-border level in order to develop the pre-requisite documentation for the investments in cross-border mobility infrastructure and tools. These can include the elaboration of concepts, plans, feasibility studies, development of tools, the preparation of the investments, the implementation of pilot investments, and awareness raising on sustainable mobility. The second ones are “hard” outputs like upgraded roads, extended road networks. These hard outputs are nevertheless limited by the budget of the Romania-Bulgaria Cooperation Programme and by their needed cross-border relevance. The third outputs are integrated measures that will enhance mobility and its safety through studies and small-scale investments.

Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Joint solutions and strategies in order to connect secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure and to reduce transportation time and improve public mobility services,
- Investments for the improvement/modernization of road infrastructure, construction of bicycle routes to improve the cross-border secondary and tertiary nodes connections to TEN-T infrastructure,
- Active cooperation and exchange of knowledge in order to improve the local public transport and traffic safety.
- Joint traffic management for smart mobility measures and tools

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The target groups are diverse and correspond to all the transport and mobility stakeholders groups in the cross-border area who would benefit from the improved connections to national and TEN-T transport networks: from different population groups (local commuters, business and leisure tourists, business owners, etc.) to national or county/district administrations in charge of infrastructure planning, public transport operators and private companies whose activities are heavily dependent on the accessibility of the cross-border territory.

The beneficiaries, on the other hand, will mainly be the organizations able to provide an effective input for the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems that will be better connected with European (TEN-T) transport corridors: county/district or national public authorities, public infrastructure administrators and

providers, national or country/district transport associations, research and innovation organizations, universities, etc.

Specific territories targeted

The whole cross-border area is targeted under this specific objective. Nevertheless a special emphasis will be put on the connectivity of the cross-border area with the Danube TEN-T corridor and the related inter-modality necessary for ensuring smooth connection and crossing.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 7.b.

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
7b. 1	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	km of reconstructed or upgraded roads	120 KM	Project reports	Annual
7b.2	Number of joint mechanisms (e.g. route guidance, incidents/emergencies detection and management, studies on traffic flows, feasibility studies addressing cross-border transport issues, traffic safety measures, black-spot maps, awareness raising activities); to facilitate the connection of secondary/tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure	Number of mechanisms facilitating connection of secondary/tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure	30	Project reports	Annual

2.A.4. Investment priority

Investment Priority 7c: Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infra-structure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 1.2: To increase the level of coordination in terms of transport safety

The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

The RO-BG Cross border area must take advantage of the fact that large shipping lines can consider or already consider Black Sea ports as their natural ports for UE. There is, therefore,

a real opportunity for the cross border area to take benefit from transfer of production and assembly activities from Western Europe and Asia in order to become the Asian gateway for Central and Eastern Europe via Black Sea ports and one of the UE distribution centre. According to the World Bank, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), including Austria, accounts today for more than 12% of EU's GDP, yet the region attract less than 1% of the sea freight coming to Europe. This is a huge imbalance as the bulk commodities and goods coming mostly from Eastern Asia and the Middle East, which could enter the region directly, are currently transiting through North-Western Europe. Therefore, there is a need to promote the development of Black Sea ports and to make the cross border region appear as the international EU entrance gate from the east: a trade hub for assembly and product customization activities, serving the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Black Sea markets. Creating such a direct route will attract additional benefits such as CO2 emissions reduction and will create new business opportunities for the cross border area (brokers, storage, transport companies) and attract new investments. Indeed, the opportunities to increase the business attraction of the cross border area is strongly linked to the development of distribution centres, the improvement of transit trade initiatives, the provision of specialized warehouses and better transport infrastructure. Ports need to be modernised and adjusted to multimodal requirements in order to play a more significant role not only in terms of accessibility but also as optimal places for concentrating business and industry.

Moreover, sustainable mobility is a clear objective of Europe 2020, as well as the common European transport policy. Given that inland navigation has a relatively low environmental impact (it emits 3.5 times less CO2 per ton-kilometre than trucks) it is an important mode of transport. According to the EUSDR, for inland navigation, the Danube River is clearly not used to its full potential. Throughout the year, the waterway infrastructure, on some sections of the network, partly limits the competitiveness of navigation on the Danube River (primarily in case of extended low water periods). On this topic, a Memorandum of understanding between the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania was signed on 11 October 2012. It foresees the setting up of an inter-ministerial Committee for sustainable development of inland waterway transport in the common Bulgarian-Romanian section of the river and improving the connectivity of the region.

The main result envisaged is to create the basis for common measures and investments directed towards improving Danube's and the Black Sea's (in the cross-border area) navigability and their attractiveness as passenger and freight transport corridors.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁶	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.2	% of the RO-BG CBC Danube area and Black Sea area where safety of the navigation have been improved		To be defined	2015	To be defined		2018 and 2023

⁶ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority (*by investment priority*)

2.A.6.1. 7c A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to increase the level of coordination in terms of transport safety

The actions that will be financed by the SO 1.2 will seek to foster cross-border coordination in order to increase Danube navigation safety for freight and passenger traffic in the cross border area in order to transform the programming region in a strategic “Danube/Black Sea gateway” that will attract investments in various economic fields. This will be done by supporting port infrastructure renovation and development and measures for the improvement of the Danube navigability that is impeded by sediments, shifting river bed, variation of the water level and debit, bank erosion, seasonal water-level variation. The objectives will be achieved through the development and implementation of coordinated strategies, concepts and infrastructure and equipment for enhancing navigability and for the rehabilitation the port-infrastructures (in order to enable the access of the hinterland to the Danube and the access from the Danube to the resources and attractions of the cross-border hinterland), strengthening the multimodality in the ports and harmonizing standards and procedures (for crossing the Danube, navigation on both national sectors, managing freight traffic, enabling tourism on the river banks and on the river, etc.). Actions are further contributing to the improvement and testing of freight transport services and logistics planning, including pilot applications, which are supposed to trigger investments in the field.

In order to increase the freight and passenger traffic on the Danube, improving the mere navigability will not be sufficient. This is why the supported actions will include measures for the Black Sea ports and the navigability on the Black Sea coast that is inside the cross-border area, as the main transport corridor generating and giving economic relevance to the Danube.

Indicative actions that will be supported under this specific objective:

Soft measures:

1. Awareness-raising activity regarding the importance of developing and improving environment-friendly transport systems in the cross-border area;
2. Experience exchange activities as joint seminars, study visits, surveys and trainings leading to implementation of new methods related to winter management.

Hard measures:

3. Investments (infrastructure and equipment) to improve freight and passenger river transport on cross-border level;

Integrated measures:

4. Develop integrated plans and measures in order to improve the navigation conditions for the common sector of the Danube in the cross-border area (e.g., joint feasibility studies, engineering planning documents, morphological and hydrodynamic studies in establishing the sediment accumulation conditions, etc. on river regulation works, unify the reference system used in Romania and Bulgaria on the Danube and introduce the River Information system);

5. Developing and implementing joint co-ordinated strategies, tools and pilot applications to improve the development of multimodal nodes and port services;

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained. A special emphasis is nevertheless given to strategies, integrated plans and measures and investments at cross-border level in order to improve freight and passenger river transport. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Integrated plans and measures in order to improve the navigation conditions
- Joint co-ordinated strategies, tools and pilot applications
- Awareness-raising and experience exchange to improve the capacity of target groups (mobility actors) to better respond to navigability issues
- Investments to improve freight and passenger river and sea transport

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The great diversity of the target groups of the measures supported under this objective include both the public and the private sectors: providers and operators of freight and passenger transport, logistics services (e.g. railway enterprises, shipping companies, ports, terminal operators, logistic service providers/logistic centres and platforms), institutions in charge of planning and managing freight and passenger transport, public infrastructure providers, fluvial transport associations and, in general, all the public and private stakeholders that can benefit from the increased transport activity on the Danube and the Black Sea.

The beneficiaries are the stakeholders that can effectively contribute to the development of the navigability of the Danube and the Black Sea sectors situated in the cross-border area: local, regional and national public authorities (especially those with prerogatives in the field of transport infrastructure planning and development and those in charge of managing the navigability issues), transporters' associations and organizations, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, river administrators such as AFDJ Galati or APDD Ruse as well as universities and research institutes.

Specific territories targeted

Given the Danube and Black Sea navigability objective, the supported actions under this objective will mainly target the area in the immediate proximity of the Danube and the Black Sea in the cross-border area. Nevertheless activities that could contribute to the attainment of the objective (e.g. applied research in effective measures for improving navigability) will be supported even though they take place outside this area as long as they respect the general eligibility conditions.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 7.c.

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
7c.1	Number of studies, strategies and action plans to improve safety of the navigation on the Danube and the Black Sea supported	Number of strategies, action plans	5	Project reports	Annual

2.A.7. Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis Priority Axis 1 – An effective region

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
1	Key implementation step		Number of KM of roads to be upgraded or reconstructed for which tenders have been launched	Number of KM	60 KM		Project reports	The Common Output Indicator is Total length of reconstructed and upgraded roads. Due to the delay that may appear when launching construction tenders and due to the complexity of the works, we can hardly expect to have finalized projects as early as December 2018
1	Output		Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	KM of reconstructed or upgraded roads		120 KM	Project reports	
1	Financial indicator		(Certified) Expenditure	EUR	7 000 000	77 884 130	Application for payment	

2.A.1 Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

PRIORITY AXIS 2: A green region

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF</i>
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	<i>Total eligible expenditure</i>

2.A.4. Investment priority

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

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 2.1: To improve the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage

The Romania-Bulgaria cross border area is characterised by a rich natural and cultural heritage, which is subject to a variety of pressures and usage conflicts (e.g. from industry, intensive agriculture, climate change, transport as well as mismanaged tourism flows). Given the socio-economic difficulties of the cross-border area, the pressures seem set to continue

unless new ways of sustainable yet viable economic uses of the heritage are identified, implemented and promoted. Sustainable tourism seems to be the sector that best combines, given the local conditions, the economic rationale and the protection logic in order to yield sustainable benefits for the local communities. This seems to be the best way to tackle the problems affecting a rich natural and cultural heritage that is less known both at national and international level.

Tourism development and environmental protection are already a common political and civil society objective as have been seen during the 2007-2013 period. The Cross Border region has already created a common territorial brand and Romania and Bulgaria are in charge of the EUSDR Priority Area: “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts”. Moreover, the development of integrated tourism products between the Danube and the Black Sea areas and the creation of new linkages with the Danube upper side tourism infrastructures can increase the tourism contribution to green and sustainable growth in the Cross Border area.

The specific objective can be further detailed into two sub-objectives emphasizing the management capacity of heritage and its concrete restoration efforts. The sub-objectives would thus be:

- To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources;
- Reconstruction, recovery and promotion of cultural/natural sights and monuments through relevant strategies/concepts and cultural events with cross-border dimension;

Given the geography, the ecological structure of the cross-border area (structured around the Black Sea seaside and the Danube corridor – a major natural corridor connecting the two national sides) and the common ethnographic and historical evolution of the two national sides, the cross-border added-value in tackling the issue of natural and historical heritage protection and usage seems obvious.

The main result envisaged by the Member States can thus be summarized as the emergence of a model for the joint protection and sustainable use (for heritage-friendly economic development) of the natural and cultural heritage of the cross-border area.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)⁷	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.1	Number of tourist overnights in the CBC region	Overnight	6 668 515 overnights	2013	7 200 000 overnights	Romanian and Bulgarian national statistical survey	2018, 2023

⁷ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1.6.c A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to improve the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage

The actions that are foreseen to be supported under this specific objective will strengthen the capacities of relevant actors to restore, preserve and sustainably use the cultural and natural heritage of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area. The main emphasis will be on the joint management and coordination approaches that will ensure the decrease of the current pressure and avoid future usage conflicts. An important instrument for this will be the strong support of the Programme for the developing of common tools and technologies for the management of natural and cultural heritage areas and sites affected either by local pressures or by climate change.

Sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage will be reinforced by both the joint approaches that will require each national partner to streamline its procedures and the tourism-based approach that will make mandatory the local economic relevance of protection and preservation and raise the local community's awareness on the importance of heritage preservation for its own livelihood.

Some indicative activities:

Soft measures:

1. Preparation of joint studies, strategies, management plans etc. in the field of common preservation, development and utilisation of cultural/natural heritage
2. Joint training and awareness-raising campaigns regarding the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage
3. Preservation, promotion and development of intangible cultural heritage, mainly through cultural events with a cross-border dimension

Hard measures:

4. Support the promotion and utilisation of cultural/natural heritage potential by investments in joint and sustainable touristic infrastructure
5. Rehabilitation/construction of roads to natural and cultural heritage interest points that will be part of a cross-border tourism product
6. Cultural infrastructure: reconstruction, recovery and promotion of cultural monuments based on relevant cross-border strategies/concepts

Integrated measures:

7. Development of common tourism products and services based on the natural and cultural heritage and joint promotion
8. Joint development/management of natural parks, nature reserves and other protected areas

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained such as the creation of joint tourism products and the common development and rehabilitation of cultural and natural heritage sites at cross-border level. The local key infrastructure elements (local roads) that can create the basis for increased and well managed accessibility of natural and cultural heritage sites will also be targeted under this specific objective. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Joint trainings, awareness-raising and cultural events to promote and develop natural and cultural heritage
- Investments in joint and sustainable touristic infrastructure and cultural monuments to develop cultural/natural heritage
- Joint studies, strategies, management plans to preserve, develop and promote cultural/natural heritage
- Common tourism products and services based on the sustainable joint utilisation of the cultural/natural heritage

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

Even though the target group is a very large one, including the residents of the cross-border area and the visitors (tourists), some specific groups will constitute the main focus of the activities indicated above. They are the main groups active in drafting and implementing policies in the cultural and natural heritage sector: public administrations, NGOs involved in the protection and valorisation of cultural, historical and natural heritage and local communities living in contact with the heritage assets.

The beneficiaries are selected among the above groups and represent those that can effectively contribute to the delivery of the specific objective, namely the public institutions, NGOs, universities and R&D institutions, chambers of commerce (including associations of SMEs) that can improve the protection of natural and cultural heritage while developing also an economic model for its sustainable use (sustainable tourism product). This last aspect explains the importance of the participation of associations of NGOs under this specific objective.

Specific territories targeted

All the cross-border area is targeted and is eligible for the actions supported under this specific objective. A special attention will be, nevertheless, given to areas of high natural or cultural value and to natural areas/cultural sites that face significant threats/pressures and/or usage conflicts.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 6.c

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and

expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
6c.1.	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attraction (COI)	Number	100 000	Project reports	Annual
6c.2	Number of integrated tourism products/services created	Number	100	Project reports	Annual
6c.3	Number of common strategies, policies or management plans for valorising (including raising awareness) the cultural and natural heritage through its restoration and promotion for sustainable economic uses	Number of common strategies/management plans approved	50	Project reports	Annual

Investment Priority 6d: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services including through NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 2.2: To enhance the sustainable management of the ecosystems from the cross-border area

This biodiversity and soil restoration Investment priority is by definition suitable for a cross-border programme as the Romania-Bulgaria one, due to the interaction and interdependency of the landscapes and the continuity of habitats and ecosystems across and along the Danube River that constitute one of the greatest assets of the cross border area and an important location factor for development. Cross border cooperation can facilitate the transfer of best-practice models and solutions and the pooling of competences in a region where the impacts of climate change are expected to be more important than in other places and have a strong negative impact on biodiversity and on the health of local ecosystems.

Given the fact that NATURA 2000 sites create in the region a chain of interconnected protected natural sites structured around the Danube and its local tributaries, as well as along the coastal area of the Black Sea, they represent a great potential for ecosystem management and protection at cross-border level. In addition the NATURA 2000 system is very important for a region where there is a limited capacity to manage the social and economic pressures on environment and ecosystems. Ensuring the capacity to integrate sustainability at the level of such large areas that are also strongly connected across the border, will most likely foster further protection of ecosystems at large in the area and even further afield in each country.

This specific objective will thus concentrate on the protection and sustainable management of NATURA 2000 sites. Even though these sites should in principle have their own management strategies or some kind of contractual framework, they often lack effective strategic framework. They often work in isolation and not efficiently enough. An effective management enhanced through cross border cooperation and networking is therefore necessary. The investment priority will support exchange of experience and capacity building for protected areas/NATURA 2000 sites administrations/administrators; community involvement; visitor management and tourism development; coordinated management planning, implementation of measures for protection (green infrastructure, protective measures) and evaluation. The development of public awareness on NATURA 2000 sites and protected areas in order to promote them as community assets is also an important result that the Programme seeks to achieve. The awareness of the importance for local communities of natural areas along and across the border can also be a factor in the emergence of a common cross-border identity. The Programme will thus support the cross-border coordination of different activities aimed at restoring, protecting and managing in a sustainable way the ecosystems that are included under NATURA 2000 sites and areas. These activities will target the implementation of coordinated management and protective intervention in the natural sites.

In the previous programming period successful projects were implemented in the fields of biodiversity, land use planning as well as the preservation and sustainable use of nature assets. The priority axis will also focus on joint activities for integrated coastal zone management in the Black Sea area.

The main result the 2 Member States aim to achieve is healthy, biologically diverse and better connected ecosystems through improved joint management and protection of NATURA 2000 sites.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)⁸	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.1	Increasing NATURA 2000 sites from the cross-border area with coordinated management tools	Number	2	2014	10	Project reports	2018 and 2023

⁸ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1.6d A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to enhance the sustainable management of the ecosystems from the cross border area

Cross-border cooperation in the field of NATURA 2000 sites protection can bring added value as many of these sites are closely connected over the border. The cooperation of cross-border diverse stakeholders in the field of environment protection and biodiversity promotion can better address the key issue of ecosystems connectivity in a region where the frontier encompasses such major natural elements as the Danube River and the Black Sea coast.

The actions that will be supported under this specific objective will make use of the cross-border cooperation in order to ensure that administrative and national boundaries do not become barriers for the ecosystem protection and that management of protected sites (especially NATURA 2000) can be more effective through flexible and adaptive cross-border cooperation. The joint development, testing (pilot actions) and implementation of innovative tools and mechanisms for the protection of NATURA 2000 sites and the reconnection of ecosystems in the cross-border area will be supported by the Programme. This will seek to ensure a better cross-border protection of the ecosystems, in an area where the local awareness on nature protection is limited and the management of resulting anthropic pressures is very difficult.

All the supported actions seek to strengthen the environmental management capacities in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area:

Soft measures:

1. Cross-border coordination and exchange of information to reinforce the implementation of relevant policies (Water Framework Directive), and biodiversity conservation (Flora, Fauna, Habitat Directive and Birds Directive), organise knowledge transfer, exchange of good practice examples, networking and development of innovations on protecting/preserving ecosystems
2. Protecting ecosystems using classification, mapping and spatial planning and other structural cooperative measures in the field of nature and landscape protection
3. Preparation and implementation of joint researches, studies, strategies, plans related to NATURA 2000 sites
4. Common awareness-raising activity for the general public by acknowledging and promoting the potentials related to NATURA 2000 sites
5. Joint designation and management of protected sites and species of the NATURA 2000 network

Hard measures:

6. Support and promote cross-border investments regarding the green infrastructure (e.g. urban tree canopy, corridors connecting habitats)

7. Protecting/preserving/monitoring the ecosystems, especially in NATURA 2000 sites by purchasing the necessary equipment.
8. Creating/reinforcing cross-border coordinated infrastructure that protects/restores biodiversity/soil/promotes ecosystem services, including through NATURA 2000

The main result expected under SO 2.2 is to support the common protection of the ecosystems and the development of green infrastructure corridor in an area that includes important European ecosystem such as the Danube and the Black Sea, mainly through the better and joint management of the extensive (and interlinked on the border) NATURA 2000 network in the cross-border area.

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained. Emphasis is put on joint strategies, common management plans for the NATURA 2000 sites and joint measures for supporting green infrastructure at cross-border level. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Mapping and spatial planning, exchange of information, knowledge transfer to protect/preserve ecosystems
- Awareness-raising, joint researches, studies, strategies and plans to preserve NATURA 2000 sites
- Cross-border coordinated infrastructure and green infrastructure to preserve biodiversity and NATURA 2000 sites
- Equipment to preserve biodiversity and NATURA 2000 sites

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The target groups are representing virtually all stakeholders involved in the protection of cross-border environment and the promotion of ecosystem services, from public administrations to private companies registered or working in the areas and from NGOs to the resident or visiting citizens.

The beneficiaries of the supported actions will be all the public or not-for-profit organizations that can contribute effectively to the improvement of management and protection of cross-border natural areas, especially the NATURA 2000 ones. They include county/district or national nature protection agencies and bodies, NGOs involved in nature protection, universities and R&D institutions involved in environmental research and/or green innovations, etc.

Specific territories targeted

Although all the cooperation area is targeted by this specific objective, a special emphasis is put on the NATURA 2000 sites included in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area and on natural areas that are at a particular risk due to stronger pressures generated by the human activity than in strictly protected natural areas.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 6.d

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
6d.1.	Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status (ha) (COI)	ha	20 000	Project reports	Annual

2.A.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis Priority Axis 2 – A green region

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
2	Output Indicator	P2.1	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attraction	Number	20 000	100 000	Project reports	
2	Output Indicator	P2.2	Number of integrated tourism products/ services created	Number	10	100	Project reports	
2	Financial indicator	P2.3	(Certified) Expenditure	EUR	4 500 000	51 239 559	Application for payment	

2.A.1. Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

PRIORITY AXIS 3: A safe region

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

(repeated for each fund under the priority axis)

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF</i>
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	<i>Total eligible expenditure</i>

2.A.4. Investment priority

Investment Priority 5b Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 3.1: To improve joint risk management in the cross-border area

The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

The effects of climate change are being felt in the cross border area: dry, hot summers and winters with high volumes of snow; areas with desertification tendencies or floods, landslides.

The lack of strategic interventions and investments in the last decades in many areas (river bank management, land improvement, wetland restoration, urban planning for areas with high degree of natural and anthropic risks) has led to an ever increasing impact of the above indicated natural hazards on the cross-border communities and environment. These face today an increased risk towards natural disasters generated by climate change. In addition even though industrial pollution has declined, the abandoned historically polluted sites and the multiplication of small polluting sources represent anthropic risk factors that are only marginally managed and become almost hazards given the climate change effects in the area (anthropic risks become hazards, e.g a big steel plant site that is abandoned represents a risk of pollution for the water table that is difficult to manage on the short term, becoming thus a partial hazard).

Given that, associated to the situation presented above, there is an overall low mitigation capacity (infrastructures, equipment, norms, administrative capacity, cross-border cooperation for environmental hazard management) the need to strengthen both the hazard management and the current rescue service situation is obvious and pressing. The continuation of the implementation of previous programming period projects (such as flood prevention measures and hazard zoning, development of risk management system and cross border rescue services / system) is a great opportunity for a cost-effective and rapid improvement of some key aspects in the field of hazard management and emergency response.

Therefore, joint disaster risk prevention and management is one of the main cross border priorities. Cross border public and private stakeholders as well as the civil society has already, through the results of the previous programming period, a direct view of the benefits of cross border collaboration in this field and promote the implementation of common measures and projects that ensure an effective management of common issues. Indeed, the RO-BG cross border region is extremely susceptible to climate change and natural disasters such as droughts and flooding, seacoast and river bank erosion, landslides, earthquakes, fires, etc.. A higher level of disaster risk prevention can come from cooperation and coordination of cross-sectorial responses, technological developments and norms agreed upon by both countries at local and national public level. Moreover, as the ETC regulation mentioned it several time, it is highly recommendable to enhance the shared management of common risks at a cross border level. This will require, amongst others, support to develop cross-border context-specific strategic planning and rescue service delivery.

Given the above considerations, the Member States intend to achieve, through this Axis, a two-fold result: support the identification of those common measures that can best tackle common hazards and risks and support some investments/measures for joint hazard management and risk prevention.

The result that the Member States seek to achieve under this specific objective is a better-prepared and integrated cross-border region in terms of prevention and management capacity of disaster risks.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)⁹	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
3.1	Increase in the quality of the joint risk management in the CBC area	% of the satisfaction rate of the local administration representatives in the area	Survey	2014	To be defined	Survey	2018 and 2023

⁹ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1.5.b A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to improve joint risk management in the cross-border area

The supported actions will use the cross-border cooperation framework to contribute to higher disaster resilience and higher mitigation capacity regarding the impacts of the climate change. The supported actions focus on both the joint planning and joint implementation of measures to monitor, prevent and mitigate the disaster risks. The cooperation in this field is essential as the geography of the cross-border area and the associated disaster risks (big river floods and landslides, heat waves and fires, earthquakes and industrial disaster risk) indicates a clear added-value in tackling together both the planning and the implementation of mitigation and disaster resilience measures.

There are 3 main types of actions that will be supported under this specific objective:

Soft types of measures:

1. Soft measures for joint training and raising awareness of public service actors and population effective hazard management and disaster resilience
2. Soft measures for increasing/ensuring cross-border administrative coordination and effectiveness in the area of hazard management, risk prevention and disaster resilience

Hard types of measures:

3. Investments in small-scale interventions/investments like dikes, planting protective windbreaks, land improvements and ecosystem-based mitigation elements (e.g. floodplain forests, rainwater harvesting systems) in key geographical areas in the cross-border area

Integrated types of measures:

4. Investments in equipment and systems for early warning and disaster management capacity

Each type of action contributes to the realization of the specific objective by tackling in a systemic way (see the paragraph below) key shortcomings in the hazard management and disaster resilience areas:

- The in-depth analysis of hazards and risks affecting the cross-border area and the identification of possible solutions tackle the need for updating the relevant information and strategic framework of public administrations and emergency structures. Many aspects that escape the control of authorities on one side might be better tackled if perceived from a joint perspective (e.g. the management of effects of industrial pollution, the management of effects of earthquakes, etc.)
- The drafting of common strategies for tackling environmental and anthropic hazards and ensuring disaster resilience is tackling a stringent need of local public authorities and emergency management institutions to have a long-term and more adapted approach to the issues they are legally responsible to manage in this field. A well drafted strategy for environmental hazard management can help identify key aspects in other legal frameworks that need to be changes and

coordinated on cross-border (e.g. urban planning regulation can be drafted in order to better take into account the hazards, especially the ones that are generated on the other side of the frontier).

- The financing of joint equipment and systems for hazard and risk management, early warning and disaster resilience is responding in a very cost-effective way to the needs in modern and adapted equipment of specialized public services and local public administrations. The provision of this equipment in a cross-border manner represents both an incentive to coordination and a more effective measure than their provision through a solely national initiative.
- The financing of key investments in the hazard mitigation and risk prevention responds to the big needs in this field in the cross-border area (protective windbreaks, reforestation against landslides, coastal erosion, etc.) and targets the emergence of cost-effective best practices that can be adopted and further developed by national investment programs in a region with small public resources allotted to hazard and risk management and mitigation.
- By supporting the training of public services employees (emergency services but also local administration) for the better and cross-border management of hazards and risks, the Programme responds to a stringent need of enhancing the administrative capacity of public stakeholders to coordinate between themselves and tackle this type of issues (local administrations critically need to be better prepared to respond to emergencies and coordinate with the emergency institutions, to better understand the importance of respecting urban planning regulation for decreasing the risk and tackling hazards). In a region traversed by the Danube and including the Black Sea shores, developing the capacity of local administrations to understand the hazards and risks that are on the other side of the frontier and coordinate with emergency services of the neighbors can be key in ensuring increased capacity to mitigate the effects of disasters.
- The raising awareness of populations on a cross-border level can ensure their more effective mobilization towards reducing risks stemming from their socio-economic behavior, better reacting in front of disasters and better understanding the risks and hazards of both their own and their neighbor's area. This is very important in a region that is shrinking demographically and displays high inactivity rates.

The types of actions that will be financed by the Programme under this Specific Objective have a strategic approach to the problems of environmental and anthropic hazards present in the cross-border area. They reinforce and complement each other while capitalizing on the cross-border cooperation framework: soft measures like hazard analysis (on a cross-border level) and the development of joint strategies are unavoidable steps in the process of designing and implementing functioning cross-border systems for early warning and disaster management, while effective and efficient cross-border “hard” or investment projects in this field are impossible without a coherent strategy and systemic approach. This incremental approach is key in ensuring that interventions are not insular or overlapping and they lead to the fulfilment of the strategic objective.

Some examples of actions that correspond to the above indicated types of actions and are supported under this specific objective:

Soft measures:

1. Ensure better co-ordination and efficient reactions of the authorities in the emergency situations caused by natural disasters (flood, fire, heat waves, earthquakes, storms), as well as setting up common rules/legislation on deforesting and construction in the areas affected by natural and anthropic hazards
2. Set-up and integration harmonized standards and systems for better forecasting and managing natural and anthropic hazards in the CBC area (flood, earthquake, fire, storms), including preparing/updating hazard maps and ecosystem-based solutions (for floodplains, wetland preservation, forest management)
3. Setting up of harmonised integrated tools for risk prevention and mitigation (including detection, early warning and alert systems, risk mapping and assessment) - creation of joint structures for urgent, unexpected situations (including highly specialized response units/civil protection modules), and development of small-scale regional level cross-border infrastructure in the field of emergency preparedness (e.g. transport accidents, disasters, etc.), including in cases of weather-related risks (such as storms, extreme temperature events, forest fires, droughts, floods) and geophysical risks (such as landslides, earthquakes).
4. Elaboration of joint detailed maps and data bases indicating natural and technological risks, and land use for regional planning authorities, environmental agencies and emergency services;
5. Exchanges of experience and knowledge, including raising awareness in the field of efficient risk prevention and management in the cross-border area (including training and learning programmes, community-based training initiatives, bilingual maps, information sheets, brochures about natural and anthropic hazards) targeted at specific target groups (children/youth, development planners, emergency managers, local government officials, etc.)

Hard measures :

6. Land improvement for regions with high and medium hazard risk level (including: sanitation and reforestation of river banks, building flood and coastal defence (dikes, reservoirs), forestation/reforestation of non-permanent vulnerable land to torrential formations, reducing desertification tendencies and high drought risks, replanting floodplain forests)
7. Support and promote cross-border investments into the green infrastructure that helps reduce the risk and mitigate disasters (like systems for rainwater harvesting, purification of

Integrated measures:

8. Measuring/monitoring environmental parameters that are important for early warning and effective mitigation measures (e.g. emission levels, water purity, analysis of soil and water samples etc.), through the purchasing of common equipment and joint assessment of results;

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained.. A special emphasis is nevertheless present on joint systems and tools as well as co-ordination of strategies and

investments at cross-border level for tackling risk prevention and hazard management. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Common strategies for hazard management and risk prevention including joint action plans
- Action plans for disaster resilience and mitigation
- Set-up of integrated and common standards for the urban planning and risk management
- Actions for common use of equipment in the field environmental parameters monitoring
- Actions for common use of equipment in the field of hazard management and disaster resilience
- Awareness raising campaigns for the cross-border population on the hazards and risk and on the measures for their mitigation, management, reduction
- Exchanges of experiences

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The main target groups of this measure are the decision makers at national, regional, county and local level in the area of disaster risk and emergency, the general resident population of the cross-border area and the institutions that are legally in charge of monitoring, assessing and addressing hazards, disaster risk and emergency.

The beneficiaries of the supported actions are in the first place the national and/or local/district/county institutions in charge, according to the law, of managing emergency situations. Any other public or non-profit organization that can actively and effectively contribute to the reduction of disaster risk and help in the process of mitigation of disaster effects are also important potential beneficiaries: local public administrations, NGOs that can involve and train local communities, universities and R&D organizations involved in research on different risk factors (industrial pollution, local effects of climate change, etc.).

Specific territories targeted

The whole Romania-Bulgaria cross border area is targeted.

A special attention will be given to Danube flood risks and land and costal erosion issues on one side and to industrial disaster risk on the other. As such the territories most affected by these types of risk can be readily identified as targeted territories (areas in vicinity of important industrial sites, the Danube flood plain, the areas exposed to coastal erosion, etc.).

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 5.b

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
5b.1	Number of people benefiting from actions of risk management	Number	2 500 000	Project reports	Annual
5b.2	Number of joint partnerships in the field of joint early warning and emergency response	Number	50	Project reports	Annual

2.A.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis Priority Axis 3 – A safe region

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
3	Output Indicator	P3.1	Number of joint partnerships in the field of joint early warning and emergency response	Number	10	50	Project reports	Output Indicator
3	Financial indicator	P3.2	(Certified) Expenditure	EUR	4 000 000	38 942 065	Application for payment	Financial indicator

2.A.1 Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

PRIORITY AXIS 4: A skilled and inclusive region

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF</i>
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	<i>Total eligible expenditure</i>

2.A.4. Investment priority

Investment Priority: 8.i: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 4.1. To encourage the integration of the cross-border area in terms of employment and labour mobility

In the context of depopulation, demographic ageing and external migration from the cross-border area, one of the most urging issue is a current employment situation showing that the

supply and the demand of work is unbalanced as a result of a general climate unfavorable to business-related initiatives.

Indeed the area is for now locked in a detrimental pattern where workers prefer to leave the region when they are educated and where companies hesitate to settle fearing that they will not find skilled workers.

The programme expect to influence growing mobility and inclusiveness of the labour market by fostering initiatives directed at the same time towards workers and entrepreneurs.

To that purpose it stresses the need for the building of cross-border networks sharing best practices, business initiatives and strategies in order to give confidence to companies and SME's about the opportunities of the region and to create valuable encounters and synergies between them.

For instance the sharing of best practices in tourism can be fruitful for the integration of the area since operators will then have the possibility to build a cross-border common offer, such as a Danube-centered organised trip.

This network will also relate the private sector (entrepreneurs, SME's, Ngo's) with the educational system in order to give a more concrete and valuable training to students or workers. It will permit workers to match the needs of employers and also to reassure workers about their professional future.

Moreover initiatives will be fostered to give a better accessibility and promotion to language learning programm. To that purpose it will be helpful to supply informations about job opportunities on the other side of the border. Thus it will be possible for the population to change the scale of their researches and to be more open to learn an other language.

To that end it seems also necessary to promote the implementation of dedicated cross-border structures that will have the role to help, on a daily basis, cross-border workers and entrepreneurs to come across administrative, legal or fiscal obstacles to mobility.

The European Union Employment Service already created 20 EURES cross-border partnerships in more than 13 countries. This cross-border partnership and its advisers has the aim to meet the need for information and coordination connected with labour mobility in the border regions, these partnerships bring together public employment and vocational training services, employers and trades union organisations, local authorities and other institutions dealing with employment and vocational training.

This good practice can be a valuable model to achieve our cross-border initiative as a way to gain awareness about the EURES cross-border framework and its implementation in other European regions.

The main result sought by these initiatives is the creation of a common labour market that will lead, on the long-term, to a common representation of the cross-border area.

In other words to a widely shared idea that the inhabitants of the region do not live only in the periphery of capital cities or foreign countries but that they live primarily in a distinct and central area where it is possible to find and keep a qualified and sustainable job and to have access to life-long training programmes fitted to the more and more complex needs of innovative and sustainable cross-border companies.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective) – to be filled in

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)¹⁰	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
4.1	Increase of the population that have access to joint employment initiatives	Qualitative scale	20 000	2013	50 000	Project reports	2018, 2023

¹⁰ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.6.1. 8i A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to create an integrated cross border area in terms of employment and labour mobility

The actions that will be supported under this specific objective seek to foster the development of a more integrated labour market in the cross border area and the development of cross-border activities of SMEs (fostering cross-border entrepreneurship). This will mainly be done through training and support mechanisms that have an empowerment and facilitating role for the labour force in the cross-border area.

Seeking to make the workforce seize cross-border jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, the support will be concentrated around two main aspects: the provision of skills adapted to the cross-border economic resources and potential (for unleashing genuinely endogenous and sustainable economic potential, especially in areas where new SMEs and entrepreneurship can be developed) and the support to cross-border mobility enabling measures (language teaching, infrastructure and transport for border crossing, etc.).

All the actions that will be supported will contribute to improve the integration of cross-border labour markets and to enhance linkages between entrepreneurs on both sides of the border.

Examples of actions that will be supported:

Soft measures:

1. anticipating long-term employment opportunities created on both sides of the border by structural shifts in the labour market and developing services in the fields of lifelong guidance and lifelong learning to foster career transitions
2. to develop joint strategies, plans, and studies related to the cross-border mobility and to identify the key branches that can activate workforce mobility
3. collaborating in offering services to employers and establishing partnerships with education institutes and other employment services to organise flexible, preventive and efficient service delivery
4. to provide comprehensive and official information on social security, employment legislation and tax issues both in Romanian and Bulgarian border regions through regular training sessions and courses in relevant legal regulations to decrease the doubts of proper administrative units and employers concerning the manner of interpretation and application of specific regulations
5. developing and providing joint special programs in vocational training in sectors which lack specific skills
6. joint training and support, exchanges of good practices for a better integration in the labour market
7. awareness actions for employment opportunities throughout the CBC area

8. to provide special language courses for mobile employees and people looking for work, which would potentially increase their chances to find employment in the eligible area.

Hard measures:

9. creating/development infrastructure to increase labour mobility

Integrated measures:

10. cross-border strategies and measures for a better inclusion in the labour market of the disadvantaged categories of population
11. to develop information and advice for cross-border commuters and potential employers by creating and developing joint databases in service of labour mobility
12. providing integrated support tailored to the needs of jobseekers on both sides of the border while extending service provision to job changers and supporting the inactive back to work
13. creation and development of cross border business incubators and virtual incubators for promoting employment of staff from both side of the border (companies based on local assets and local service needs such as innovative heritage tourism, nautical and water tourism and ecotourism products located in the region)

Types of outputs

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained. Nevertheless there is a special emphasis on providing services, developing strategies and infrastructures to increase labour mobility in the cross-border region. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Services to foster employment and lifelong learning
- Key infrastructure elements that foster labour mobility
- Cross border business incubators and virtual incubators for promoting employment
- Common strategies for a better inclusion in the labour market
- Information (databases) and advice to increase labour mobility
- Awareness raising campaigns, language courses and joint trainings to foster opportunities on the labour market.

The **main target groups** of this axis will be the inactive working-age persons and the potential and active entrepreneurs of the cross-border area. Nevertheless the above working-age persons and the youth will also be targeted as they are very important for ensuring cohesive local communities (active ageing, lower dependency rates and increased revenues) and a future skilled and well-adapted workforce.

An important emphasis will also be made on the women and on the persons belonging to disadvantaged groups (ethnic minorities, disabled persons, etc.) in order to increase their employability and enable them to take advantage of the cross-border job-opportunities.

The **beneficiaries** of the above indicative actions will most likely be the local public authorities (public policy, economic and social prerogatives, public services providers), the education organizations (for the provision of cross-border relevant skills and competencies) and NGOs, especially the business associations from both sides of the border (for the support of SMEs and self-employment in the cross-border area) and the Chambers of Commerce.

Specific territories targeted

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area includes some of the poorest territories in the European Union. Only a limited number of urban centres inside the area have a relatively good socio-economic situation in regard of the national standards.

The labour market is affected by high inactivity rates and by its poor and small-diversified offer of employment opportunities, mostly in the rural area but also in some small urban areas. This is why this axis tries to tackle the employability problems and the low-level of entrepreneurship in the area by supporting measures for self-employment, start-ups and micro-enterprise that capitalize on un-tapped resources that come from rural areas: agriculture through higher quality, agricultural raw produces and specific food production and processing, unspoiled natural and rural environment for nature and culture tourism, etc.

Nevertheless the whole Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border area is targeted only differently since small urban areas and rural areas have a stronger need of inclusive and training measures.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 8.i

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments.

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results. In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
8i.1	No. of initiatives (trainings, education schemes, websites, agreements, networks, job-fairs etc.) that activate workforce mobility in the cross border area	Number	50	Project reports	

2.A.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis Priority Axis 4 – A skilled and inclusive region

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
4	Output Indicator	P4.1	No. of initiatives (trainings, education schemes, websites, agreements, networks, job-fairs etc.) that activate workforce mobility in the	Number	10	50	Project reports	Output Indicator

			cross border area					
4	Financial indicator	P4.2	(Certified) Expenditure	EUR	1 000 000	14 347 077	Application for payment	Financial indicator

2.A.1. Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

PRIORITY AXIS 5: An effective region

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF</i>
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	<i>Total eligible expenditure</i>

2.A.4. Investment priority (repeated for each investment priority under the priority axis)

Investment Priority 11.iv: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the

ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration

2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

Specific Objective 5.1. To increase cooperation capacity and the efficiency of public institutions in a CBC context

The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

Even though progress has been made towards strengthening the administrative capacities of both Bulgaria and Romania, the cross-border area is still regarded as having weak administrative capacity, a tendency towards over-regulation and a too centralized, bureaucratic and opaque public authority's structures.

The situation leads to consequences such as a not fully optimal absorption of EU funds and a very low level of public-private partnerships and public participation.

These two questions are linked since a lack of capacity and efficiency of the public authority can be detrimental to fully accede to EU funding opportunities. The latest depends on a deep involvement of private stakeholders and on the necessary implementation of the governance framework of project-building at every territorial scale.

For instance the Commission insists on the importance of Community-Led-Local-Development as an instrument to lighten the weight of public authorities in the local implementation of EU's policies.

Following the principle of subsidiarity it focuses on specific sub-regional territories where local action groups composed of representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests carry out area-based local development strategies designed to take into consideration local needs and potentials.

On this model, the building of network with public and private stakeholders can permit the upbringing of such horizontal initiatives and the fostering of evolved and agile public authorities

Indeed, the development of new models of governance, which involve private stakeholders, can help to efficiently fulfil a mission of public service with the management, monitoring, evaluating and collaborative systems and tools of the private sector.

For instance it can be a very valuable leverage for the development of an efficient vertical and horizontal public management and the implementation of local social enterprises activities as social counselling or care towards disadvantaged groups as ethnic minorities or disabled persons.

To that purpose the first priorities are to create a horizontal network between private and public stakeholders and to help public authorities to be more aware of their environment and to adopt new practices of governance towards their citizens (as e-government solutions or public participation in decision-) and towards their private stakeholders (as reducing the burden of bureaucracy, developing PPPs, creating evolved territorial development and investment plan and structures – EGTC, ITI, CLLD).

In order to raise awareness, the expected result of our actions could be shared with all stakeholders through a case study of a successful cross-border cooperation programme (as an European or cross-border CLLD) that will firstly promote the programme's actions towards a simpler, more transparent and assessable public management and shows that their outcome

will be the increase of the cooperation capacity and of the efficiency of the public administration in the cross-border region.

This presentation will eventually communicate the message that the programme's actions do not aim to "upgrade" public authorities or to deprive them from their prerogatives and legitimacy, at the contrary, they are meant to enhance their capacity to develop ambitious, concrete and funded projects that participate to the improvement of the overall well-being of their citizens.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)¹¹	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
4.1	Increase of the level of co-ordination of the public institutions in the eligible area	Satisfaction degree of cross-border stakeholders (administration, NGOs)	to be determined via further qualitative research (survey)	2015	To be determined	Survey	2018 and 2023

¹¹ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Actions to increase cooperation capacity and the efficiency of public institutions in a CBC context

The programme aims to assist social organisations and public authorities to deliver more efficient, adaptable and tailor-made policies and services with a comparable quality throughout the cross-border region. It also focuses on developing innovative solutions in the light of multi-level governance and cross border cooperation.

Furthermore, the programme expects that local stakeholders will collaborate with public institutions in order to identify innovative public services solutions.

The set of actions to be supported in the cross-border area, all corresponding to the specific objective “increase cooperation capacity and the efficiency of institutions in a CBC context”, foresees the following:

Soft measures:

1. Analysis and harmonization of regulatory framework
2. Strengthening local/regional cross border networks
3. Design implementation strategies, development and transfer of best-practice models and solutions (including best-practices for the provision of public services through e-government tools and methods), organisational models, decision-making tools and promotion of pilot actions for a better participation of all groups of civil society in the cross-border and local decision and policy making process
4. Coordination of policies and investments in the programme area - development of common approaches to common problems - in areas such as social policies, education, health, employment, transport, environment and customs
5. Develop models for institutional co-operation and spatial organization for and between different territorial types
6. Training for institutions personnel to increase capacity in view of implementing EU projects, legislation and managing public investments in a CBC context
7. Develop cross border models for the design, testing, up-scaling, comparison and evaluation of innovations (tools, processes, actors, organizations and interfaces) in the fields of services of general interest, social services and public administration
8. Up-skilling in the field of CBC policy development and implementation
9. Raising awareness regarding cross-border opportunities (employment, health care, education, etc.)

Integrated measures:

10. Supporting the modernisation of public services in areas such as customs, social policies, education, health and employment (including purchase of equipment and infrastructure development)
11. Development of common structures, systems and tools that ensure continuity and allow to gradually step up the maturity of cross-border cooperation in the programme area
12. Actions to promote the reduction of administrative burden for citizens

Type of outputs:

Within the supported actions, different types of outputs can be obtained. Nevertheless there is a special emphasis on developing public services and increase cooperation for a better participation of all groups of civil society, local decision and policy making process, in the cross-border region. Types of outputs (without being limited to this list) can thus be:

- Local/regional cross border institutional networks,
- Actions to reduce administrative burden for citizens,
- Cross-border models to improve services of general interest, social services and public administration,
- Training to increase capacity to implement EU projects, legislation and managing public investments in the cross-border area,
- Awareness raising on the opportunities for institutional cross-border cooperation.

The main target groups and types of beneficiaries:

These priority axis beneficiaries are any kind of public institutions or public service organizations (any non-profit organization with private or public law personality that delivers/provides a public service according to law). Given the fact that this represents a very large group of beneficiaries that is nevertheless very well defined, the target group of the activities financed under this axis is identical to the group of beneficiaries.

The target group and the potential beneficiaries include all the following sub categories:

- Local Public Administration units (e.g. municipalities, county councils, district administrations)
- Public institutions with key sectorial competencies in the cross-border area and their local bodies: river basin administrations, environmental agencies and inspectorates, public forestry administration, land improvement administrations/institutions, public weather agencies.
- NGOs delivering public interest services in the cross-border area: healthcare, old-age care, child-care, transportation services for disabled, other services for people with socio-economic difficulties, etc.
- Deconcentrated bodies of public institutions like the customs, the border police, employment agencies, education inspectorates, healthcare directorates, etc.
- Public institutions that deliver public services such as: hospitals, universities, high schools, local healthcare units, schools, social service institutions.

Specific territories targeted

Given that the axis targets development in administrative capacity and increased overall cooperation, beneficiaries from all cross-border regions eligible.

The only exception regards the training of officials and public servants in which rural area and small urban may be helped in priority in regard of their limited access to training funds or of their urgent need of such initiatives.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Investment priority 11.iv

The selection of operation shall be performed in a similar manner for all priority axes. A special attention will be given to ensuring that supported investments under this SO will not overlap with any activities/outputs financed by other intervention instruments

The evaluation shall have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed strictly by the JS (Joint Secretariat) and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed, if the case, with the help of contracted external experts.

The eligibility criteria will verify both the eligibility of operations, beneficiaries and expenditure.

The operations are eligible if they fall within the programme specific objectives and if they contribute to at least one of the programme results.

In case an operation does not contribute to the specific objectives and to one of the programme results it shall be rejected in the first phase (administrative and eligibility evaluation). The extent to which an operation contributes to the specific objectives and results shall be scored in the technical evaluation.

The eligible beneficiaries are public or private bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations that observe the specific requirements of the call for proposals.

For what concerns the eligible expenditure, the list will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. No other additional national legislation is required. In the administrative phase only the compliance of the type of expenditure shall be verified.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
11iv.4.	Number of (supported) cross border mechanisms (agreement, networks, regulations, studies, policies, strategies, information exchange, tools) to enhance cooperation capacity	Number	100	Project reports	annual

2.A.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis Priority Axis 5 – An effective region

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
5	Output Indicator	P5.1	Number of supported cross border mechanisms (agreements, networks, regulations, studies, policies, strategies, information exchange and tools) to enhance cooperation capacity	Number	10	100	Project reports	Output Indicator
5	Financial indicator	P5.2	(Certified) Expenditure	EUR	1 000 000	10 247 912	Application for payment	Financial indicator

2.A.8. Categories of intervention

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount
Priority axis 1: A well connected region	034 Other reconstructed or improved road (motorway, national, regional or local)	60 408 743.64
	041 Inland waterways and ports (TEN-T)	12 944 730.78
	044 Intelligent transport systems (including the introduction of demand management, tolling systems, IT monitoring, control and information systems)	8 629 820.52
Priority axis 2: A green region	091 Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas	6 472 365.39
	094 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	25 889 461.56
	085 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	12 944 730.78
	086 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	8 629 820.52
Priority axis 3: A safe region	087 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	17 259 641.04
	088 Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (i.e. earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (e.g. technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	23 732 006.43
Priority axis 4: A skilled and inclusive region	102 Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility	6 472 365.39
	106 Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	4 314 910.26
	108 Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders	4 314 910.26
Priority axis 5: An efficient region	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	6 472 365.39
	120 Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels	4 314 910.26

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (€)
Priority 1	01 Non repayable grant	215 745 513.00
Priority 2		
Priority 3		
Priority 4		
Priority 5		

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (€)
	07 Not applicable	

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (€)
	07 Not applicable	

2.A.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

2.B. Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

2.B.1. Priority axis

<i>ID</i>	
<i>Title</i>	Technical assistance

2.B.2. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

<i>Fund</i>	ERDF
<i>Calculation Basis</i>	Eligible public expenditure

2.B.3. Specific objectives and expected results

Specific objective (repeated for each specific objective)

<i>ID</i>	
<i>Specific objective</i>	An effective & efficient programme implementation
<i>Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support</i> ¹²	Not required (budget under 15M EUR)

2.B.4. Result indicators¹³

Not applicable (*if the budget remains almost the same as during the previous programming period*)

2.B.5. Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

B.5.1. Description of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

<i>Priority axis 6</i>	Technical assistance
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The Technical assistance will support on one hand actions that enhance the capacity of applicants and beneficiaries to apply for and to use the programme funds and on the other hand, actions that improve the administrative procedures while ensuring a proper verification of project outputs and results under the quantitative and qualitative point of view. The technical assistance costs will mainly be composed of preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities, as well as financing activities (if necessary) to reinforce the administrative capacity for implementing the funds. In accordance with Article

¹² Required where the Union support to technical assistance in the cooperation programme exceeds EUR 15 million.

¹³ Required where objectively justified by the given the content of the actions and where the Union support to technical assistance in the cooperation programme exceeds EUR 15 million.

17 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the limit for Technical Assistance is set at 6% of the ERDF total amount allocated to the cooperation programme

Moreover, Technical Assistance funds will be used to prepare programme processes and templates, for programme management (implementation, monitoring, evaluation, communication, auditing) and to improve the administrative capacity of programme bodies and stakeholders. Therefore, Technical Assistance funds will finance the programme bodies: the Managing Authority (MA), the National Authority, the Joint Secretariat (JS), The First Level Control system and the Audit Authority (AA).

Indicative actions supported under this Priority Axis are listed below and refer to principles and tasks described in Sections 5.3 and 7:

1. General management

- Supporting the management bodies for the implementation and day-to-day management of the programme; supporting the Monitoring Committee activities, the National Authority, the functioning of other programme committees (meetings organisation, communication material costs, etc.) and the monitoring and MIS system.
- Elaboration of studies, reports and surveys on strategic matters concerning the programme may be elaborated. These documents will contribute to the sustainability and the incorporation of results and achievements into policies, strategies, investments of public interests, making use of experts if necessary.

2. Implementation

- Drafting and implementing call for proposals and their corresponding guidance documents.
- Drafting information documents for beneficiaries to guide them in the implementation, evaluation, control and communication activities of approved operations.
- Organisation of seminars, trainings and information events on national and cross border level (details will be set out in the communication strategy) to support projects' development and implementation.

3. Monitoring, control and audit

- Implementing proper procedures for the quality assessment, monitoring and control of operations carried out under the cooperation programme, involving external experts such as First Level controllers where necessary, and contributing to the reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries.
- Organising and implementing audit activities with regard to the programme management and control system and the operations.

4. Communication and information

- Implementing widespread information activities about the programme and the projects, as well as supporting activities related to communication and publicity through e.g., the elaboration and implementation of a programme communication strategy and similar supporting activities.
- Support for identifying and strengthening the co-ordination networks and contacts among representatives of other relevant EU co-funded programmes

by MA, NA, and JS (EUSDR, neighbouring ETC programmes, national programmes, etc.)

5. Evaluation

- Evaluation of the programme implementation in achieving its objectives. The used methodology shall be extensive and include activities such as the evaluation of financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones, elaboration of the intermediary, ad-hoc, ex-ante reports for the post 2020 period and reporting to the Monitoring Committee and the European Commission. For this purpose, an evaluation plan may be drafted according to the provision of the regulations and making use of external experts may be necessary.

Technical Assistance actions will be implemented by all authorities involved in the management of the Programme, listed in Section 5.3.

2.B.5.2 Output indicators expected to contribute to results

Table 11: Output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023) (optional)	Source of data
<2.B.3.2.1 type='S' maxlength='5' input='M'>	No of performed evaluations of the programming	no	1	Evaluation plan, evaluation reports, observations, etc.
	Functional Pro ETC	no	1	Generated reports, observations
	No of Joint Monitoring Committee meetings	no	14	Invitations submitted to the JMC, minutes of the meetings, etc.
	No of events for beneficiaries	no	xxx	Invitations submitted to the beneficiaries, minutes of the meetings, etc.

2.B.6. Categories of intervention

Corresponding categories of intervention based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and an indicative breakdown of Union support.

Tables 12-14: Categories of intervention

Table 12: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
<i><2B.4.1.1 type='S' input='S' Decision=N ></i>	<i><2B.4.1.2 type='S' input='S' Decision=N ></i>	<i><2B.4.1.3 type='N' input='M Decision=N' ></i>
	120 (Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection)	
	121 (Evaluation and studies)	
	122 (Information and communication)	

Table 13: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
<i><2B.4.2.1 type='S' input='S' Decision=N ></i>	<i><2B.4.2.2 type='S' input='S' Decision=N ></i>	<i><2B.4.2.3 type='N' input='M' Decision=N ></i>
	

Table 14: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
<i><2B.4.3.1 type='S' input='S' Decision=N ></i>	<i><2B.4.3.2 type='S' input='S' Decision=N S' ></i>	<i><2B.4.3.3 type='N' input='M' Decision=N' ></i>

SECTION 3. FINANCING PLANS

3.1. Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR)

Table 15

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
<i>ERDF</i>								
<i>IPA amounts (where applicable)</i>								
<i>ENI amounts (where applicable)</i>								
<i>Total</i>								

3.2.A. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

- 1. The financial table sets out the financial plan of the cooperation programme by priority axis. Where outermost regions' programmes combine cross-border and transnational allocations, separate priority axes will be set out for each of these.*
- 2. The financial table shall show for information purposes, any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme (other than contributions from IPA and ENI)*
- 3. The EIB¹⁴ contribution is presented at the level of the priority axis.*

¹⁴ European Investment Bank

Table 16: Financing plan

Priority Axis	Fund	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d))	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) <u>(2)</u>	For Information	
					National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) <u>(1)</u>			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
<i>Priority axis 1</i>	ERDF (possibly incl. amounts transferred from IPA and ENI) ¹⁵									
	IPA									
	ENI									
<i>Priority axis N</i>	ERDF (possibly incl. amounts transferred from IPA and ENI)									
	IPA									
	ENI									
Total	ERDF									
	IPA									
	ENI									
Total	Total all Funds									

(1) To be completed only when priority axes are expressed in total costs.

(2) This rate may be rounded to the nearest whole number in the table. The precise rate used to reimburse payments is the ratio (f).

¹⁵ Presentation of amounts transferred from ENI and IPA depends on management option chosen.

3.2.B. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

Table 17

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
Priority Axis 1 – A well connected region	TO 7- promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	81 983 295	14 467 640	96 450 935
Priority Axis 2 – A green region	TO6 - preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	53 936 378	9 518 184	63 454 563
Priority Axis 3 – A safe region	TO5 - promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	40 991 647	7 233 820	48 225 468
Priority Axis 4 – A skilled and inclusive region	TO8 - promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	15 102 186	2 665 092	17 767 278
Priority Axis 5 – An effective region	TO11 - enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration	10 787 276	1 903 637	12 690 913
Priority Axis – Technical Assistance	<i>Not applicable</i>	12 944 731	6 970 240	19 914 970
TOTAL		215 745 513	42 758 613	258 504 126

Table 18: Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives

Priority axis	Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (€)	Proportion of the total allocation to the programme (%)
Total		

SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

The ROBG CBC Programme 2014-2020 contributes to smart (priority axis 1, 4 & 5), sustainable (priority axis 1, 2, 3 & 5) and inclusive (priority axis 4 & 5) growth through an integrated approach in order to address common territorial challenges. The programme is based on an in-depth analysis of territorial features of all participating NUTS 3 regions (Section 1.1 and Annex “The Territorial Analysis”).

Indeed, in a consistent and complementary approach towards the national Partnership Agreements, the programme aims to foster, in a resource efficient way, the unique growth initiatives and opportunities based on the development of transversal and horizontal flows on the area’s backbone, the Danube/Black Sea corridor.

The programme strategy combines thematic and territorial dimensions and is well in line with the PAs of the two Member States in all its chosen priorities:

Priority 1 (TO 7): According to the PAs, a common priority for the two states is to enhance TEN-T connections, to improve navigation on the Danube and to enhance cross-border connections. Indeed, the Danube River is not used to its full potential as navigation is limited throughout the year and cross border infrastructures are often in poor conditions or missing. By developing the Danube waterway and enhancing its accessibility, the programme priority will foster sustainable mobility and will therefore contribute to the common European transport policy and to the flagship initiative: “Resource Efficient Europe”.

Priority 2 (TO 6): The interaction and interdependency of the landscapes and the continuity of habitats and ecosystems across and along the Danube River constitute one of the greatest assets of the cross border area and an important location factor for development in the tourism field which is one of the priority of two member states Partnership agreements. It supports the flagship initiatives: “Resource efficient Europe” and “An Agenda for new skills and jobs”.

Priority 3 (TO 5): The region is susceptible to climate change and natural disasters such as flooding. It is necessary to ensure a high level of risk prevention through cross border cooperation. This programme priority will increase the overall low mitigation capacity and rescue services delivery. This priority axis contributes to the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change.

Priority 4 (TO 8): the RO-BG CBC area needs to tackle the challenges due to the economic crisis such as a shrinking working population, youth unemployment, migration issues, a weak development of cross border business networks and the lack of links between educational institutions and the business sector. The programme priority will facilitate the training, the inclusion and the employment of all age groups and the development of networks between cross border SMEs. This priority axis contributes to the social cohesion goal and supports the flagship initiatives: “European platform against poverty”, « Youth on the move” and “An agenda for new skills and jobs”.

Priority 5 (TO 11): A strong institutional capacity is needed in order to tackle challenges arising from driving forces like climate change, globalisation, demographic change and scarcity of public funds. This programme priority will foster the development of a more strategic cooperation approach in order to compensate for the lack of critical mass that characterises many public and private activities within the Programme area.

4.1. Community-led local development (where appropriate)

Approach to the use of community-led local development instruments and principles for identifying the areas where they will be implemented

Not applicable

4.2. Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate)

Principles for identifying the urban areas where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented and the indicative allocation of the ERDF support for these actions

Not applicable

Table 19: Integrated actions for sustainable urban development – indicative amounts of ERDF support

Fund	Indicative amount of ERDF support (EUR)
	<i>Not applicable</i>
ERDF	

4.3. Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)

Approach to the use of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (as defined in Article 36 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) other than in cases covered by 4.2, and their indicative financial allocation from each priority axis

Not applicable

Table 20: Indicative financial allocation to ITI other than those mentioned under point 4.2. (aggregate amount)

Priority axis	Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)
	<i>Not applicable</i>
TOTAL	

4.4. Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate) (Where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)

The Danube River is a key territorial feature of the cross border region as the Romanian-Bulgarian border stretches over 609 km, of which around 470 km are formed by the Danube River. Moreover, the Romanian section of the Danube River represents 29% of the surface area of the whole Danube River Basin, with 37.7% of the river flowing through its territory to the Black Sea. The Romania Bulgaria cross border area can be considered as the EU Danube-Black Sea Gateway. Therefore, both countries are key state members of the European Union Strategy of the Danube Region (EUSDR). They are coordinating together the Priority Area 3 "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts" and are involved as coordinators but separately in other Priorities area:

- Priority Area 1A "To improve mobility and intermodality - Inland waterways" and Priority Area 5 "To manage environmental risks" for Romania
- Priority Area 11 "To work together to tackle security and organised crime" for Bulgaria

In the EU official documents: "*Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes for the period 2014-2020*", the Commission has underlined that cooperation on Danube-related investments within the period 2007-2013 has been insufficient despite the involvement of both countries in the coordination of the EUSDR and that EUSDR objectives must be incorporated when defining priority areas.

The chosen thematic objectives are well in line with the recommendations of the European Commission Position papers, with the Partnership Agreements and with the recommendations of the Common Provisions Regulation, Annex 1, article 7 that stipulates that programmes co-financed by the ESI Funds should promote, where appropriate, operations deriving from the macro-regional strategies, in order to support and enhance the implementation of their objectives.

A focus is made in the article 7 on the following indicative actions "*creation of European transport corridors, including supporting modernisation of customs, the prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters, water management at river basin level, green infrastructure, integrated maritime cooperation across borders and sectors, R&I and ICT networks and management of shared marine resources in the sea basin and protection of marine biodiversity*". Strong connections have been made between the RO-BG Cross Border programme 2014-2020 priorities and the EUSDR ones. The common border – the Danube River- is considered in itself as a common project for economic and social cohesion of the region, increasing the competitiveness and the setting up of growth and jobs. The programme strives to support the implementation of the EUSDR by contributing to its 4 pillars and to 8 of its 11 Priorities Areas:

- a. The Priority Axis 1 & 2 of the Romania-Bulgaria CBC Programme 2014-2020 are contributing to the EUSDR first pillar **“Connecting the region”** and are connected with the:
 - EUSDR Priority Area (1) To improve mobility and multimodality (covering road, rail and air links as well as inland waterways);
 - EUSDR Priority Area (3) To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts.
- b. The Priority Axis 2 & 3 of the Programme are contributing to the EUSDR second pillar **“Protecting the environment”** and are connected with the:
 - EUSDR Priority Area (4) To restore and maintain the quality of waters;
 - EUSDR Priority Area (5) To manage environmental risks
 - EUSDR Priority Area (6) To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soil.
- c. The Priority Axis 4 of the Programme is contributing to the EUSDR third pillar **“Building prosperity”** and is connected with the:
 - EUSDR Priority Area (8) To support the competitiveness of enterprises
 - EUSDR Priority Area (9) To invest in people and skills
- d. The Priority Axis 5 of the Programme is contributing to the EUSDR fourth pillar **“Strengthening the region”** and is connected with the:
 - EUSDR Priority Area (10) To step up institutional capacity and cooperation
 - EUSDR Priority Area (11) To work together to tackle security and organised crime

Therefore, the chosen Priority Axis for the next programming period cover all the EUSDR priority areas where Romania and Bulgaria are involved as coordinators.

According to the Annex 1 of the CPR, article 7¹⁶, there are three options to be used to support the implementation of MRS strategies:

- ring-fencing part of the programme funds for the implementation of strategic projects developed in the framework of Macro Regional Strategies,
- organising specific calls for projects with a clear macro-regional impact,
- giving priority to these operations in the selection process (i.e. more points in the selection process).

The Monitoring Committee will have to decide which of the options are the most appropriate in the framework of the programme. The third option appears more suitable for a Cross Border programme. Indeed, as mentioned in Section 6

¹⁶“Ensuring successful mobilisation (of Union funding) may be done, among other actions, by prioritising operations deriving from macro-regional and sea-basin strategies by organising specific calls for them or giving priority to these operations in the selection process through identification of operations which can be jointly financed from different programmes.

“Coordination”, the application form will include a special section where the potential beneficiary will detail how the project is complementary with the EUSDR Strategy. This section will be marked by the JS during the evaluation process.

Due to its limited resources, the Programme was designed to support mainly “*soft*”, “*pilot*”, “*small scale*” or “*missing link*” projects and to support the implementation of mechanisms for mutual information.

The RO-BG Cross Border programme 2014-2020 touches also the EU Strategy for Blue Growth, the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution and one potential MRS still under discussion, the Black Sea Synergy. The challenges affecting the Black Sea region that will be addressed refer to:

1. Mobility, multimodality and sustainable transport (PA 1),
2. Environment protection and sustainable use and natural risk mitigation (PA 2 & 3). Nutrient enrichment, land and river based pollution, loss of biodiversity and coastal degradation have been identified as the major key-issues affecting the Black Sea.
3. Economic and social development (PA 4)
4. Institutional cooperation (PA 5)

The programme will support projects focusing on a more sustainable use of the sea resources and on “blue growth” through coastal tourism for example. In this regard, it will bring specific added value by activating synergies in the Eastern Danube/ Black Sea gateway region. The programme does not foresee the use of a separate assessment criteria for the Black Sea Synergy, but the contribution can be evaluated in the overall assessment of the project’s contribution to regional, national or other strategies (See Section 6). The programme contribution to the EUSDR and to the Black Sea Synergy will also be highlighted in the communication activities.

SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1. Relevant authorities and bodies

Table 21: Programme authorities

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Managing authority	Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration	Liviu Nicolae DRAGNEA – Viceprime Minister, Minister
Certifying authority, where applicable		
Audit authority	Audit Authority besides the Romanian Court of Accounts	Aron Ioan POPA – President

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

<input type="checkbox"/> the certifying authority	
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Table 22: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Romania – First Level Control Unit within the Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation Calarasi Bulgaria – TO BE COMPLETED	Sandu SERBAN – Head of Unit Nicoleta MINCU – Director
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	Group of Auditors	Aron Ioan POPA – President

5.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Following the analysis of different scenarios, the Joint Working Group decided to maintain the Joint Secretariat at the same location in Călărași (Călărași Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation) for the 2014-2020 programming period as it was the case during the 2007-2013 Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme, due to the following arguments:

- the experience of one entire programming period will allow to start the implementation of the new Programme as soon as possible, (quick launch of calls for proposals after the Programme's approval in order to ensure a high level of absorption),
- the Călărași office is an already existing institution with entirely functional management structures and multicultural human resources with experience in programme management. This will ensure reduced operational costs such as staff training costs. Indeed, the Călărași staff has already been trained for the 2014-2020 programming period.
- the working procedures of the current JS were audited and can be easily updated according to the provisions of the new EU regulations and the lessons learned,
- a good visibility of the Programme and transparent and proper information of the beneficiaries were provided during the previous programming period. According to the 2010 INTERACT evaluation, the 2007-2013 Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation is considered as one of the most transparent ETC programmes.

The costs of the tasks of the Joint Secretariat will be financed from the programme's Technical Assistance budget as long as they will comply with the list of tasks eligible for financing. The Joint Secretariat will have a staff fluent in both Romanian and Bulgarian languages as well as in English.

The Programme bodies also decided to establish an Antenna of the Joint Secretariat in Ruse on the Bulgarian side for the 2014-2020 programming period. The Antenna will have as a main role to serve as local contact point for project beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries. The Antenna will perform the following tasks:

- information and communication activities for Bulgarian partners,
- monitoring of the projects implemented by Bulgarian partners,
- and support for present and potential beneficiaries.

As the staff of the JS for the 2007-2013 Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme is already trained and experienced, it will take over additional responsibilities, according to each person's expertise for the 2014-2020 Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme.

New staff selection will be organised both at the Joint Secretariat in Călărași and the Antenna in Ruse through a public and transparent procedure, ensuring equal opportunities and promoting equality between men and women.

The staff selection procedure will have four phases:

- (1) Administrative compliance of submitted application and eligibility of the applicant,

- (2) Assessment of submitted documentation
- (3) Written exam
- (4) Structured interview

Both the Managing Authority and the National Authority may observe the selection process for the Joint Secretariat and Antenna staff. Therefore, an observer from the Managing Authority / National Authority will be invited to participate in the selection process of the staff.

5.3. Summary description of the management and control arrangements

The Programme institutional structure consists of the following bodies:

5. The Managing Authority (MA) acting also as Certifying Authority (CA)
6. The National Authority (NA)
7. The Monitoring Committee (MC)
8. The Audit Authority (AA)
9. The Joint Secretariat (JS)

The Managing Authority (with additional functions of Certifying Authority)

According to Article 21 of the ETC Regulation, Romania and Bulgaria have agreed to still entrust the function of Managing Authority of the Programme to the Romanian Ministry of Development and Public Administration.

The Managing Authority is responsible for managing and implementing the Operational Programme in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and the provisions of Articles 125 (Functions of the Managing Authority) as well as for certifying the expenditure to EU as per article 21 of ETC Regulation, according to article 126 (Functions of the Certifying Authority) of the CPR. The Managing Authority has competencies and responsibilities regarding the management of the operational programme, the selection of operations, the financial management and control of the Programme, and the certification of expenditure.

As regards to the programme management of the operational programme, the managing authority shall:

- (a) support the work of the Monitoring Committee referred to in Article 47 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR) and provide it with the information it requires to carry out its tasks, in particular data relating to the progress of the operational programme in achieving its objectives, financial data, and data relating to indicators and milestones;
- (b) draw up and, after approval by the monitoring committee, submit to the Commission annual and final implementation reports referred to in Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR);

(c) make available to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that are relevant to the execution of their tasks and the implementation of operations respectively;

(d) establish a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification, and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable;

(e) ensure that the data referred to in point (d) is collected, entered and stored in the system referred to in point (d), and that data on indicators is broken down by gender where required by Annexes I and II of the ESF Regulation.

As regards the selection of operations, the managing authority supported by the joint secretariat together with the national authority shall:

(a) draw up and, once approved, apply appropriate selection procedures and criteria that:

(i) ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority;

(ii) are non-discriminatory and transparent;

(iii) take into account the general principles set out in Articles 7 and 8 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR)

(b) ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned and can be attributed to a category of intervention

(c) ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution.

(d) satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to in point (c) before approval of the operation;

(e) satisfy itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with ;

(f) ensure that operations selected for support from the Funds do not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Article 71 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR) following the relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area. ;

(g) determine the categories of intervention

As regards the financial management and control of the operational programme, the managing authority shall:

- a) verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the operational programme and the conditions for support of the operation;
- b) ensure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;
- c) put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;
- d) set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) Article 72 of Regulation (EU) No.1303/2013 (CPR);
- e) draw up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

In accordance with the Article 115 CPR, it will also carry the functions of the Certifying Authority. This modification is based on the experiences of the Romania-Bulgaria 2007-2013 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme. The European Commission will reimburse the certified expenditure directly in a special bank account of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration.

As regards the certification of expenditure, the managing authority shall be responsible for:

- a) drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents, and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority;
- b) drawing up the annual accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- c) certifying the completeness, accuracy, and veracity of the annual accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable law and has been incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme and complying with applicable law;

- d) ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for drawing up payment applications and accounts, including records of amounts recoverable, amounts recovered, and amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation or operational programme;
- e) ensuring for the purposes of drawing up and submission of payment applications, that it has received adequate information from the managing authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure;
- f) taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the audit authority;
- g) maintaining, in a computerised form, accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- h) keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the budget of the Union prior to the closure of the operational programme by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure.

The managing authority shall also be responsible for:

- a) Signing the project contracts financed by ERDF with the lead beneficiaries;
- b) Signing the contracts regarding the national co-financing from the state budget with the beneficiaries from Romania;
- c) Ensuring the transfer of the ERDF sources to the lead beneficiaries;
- d) Ensuring the transfer of the national co-financing from the state budget to the project beneficiaries from Romania as well as to the beneficiaries of the Technical Assistance priority axis;
- e) Ensuring the availability of the amounts from the national co-financing for the budget of the Technical Assistance priority axis;
- f) Ensuring access to information for the National Authority and Audit Authority in order to fulfil their respective tasks;
- g) Ensuring the compliance of the expenditures with the Programme rules, Community rules, and with the Programme's procedures through an adequate control system;

- h) Ensuring the compliance with the Romanian national legislation or specific procedure regarding the procurement contracts assigned;
- i) Designating the controllers responsible for carrying out the first level control for the partners located in Romania;
- j) Nominating the representatives of Romania in the Monitoring Committee;
- k) Ensuring an adequate audit trail for the whole system concerning the implementation of the Programme;
- l) Preventing, detecting, and correcting the irregularities committed in Romania;
- m) Co-ordinating the activities regarding the implementation of the Programme delegated to the JS;
- n) Ensuring the transmission of the accounting records regarding the operations and the data regarding the implementation to the European Commission, in accordance with Article 112 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR);
- o) Performing the financial corrections in accordance with the provisions of Article 143 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR);
- p) Ensuring the fast record and update of the information into the electronic system, being responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and completeness of the data concerning the Programme managed;
- q) Ensuring the necessary funds in case of funds de-commitment at Programme level proportionally with the approved projects' budget and activities performed by the Romanian beneficiaries.

The Managing Authority shall make sure the principle of equal treatment is followed when the Romanian and Bulgarian partners are verified.

The main functions and responsibilities of the MA, as defined in the Pre-Agreement between Romania and Bulgaria, are provided in Annex xx, while its responsibilities as Certifying Authority are stated in Annex xx.

The National Authority

The counterpart for the Managing Authority in charge of the coordination role in Bulgaria is the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria, acting as National Authority. The competencies and responsibilities of the Bulgarian National Authority are provided in Annex xx.

The Monitoring Committee

In accordance with Article 47 CPR, the Member States will set up a joint Monitoring Committee within 3 months of the notification of the approval by the Commission of the Cooperation Programme.

Members of the MC will represent the participating Member States on policy and administrative levels and thus ensure a transparent approach respecting the principles of partnership and multi-level governance.

In accordance with the Article 48 of the CPR, the Monitoring Committee shall be composed of representatives of the MA, NA and of representatives of the partners. Each member of the Monitoring Committee shall have a voting right. The Committee is headed by a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Chairmanship will annually alternate between the MA and the NA. In accordance with Article 48 of the CPR, the Monitoring Committee will be chaired by a representative of one of the Member States.

The members nominated in the Monitoring Committee will be, in principle, the same as the members of the Joint Working Group for Programming, where representativeness at national, regional, and local levels was ensured. In the same way, the representatives of the civil society have been selected, through a transparent procedure.

The MC members will commit themselves to respect the Monitoring Committee Code of Conduct and to act impartially solely in the interest of the Programmes.

The procedure of the MC (including the Code of Conduct), the methodology and criteria for selection of the operations as well as the eligibility rules of the Programme will be adopted not later than 12 months after the Programme adoption by the European Commission.

The Commission shall have an advisory role in respect to the activities of the Monitoring Committee, whilst the Audit Authority shall have an observer role. The functions of the Monitoring Committee are listed in Annex xx.

The Audit Authority

According to the Article 127 (4) of the CPR, a single audit authority shall be appointed by the Member States.

The designated audit authority of the Programme is the Audit Authority alongside the Romanian Court of Accounts, located in Bucharest, 20 Ernest Broșteanu Street, Sector 1, Romania.

The provisions of the Article 25 of the ETC Regulation (referring to the Article 127 of the CPR), concerning the possibility of carrying audits in the whole of the territory covered by the Programme, shall also be taken into consideration. The audit strategy shall set out which functions of the AA under Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 are outsourced (either for the whole programming area, or within a specific country).

The main competencies and responsibilities of the Audit Authority, that can be outsourced are:

- to ensure that audits are carried out on the management and control systems, on an appropriate sample of operations and on the annual accounts;

- to prepare an audit strategy, within eight months of adoption of the Programme, which shall set out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the planning of audits in relation to the current accounting year and the two subsequent accounting years. The audit strategy shall be updated annually from 2016 until and including 2024.

Audit Authority shall:

- ensure that through a system audit before the submission of the first accounts that the Certification Unit has the accurate procedures in place to account for the amounts to be withdrawn or to be recovered and to be deducted from payment claims during the accounting year as well as to follow-up pending recoveries and irrecoverable amounts;
- draw up an annual audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012;
- draw up an annual control report setting out the main findings of the audits carried out in accordance with Article 127(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions.

The Audit Authority shall be assisted by a Group of Auditors, comprising representatives of Romania and Bulgaria. The Group of Auditors will assist the AA in setting up and implementing the audit strategy. The audit strategy will also indicate which measures have been put in place by the AA and the Group of Auditors, in order to ensure that the same audit methodology, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards, has been applied by all members of the Group of Auditors.

The Joint Secretariat (JS)

The Joint Secretariat is an independent body, guaranteeing the impartiality of the Programme implementation. In accordance with provisions of the Article 23 (2) of the ETC Regulation and based on the decision at the Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting, a Joint Secretariat will be set up by the Managing Authority. The JS will be maintained in Călărași and a branch office will be set up in Ruse.

The JS will have a two-fold function (according to Article 23(2) ETC Regulation): assisting the MA and the MC in carrying out their respective functions and provide relevant information on the Programme to the potential beneficiaries. An implementation agreement will be signed after the Programme approval by the European Commission, delegating tasks to the Joint Secretariat. The tasks cannot be further delegated to another body (except the Antenna in Ruse).

The tasks of Joint Secretariat, delegated by the Managing Authority, shall be the following:

1) General tasks:

- Managing, under MA's co-ordination, the implementation of the programme, preparing the necessary materials for the implementation of the programme/projects; performing on-the-spot visits; offering

support and assistance for the project partners regarding the implementation of the activities and financial management;

- Collaborating with the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries in order to collect the necessary data and information in the revision process of the programming documents, elaboration of the reports, and other documents which are necessary to monitor the progress of the programme;
- Collecting, processing, and centralising the information received from the lead beneficiary and beneficiaries and submitting them to the MA;
- Making sure that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial, and operational capacity to fulfil the required conditions before the approval of the operation;
- Ensuring that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all the transactions related to an operation;
- Defining the categories of intervention to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

2) Administrative arrangements:

- Contributing to the manual of procedures of the programme and drafting its own internal procedures according to the manual; the drafted internal procedures should be submitted to the MA for approval;
- Ensuring the proper training of the staff in order to ensure the correct implementation of the Programme;
- Fulfilling the task of secretariat for the MC and the SC;
- Managing the written procedure within the above-mentioned committees;
- Ensuring the secretariat of any other committees set up within the programme;
- Implementing the operational decisions of the MC and the SC that address the JS;
- Organising, under MA's co-ordination and in collaboration with it, any other meetings, seminars, conferences, etc. related to the implementation of the programme;
- Fulfilling in the deadlines any instruction given by the MA regarding the implementation of the programme, instructions that become mandatory from the date of their written communication.

3) Launching of the call for proposals, preparing, evaluating, and selecting the operations:

- Participating, under MA's co-ordination, in the elaboration of the procedures, project eligibility and evaluation criteria, in the elaboration of the Applicant's Guide as well as in the establishment of the calendar

on launching the calls for proposals for submitting application forms and supporting documents, in order to obtain financing through the programme;

- Supporting the preparation and the development of the projects (organising seminars and workshops that address the beneficiaries in order to provide additional information and clarifications on the application forms);
- Organising events related to the launching of the calls for proposals in the eligible area of the Programme; ensuring the publicity for the call for proposals;
- Managing the submission of the application forms; participating in the preparation of the template for the application forms and for evaluation; offering information and assistance to the beneficiaries;
- Performing the evaluation and ensuring its quality:
 - Organising the Assessment Working Group (AWG);
 - Examining the application forms in order to make sure that they are complete and fulfil the eligibility criteria set by the Programme;
 - Ensuring that a selected operation falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned and within a category of intervention identified in the priority axis or axes of the Programme;
 - Ensuring that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the Managing Authority, the Union and national rules relevant for the operation have been complied with;
 - Presenting the results of the evaluation sessions to the JSC;
 - Contracting external experts if it is necessary;
- Stimulating the partnerships in the eligible area;
- Ensuring the notification of the beneficiaries on the results of the evaluation and selection process.

4) Contracting

- Participating in the preparation of contracts' templates;
- Preparing the contracts, gathering data from the beneficiaries, and submitting them to MA for signing;
- Performing the pre-contractual on-the-spot visits for each selected operation;
- Informing the beneficiaries on their obligations stipulated in the financing contracts.

5) Financial management, first level control and audit

- Keeping track of all the documents referring to the expenditures carried out within the projects financed through the Programme, according to the EC Regulations;
- Being the contact point for all the beneficiaries, receiving the documents related to the operations implementation, analysing and submitting them to the MA, according to procedures;
- Notifying the MA in maximum 5 working days of any irregularity;
- Undertaking irregularities' prevention, finding, and monitoring measures;
- Taking all the necessary measures to combat fraud;
- Sending reports on the detected irregularities and the measures proposed for their correction to the MA;
- Making any information or document available to the MA regarding the financed projects, in the stipulated deadlines and making sure that the control and audit activities can be properly performed;
- Observing and implementing all the recommendation coming from the EC audit and from the Audit Authority within the Romanian Court of Accounts, by the deadlines established by this Authority.

6) Programme and projects monitoring

- Monitoring the progress of the operations, together with the Lead Beneficiary, by analysing and verifying the monitoring reports, the on-the-spot visits results, etc;
- Drafting and submitting any other reports or documents requested by the MA or the European Commission;
- Collecting and updating the technical, financial, and statistics data at project level, ensuring the incorporation of these data into the electronic system.

7) Information and Publicity

- Implementing the relevant (for the JS) activities from the Communication Plan of the Programme;
- Supporting the MA in preparing and delivering the informational materials to the beneficiaries;
- Updating the information regarding the programme from the webpage of the programme.

Arrangements and Procedures for programme management, implementation and control

The procedures for projects' selection, approval, control and management are briefly described here.

Project Evaluation and Selection

- Geographical eligibility: The 2014-2020 RO-BG CBC Programme will support activities of partners located in at least one of the NUTS III administrative units of Romania and Bulgaria, defined previously. An important exception to this rule is the eligibility of public or non-profit institutions/bodies such as research institutes that are located outside the eligible administrative units but that are competent or relevant in their scope of action to all or parts of each national eligible area. Nevertheless, the ERDF may also finance operations that are implemented outside the “Union part of the programme area”, provided that the conditions of the Article 20(2) ETC Regulation are satisfied.
- Definition of eligible Partners: The project's eligible partners will be at least one of the following:
 - Public bodies/institutions/organizations (national, county/district, local) and their associations;
 - Universities and academic institutions;
 - Non-profit research institutes;
 - NGOs whose activities fall within the scope of the Programme;
 - Chambers of Commerce and other SMEs associations;
 - Schools and cultural institutions.

The eligibility of Partners will be further detailed by the Applicant Guides of each call. Nevertheless, any public support received through this Programme must comply with the State Aid rules applicable at the moment when it is granted.

- The eligibility criteria will be formulated in order to ensure the administrative and formal compliance of projects to be submitted. These will include: submission before a deadline, completeness of submitted documentation, cross-border character of the composition of the partnership no double financing from EU financial source of the same operation;
- Selection criteria will be applied to those projects that have first fulfilled the eligibility criteria and will assess their compliance with the strategic and operational principles guiding the project selection.

Both the eligibility and the selection criteria will be made available to applicants through the Applicant's Guide prepared by the MA together with the NA and with the support of the JS and that shall be approved, in a first phase, by the Programme's Joint Monitoring Committee.

The assessment and selection of operations and the procedure for the signature of the document setting out the conditions of support will be organised as follows. The responsibility of the evaluation belongs to the JS. The evaluation groups will be designated by the Head of the JS, promoting equality not only between the Romanian and Bulgarian staff but also between men and women.

The evaluation will have two phases. One regarding the administrative and eligibility criteria, performed directly and solely by the JS and one regarding the technical evaluation, performed with the help of contracted external experts if necessary. The contracting of external experts shall be the attribute of the JS.

MA and NA have the right to observe the evaluation process by designating persons to contribute to the process. If MA or NA representatives have significant doubts regarding the quality of the evaluation process, the Head of MA has the right to suspend the evaluation process and to designate a Commission constituted by MA staff (and NA, if necessary) to analyse the evaluation. In case the report of the special Commission reveals deficiencies in the evaluation process, the Head of the MA has the right to terminate the process and to request the Head of the JS to start again the evaluation process.

In case contracted experts are necessary, the evaluation should be performed online (only in case of serious reasons, the evaluation may be carried on the spot at the JS location). The application form will be available in electronic format. Training of the contracted persons may be organised before the evaluation if the Head of the JS decides to.

Each contracted person shall submit at the end of evaluation process a declaration stating that he/she is responsible for the evaluation performed online. The document may be submitted via post. The final payment shall only be performed after the selection of the operations by the Monitoring Committee. In case any subsequent control reveals deficiencies in the activity of one or more contracted experts, financial penalties will be applicable.

After the JS ranks the projects, the list shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision on selection.

The quality of the projects, as reflected in their compliance with the selection criteria, is very important in order to ensure that the Programme delivers concrete and visible outputs and results that tackle, in a cross-border and integrated manner, the challenges and needs affecting the programme area. Projects focusing on pure research (with no applicative output), including just exchanges of experience or not indicating the concrete and sustainable follow-up of "soft" activities (studies, surveys, etc.) will not be supported by the Programme.

All projects will have to comply with the followings set of horizontal quality requirements:

- Concrete and measurable results: The results have to be relevant, visible and measurable. They also have to contribute to the results of the relevant priority axis of the Programme and have to be achieved by

cross-border relevant outputs indicated in the application form. Both the outputs and results have to be precise and show that they build on the present situation or existing knowledge in order to develop new solutions;

- Sustainable outputs and results: the outputs and results of the project have to be durable and be able to become inputs in other initiatives (either towards other policies, plans, strategies or investments financed from different other sources, including EU-funded national programmes, EIB, national funds, etc.);
- Cross-border relevance: the project activities contribute to the fulfilment of the Programme's specific objectives (one or more) by addressing challenges and needs that are shared across the border and cannot be sufficiently addressed by one side alone (irrespective of the national level involved). The outputs of the project have to display an added-value that is greater than the addition of outputs that would be possible to obtain if each national part would act independently;
- Partnership relevance: the partnership involves at least 2 partners, at least one from Romania and one from Bulgaria. The partners will prove their capacity to implement the activities of the project, obtain the planned outputs and results, and ensure their follow-up. The description of the activities will have to demonstrate the joint implementation of the project and the territorial integrated approach for treating specific needs;
- Effective management: the management structure and its functioning procedures are clearly described and are transparent, effective and efficient;
- Sound budget: the project budget has to be in line with the description of the activities and demonstrate coherence with the planned outputs and results within a value for money approach and respect the price ceilings on certain categories of acquisitions that are present in the call documents. The sound financial management principle will be illustrated at project budget level and the contributions of partners will reflect the distribution of tasks while respecting a joint implementation approach;
- Coherent approach: the internal coherence between the inputs on one side and the outputs and results on the other should be clear. The coherence of this relationship inside a clearly presented timeframe should be convincing;
- Sound communication: the communication will have to be effective (reach the target group) and adapted to the project objectives in order to be able to ensure the necessary dissemination of project results and their follow-up and/or sustainability;
- All projects have to ensure the promotion of the gender equality, non-discrimination and the compliance with the principles of sustainable development.

- Contracting: After the approval of a project proposal by the MC, the JS will draft the financing contract using a template that is provided by the MA and that will be addressed to the Lead Beneficiary of the submitting partnership (designated according to the provisions of Article 13 ETC Regulation). The signatories of the contract will be the MA (the Romanian MDRAP) and the legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary. The financing contract will contain all the necessary information:
 - Legal framework;
 - The object of the financing: activities, work plan/implementation calendar, maximum ERDF amount of financing including the maximum amount allocated to partners outside the eligible area, closure of the project;
 - Conditions for eligibility of costs (including price ceilings for specific types of acquisitions);
 - Limits for changes within the budget flexibility;
 - Limits for changes of activities, outputs, results, etc.;
 - Reporting requirements and deadlines for the submission of progress reports;
 - Procedure for payment requests;
 - Rights and obligations of the Lead Partner;
 - Acceptance of expenditure and audit of projects;
 - Accounting documentation necessary and the time-period for archiving the project-related supporting documents;
 - Procedure for the recovery of unjustified expenditure;
 - Publicity, ownership (including dissemination rights) and generation of revenues;
 - Assignment, legal succession and litigation;
 - Liability clauses.

The final approved application documentation and the official approval of the project by the MC will be part of the financing contract.

- Monitoring: The monitoring of the Programme will be done through a new management system that will provide project-specific technical and financial information. The reporting will be provided by the Lead Beneficiary on behalf of the entire partnership through periodical or final reporting and presented to the JS and the MA. The JS will check the compliance of the reports with the project application. The data of the reports will be stored in the management system that in turn will generate, based on it, the reports submitted to the European Commission.
- Management verifications: The 2014-2020 Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme has decided to establish first level control system in Romania and Bulgaria. In Romania the first level control shall be situated at

the level of the Călărași Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation, in a separate structure from the Joint Secretariat. The control system for the 2007-2013 was also organized at the same premises and the activity of the controllers was excellent, the Romanian first level control system always scored 1 at system audits. In Bulgaria, the Managing Authority shall draft Common First Level Control Guidelines, including templates. The document shall be approved by the Monitoring Committee and shall be mandatory for all controllers. Moreover, the Managing Authority shall perform checks by sample, on the operations already verified by the first level control, in order to make sure that the system is working correctly. The first level controllers shall submit to MA trimestral reports regarding their activity and the main encountered problems.

- Reimbursement to the Lead Beneficiaries: According to article 27 (1) of ETC Regulation no. 1299/2013, the European Commission shall pay the ERDF support to cooperation programmes into a single bank account with no national sub-accounts. According to Article 20(2) of the same Regulation, the Managing Authority shall make payments to the Lead Beneficiary in accordance with Article 132 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR) (the Lead Beneficiary is then responsible for transferring the ERDF financing to its project partners). To this end, the Managing Authority shall make the necessary arrangements to set up a programme bank account, within a deadline of 12 months from the adoption of the Operational Programme by the European Commission. The account shall be used for receiving payments from the European Commission and making payments to the lead beneficiaries and Programme's Technical Assistance beneficiaries.

According to Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation, the Member States have decided to set up a control system making it possible to verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid by them and that it complies with applicable Union and national law, the Programme and the conditions for support of the operation.

For this purpose each Member State participating in the programme shall designate the controllers responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each beneficiary (lead beneficiary or other beneficiary) participating in the operation within a deadline of 3 months from the end of the first call for proposals.

- Programme Evaluation

The Programme is subject to an ex-ante, interim and ex-post evaluation of independent evaluators with the aim to improve Programme quality and to optimise the allocation of the financial resources. The suggestions of the ex-ante evaluations will be taken into account during the elaboration process of the Programme.

5.4. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

(Reference: point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Each Member State shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the beneficiaries located on its territory. In the case of a systematic irregularity, the Member State shall extend its investigation to cover all operations potentially affected. The Member State shall make the financial corrections in connection with individual or systemic irregularities detected in operations or operational programme. Financial correction shall consist of cancelling all or part of the public contribution to an operation or to the operational programme. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the managing authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

The Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay the lead beneficiary any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed with the lead beneficiary and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the partners. The Programme shall provide the beneficiaries a template of the Partnership Agreement.

If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the Member State on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the managing authority the amount unduly paid to that beneficiary. The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States as laid down in the cooperation programme.

In accordance with article 85 of Regulation no.1303/2013 (CPR) the Commission has the right of making financial corrections by cancelling all or part of the Union contribution to the programme and effecting recovery from the Member States in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the management and control systems which have been detected by the Commission or the European Court of Auditors.

In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to systemic irregularities, the two Member States commit to dividing the amount between the two Member States proportionally with the approved project budgets and performed activities by Romanian and Bulgarian beneficiaries, affected by the financial correction. In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to random or anomalous irregularities, the two Member States commit to investigate on a case by case basis. The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the Member States' obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

5.5. Use of the Euro (where applicable)

In accordance with the ETC Regulation, Article 28, expenditure incurred by project partners located in countries, which are outside of the Euro zone, shall be converted

into euro. The conversion is to be made by the beneficiaries using the accounting exchange rate of the EC applied during the month of the incurring of the expenditure.

5.6. Involvement of partners

The Managing Authority in collaboration with the National Authority and the Joint Working Group coordinated the programme preparation.

The representation in the Joint Working Group was ensured at national, regional and local level.

For the civil society the Managing Authority conducted a public process of selecting representatives of NGO's from three domains (environment, equal opportunities, business environment).

- **For Romania**

1. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration;
2. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration;
3. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration;
4. Ministry of Transports;
5. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change;
6. Ministry of European Funds;
7. South East Regional Development Agency;
8. South Muntenia Regional Development Agency;
9. South West Oltenia Regional Development Agency;
10. Mehedinti County Council;
11. Dolj County Council;
12. Olt County Council;
13. Teleorman County Council;
14. Giurgiu County Council;
15. Călărași County Council;
16. Constanța County Council;
17. NGO environment: Foundation Living Nature;
18. NGO business: Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture Constanta;
19. NGO equal opportunities: Foundation Human Values;

- *Romanian observers:*

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
2. Ministry of Public Finance;
3. Association of Romanian Municipalities.

- **For Bulgaria**

1. Council of Ministers' Administration (Programming of EU Funds Directorate);

2. Ministry of Finance (International Financial Institutions and Cooperation Directorate);
3. Ministry of Interior, Fire Safety and Protection of Population General Directorate (Sofia, Russe);
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (European Countries Directorate);
5. Ministry of Environment and Water;
6. Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications (Coordination of Programmes and Projects Directorate and National Transport Policy Directorate);
7. Ministry of Interior, Regional Directorate "Border Police" – Russe;
8. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (General Directorate Territorial Cooperation Management, "European Territorial Cooperation and Neighbourhood Programmes" Department) ;
9. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (General Directorate Territorial Cooperation Management (General Directorate Territorial Cooperation Management, "Monitoring, evaluation and programming" Department;
10. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (DG Strategic Planning of Regional Development and Administrative Territorial Structure, "Strategic planning and coordination of regional development in the Northwest region" Department, Vidin);
11. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (DG Strategic Planning of Regional Development and Administrative Territorial Structure, "Strategic planning and coordination of regional development in North Central Region" Department, Ruse);
12. Regional Development Council of North West Region (District administration Vratsa and District administration Pleven);
13. Regional Development Council of North Central Region (District Silistra and District Russe);
14. Regional Development Council of North East Region (District Dobrich and Municipality of town Dobrich);
15. Municipality of Russe;
16. National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria;
17. Association of Danube Municipalities "Danube";
18. Bulgarian Association of Regional Development Agencies (Regional and Economic Development Agency – Vratsa, and Centre for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises – Russe);
19. Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – (Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Dobrich and Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Silistra).

The joint working group for Programming was created in 2012. The group had 5 meetings (21.11.2012, 12.03.2013, 13.06.2013, 17.09.2013, 06.03.2014). The travel expenditures were reimbursed entirely from TA funds in order to make sure the participation of the meeting is as broad as possible.

Also, all the documents regarding Programming were presented to the Joint Working Group and subsequently published on the Programme website. The involvement of the key actors was visible, once by the comments submitted on the documents and second by the active participation in the working group (e.g. the eligible area and the location of the Joint Secretariat issued a large number of discussion in the Joint Working Group, three meetings were necessary before taking a final decision).

The group analysed all relevant documents and made important decisions:

- Concept paper;
- Eligible Area;
- Location of the Joint Secretariat;
- Terms of Reference for Programming, Ex-ante and SEA;
- Written pre-agreement between member states;
- Implementing arrangements;
- Territorial analysis.

After the Programme approval the Member States will jointly decide the composition of the Monitoring Committee. The recommendation of the Managing Authority will be to keep the same partnership structure in the future period.

- **Stakeholders involvement in the programming process**

At a wider scale, the cross-border relevant stakeholders have been involved during different phases of the Programme preparation process and through various events and consultations process.

The main stages of consultations were aimed at consulting the stakeholders on the challenges and needs of the cross-border area, the strategic prioritisation of thematic objectives and associated investment priorities and finally the choice of the result that should be achieved through each priority axis.

The Managing Authority assisted by the Joint Secretariat, the National Authority and external consultants organized the following activities:

1. A survey addressed to both Romanian and Bulgarian relevant stakeholders selected from the former beneficiaries of the Programme (2007-2013) organised in July 2013, that provides a starting point for the programming process and that guides the territorial analysis
2. An online questionnaire that was available on the Programme Website (www.cbromanialbulgaria.eu) and on the JS website was advertised through an e-mailing campaign in November 2013. The questionnaire was available in Romanian, Bulgarian and English and was designed with the aim to obtain the opinion of stakeholders on the main challenges and needs facing the cross-border area. The on-line questionnaire targeted a vast part of the 2007-2013 RO-BG CBC potential and/or effective beneficiaries from both sides of the border.

The stakeholders that were directly targeted are the following:

- All the county/district administrations;

- All the municipalities that were included in the 2007-2013 beneficiaries list and if not already included in the list:
 - The major municipalities in the cross-border area;
 - The little and medium-size municipalities in the cross-border area that could be identified.
- Associations of public authorities (municipalities and counties/districts);
- The de-concentrated public authorities (of Ministries like Ministry of Health, Ministry of Work and Social Protection, Ministry of Environment, etc.);
- The frontier police and the customs;
- The Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture;
- The Business Associations;
- The Universities and their departments in the area;
- The R&D institutes in the area;
- The main NGOs active in the area (mainly linked to social services, R&D, tourism, economic development, culture, etc.), and their relevant subsidiaries.

86 answers were obtained in the cross-border area, out of these, 51 were provided by the Romanian stakeholders and 35 by the Bulgarian stakeholders. Altogether, 81 of these answers were valid, 49 in Romania and 32 in Bulgaria. Public authorities provided altogether 29 answers (RO:17, BG:12) while academia and R&D institutions provided 25 answers (19 from the Romanian stakeholders and 6 from the Bulgarian stakeholders). Chambers of commerce, associations of SMEs and NGOs filled in 27 questionnaires, 13 and 14 from Romania and Bulgaria respectively.

3. An interview campaign that took place in November-December 2013. 20 interviews were conducted in the Romanian part and 20 in the Bulgarian part. The interviews were conducted on the basis of the on-line questionnaire in order to tackle the same topics and analyse stakeholders' opinions, on cross-border area territorial challenges and needs, in a more qualitative approach. The interviews were conducted during the second half of November and the first half of December, a period during which the first results of the Territorial Analysis, mainly based on desk research (statistical hard data, documents concerning local and regional development strategies, national strategic documentation, etc.), were already available. Therefore, the interviews added to the on-line questionnaire a qualitative touch by focusing on the following key topics that were identified as such during the Territorial Analysis:

- The issue of business development at the cross border scale in order to solve social inclusion problems;
 - The transport, territorial connectivity and cross-border accessibility issues;
 - The environmental risks and outstanding problems in the cross-border area;
4. A first series of cross-border stakeholders' workshops organised in 4 locations situated in different parts of the cross-border area in order to enable the most representative participation of the stakeholders. The date and location of the workshops are the following:
- i. **Ruse 24th February;**
 - ii. **Pleven 25th February;**
 - iii. **Constanta 27th February;**
 - iv. **Craiova 28th February;**

Altogether 91 participants (82 stakeholders and 9 representatives of the NA or JS) were involved in the workshops. 28 of the participants were from Romania and 63 were from Bulgaria. We can split the stakeholders into 3 main groups: Public Authorities (local, county/district) and their Associations, Chambers of Commerce and NGOs, Universities and R&D institutions. 46 public authorities, 21 Chambers of Commerce and NGOs, and 15 universities and R&D institutions participated.

Every workshop lasted around 4 hours and was structured around 2 stages:

- A. A presentation of the programming process and of its first results:
 - a. Presentation of the programming process: ETC regulation, procedures, calendar;
 - b. Presentation the first results of the Territorial Analysis: focus on challenges and needs of the CBC area;
 - c. Presentation of the results of the on-line questionnaire;
 - d. Presentation of the thematic concentration through the detailed presentation of the already identified TOs & IPs.
 - B. An interactive session where stakeholders' feedback and proposals on the challenges & needs of the CBC area and its adequacy with the Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities were gathered. A final focus on the administrative burden and the strategic projects was made in a final stage of the discussions, with forms being filled-in and collected in order to integrate their result.
5. A second series of cross-border workshops that discussed the results of the first draft of the Programme and provided project ideas for the future Priority Axis were organised at the beginning of May 2014. The provision of project ideas and their maturity were intended to guide the decision concerning the final financial allocation for each Priority Axis. The workshops took place in 3 locations:

- i. Craiova 12th May**
- ii. Montana 13th May**
- iii. Dobrich 16th May**

Altogether 73 participants (66 stakeholders' representatives and 7 JS representatives) were involved in the workshops. 45 of the participants were from Romania and 28 were from Bulgaria. The same 3 main groups were also present during this second phase of consultation: Public Authorities (local, county/district) and their Associations, Chambers of Commerce and NGOs, Universities and R&D institutions. 35 public authorities, 20 Chambers of Commerce and NGOs, and 18 universities and R&D institutions participated.

Every workshop in this second round lasted around 4 hours and was structured around 2 stages:

- A. A presentation of the programming process:
 - a. Presentation the programming process: content, calendar, milestones, role of the stakeholders
 - b. Presentation of the Programming draft: Thematic Objectives, Investment Priorities and Priority Axis, Indicative Actions, Financial allocation
 - c. Presentation of the Project's ideas questionnaire

- B. Stakeholder's roundtables on project ideas/concepts for 2014-2020 ROBG CBC Programme including networking opportunities for identifying possible future partners. The roundtables were animated and moderated by consultants who provided additional information to the stakeholders in order to enable the emergence and formulation of well-structured project ideas. Once identified and articulated, the project ideas were gathered by using a project idea form that was previously made available through the 2007-2014 Romania-Bulgaria CBC Programme official website. The stakeholders were also encouraged to continue the process of identification of project ideas (that suited both their organization/territory needs and the future programme priorities) and potential cross-border partners and provide them to the JS in Calarasi through electronic means, in the following weeks.

SECTION 6. COORDINATION

ROBG 2014-2020 Cross-Border programme implementation shall ensure an effective respect of the principles of coherence and complementarities with other European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds as well as with other relevant EU policies, national funding and with the European Investment Bank (EIB). The programme will be implemented in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in a complementary and coordinated way with the above-mentioned instruments in order to avoid the funding of activities that can overlap with projects activities financed by other funds.

According to the selected priorities, a coordination mechanism should be considered especially with EU funding instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the LIFE programme, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), and the Erasmus + programmes and other funding instruments such as national funding programmes or EIB instruments.

During the programme elaboration, meetings have been organised with the representatives of the Managing Authorities of different ERDF funded national programmes in order to avoid as much as possible potential overlaps and in the same time to ensure the coordination between the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border programme and other funding instruments. Bilateral protocols are intended to be made on these issues. Indeed, the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border programme will focus on supporting local and regional projects that have the potential to raise the impact of EU policies at national and regional level and therefore contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy. To avoid any risk of overlapping, special mechanisms that are detailed below will be implemented during the evaluation process. In order to support these mechanisms, an analysis of the EU funded programmes at national level in both countries has been already realized (Annex XXX) and a review of the EU policies is made below.

Priority Axis 3 and 4 dedicated to environment protection and management, resource efficiency and climate change mitigation and adaptation, complementing the actions of several other funding programmes such as LIFE on one hand and the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) or the European Maritime and Fishery Fund (EMFF) on the other hand that support projects contributing to sustainable and resource-efficient growth in rural and coastal areas..

Priority Axis 5 is funding joint training schemes and VET programmes complementing the actions of “Erasmus +” but focusing on the creation of an integrated Cross Border labour market.

The Priority Axis 1 “A well connected region” can stimulate investment in regional connectivity, closing the gaps that are affecting remote regions in accessing the TEN-T corridors and therefore complement the actions of the Connecting Europe Facility.

In terms of coordination mechanism, the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border programme can be used to finance preliminary technical studies but also to provide knowledge and capacity and to reach a sufficient amount of relevant stakeholders in order to prepare medium-large scale projects that could be further financed through other funds such as ESI, EIB and national funds. Therefore, the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border programme could contribute to the elaboration of mature projects (“bankable”) that could benefit from financing through the European Investment

Bank (EIB) initiatives such as the “Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions” (JASPERS), an instrument supporting large scale investments prepared by cooperation projects especially in the transport sectors. Coordination with EIB can be fostered by providing a one-to-one support to projects with outputs and results, suitable to be implemented with the EIB support, helping in the early stages of contacting and exchanging with EIB offices. In any case, information on opportunities, offered by the EIB for financing large-scale projects, can be provided during the info events and through communication materials. Indeed, the preparation of medium-large scale investments could represent an important output of the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border Programme.

More globally, the Managing Authority, together with the relevant Romanian and Bulgarian national authorities, will be in charge of ensuring coordination and communication mechanism with counterpart institutions in charge of other funding instruments while the assessment of potential overlaps/synergies will be analysed during the project evaluation phase by the JS. An opinion of the relevant Managing Authorities / national authorities implementing funding programmes/schemes in fields related to those financed by the Programme shall be requested whenever deemed necessary in order to avoid possible overlaps. As a rule, all such opinions shall be made available to the committee in charge with taking the financing decision or monitoring an operation before the decision moment or whenever a suspicion of overlap is raised.

In the framework of the RO-BG 2014-2020 Cross Border Programme, the following mechanisms to avoid overlapping and to promote synergies will be set up:

- The application form will include a special section where the applicant will:
 - include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance;
 - detail how the project is complementary with national and regional programs supported by ESI funds, with other Union funding or with national policies and funding instruments;
 - describe what is the specific cross border added value of the project.
- The applicants who will propose projects focused on preparation of investments related studies will explain how they expect to finance the effective implementation of their projects through other sources of finance;
- The joint committee/s that shall be created at Programme level according to article 47 of Regulation 1303/2013 shall benefit of the presence of representatives of relevant Managing authorities and line ministries/authorities in charge with managing national level funding programmes/schemes in fields related to those financed by the Programme. Also, representatives of the national structures in charge with funding coordination - Romanian Ministry of European Funds and Bulgarian Council of Ministers - shall be always invited to take part to Programme joint committees meeting. Thus, whenever a financing decision for an operation is taken, suspicions of overlaps can be signaled

and tackled in due time. This measure proved its efficiency also for ROBG CBC 2007-2013;

- Agreements shall be established with other relevant Managing Authorities / national authorities implementing funding programmes/schemes in order to award the JS view/read-only access to the respective electronic monitoring systems (when funding specific rules and electronic systems allow such measure to be implemented). Thus, an analysis can be performed whenever a suspicion of overlap with other financing instruments is raised. As a rule, the results of such analysis shall be made available to the committee in charge with taking the financing decision or monitoring an operation before the decision moment or whenever a suspicion of overlap is raised;
- The exchange of information between the EU Commission Services and other European and national bodies involved in the management of Union instruments and the MA and JS, in order to exchange good practice and to jointly spread information targeting common relevant stakeholders;
- The dissemination of the outputs and the results of the RO-BG Cross Border programme at EU, national and cross border level through the programme communication strategy.

A special attention will be paid to the possibility to collaborate with other ETC programmes such as transnational programmes or other Cross Border cooperation programmes sharing or strongly linked with the eligible area such as: the Danube programme 2014-2020, the Black Sea joint operational programme, the Romania-Serbia Cross Border programme that includes the NUTS III region of Mehedinti and the Bulgaria-Serbia Cross Border programme that includes the NUTS III regions of Vidin Montana and Vratsa (as additional region).

A coordination mechanism will be set up in order to detect and avoid possible overlapping and duplication as well as to foster synergies between complementary projects being implemented in neighbouring cooperation areas. This coordination mechanism will mainly consist of:

- Exchange of information during the selection of applications;
- Exchange of information during the implementation monitoring of the approved projects in order to disseminate the results of projects addressing similar challenges and needs and to create synergies between them;
- Fostering the use of the geographical flexibility, as mentioned in Article 20 (2) of the ETC regulation in order to support projects that will have stronger results if a part of their activities are implemented beyond the programme area, especially along the Danube or in the Black Sea Coastal area.

We can also mention here that INTERACT Programme will remain an important coordination tool between ETC Programmes. It will support the exchange between the programmes bodies and will gather information about funded projects in all Europe, which will allow applicants and decision makers to investigate previous and on-going projects cooperating on similar themes.

SECTION 7. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES

Assessment

During the workshops organized with the aim of discussing the future programme's priorities, the participants answered to an "administrative burden" related questionnaire. The answers contained a series of recommendations considered necessary in order to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries during all stages of project submission, evaluation/selection and implementation. The summary of the stakeholder's recommendations can be structured around 4 main administrative steps

1. Project submission

The project submission process would be easier through:

- An e-submission system (e-forms, etc.) that follow the best practices of the European Commission (ECAS system) and would enable the stakeholders to use the scanned version of documents in a first stage. Only a limited number of the documents should be requested (the remaining documents being submitted before the contracting phase).
- A two-stage system for the project submission to improve the selection procedure. A first concept note stating only the main elements of the project (e.g., main outputs, budget, partnership, calendar, etc.), will be the basis of a first evaluation followed by the request for the administrative documentation. A possible on-line template for the concept note should also be envisaged.

2. Project evaluation

- The evaluation phase can be a very long period. One recommendation is to evaluate a project through a staged process that would verify key aspects in the first stage and give a rapid feedback to the submitting partnership about the eligibility of the project through the programme;

3. Contracting phase

The contracting phase should also be shorter (1-2 months) and lead to a signed agreement that can be made through the exchange of documents by mail or by other means of expedition. Previous or current beneficiaries are also requesting a higher flexibility for decisions and amendments during the pre-contracting stage.

4. Project implementation phase

- The stakeholders request easier and faster procedures related to the changes occurring during the implementation of the project;

- The communication between the JS and the project beneficiaries should involve all the partners;
- The First Level Control should be the basis for any additional direct control on the beneficiary by the JS. The FLC should be structured to limit the need for additional controls and verifications. Any subsequent control should focus on the FLC report;
- A greater flexibility regarding the project duration as well as the possibility of temporary suspension of projects for objective reasons are considered to be necessary;
- Overall the reporting, the reimbursement requests and any communication should mainly be electronic.

Actions

To answer to these requests, the following actions will be taken in order to decrease the administrative burden for beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 Programme:

- Electronic data exchange system for all the communication among the MA, JS, audit authority, and the beneficiaries that will also be used for the management, monitoring, and evaluation of the Programme. The system will also ensure the electronic communication with the European Commission by being interoperable with the EC framework. The system will enable (based on the principle of “information inserted only once”): interactive or pre-filled-in forms on the basis of previously inserted data, cross-checks of the filled-in information, automatic calculations and the possibility of beneficiaries to track on-line the status of their project proposal or of their reimbursement requests during project implementation;
- A reporting tool-box (templates, examples, etc.) with a manual that provides the necessary advice for the reporting activity for the partners;
- The number and complexity of the project indicators needed for reporting on the progress will be limited at maximum;
- The JS will provide trainings for beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries on project application, implementation, reporting, control, and audit of CBC-financed projects;
- Simplified cost options are foreseen (subject to approval of the Monitoring Committee): according to experience from the 2007-2013 Programme, and according to the ETC Regulation EU No. 1299/2013, Art. 19.
- The use of a single exchange rate which will reduce the period of reimbursement of the final payment. In this context, the expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was incurred (as per ETC Regulation EU No. 1299/2013, art. 28, letter (a));
- Thematic workshops in the key areas identified by the beneficiaries shall also be organized (e.g., public procurement, funding opportunities, etc.);

- To decrease the number of controls and audit missions at the level of beneficiaries;
- The submission of documents shall not be duplicated (if a document was requested once it shall be available in the control system for the involved bodies);
- To simplify the procedure of procurement for bodies that are not subject to national procurement legislations;
- To increase the stability of project management in case of projects implemented by public institutions in order to avoid to the modification of the priorities which were initially set within the projects;
- Elaboration and approval of the relevant templates clearly explained (e.g., application form, reimbursement claim, progress report, FLC certificate, FLC report, FLC checklist, etc.), in order to allow proper design of the electronic system in due time and also for the beneficiaries to be aware of all the requests in the implementation;
- The electronic system should be set up by the end of 2015, which will significantly reduce the paper documentation to be submitted and all the documents will be stored in electronic format.

SECTION 8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

8.1. Sustainable development

The horizontal principle of sustainable development refers to the commitment to preserve and protect the environment from potential harmful effects of human interventions and to enforce the safeguard of social, environmental and climate benefits.

The Programme recognizes that social, environmental and economic issues are inter-related. The impact of infrastructure investment on the global and local environment and their related effects may significantly threaten human health, climate change, biodiversity, limited natural resources etc. The principle of sustainability plays an important role in this Programme so far as the economic development in this region is taking place against the backdrop of highly sensitive spaces. Being a horizontal principle, sustainability must be taken into account on all priority axes.

Consequently, sustainable development is integrated as a horizontal principle considered in all steps of the elaboration of the Operational Programme, and will be followed in its implementation, by the Managing and National Authorities, beneficiaries and other stakeholders within the cross-border area.

In this respect, the present Programme will verify the degree in which the proposed projects are aware of and respect the cross-border legislation on environment and sustainable development. Moreover, the OP, through its indicative actions, will seek to avoid or reduce any negative effects on the environment, but also to create the premises for social, climate and environmental benefits.

The strategy of the Priority axis 2: A green region has been established in a way that optimally supports the idea of sustainable development. Within this priority, both investment priorities *Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage* and *Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure* involve actions that are directly targeted at the enhancement of the long term sustainability of the management of natural resources.

The sustainable development principles that should be followed by the current OP are:

- avoiding investments that may have negative environment or climate externalities;
- promoting the use of green procurements and the reduction of waste generation;
- protection of air quality, resource efficiency, biodiversity and ecosystem;
- extended producer responsibility.

All projects will be assessed from a climate and environmental perspective in order to determine their impact. Specific sustainable development criteria will be used in the selection process. Therefore, projects that have the following characteristics will be favoured:

- Projects that encourage the use of e-government tools and other internet-based cooperation actions;

- Projects that cover investments towards resource-efficient and sustainable options;
- Projects that do not foresee investments with negative environmental or climate impact;
- Projects that promote a pro-active approach towards risk-management;
- Projects encompass use of green procurements.

When submitting project proposals, the applicants will also have to describe the way the respective projects contribute to sustainable development and how the sustainable development principles are reflected in the foreseen activities(e.g., using renewable energy for the project activities).

The Management Authority will promote awareness-raising mechanisms and, if needed, will provide support to the applicants for dealing with environmental issues during all project stages.

In addition, all projects supported by the OP will have to respect the relevant policies and rules on environment protection and sustainable development, including the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Flora-Fauna-Habitat Directive and the Birds Directive which are the basis of Europe’s nature conservation policy.

The proposals will have to demonstrate in particular their contribution to sustainable development through the following the three pillars – economic, social and environmental, in the search of strengthening regional capacities and building knowledge and skills that increase employment and labour mobility.

Appropriate management arrangements shall ensure at all levels of programme implementation, that - beyond the legally required absolute minimum standards - possible effects which are unsustainable or unfavourable to environment, especially as concerns impacts on climate change, the maintaining of biodiversity and ecosystems, and the drawing on natural resources, are avoided or kept as low as possible, so that the environmental charges of the OP in total, will in the end be climate - and resource-neutral. The OP’s positive effects and potentials for synergies in the sense of optimizing its contribution to an environmentally sustainable development shall be exploited at best and, wherever possible, be strengthened.

8.2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Description of the specific actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the cooperation programme and, in particular, in relation to access to funding, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination, and in particular, the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

According to the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR): “Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes”.

The principles of both non-discrimination and equal opportunities are embedded in Bulgarian and Romanian strategies and legislation¹⁷, having positive consequences on all domains – education, employment, environment, economic activities etc.

The OP will consider the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination during all stages of implementation – preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. The OP is highly concerned with promoting equal chances and opportunities and preventing any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, disabilities or sexual orientations. Particular attention will be given to any groups at risk of being discriminated against, especially to those facing multiple discriminations (e.g. ethnic minorities women), and to requirements for ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The cross-border region is characterised by disparities between urban and rural areas, in terms of economic development, innovation, social cohesion and access to public services. Therefore, applying the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination will contribute to the levelling of such differences in domains such as economic growth, public services, professional skills, innovation, labour mobility etc.

All projects funded through the OP will have to ensure that the activities implemented are in line with the principle of equal opportunities and do not generate discrimination. The obligation to comply with the Community rules of horizontal policies such as equal opportunities will be taken into account by all proposed projects.

Through the selection process, any projects fostering adverse or negative consequences for equality and non-discrimination will be disregarded. Consequently, proposed projects are encouraged to foresee actions directed towards reducing disparities and ensuring equal treatments to all groups and communities.

Future beneficiaries will have to explain their potential contribution to equal opportunities and non-discrimination – how the equal opportunities principle is anchored within the specific project and its planned activities. The applicants will have to demonstrate how they are planning to strengthen competences and skills, promote employment and labour mobility and, at the same time, foster the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination among the target groups. They will also provide data on participants in terms of gender, age, employment status, education and disabilities. Whether an application is supported by comprehensive contribution to equal opportunities, it will be granted with bonus point during the evaluation process.

All the above actions will be monitored by reporting in the progress reports.

In the fields of monitoring and evaluation, attention is given to equal opportunities and non-discrimination indicators, the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the Monitoring Committees and the involvement of potentially discriminated groups should be considered in the evaluation activities.

The Joint Secretariat will provide guidance on how to tackle these horizontal principles (e.g workshops for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups)..

¹⁷Law 48/2002 in Romania and Act on Protection against Discrimination and Integration of People with Disabilities Act in Bulgaria

8.3. Equality between men and women

Owing to social framework conditions, women still take a clearly less active part in economic and social life than men. Even though the present Programme will not eliminate the differences in terms of job and income opportunities and access to social and political functions, efforts should be made to exploit all the possibilities the programme offers in this respect.

In keeping with Article 7 of the General Regulation, the Programme undertakes “to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”. Based on the concrete gender-specific problem situations, the measures will be implemented against the backdrop of the European and national equal treatment policies. Special focus shall be given to target ethnic minorities facing disadvantages. The alignment with the Investment for Growth and Jobs Operational Programmes concerning human resources and the National Action Plans for Employment opens up synergy potentials.

Each project will be assessed according to this principle and if found to have a negative impact on equality between men and women, will not be funded. Therefore, submitted projects will be encouraged to incorporate activities that respect gender equality, such as equal participation of women in the target groups and the promotion of the principle of gender equality.

Thus, all projects submitted under this OP will confirm that the foreseen activities are in line with the principle of equality between men and women and do not generate any discrimination between genders. All applicants will have to demonstrate the contribution to this principle and explain how the gender issue is addressed within the proposed activities. Applications which remarkably support gender equality will be granted bonus points during the evaluation process.

This principle will also be taken into consideration regarding the programme management structure, and the procedures for programme implementation and monitoring, e.g. staff recruitment and personnel policies.

Relevant equal opportunity data will be regularly collected by the Managing Authority and monitored throughout the Programme. The Joint Monitoring Committee will review the equal opportunities statistical data on a regular basis and will identify activities to be developed and strengthened for equal opportunity purposes.

SECTION 9. SEPARATE ELEMENTS¹⁸

9.1. Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

Table 23: List of major projects¹⁹

Project	Planned notification/submission date (year, quarter)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year quarter)	Priority axes/investment priorities

9.2. Performance framework of the cooperation programme

Table 24: Performance framework (summary table)

Priority axis	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)

9.3. Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

A. The members of the Joint Working Group for Strategic Planning and Programming of the cross-border cooperation programme 2014-2020 that participate to the Working Group 3 & 4 are:

1. Bulgarian Members:

- Ministry of Regional Development - National Authority RO-BG CBC Programme;
- Ministry of Regional Development, DG Strategic Planning of Regional Development and Administrative Territorial Structure;

¹⁸ To be presented as annexes in printed document version

¹⁹ Not applicable to INTERACT and ESPON.

- Ministry of Regional Development, Road infrastructure agency;
- Bulgarian Association of Regional Development Agencies;
- Regional Development Council of North West Region;
- Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Regional Development Council of North Central Region;
- Regional Development Council of North East Region;
- Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications;
- Ministry of Interior;
- Ministry of Environment and Water;
- Council of Ministers' Administration;
- Dobrich District Administration;
- Silistra District Administration;
- Association of Danube Municipalities "Danube";
- National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Municipality of Ruse;
- Dobrich Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Dobrich Municipality;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of Finance.

2. Romanian Members:

- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Managing Authority RO-BG CBC Programme;
- Ministry of European Funds - Directorate General for Analysis, Programming and Evaluation;
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change;
- Călărași County Council;
- South Muntenia Regional Development Agency;
- South Oltenia Regional Development Agency;
- South East Regional Development Agency;
- Dolj County Council;
- Olt County Council;

- Teleorman County Council;
- Mehedinti County Council;
- Constanta County Council;
- Giurgiu County Council;
- Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Shipping and Agriculture;
- "Living Nature" Foundation.

3. Romanian Observers and Guests:

- European Commission;
- Romanian Embassy in Bulgaria;
- Romanian Court of Accounts, Audit Authority;
- Ministry of Public Finance - Certifying and Paying Authority;
- Association of Romanian Municipalities.

4. Other participants:

- Cross Border Cooperation Regional Office Călărași for the Romanian-Bulgarian Border

B. Workshops have been organized in each Member States. Governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations, most of them beneficiaries of the 2007-2013 programme, have participated to these meetings.

9.4. Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in transnational and interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources

(Reference: Article 26 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)