

**IPA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME BETWEEN ROMANIA
AND REPUBLIC OF SERBIA - PRIORITY AXES**

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***Abstract:** This Cross-Border Cooperation Programme is the result of a joint programming effort of the relevant Romanian and Serbian authorities, represented in the Joint Romanian-Serbian Working Groups and in the Joint Task Force. The Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme focuses on increasing the overall competitiveness of the economy in the border area and on the improvement of the quality of life for the border communities.*

Key words: IPA, cooperation, priority axes, measures, target.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the analysis presented above, and in the framework of the specific objectives for the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, 4 priority axes have been identified as the basis for intervention to address common challenges facing regions in both Romania and Republic of Serbia:

1. Economic and Social Development. This priority addresses the requirement for intervention in a range of areas to address the issues related to connectedness, competitiveness, and rural development.

2. Environment and Emergency Preparedness. This priority recognises a range of common issues faced on both sides of the border in specific fields of environment and emergency preparedness, and which require joint action to achieve meaningful and sustainable results.

3. Promoting “people to people” exchanges. It is essential to develop actions in this priority area to widen and deepen the level of engagement of communities on both sides of the border in common actions.

4. Technical Assistance. This will be necessary to ensure efficient and effective use of resources in accordance with the goals, objectives and priorities of the Programme.

In accordance with the IPA Implementing Regulation a set of measures and indicators are provided for each Priority Axis.

In the light of the provisions of Article 95 of the IPA Implementing Regulation, the participating countries may also identify joint operations outside calls for proposals through an evaluation and selection procedure approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee. In that event, the joint operation shall be specifically mentioned in the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme or, if it is coherent with the priority axes or measures of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, shall be identified any time after the adoption of the programme in a decision taken by the Joint Monitoring Committee referred to in Article 110.

For this reason, individual "for-profit" entities (SMEs, businesses, tourism operators/agencies, etc) are not eligible to directly apply for funds within the scope of this Programme, although it is a high priority to ensure that projects are targeted at bringing concrete and demonstrable benefit to businesses in the Programme area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Priority Axis 1 – Economic & Social Development

On the basis of the analysis and SWOT analysis set out above, it is seen that within the framework of the Programme it is necessary to give priority to cross-border actions in relation to Economic and Social Development.

The economic and social infrastructure of the border region is a constraint upon development, with transport connections being a particular issue (both internal to the region – such as across the Danube - and external connections between the region and other regions). Moreover, there are certain sectors that for both sides of the border demonstrate both a potential for sustainable economic development, and yet at present have not achieved any clear and demonstrable development trends. In this respect, particular mention has been made of the tourism sector, both to national and natural parks as well as protected natural areas and to the thermal springs which constitute a major natural resource of the area and are spread across the whole eligible area. This provides considerable opportunity for success on the basis of joint cross-border initiatives.

It also has been highlighted that the border region as a whole suffers from low levels of SME activity, and very limited investment in Research and Development to support the development of a competitive economy in the cross-border region. In this respect the border may have acted as a barrier to development, but a pooling of resources and energies via joint measures will be important in maximising the benefit of investments in much-needed initiatives to support SME development and R&D on both sides of the border. In this respect, actions to support economic development could also have an important role in addressing the major environmental challenges of the region, with the potential to stimulate economic activity in areas such as eco-tourism, and environmental technologies/services.

The border regions also require investment and development of the human capital if there is to be success in supporting socio-economic development. In this respect also, it will be important for all stakeholders (educational institutions, labour market agencies, development agencies and local government) to look for ways to utilise this joint resource to add value and thus to make a positive contribution to tackling the significant HRD issues effecting the region. To support this, the Programme will promote operations to develop the human capacity in the border regions by improved HRD activities, as a horizontal activity for all the measures, as training and educational activities and training products in the field of tourism, business development, transport, innovation, etc. Qualified human resources in the border area could be the milestone for achieving the goals of economic and social development.

In this context, within this priority axis, there are *4 measures*. These are:

- **Support for local/regional economic and social infrastructure.** This measure aims at supporting local and regional initiatives especially in areas of economic/social infrastructure including public utilities and socio/educational facilities and also at the development of feasibility studies and other preparatory work for large-scale investment activities to be financed by other Programmes. The measure aims also at development of integrated and environmentally appropriate local transport connections, including local road transport improvement and local inter-modal facilities to increase logistics capacity and efficiency in the border area.

- **Develop the tourism sector, including the strengthening of the regional identity of the border region as a tourist destination.** The main contents of this measure are the development of activities in the tourism sector including support in creating, upgrading and improving tourist attractions and also promotion and marketing activities and in particular supporting initiatives to promote cross-border regional identity as a tourist area.
- **Promote SME development.** The main aim of this measure is to support schemes to facilitate improved marketing and business development including the agricultural sector, creation by SMEs of common cross-border products/services with a clear cross-border identity and development of advice services to assist SMEs in the development of related business activities.
- **Support increased levels of R&D and innovation in the border region.** This measure aims at support schemes to promote the development of innovation and research & development, especially involving university-business partnerships for technology transfer/ innovation centres and initiatives. It should also be highlighted that the support of studies across a range of priority sectors will also be used to address the current lack of data concerning the border region, and as such will provide a stronger basis for future programming of cross-border activities (as well as better informed national and regional policies).

Applications for funding must be submitted by the appropriate bodies (NPOs, NGOs, public agencies; see specific guidelines for this).

Table 1.

Priority Axis 1 – Economic & Social Development

Output indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Improved physical infrastructure in the border area	Number of infrastructure investment projects (calculated also by type).	0	15
Improved capacity and cross-border contacts of SMEs and in the R&D sector	Number of trainings/courses implemented, networks developed, fairs organised for SMEs (calculated also by type) and in the R&D sector.	0	20
People in labour force with qualifications received/improved from joint training activities	Number of participants benefiting from training events/ courses	0	300
New or improved cross-border tourism products, joint marketing approaches/activities or joint tourism information services developed	Number of projects addressing the development and improvement of tourism products, marketing activities or information services	0	10
Result indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
New or improved cross-border tourism products and services	Number of activities, actions, initiatives focusing on promoting tourism in the border area	0	7
New or improved cross-border transport links and logistics capacity in the border area	Number of activities, actions, initiatives creating new or improving existing transport links or tackling logistics capacity.	0	10
Increased importance of R&D/Innovation in the border area	Number of activities, actions, initiatives focusing on promoting the importance of or dealing directly with R&D/Innovation	0	5
Increased SME's capacity in the border area	Number of activities, actions, initiatives focusing on promoting SME's activity.	0	5

Source of information: Annual implementation report; Evaluation reports; Monitoring reports; Surveys /studies; MIS-ETC.

Priority Axis 2 – Environment and Emergency Preparedness

On the basis of the analysis and SWOT analysis set out above, it is seen that within the framework of the Programme it is necessary to give priority to cross-border actions in relation to Environment and Emergency Preparedness.

The areas on both sides of the border face a number of environmental challenges that are based on factors that are not limited to one side of the border only, and thus that can only be solved by joint actions. The effects of water-borne pollution and water-based environmental challenges are a major example of this.

There are also common challenges in many other areas, most notably in relation to waste management (solid waste and waste water), where the border areas will gain significant benefit from developing common responses. In respect of such issues, there is a striking similarity between the concerns on both sides of the border, and thus considerable potential for achieving progress by pooling limited local resources and expertise. It should also be noted, that action to address these issues could also play a strong part in the economic and social development of the border region, stimulating environmentally based economic activity.

It is also a notable feature of the border region that the areas on both sides of the border face common emergencies, whilst the common systems/structures to address such emergencies are not yet properly developed. This is most obvious in relation to flood prevention and flood control, although there is also the need to address other potential emergency situations (e.g. food safety, health). These issues can only be combated on the basis of joint actions, and it is therefore a high priority to ensure that preparations and systems are in place and improved to protect the local areas and local communities.

In this context, within this priority axis, there are **3 measures**. These are to:

- **Improve systems and approaches to address cross-border environmental challenges, protection and management** (including awareness and information campaigns, trainings in the fields of environment protection and management). This measure will mainly aim at research and preparatory work (e.g. feasibility studies) and/or improving implementation of national and EU environmental legislative framework related to matters of environment protection and/or design of specific cross-border procedures and joint management systems. The measure also aims at supporting small-scale investments in the field of management and environment protection and other preparatory work for large-scale investment activities to be financed by other Programmes. The measure will also aim at interventions regarding nature protection and biodiversity as the eligible area offers a great potential in these fields.

Develop and implement effective strategies for waste and waste water management. The main aim of the measure will be to support the development/updating and implement joint cross-border strategies/ action plans for waste and waste water management, small-scale investment including rehabilitation of the existing infrastructures (waste water treatment plants, waste landfills) and purchasing/procurement of necessary equipment.

More effective systems and approaches to emergency preparedness (including aspects such as flood prevention/control, food safety, health issues). This measure aims at development and implementation of training and educational activities and training products in the field of emergency preparedness, awareness and information campaigns in relation to emergency preparedness. The measure also is aiming at increasing qualification of human resource in reacting to situations of environmental emergency. Also the measure aims at supporting development of feasibility studies and/or design of specific cross-border

emergency procedures and joint management systems (flood, health, and food safety), small-scale investment and other preparatory work for large-scale investment activities to be financed by other Programmes.

The measures undertaken under this Priority should be in line with the requirements of the EIA Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Urban Waste Water Directive and the Floods Directive. In addition, they need to be co-ordinated with the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

It should also be noted that environmental challenges are also highlighted as being issues to be addressed via Priority Axes 1 and 3.

Table 2.

Priority Axis 2: Environment and Emergency Preparedness

Output indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Improved technical capacity of the cross-border monitoring of environment	Number of investments, number of categories/types of equipment purchased.	0	10
Improved physical infrastructure of waste and wastewater treatment in the border area	Number of projects dedicated to infrastructure investments, and equipment purchasing (calculated also by type).	0	2
Increased qualification of human resources in reacting to situations of environmental emergency	Number of relevant staff and volunteers among local inhabitants gained skills /trained to react effectively in case of environmental emergency	0	50
Increased joint technical preparedness to situations of environmental emergency	Number of categories/types of equipment purchased for situations of environmental emergency and infrastructure investment projects	0	10
Result indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Increased cross-border cooperation in environment protection	Number of actions, activities, initiatives protecting or preserving the environment or raising public awareness on the topic (calculated also by type).	0	3
Increased expertise and exchange of experience in the field of environment protection	Number of actions, activities, initiatives increasing expertise or exchange of experience in environment protection topics	0	5
Increased institutional capacity and preparedness in reacting to situations of environmental emergency (e.g. flooding, bird flu, swine influenza)	Number of newly elaborated cross-border emergency plans or training events realised on emergency planning or emergency management techniques	0	6
Improved implementation of national and EU environmental legislative framework	Number of activities, actions, initiatives implementing national and EU environmental legislative framework;	0	10
Increased public awareness in the field of environment protection	Number of participants gained new knowledge in educational or information activities aiming at raising environmental awareness of wider public.	0	100

Improved knowledge on different environment-friendly approaches and applications in everyday life	Number of activities, actions, initiatives promoting different environment-friendly solutions.	0	5
<i>Source of information: Annual implementation report; Evaluation reports; Monitoring reports; Surveys /studies; MIS-ETC.</i>			

Priority Axis 3 – Promoting “people to people” exchanges

On the basis of the analysis and SWOT analysis set out above, it is seen that within the framework of the Programme it is necessary to give priority to the promotion of “people-to-people” exchanges. There is currently a limited number of institutions with experience in cross-border project development and implementation, and a low level of cooperation amongst public services across the border, and this lack of experience will act as a hindrance to the development of added-value cooperation. This will itself limit the effectiveness over time of actions in relation to the priority areas of Economic & Social development, and also Environment and Emergency Preparedness, as even where there is to be large-scale project activity it is necessary to have an understanding and commitment to cross-border activity amongst the wider population to achieve its full potential. For this reason, and to develop a genuine cross-border identity, it is therefore of importance to engage many groups and organisations in cross-border project work.

Moreover, there are certain areas of activity that are of considerable importance to the development of the border region, both in terms of competitiveness and quality of life, which are best tackled via small-scale local actions. In this respect, the analysis above has identified a number of themes which present issues that are common to communities on both sides of the border, and where there is clear added value in an exchange of experience and know-how between organisations and people from Romania and Republic of Serbia. In this respect, it is important to address issues of civil society which impact on the daily lives of citizens on both sides of the border, and also to weaknesses in local governance which inter alia impacts on the delivery of services in all border communities in the region.

In this context, this priority axis has the specific aim of broadening the base for cross-border cooperation, of encouraging and supporting wide participation in project activity, and of promoting real benefits and impacts from concrete projects developed and delivered by local institutions and agencies. In addition to this, this priority axis will support smaller-scale people-to-people projects that complement and support the actions to promote the Economic and Social Development of the border region (in line with Priority Axis 1) and the position with regard to Environmental issues and Emergency Preparedness (in line with Priority Axis 2) through operations that aim at increasing cooperation between local organisations, training and capacity building activities, promoting exchange of experience and spread of good practice, etc.

To meet this aim, and to build on the specific development areas highlighted in the analysis, there will be support provided to meet **3 measures**. These are to:

Support the development of civil society and local communities. The measure aims at support joint capacity building actions for civil society organisations and collaborative projects and pilot actions between local organisations. The measure also addresses joint action plans and strategies in the specific field.

Improve local governance in relation to the provision of local services to communities in the border areas. This measure aims at development of joint local development plans and strategies in the specific areas, training and capacity-building activities for local institutions and NGOs to promote better local governance, delivery of services.

Increase educational, social, cultural and sporting exchanges. This measure aims at support for educational and cultural/sport exchange programmes and joint

educational/cultural/sporting activities and actions to promote spread of good practice from “poles of excellence” to less developed areas in the border regions. In the same time this measure will promote the creation of stronger social and cultural relations among communities in the border area and it focuses on the joint capacity building actions for civil society and on the promotion of mutual understanding between neighbours, respect for cultural diversity and innovative solutions for social problems of disadvantaged groups.

Table 3.

Priority Axis 3: People-to-people exchanges

Output indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Stronger civil society of the border area	Number of NGOs implementing joint capacity building actions/ action plans and strategies for developing the civil society of the cross-border area	0	5
Increased people-to-people exchange in the fields of education, culture and sports	Number of people participated in cross-border people-to-people exchanges events	0	100
Increased integration of the local communities from border area	Number of cross-border public events organised for integrating local communities from both side of the border (calculated also by type).	0	10
Result indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Increased social and cultural integration of people in the border areas	Number of participants benefiting from cross-border social and cultural events	0	200
Increased cooperation between local and regional public authorities across the border to finding solutions to joint local problems in the border area	Number of activities, actions, initiatives between local and regional public authorities in tackling joint problems, improving local service provision etc.	0	25
Increased cooperation between NGO's across the border in order to develop civil society capacity on border area	Number of activities, action plans, initiatives between NGO's in building capacity of civil society organisations, promoting local governance and civil rights.	0	20
Improved quality of life and increased attractiveness of the border communities as a living place	Number of activities, actions, initiatives developing new or improving existing educational and social services, or improving other local living conditions	0	60
Improved knowledge of culture, history, society, organisational and institutional structure, and language of the neighbouring country	Number of participants gained new knowledge in events promoting/profiling the neighbouring country	0	200
Source of information: Annual implementation report; Evaluation reports; Monitoring reports; Surveys /studies; MIS-ETC.			

Priority Axis 4 – Technical Assistance

Within this priority axis, the measure is to achieve effective and efficient implementation of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme via enhanced preparatory, monitoring, administrative and technical support, evaluation, audit and control measures.

The Priority Axis 4 is split into **2 measures**:

- **Support for the implementation, overall management and evaluation of the Programme**

• **Support for the publicity and information activities of the Programme**

The Measure: *Support for the implementation, overall management and evaluation of the Programme* aims at supporting an efficient, effective and transparent management and implementation of the Programme. Therefore it shall provide adequate support of the actions in order to ensure an efficient management and a sound use of resources of the Romania - Republic of Serbia IPA CBC Programme. This measure will aim at supporting activities in order to ensure a sound financial planning and effective use of the resources allocated to the programme and the increase the administrative capacity of the Programme management structures.

The Measure *Support for the publicity and information activities of the Programme* aims at ensuring the visibility and awareness of the Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA CBC Programme and it is meant to ensure the awareness regarding the funding opportunities and of the added value provided under the framework of the Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme. This measure is also meant to provide support in highlighting the role of the European Union regarding the establishment and perspectives derived from the Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme and to ensure the transparent and unbiased communication regarding the implementation of the Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

Within this Measure the following indicative activities could be supported (the list is not exhaustive):

- Development of an information framework regarding the Programme for all interested actors including preparation and dissemination of information and publicity materials (current official Programme documents, manuals of procedures, bulletins, brochures, posters, objects with EU logo, Programme logo);
- Organising conferences, fora, road shows, workshops, training for beneficiaries, networking, awareness-raising and cooperation/exchange of experience.

Table 4.

Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance

Output indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Effective expenditure of the budget	%	0	100 %
Number of relevant studies/ surveys carried out	Number	0	5
Number of monitoring meetings organised	Number	0	16
Number of evaluations commissioned	Number	0	2
Number of types of information materials for the publicity and information of the programme	Number	0	3
Number of events organised for the publicity and information of the programme	Number	0	100
Number of seminars and training sessions delivered for building skills capacity	Number	0	6
Result indicators			
Indicators	Measurement	Baseline 2007	Target 2015
Number of participants to different events (conferences, workshops, seminars, trainings, networking)	Number	0	2.000

Percentage of people from the target groups reached by the publicity and information measures and activities	%	0	70% from the target groups from the programme eligible area
Source of information: Annual implementation report; Evaluation reports; Monitoring reports; MIS-ETC.			

CONCLUSIONS

A special attention shall be given to initiatives based on exploitation of the potential for health-eco tourism, for cultural tourism and for spa-based tourism and for utilisation/development of the national park areas. A particular attention shall be given to activities that intend to stimulate joint innovation and RTD work across all sectors, with a focus on projects that include a clear demonstration element to promote the wider adoption of innovative approaches to business activity.

There are some areas which require special attention with regard to environment protection, including national and natural parks as well as protected natural areas and thermal springs which constitute a major attraction of the area. Also interventions regarding nature protection and biodiversity are encouraged as the area offers a great potential in these specific fields of intervention.

It is also important to consider social, cultural and educational exchange activities, as these will undoubtedly engage people in common projects and thereby contribute significantly to the development of shared understanding, perspectives, and an increasing common identity.

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