


INTERREG VI-A ROMANIA-BULGARIA PROGRAMME

APPLICANT'S GUIDE

TARGETED CALL FOR OPERATIONS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE (OSI) ADDRESSING THE NAVIGABILITY AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

Call 6

Priority 1 *A well connected region*

-  Specific Objective 3.2 - Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to ten-t and cross-border mobility

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APPROVED



Preamble

This document sets the terms and the conditions that apply for the targeted call for the operations of strategic importance, and is part of the *applicant's package for the targeted call for operations of strategic importance*, which is available on the Programme website (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en>). The applicant's package includes the Applicant's guide and its related annexes, inter alia: template of the application form, assessment grids, template of declarations, template of Partnership agreement, template of the subsidy contract etc.

The language of our Programme is English. Thus, all official communication is conducted in English and all documents regarding the project application are produced in English only or translated if issued in other language than English.

The Applicant's Guide and its annexes are to be taken as mutually explanatory of one another. Still, in the event of conflict between the provisions of the Annexes and those of the present document (Applicant Guide), those of the Applicant's Guide shall prevail.

When developing your application, we strongly recommend you to read all the annexes, as well as the Project Implementation Manual and other supporting documents issued by the Programme (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>).

Section 1 - General information

1. The Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme

1.1. General information

The Programme strategy, priorities and specific objectives, as well as the related outputs and results and the programme structures roles are described in the Interreg Programme. Details are available here: <https://interregviarobg.eu>.

1.2. Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JeMS)

JeMS, the Joint Electronic Monitoring System, is the Programme Monitoring System for the 2021-2027 period. JeMS is available on line at <https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/>.



Details regarding the access and usage of JeMS are provided in the JeMS manual. A helpdesk for technical support specifically dedicated to JeMS can be reached via email at jems.admin@mdlpa.gov.ro.

Section 2 - Conditions, requirements and feature

2.1. Objectives of the call

The aims of this call are:

- To develop and select operations of strategic importance that build upon or complement the activities and results of projects dedicated to improving navigability along the Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of the Danube, within the Interreg V-A and VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programmes.
- To enhance rail connectivity across Danube.

This call is open exclusively to:

- **Operations of strategic importance aimed at developing initiatives addressing the navigability**, building upon or complementing the activities and/or results of the DISMAR Project and/or projects on navigability funded under Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme stretching the entire Romanian-Bulgarian common sector of Danube (such as Danube Safety Net Project, DANRiSS Project, etc.). These operations must be in line with the Programme's types of actions dedicated to the *Specific objective 3.2: Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to ten-t and cross-border mobility*.

DISMAR is a strategic operation funded under the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme.

Danube Safety Net Projects and DANRiSS Project¹ were funded under Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria, contributing to the improvement of the navigability conditions on Danube River.

- **Operation of strategic importance aiming for the enhancing the rail infrastructure across Danube (including studies on Giurgiu - Ruse bridge, rail section).**

¹ <https://www.interregrobg.eu/en/projects/our-hard-projects/axis-1/2-categorie-principala/426-robg-522.html> and <https://www.interregrobg.eu/en/2-categorie-principala/308-robg-172.html>





2.2. Eligible applications and applicants

This call is open exclusively to a partnership developed by the following partners:

-  River Administration of the Lower Danube Galati - AFDJ Galati
-  Executive Agency for exploration and maintenance of the Danube river - EAEMDR Ruse
-  Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company
-  Romanian Naval Authority
-  Executive Agency "Maritime Administration"
-  National Railway Company of Romania CNCF CFR S.A. (CFR)
-  State Enterprise "National Railway Infrastructure Company" (NRIC)

The partnership, at the decision of the above mentioned partners, can be developed by including new partners, relevant for the rail and navigability field.





The following requirements must be observed by the new proposed partner(s):

-  Be a national, regional and local public bodies, administrations, company, agencies, entity, including the bodies governed by public law (which fall under the definition of Article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement), such as organisations established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character, having legal personality, and which are either financed, for the most part, by the state, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial, or supervisory board, more than half of the members appointed by the state, regional or local authorities or by other bodies governed by public law (with exceptional status by law, the state-owned companies having portfolio of public interest are eligible); administrations, institution, county/district councils, local councils/ municipalities, ministries, national companies, and research institutions etc. relevant for the field of this call.
-  Be a non-governmental organization (associations or foundations) in the sense of art. 191, of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509².




² Grants shall not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action or the work programme of the beneficiary ('no-profit principle') - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202402509.



In order to be eligible these applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

-  Be a Romanian or Bulgarian entity, legally established according to the national legislation of the state on whose territory they are located
-  Not be in any of the situations mentioned under Art. 138 of REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509
-  Have their headquarters in the Programme area or outside the Programme area, if their competency extend to the Programme area
-  Are Romanian or Bulgarian national public authorities, agencies, entities etc. whose area of competence, established by legal acts, extends to the Programme area of the Programme.

Applicants, outside the Programme area, but from Romania and Bulgaria, can also participate in projects if:

-  Are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area (e.g. ministries, national agencies, agencies, administrations, national companies etc.);
-  Carry out activities that are beneficial for the Programme area
-  Their participation must bring clear added value and expertise to the implementation of a project and has to be beneficial for the Programme area.

Associated partners

The applicants involved in the project **without financially** contribution are considered as associated partners. Associated partners are key stakeholders of the project, whose involvement can improve the planning and development of project outputs and results. They can help to sustain and mainstream project results generate multiplier and leverage effects. Information on the involvement of associated partners should be provided in the relevant sections of the application form.

Applicants from third country partners (outside and inside EU) can participate as associated partners but cannot receive funding from the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme.

Lead partner principle

In compliance with the “lead partner principle”, each project partnership shall appoint one applicant acting as lead partner, which takes full financial and legal responsibility for the implementation of the entire project. The responsibilities of the lead partner are laid down in detail in the subsidy contract signed with the Managing Authority.



The tasks, responsibilities and the relations between the lead partners and the partners are included in the partnership agreement. The template of the subsidy contract and the partnership agreement are available at the Programme website, under the specific call.

! Conditions and rules

-  **Exclusion Based on EU Regulations:** Applicants falling under the situations described in Article 138 of REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals.
-  **Ineligible Applicants:** Political parties are not eligible to apply as either applicants or partners.
-  **Subcontracting Restrictions:** Subcontracting between project partners or associated partners is strictly prohibited. Any such cases will result in the entire partnership being deemed ineligible, and the project will be rejected without further assessment.
-  **Responsibilities of partners:** Partners must have responsibilities in the field addressed by the project. The partnership must consist of organizations legally responsible for the intervention area or policy domain targeted by the project.
-  **Associated partners:** Relevant public authorities may participate as associated partners to ensure the durability and transferability of project results.
-  **Financial capacity requirements:** Each partner must submit **Annex AF_A9 Financial Capacity Self-Assessment**. If this assessment indicates a high-risk financial situation (subvention, liquidity, or debt rate above the set threshold), the partner must present a plan to ensure availability of financial resources and a mechanism to cover project cash flow and operation/maintenance costs. This will be verified during the project assessment.
-  **Use of PIC Number:** All applicants must register in the **EC Participant Register** to obtain a PIC number, which must be included in the **Partner Identity Information** section in Jems. For more details, visit the [EC Participant Register](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register) (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>).

The Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat may request, at any time, additional documentary evidence and argumentations regarding the eligibility of applicants.

Size of the partnership

The partnership must observe the minimum requirements:

-  maximum 6 partners



- at least one partner from each Member State participating the Programme (Romania, Bulgaria).

The size of the partnership should reflect the scope of the project and the role of each partner should be clear justified.

2.3. Eligible indicative types of actions

The indicative types of the actions are related to actions improving the navigation conditions and safety on the Danube and Black Sea in order to enhance the mobility and connectivity in the cross-border area (non-exhaustive list):

- Reducing administrative burden and other types of bottlenecks: studies, analyses, solutions, tools.
- Developing and implementing joint coordinated strategies, tools and pilot applications to improve the navigation conditions on Danube and Black Sea (e.g. joint feasibility studies, engineering planning documents, morphological and hydrodynamic studies in establishing the sediment accumulation conditions etc.).
- Developing and implementing integrated measures to improve the navigation conditions for the common sector of the Danube and the Black Sea in the cross-border area (e.g. integrating the marking systems on Danube, equipment, signalling etc.).

The indicative types of the actions related to enhancing rail connectivity and mobility across the Danube (non-exhaustive list) are:

- Elaboration of feasibility studies for the electrification and digitalization of the railway infrastructure.
- Designing and implementing sustainable transport tools and solutions for better connectivity and mobility in the CBC area, for the railway transport, including, but not limited to: safety, territorial deployment, reliability, efficiency, real-time knowledge of schedules, traffic and ticketing etc.
- Identifying and addressing the missing links and bottlenecks in rail and river crossing infrastructure: studies, strategies, joint solutions, joint tools etc.
- Improving and expanding rail transport: studies regarding traffic safety, awareness campaigns, connectivity/mobility studies for understanding freight and passenger flows, commuting etc.
- Designing and implementing integrated solutions for supporting mobility and connectivity in time of crisis.
- Designing and implementing sustainable transport solutions for better connectivity and mobility in the area.



- Modernization, upgrading and expanding the rail infrastructure
- Works for railway modernization (including electrification of the railway lines and introduction of the ERTMS / ETCS railway signaling system);
- Works for modernization, reconstruction and construction of railway stops and stations.

! Conditions and rules

- Mandatory conditions for applicants:** The applicant has the legal authority, responsibility or task to carry out the proposed activities, according with its statute or according to the national legislation, or alternatively have a formal agreement from the relevant institutions, organisations, bodies etc. to implement these activities.
- Specific Requirements for Bulgarian Partners** (Investments - works, infrastructures and equipment): Investment activities must be conducted on public property, which includes the public and private property.
- Compliance with Article 22(i) of Regulation 2021/1059 (Interreg):**
 - Projects must not be affected by any reasoned opinion from the European Commission under Article 258 TFEU that could jeopardize expenditure legality or project performance.
 - Applicants should verify potential infringements affecting Romania or Bulgaria through the EC Infringement Decisions Database³.
 - If a reasoned opinion poses a risk, the Programme structures do not recommend the development of the project, except where there are reasons to believe that the infringement is lifted within the deadline for the project submission set by this Guide.
 - Project impacted by reasoned opinions will be rejected at any stage of the process, even if the information was unavailable at submission.
 - Compliance with these requirements will be reviewed throughout the entire assessment process. Non-compliance at any stage can lead to project rejection.

The eligibility of an action does not confer eligibility on the expenditure made for the implementation of that activity.




³ https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement-decisions/?lang_code=en&langCode=EN



2.4. Location of Activities

The Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme supports project activities that are implemented in the Programme area. The applicants are asked to demonstrate that the activities have cross-border impact on the Programme area and contribute to the objectives of the Programme. All the activities, regarding the location, must be in the interest of the Programme, and clearly justified.

In duly justified cases, **project activities (including services, equipment, works and investments) can be implemented, purchased and used also outside Programme area.** In such cases, several requirements must be observed by the concerned activities:

-  They are for the benefit of the Programme area
-  They are essential for the implementation of the project
-  They are explicitly foreseen in the application form.



Under this call activities can be implemented outside the Programme area, provided they are in the Programme area benefit and have a cross-border impact.

If the proposed activity/activities (including investment related ones: equipment, works, infrastructure) has/have an impact extending beyond the Programme area, the applicant must clearly identify and justify both the need and the specific impact on the Programme area, as well as the relevance to the project, including in terms of functionality. Additionally, the applicant must specify and justify the share of these activities (including the corresponding budget) corresponding to the effects on the Programme area.

2.5. Budget of the call

The Programme allocates 12,145,711 million to this call. The indicative allocation is presented below:

Operations of strategic importance	Indicative ERDF allocation - Euro	Indicative total allocation - Euro
Operation of strategic importance 1 (complementing DISMAR)	5,316,569	6,645,711



Operation of strategic importance 2 (complementing and/or capitalizing on the results of the Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme)	3,200,000	4,000,000
Operation of strategic importance for railway infrastructure	1,200,000	1,500,000

! Conditions and rules

- The **project budget must be within the indicative allocation**. The Programme will grant maximum the amount included in the table above. In case a project proposes a budget below the limit set in the table, the available funds can be relocated to other projects submitted under this call (in the situation mentioned below⁴), over the limits set in the table. This aspect shall be analysed during the assessment and selection process.
- If the final proposed value is exceeding the indicative allocation, the difference should be included in the budget as **non-refundable/ non-eligible funds** supported from different sources. If the case, please include the information regarding the non-refundable/ non-eligible funds⁵ in the narrative section **A.2 Project Summary**. If the project is selected, this value shall be included in the subsidy contract, under non-refundable expenditures from the Programme.
- As a general rule, the Programme management bodies do not encourage, but in exceptional and duly justified cases, depending on the evolution of Programme implementation, the value of the grant for the project contracted under this call may be increased⁶ by decision of the Monitoring Committee, based on the proposal made by the Managing Authority in consultation with the National Authority. The proposal shall consider the Programme status indicators, the availability of funds and the Lead Partners' justifications.

⁴ If the final proposed value is exceeding the indicative allocation, the difference should be included in the budget as non-refundable/ non-eligible funds supported from different sources. If the case, please include the information regarding the non-refundable/ non-eligible funds in the narrative section A.2 Project Summary. If the project is selected, this value shall be included in the subsidy contract, under non-refundable expenditures from the Programme.



⁵ Non-eligible costs as defined in the eligibility rules of the Programme and other funds not covered by the Programme at the time of the application form submission considering Programme limitations, but which may later become refundable from the Programme considering the savings at project level

⁶ The new project implementation period and/ or the new grant value may exceed the maximum duration/ value, as specified in the current Applicant Guide.



If the case, the increase of the value of the contract shall be done in consideration of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its indicators.

The ERDF co-financing rate is 80%. Partners shall ensure the needed co-financing, as set by the national rules:

-  Romanian partners - the 20% of the national co-financing is ensured from the state budget (18%) and partner own contribution (2%)
-  Bulgarian partners - the 20% of the national co-financing is ensured from the state budget (18%) and partner own contribution (2%).

When selecting the projects, the Monitoring Committee can adjust the funded value so as to ensure the sound financial management of the Programme.

The budget of the call may be increased with the approval of the Programme Monitoring Committee based on availability of funds.

2.6. Programme and project indicators

The Programme results are measured by indicators. For this call, the following output and results indicators should be considered by the application:

Indicator	Measurement unit	Target 2029	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target 2029
Output			Result		
RCO84 -Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action	1	RCR104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations	Solutions	2
PSO2 Length of waterway supported in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area	Km	470			
RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategies and action plans	1			
RCO87 - Organisations	Organization	4	RCR84 - Organisations	Organisation	2



cooperating across borders			cooperating across borders after project completion		
PSO 1 - Length of rail reconstructed or modernised - in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area	km	0.5	RCR58 - Annual users of newly, built, upgraded, reconstructed or modernised railways	passenger km/year	5,000
RCO53 New or modernised railway stations and stop	stations and stops	2			

The pairing of the indicators must be observed.



The projects should contribute to the one or more of the following pairs of indicators:

- RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects*
- PSO2 Length of waterway supported in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*
- RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed*
- PSO 1 - Length of rail reconstructed or modernised - in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*
- RCO53 New or modernised railway stations and stop*

Paired with the result in indicator:

- RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations*
- RCR58 - Annual users of newly, built, upgraded, reconstructed or modernised railways*

The projects should contribute to the following pair, in connection with the pairs above mentioned:

- RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders*
- RCR84 Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion.*



When setting the set project outputs and results, please make sure that you checked the definitions and the conditions for each programme output and result indicators,









as describes in the *Guidance on monitoring Programme indicators_Annex 1_SO 3.2*⁷.

Each project shall select the relevant Programme indicators based on its specific characteristics and activities. The indicators PSO2 is not applicable to the railway project. Similarly, the indicator pair PSO1-RCR58 does not apply to the navigability projects. All other indicators are applicable to all projects, including both navigability and rail infrastructure projects.



2.7. Project features

The projects must observe, at least the following characteristics:

-  Have a cross-border character and impact
-  Contribute to the Programme indicators
-  Integrate, as much as possible the core values of the New European Bauhaus (sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion)
-  Promote solutions that are friendly with the environment and observe the *Do no significant Harm* Principle
-  Promote the equal opportunities, transparency and green procurement
-  Partners must cooperate in the development and implementation of project, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both, thereof.



Rejection conditions

-  The project that does not have a cross-border character and impact will be rejected.
-  In case the mandatory cooperation criteria are not met by the partners, as set in the Guide, the project shall be rejected and the assessment process shall stop without further analysis.



Cooperation Criteria

Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of Interreg operations, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both, thereof. Thus, in order to be eligible, projects must contribute to at least three out of the following four cooperation criteria.



Mandatory cooperation criteria (to all projects):

⁷ <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>



-  Joint development (mandatory) - means that the project must be designed in common by partners from both sides of the border. This means that project proposals must clearly integrate the ideas, priorities and actions of stakeholders on both sides of the border. The lead partner is the coordinator of this process but should include other partners from the beginning of the development process.
-  Joint implementation (mandatory) - means that activities must be carried out and coordinated among partners on both sides of the border. It is not enough that activities run in parallel. There must be clear content-based links between what is happening on either side of the border and regular contact between the two sides. The lead partner is responsible for ensuring that activities are properly coordinated, that schedules are kept and that the right quality levels are achieved.

And at least one of the following criteria (the projects can chose one or both of these criteria):

-  Joint financing (at project decision) - means that there will be only one contract per project and there must therefore be one joint project budget. The budget should be divided between partners according to the activities carried out. There is also only one project bank account for the EU contribution (held by the Lead Partner) and payments representing EU support are made from the Programme to this account. The lead partner is responsible for administration and distribution of these funds and for reporting on their use. Funding should come from both sides of the border and illustrates the commitment by each partner to the joint project. The distribution of financial resources should reflect tasks and responsibilities of the partners.
-  Joint staffing (at project decision) - means that the project should not duplicate functions on either side of the border. Therefore, regardless of where the person is located, there should be one joint project manager, one joint financial manager etc., (of course more staff may be required for larger projects). These staff will be responsible for project activities on both sides of the border. The lead beneficiary is generally the employer of core project staff.

2.8. Project duration

The project should have a duration of **maximum 36 months. Moreover, a project should not have an end date after 30 June 2029⁸.**

⁸ Depending on the projects and Programme evolution, the date can be adjusted by the Programme structures



2.9. Eligibility of expenditures

Detailed description regarding the eligibility of expenditures is included within *Annex AG_B - List of Eligible Expenditures 2021-2027* (approved by MC Decision no.27/8 of May 2024, <https://interregviarobg.eu/assets/2024/04/list-of-eligible-expenditure-priority-1-and-2.pdf>)⁹.







The project budget should be prepared on the basis of the activities needed to meet the projects' objectives and the resources required to carry out these activities within the time allowed. Only "eligible expenditure" can be taken into account for financial support. The eligibility of expenditure applies to both public and own contribution, so it is not possible to consider an ineligible expenditure as own contribution.

If the total cost of the project is above EUR 5,000,000.00 (including VAT) only non-recoverable VAT under national VAT legislation is eligible, otherwise the VAT is considered as not eligible.

The budget is therefore both a cost estimate and a maximum ceiling for "eligible costs".

The eligible costs must be based on real costs, except for the lump sums and flat rates, which are automatically calculated.

Under this call, the following types of costs shall be applied:

-  Project preparation (based on lump sum and real costs, if the case)
-  Staff costs flat rate
-  Travel & Accommodation flat rate
-  Office & administrative costs flat rate
-  Project closure lump sum
-  Real costs



Justification of the real costs¹⁰

Cost justification is mandatory during the application preparation phase and must be provided for assessors' assessment.

⁹ Approved through MC decision no 27 of 08.05.2024, List of eligible expenditures for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>).

¹⁰ The justification of the costs is requested during the development process of the application for budget justification for assessors' usage. During the implementation stage of the project, the costs will be determined by the free market and completion. During the implementation stage, the technical specifications issued by partners should be similar or higher than the ones used for the application preparation, depending on the evolution of technology.



All real costs in the project budget must be justified using at least one of the following methods:

- **Two comparable offers:** these can include screenshots from websites, contracts from other organizations, or formal offers received via email, etc.
- **Independent price evaluation** conducted by a certified evaluator or an independent entity.
- **Reference to a similar contract:** submit details of an equivalent contract already executed by a partnership partner.
- **Prints from public procurement systems.**

The justification indicated in any of the 4 methods must be related to identical or technically similar equipment, services, or works.

Submitting offers with significant differences in specifications or if the applicants do not submit any of the justifications mentioned above, the assessors may propose to reduce or deduct the related amount from the project budget.

- ✪ **Exceptions to the rule:** for costs covered by Feasibility Studies or other technical documents as outlined in Annex B2, there is no requirement to submit additional offers or evaluations.

Lump sum for project preparation of 14,000 Euro (total value)

Lump sum for preparation will be paid out by the Programme after the financing contract (subsidy) is signed. The lump sum for project preparation covers elaboration of applications for financing, including the annex mandatory for all applications as listed in A. *Documents mandatory for all applications.*



In addition to the lump sum for project preparation, the operations of strategic importance shall have the possibility to **ask the reimbursement of the costs of the annexes to the application for financing on basis of real costs.**

These annexes refer to the following documents listed on B. *Documents to be submitted depending on the specificity of the application* (non-exhaustive list): feasibility study or equivalent technical document, Cost Benefit Analysis, studies and costs for documentation necessary to obtain the necessary endorsements and authorizations,



documentation concerning the urban planning plan, impact assessments, location studies/appraisals, technical verification etc.

Please note that the expenditures for project preparation based on real costs must be requested in the first reporting period.

Lump sum for project closure of 6,500 Euro (total value)

The payment of the lump sum for closure is linked to the delivery of predefined output.



The partners should decide between themselves on the division of the lump sums received within the project;

The lump sum for project preparation and the lump sum for project closure will not be included in the basis for the flat rates used by the Programme (flat rate for staff costs, flat rate for travel and accommodation, flat rate for administration costs).

Staff Costs

Form of reimbursement:

Staff costs will be calculated based on a flat rate up to 20% of the direct eligible costs of the operation.

The calculation basis for the application of the flat-rate for *Staff costs* for INTERREG VI-A Romania-Bulgaria will consist in the following direct eligible costs:

-  External expertise and services costs;
-  Equipment;
-  Costs for Infrastructure and works.

Project preparation costs and project closure costs will not be included in the calculation basis.

The project partners shall be able to demonstrate the existence of employment/works contracts or other equivalent legal agreement that allow the identification of the employment relationship with the partner's organisation.

If in the framework of controls and audits, direct costs used as calculation basis for determining staff costs are found to be ineligible, the determined costs for staff must be re-calculated and reduced accordingly.



No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).

Considering the flat rate for *Staff cost category*, please be aware that only external expertise and services for very technical/specific documents/contribution for the project implementation is allowed. Additionally, external services can be considered when there is a lack of administrative capacity within the partner organization. In justifying the need for such expertise from the phase of drafting the Application Form and planning the budget, the partner shall have to prove that the expertise and services to be contracted under External expertise and services is not available at the level of the project management team and that the Staff costs are not already financing the type of external expertise and services (to be) contracted.

Travel and accommodation costs

Form of reimbursement:

Travel and accommodation costs will be calculated based on a flat rate of **up to 15% of the eligible direct staff costs of the operation** (as foreseen under the cost category Staff costs).

Travel and accommodation costs shall cover the participation of project partners in events organised within the project (such as partners meetings etc.) or by other entities, relevant for the project implementation (such as the meetings organized by the Programme's structures, other projects etc.).

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts (including invited speakers, experts and chairpersons of meetings) and service providers fall under external expertise and services costs and shall be reimbursed on basis of real costs. The same applies to travel and accommodation costs of staff of institutions acting as associated partners, where the case.

No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).

Office and administrative costs

Form of reimbursement:

Flat-rate of **up to 15% of eligible direct staff costs of the operation**.

No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).



Office and administrative cost category includes equipment for general office use, for which the exclusive use in the project cannot be demonstrated. In consequence, this equipment shall not be allocated under the *Equipment* cost category. Please refer also to *Equipment*;

Costs of equipment for general office use not exclusively used for the project is not eligible under *Equipment category*, as they are already covered by the flat rate of the *Office and administrative budget line*.

Purchase of consumables that do not fall under the definition of *Office and administrative costs* and that are necessary for the use of laboratory equipment or machines and instruments (See *List of eligible expenditure*) is eligible and should be included under the *Equipment cost category*.

External expertise and services

Form of reimbursement:

External expertise and services costs are reimbursed by the programme on a real costs basis.



Points of attention:

- External expertise and services cost are connected to certain project tasks/activities that cannot be carried out by the project partners themselves and are therefore outsourced to external service providers.

External service providers' work must be necessary for the project and should be linked to activities foreseen in the application form.

External expertise and services cost shall not duplicate costs already budgeted under staff costs or the task of project management team. In this respect, no activities that are foreseen to be externalised will be also performed by partners' own staff (for example in case of projects externalising parts or hole of the project management, including external expertise related to the organization of the (public) procurement, services related to the financial or technical reporting, or other activities). **In case project management is externalised, the flat rate option for staff costs shall be accordingly diminished.**



Equipment Costs

Form of Reimbursement: on a real costs basis.

Costs of equipment for general office use not exclusively used for the project is not eligible under Equipment category, as they are already covered by the flat rate of the Office and administrative budget line.

Infrastructure and works

Form of Reimbursement: on a real costs basis.

In case of financing construction works, each partner shall foresee in the application form costs for services for quality audit of the performed works.

2.10. Horizontal issues

The project will have to clearly describe how will comply with the horizontal principles set in the EU regulations and described in the Programme. This means that horizontal principles and issues should, to the possible extent, be integrated in the project activities, outputs and results, thus ensuring their fulfilment.

The project should respect the fundamental rights¹¹ and should describe its specific contributions to the main three horizontal principles on sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women, during all phases of the project lifecycle, from its design and preparation to its implementation and reporting.

The accomplishment of the minimum requirements of the law in the fields of promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women and sustainable development is mandatory for all projects and will be monitored during project implementation.

¹¹In accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in compliance with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.



Another horizontal issue that will have to be considered by the applicants and integrated in the projects is the New European Bauhaus¹², an initiative that connects the European Green Deal¹³ to the daily lives and living spaces.

Also, the contribution to the European Union Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR)¹⁴, EU Green Deal and EU Territorial Agenda 2030¹⁵ must be proven and detailed in the application form, with clear indication of the Priority Area to which the project is contributing.

In addition, the contribution and synergies with the national, regional and local strategies/plans/strategic documents should be described in the application form.

When drafting the application, the following details should be considered, as they will be assessed and scored.






More details regarding the horizontal issues that need to be approved by the project are included in the *Annex L - Horizontal issues*.

The following sub-sections include the main headlines of the horizontal issues, but these should be read in conjunction with the *Annex L - Horizontal issues*.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development has three dimensions that interrelate:

-  **environmental sustainability** - ensuring that natural environment is used in a way that will preserve resources for future generation,
-  **economic sustainability** - capacity of future generation to earn an income and allow for economic growth,
-  **social sustainability** - future generation having the same or improved access to social resources such as human rights, political stability.

DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM (DNSH)

The project activities contribute to one of the six environmental objectives and they are compliant with Do no significant harm objectives:







¹² https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹⁴ <https://danube-region.eu/about/>

¹⁵ <https://territorialagenda.eu/ta2030/>



-  Climate change mitigation
-  Climate change adaptation
-  Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources
-  Pollution prevention & control
-  Transition to a circular economy
-  Protection and restoration of biodiversity & ecosystems

When developing the application form and the technical annexes, the applicant must include adaptation measures, in this regard please consider at least the measures identified in the *Annex AG_I. DNSH_Interreg VI-A RoBg level*, for the corresponding Priority and Specific Objective.



The adaptation measures included in the *Annex AG_I DNSH_Interreg VI-A RoBg level* are mandatory for all projects! Therefore, before designing your project and the technical annexes, please check the adaptation measures identified for the Specific Objective and Priority under the project will be submitted.

Please bear in mind that these are minimum requirements, and they can be complemented with additional ones, depending on the legal requirements and the type of the project.

GO GREEN WITH YOUR PROJECT!

When designing and implementing your project, you can act in many ways to reduce impact on the environment and reduce the carbon footprint. You are thus strongly encouraged to apply energy efficient and sustainable principles to the project activities. In fact, measures reducing the impact on the environment cannot only add value to the project in terms of credibility, but it can also result in lower costs.



Mandatory!

Projects aimed at renovation/modernization of existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings must consider the implementation of solutions to improve energy efficiency, as well as the use of renewable sources of electrical/thermal energy.



GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is defined as *"a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured"*¹⁶.

The Programme encourages sustainable measures and supports the inclusion of additional 'green' criteria in tendering whenever legally possible. Thus, by using your purchasing power to choose environmentally friendly goods, services and works, you can make an important contribution to sustainable consumption and production.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Guaranteeing equal opportunities and preventing discrimination are important principles in project implementation. No one should be discriminated based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Instead, project activities should, where possible, increase the possibilities of all groups to participate in the activities of the society. Any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation has to be prevented. Accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account. At the level of projects, applicants are invited to explain in their application form how their project complies with, and possibly even strengthens, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

In addition to the general principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination the programme pays attention to the equality between men and women.

Ensuring equality between men and women means in principle to make possible that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. Gender equality implies not only equal distribution between men and women in all domains of society. It is also about the qualitative aspects, ensuring that the knowledge and experience of both men and women are used to promote progress in all aspects of society, placing equal value and emphasis on the knowledge and skills of both men and women, including ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

¹⁶ For more details regarding green procurement, you can check the European Union site: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm



NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

The New European Bauhaus¹⁷ initiative promotes a new lifestyle where sustainability matches style, thus accelerating the green transition in various sectors of the economy such as construction, furniture, fashion and in the society as well as other areas of our daily life. The aim is to provide all citizens with access to goods that are circular and less carbon-intensive, that support the regeneration of nature and protect biodiversity.

Your project will have to take the opportunity to explore ways to contribute to creating and delivering sustainable, affordable, accessible, inclusive and beautiful products and/ or services, whether we refer to new cycling infrastructure, digitalization of heritage, learning programs or green areas in cities.

Your project can contribute to implement the New European Bauhaus initiative with a wide range of solutions, from educational and cultural activities, to implementation of nature-based solutions, while making the built environment more attractive.

SEA MITIGATION MEASURES AND INDICATORS

When developing and implementing the projects, the recommendations and the monitoring indicators set by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report must be observed. The list of the measures and the monitoring indicators proposed for each type of actions is included in *Annex AG_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators*.



Please consult the provisions of *Annex AG_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators* and consider the proposed measures when developing the project. Details regarding the way these measures were considered by the project partners should be included in the description of the work packages/activities (where relevant). These aspects shall be assessed by the assessors or followed during the implementation stage.

The Bulgarian partners must observe also the recommendations generated by the Bulgarian legislation, as mentioned in *Annex AG_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators*.

¹⁷ For more details regarding the New European Bauhaus you can check The EU'S site: https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en



2.11. Communication and branding

Co-funded projects have to acknowledge and promote the ERDF support received in all their activities. The overall context of the operations of strategic importance in the cohesion policy regulatory framework is related to visibility and communication, in line with Articles 46(a) and 50(1)(e) of the CPR.

Each project is required to set out the envisaged approach to communication and visibility of the project. For more details, please see *Communication Kit Starter* (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>).



Please bear in mind that failure to comply with the visibility legal requirements set out by EU Regulation may lead to the appliance of financial correction by the Managing Authority up to 2% of the ERDF total support of the project, based on the principle of proportionality.

Projects are encouraged to use communication products such as roll-ups and banners to promote the project when organising events.

Promotional items are by definition produced in larger quantities and come custom-printed with the Programme logo. They are usually relatively small and inexpensive. Their production has to respect horizontal principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, sustainable development and environment protection.

Limited types of promotional materials are allowed under the Programme. The list includes: pens and pencils, (Paper) notebooks, bags (made of sustainable materials like cotton, paper or linen), cardboard conference folders, USB sticks.



The applicants can choose the promotional items from the Programme list, according to their needs.

However, at operation level, partners may decide to propose maximum 3 promotional items, additional to the Programme list.

All promotional items must respect the green principle and the quantity produced should be reasonable and justified. The costs of a single item should not exceed EUR 50.



The public availability of results must be guaranteed also after project closure. Results and outcomes must remain available for at least 5 years after the end date of the project.

Also, please bear in mind that you will need to prove you have planted at least 5 trees, during the project implementation. You can plant your trees on public spaces or near to your headquarters. When selecting the trees, please make sure you have chosen local species (please do not use alien and invasive species¹⁸). Also, please make sure that you can take care of the development of the planted trees.

2.12. State aid

According to Article 107 (1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, state aid refers to financial support granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition and intra-community market trade by favoring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods. In order to meet the requirements of the European Commission and in order to allow a smooth implementation of the Programme and its approved projects, in the framework of Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria, State Aid is not permitted.

In case that during project implementation, or during 5 years after the end of project implementation period, illegal state-aid incidence is discovered the MA may apply a correction up to 100% financial correction for the respective project, including penalties and debts from the date of grant award to date.

For state aid to take place the recipient of project funding must be an undertaking, and the Court of Justice has consistently defined undertakings as entities engaged in an economic activity, regardless of their legal status and the way in which they are financed. The term "undertaking" is in this context used in a wide sense as any entity which has an activity of an economic nature and which offers goods and services on the market, regardless the legal form and the way of financing of this entity. Also if an entity is not profit-oriented, state aid rules will apply as long as it competes with companies that are profit-oriented. Therefore, not only private companies are subject to state aid rules but also public authorities, if they carry out an economic activity on the market.

¹⁸ The partner shall verified/consult the list/studies of the invasive tree spices, before purchasing and planting the trees. The local/regional environmental agencies can be consulted before the process.



The next step in establishing state aid is to use the set of five criteria that all have to be fulfilled cumulatively in order to be state aid. For details, please consider annex AF-A3 and Annex AG_M - State aid.



Please bear in mind that under this call, no state aid is granted, any activities fulfilling all the above criteria cannot be financed. In this regard you have to make an initial assessment of whether State aid is involved in your project and your options for dealing with this. As such, *Annex AF_A3 State Aid Self-Assessment* must be filled in by each partner and submitted with the application.

2.13. Revenue Generating Projects

The projects are expected to share any outputs and results widely and for free. In case where income to the project could happen, the partners should observe the legislation in force.

2.14. Durability, transferability and financial sustainability

The project must ensure the effectiveness, fairness and sustainable impact of the Funds and should guarantee that investments in infrastructure or productive investment is long lasting and prevent the Funds from being used to undue advantage.

Therefore, the sustainability of a project - or more precisely of its results - is crucial. A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to the project partners and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the project implementation. Hence it is essential to include the aspects of sustainability in the application form. As such, information regarding the necessary financial resources and mechanism to cover the operation and maintenance costs for the operations including investment infrastructure should be provided by the partners.

Also, the durability of the operations in case of investment in infrastructure or productive investment must be ensured for 5 years since the project completion. No cessation or transfer of productive activity, no undue advantage owing to change of infrastructure ownership and no substantial change in nature, objectives etc. are accepted.



Moreover, some outputs/deliverables that will be delivered by the project can be adapted or further developed to be used by other target groups or in other territories. Thus, the project partners should include details and measures for ensuring the transferability of these results to the relevant groups.



Please bear in mind that the Programme will assess the way you ensure the durability and the financial sustainability of the project, after the project implementation. As such, you must include in the application form detailed information on how you will ensure the financial sustainability and the durability of the project and its results after a period of 5 years since the project completion.

2.15. How to apply and the deadline

The present call is organized in “one-step” procedure, exclusively online. The project proposals must be submitted in English language, only through the web-based programme joint electronic monitoring system (Jems) available at <https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/>.

JEMS manual provide potential applicants with detailed guidelines on the application for funding process.

OSI proposal must be submitted by the lead applicant at the latest by:

22nd of December 2025 at 13:00 PM EET

2.16. Assessment and selection of applications

Assessment Process

The project proposals shall be assessed and selected for funding based on standardized procedure which complies with the principles of transparency and equal treatment. The assessment and selection criteria are available in *Annex AG _A Evaluation grids*.

The evaluation process shall be carried out by the Assessment Committee based on the criteria approved by the Monitoring Committee (MC).

The evaluation will be carried out in two phases:



Phase 1 - administrative compliance and eligibility check



- Phase 2 - quality assessment (technical and financial evaluation and state aid incidence assessment)

Verification of the compliance of project application with eligibility criteria can be made all through the assessment, selection, and contracting process and failure to comply with the established eligibility criteria can lead to the rejection of the application in any stage of the evaluation, selection, and contracting process.

Selection process

Project proposal will be selected by the programme MC on the basis of the results of the assessment process. After the assessment process of an application is finalized, an individual recommendation of selection, rejection with the proposal to be revised or rejection shall be submitted to MC.





Please be aware that the Monitoring Committee is responsible with the selection of the projects, considering the results of the evaluation process, but also the benefits for the Programme and the accomplishment of the Programme indicators, and with the decisions related to the complaints.

The application which did not pass the assessment process will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for decision:

- Return for improvement (scenario 1):**
 - The application will be returned to the applicant with clear indications for changes and a set deadline.
 - If the applicants do not comply with these requests/fails to comply with the assessment requirements/selection threshold, the application will be rejected, but may be revised and resubmitted, in a certain deadline (in scenario 2).
 - This process is not considered as a rejection, but as a process, part of the assessment process, to improve an application, based on clear recommendations approved by MC.
 - After the application is improved and resubmitted in JEMS, the assessors will check the application and make a recommendation to MC, for selection or rejection with the proposal to be revised (scenario 2).
- Rejection with the proposal to be revised (scenario 2).**
 - If the Monitoring Committee finds the application fundamentally inconsistent but potentially improvable after scenario 1, it will reject the application with a proposal to revise and resubmit it in a clear deadline.
 - The application will be returned to the application in Jems.



Rejection from funding, definitely, if (scenario 3):


-  The project partners fail to revise and resubmit the application in either of the situations above.
-  The revised application still does not reach the selection threshold after resubmission.

The Monitoring Committee will discuss the project application and especially its general strategic relevance.



The assessment process may start after the submission of a project, as this is not a competitive call (considering the internal working procedures). In case a project has at least 65 points as final score it goes to the Monitoring Committee for approval and, after observing the contracting procedure, the financing contracts are signed. The contribution to Programme indicators (output and result) shall also be taken into consideration.

At the end of the entire process (of selection) the project can be included under one of the two categories:



-  project proposed for financing;
-  project proposed for rejection.

Applicants will be notified about the outcome of the selection process after the MC decision regarding the submitted proposals. The Decision of the Monitoring Committee is final and mandatory for all applicants.


The decision of the Monitoring Committee shall be inserted into the JEMS by the JS after the meeting. The MC decision is recorded in a list 'Funding decision (MC)'. The funding decision may be clean, or approved under conditions, that need to be approached during the pre-contracting stage.

Approved under condition

During the contracting phase, after the Lead applicant modifies the application form, the JS reviews the modified application form and sets the status to refused, accepted, or handed back.

-  Accepted: accepts the modifications introduced by the LP and generates a new version of the AF. The project status is changed to 'approved' and the project is moved from 'approved under conditions' to the 'handover and contracting' section.
-  Handed back: reopens the AF for further modifications by the LP.



-  **Refused:** terminates the modification process and omits all modifications done by the LP. No new version of the AF is created. The project is rejected and archived. In addition, the project shall be eliminated from the list of projects proposed for financing (based on the MC decision).

Subsequently, all Lead Applicants will receive notification of the approval/rejection (with the proposal for resubmission) of their projects (via email or JeMS, if function available).

The decision of the Monitoring Committee is followed by the pre-contractual phase and then the contracts will be concluded.

The Joint Secretariat will publish on the Programme website, the list of the approved projects in 5 working days after the Monitoring Committee meeting. It is the responsibility of the lead partner to inform the other project partners about the outcome.

Recommendation for projects proposed for financing: partners are strongly recommended to start the implementation of project activities as soon as possible in order to avoid any delays in implementation. Therefore, the partners are strongly encouraged to start the implementation of the project activities, preparing their tender documentations and launch the public procurement procedures, before or immediately after the selection of the project by the Monitoring Committee (depending on each partner decision). Contracts may be signed and expenditures paid, as they are eligible starting with 1st of January 2021.

2.17. Contracting process

The decision of the Monitoring Committee is followed by the pre-contractual phase and then the contracts will be concluded.

For the project proposals selected for funding and approved under conditions a pre-contracting procedure is initiated in order to fulfil the requirements/conditions for approval set forth by the MC following the assessment process or to correct any technical errors /inconsistencies detected by the JS in the pre-contracting phase.

Details regarding the contracting process and rules are detailed in Project Implementation Manual¹⁹.

¹⁹ [Interreg VI A RO-BG - PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL](#)



Please bear in mind that the Managing Authority has the right to decide not to sign a financing contract in case a Partner already has in implementation 4 projects. Depending on the evolution of the Programme and projects implementation during or after the finalization of one project, MA has the right to reconsider the decision and contract more than 4 projects at the same time for a partner.

If the case, please be aware that during the pre-contracting phase, additional clarifications/information regarding the non-refundable funds (e.g. a short and clear description of non-refundable funds necessary for implementing the project activities or the necessity of envisaged non-refundable funds for implementing the project etc.) may be requested by the Programme structures.

The contract templates annexed to this Guide are only indicative; the final version of all contracts will be presented to the partners of the selected projects in the pre-contractual phase.



Please bear in mind that the lead partner and all project partners are responsible for the correctness of information provided and certify that the information uploaded in JeMS is a true and complete copy of the original (if the case). In case differences are identified between the electronic version and the original during the project life cycle of the project, the project could be rejected/terminated (for contracted projects).

2.18. Complaint against MC selection decision

In case the applicants are not satisfied by the MC selection decision, a complaint can be filed according to the Complaint Procedure (*Annex AG_ D Complaint procedure for evaluation results*). Following the JS notification to the lead applicant on the MC funding decision, and within the set timeframe available for submitting a formal complaint, the lead applicant may decide to submit a complaint concerning the MC decision on its project proposal. The complaint can be submitted only for the project not accepted for funding (rejected from funding) or selected without available financial allocation.

Only the project's lead applicant as the one representing the project partnership affected by the funding decision is entitled to file a complaint. It is therefore the task of the lead applicant to collect and bring forward the complaint reasons from all project partners.



Section 3 How to develop a high quality project and how to apply

3.1. Application form - general overview

The application form (AF) is a binding document, which describes the project and gives detailed information on the work plan and financial figures. It is the reference document for implementation during the whole project duration.



The information filled in the text boxes shall be in English, precise and concise as the number of characters is limited. Once the AF is filled in and submitted no changes are possible.

For an easier identification of each applicant, it is mandatory to also use the PIC number (which can be obtained by registering within the EC Participant Register) when filling in the Partner Identity Information in Jems (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>).

In the online application form some fields in various (sub-) sections will be automatically filled in by the system, displaying data which are inserted in other sections of the application form or which are automatically calculated.

More detailed guidance for each part of the application form is provided in the offline template of the application form.

For practical details on how to fill in an application in Jems, you may also consult our YouTube tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sipyi-qVt5A&t=505s>.

3.2. How to plan a project

3.2.1. Lead Partner and partnership rules

In compliance with the “lead partner principle” each project partnership shall appoint one applicant acting as lead partner, which takes full financial and legal responsibility for the



implementation of the entire project. The tasks of the Lead Partner are provided in article 26 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The tasks, responsibilities and the relations between the lead partners and the partners are include the partnership agreement (*Annex AG_H Template Partnership Agreement*).

The responsibilities of the lead partner are laid down in detail in the subsidy contract signed with the Managing Authority (*Annex AG_F Template Framework subsidy contract*).

All partners should dispose of the expertise, resources and capacity to fulfil their designated tasks. The applicants must state their financial and administrative capacity to manage their share of the project.



3.2.2. Developing the application

Logic of intervention

The project must follow an intervention logic that reflects the need of the territory (and of the partner) and the intended change the project seeks to induced through its implementation²⁰. The Programme intervention logic should be mirrored in the projects' intervention logic.





The project must be in-line with the specific objective of the Priority under which is submitted and to contribute to the Programme output and results indicators. This linkage should be reflected by the application.

The project must clearly describe its objectives, activities and the expected outputs and results. When developing the project, the partners should describe:

-  The overall project objective - Provides overall context for what the project is trying to achieve, and aligns to Programme priority specific objective. It relates to the strategic aspects of the project and to the planned project results (and intended territorial change). The overall project objective is broken down into one or more project specific objectives.
-  Project specific objectives - is a concrete statement describing what the project is trying to achieve through its planned activities and related outputs and deliverables. It has to clearly contribute to the overall project objective and should be specific and measurable (it refers to the project main outputs). It should be verifiable whether the specific objective has been reached.

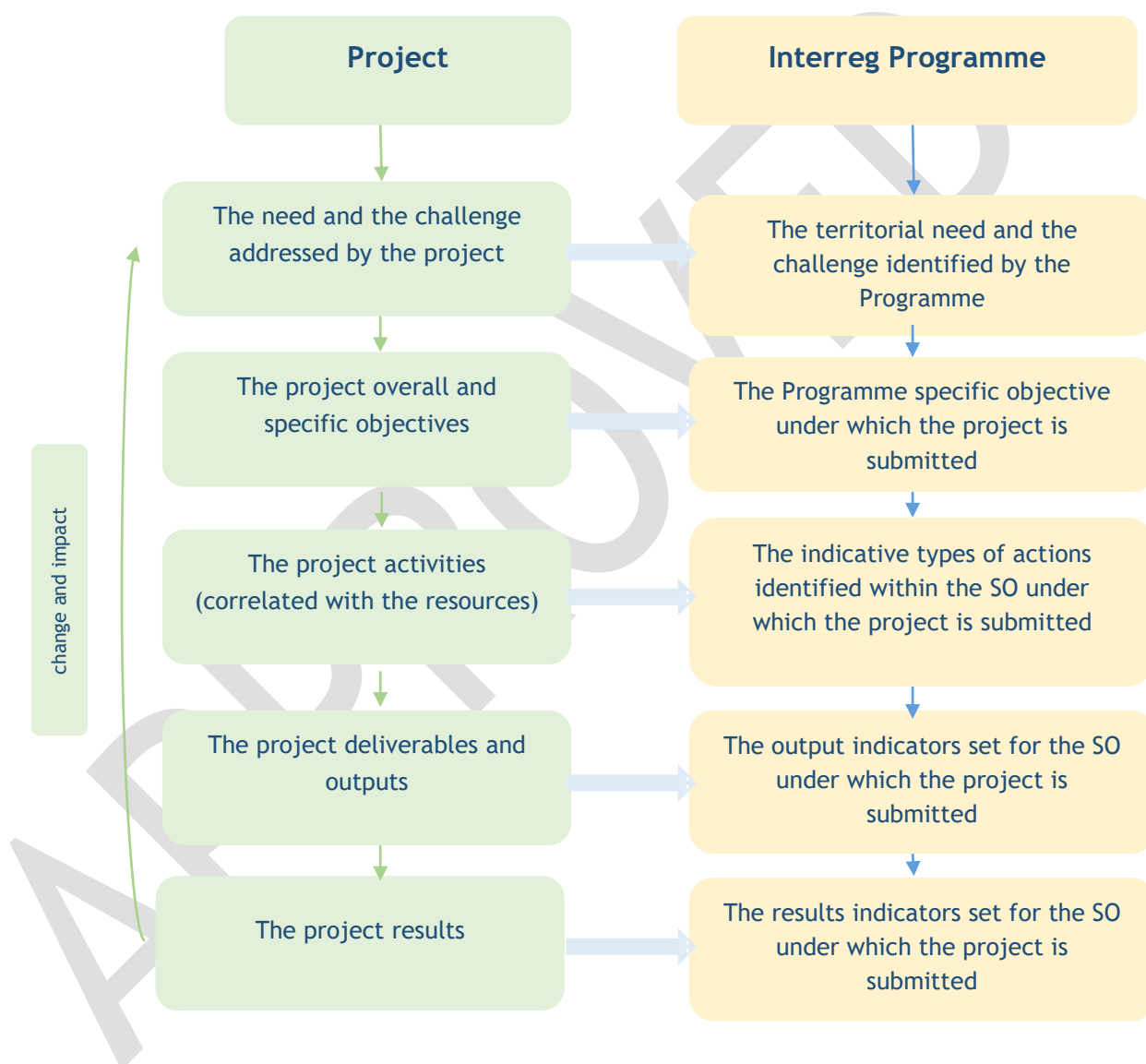
²⁰ For hints you can check https://www.interact-eu.net/library?title=&field_fields_of_expertise_tid=43&field_networks_tid=All#1735-info-sheet-interreg-project-quality-characteristics



-  Project activities - are the specific tasks performed for which resources are used. It's a work package component which may or may not result in a deliverable or an output. The project activities can be grouped in a project work package.
-  Project output - is a product that results from the implementation of project activities. All project activities and outputs need to be clearly consistent with and contribute to the achievement of one or more project specific objectives. The project outputs must be linked to the Programme output indicator set for the SO under which the project is submitted.
-  Project deliverable - is side-product or service of the project that contributes to the development of a project's main output, e.g. analysis reports, feasibility studies, strategy documents, pilot action reports, training documentations. It is recommended to limit the number of project deliverables.
-  Project result - is the immediate effect and change compared to the initial situation in the area which a project intends to achieve through the use of its outputs. The project results must be linked to the Programme results indicator set for the SO under which the project is submitted.



The project logic intervention



Project objective and result indicators

The project must select a Programme priority specific objective to which the project contributes and describe how it will contribute. It is important to secure consistency between the project



objective(s) and the Programme priority SO as it will help to focus the reach of the project and underline what impact the project will make.

The project can define a number of project specific objectives. The project specific objectives need to show direct contribution to the project overall objective.

Project Work Plan (application form Section C.4)

A project is structured into Work Packages (WP) and activities, and produce deliverables and outputs that contribute to the achievement of the results and the set objectives.

The Work Package (WP) is defined as group of related project activities required to produce project main outputs. This means that the project will have as many work packages as it will have project specific objectives defined.

It is recommend to have up to 3 work packages, but in some cases up to 5 should also be acceptable. Work packages have to be broken down into activities, deliverables and outputs. A work package may include investments.

For each Work Package, a project shall define one project specific objective to be achieved in the project lifetime through the implementation of planned activities and related outputs and deliverables. Please note that each work package should have a distinct project specific objective (i.e. project specific objectives should not be repeated in other work packages).

Each work package should also have at least one communication objective, and related target audiences, that contributes to the achievement of the project specific objective.

Project activities, outputs and results

The project activities must contribute to the achievement of the project's output and result indicators, as well as the project specific objectives. Thus, each working package should include activities that are contributing to the achievement of the project specific and communication objectives set in that WP. Please note that the activities should contribute to the development of the planned outputs. The number of activities per work package depends on its complexity, such as the number and type of outputs to be developed. Usually no more than 4 to 6 activities per work package should be foreseen.

Please note that each working package includes specific communication objectives and activities. As such, each project is required to set out the envisaged approach to communication and visibility of the WP. Thus, the applicant must identify a communication objective(s) and specific communication activities to be integrated in each work package. The communication activities



are designed for each communication objective based on the needs to achieve a specific project objective.

Communication activities vary according to the WP specified and to the identified target groups and messages for them.

Communication activities can also contribute to the capitalisation of achieved project outputs and results. Communication activities focused on capitalisation should address audiences/target groups that go beyond the partnership and participating regions.

Moreover, during all stages of your project, you must make sure that the activities carried out within the project comply with the mandatory requirements for ensuring the publicity and visibility of the EU financial intervention, mentioned by art. 36 paragraph 4 of EU Regulation 1059/2021 and detailed in the Manual for Visual Identity²¹ of the programme. Thus, please note that properly branding all project thematic and communication activities will be crucial for their eligibility.

Details on how to approach the communication activities are included in the documents Communication Starter Kit, the Manual for Visual Identity of the Programme and Go Green!

Please note: The work plan includes only thematic work packages and there are no separate work packages for project management and communication in the application form. The overall approach to project management and communication has to be described in section C.7 of the application form.

Deliverables

For each activity, at least one deliverable should be defined. Deliverables should present in an aggregated form the outcomes of intermediate (smaller) steps within a certain activity. A deliverable should thus be sufficiently comprehensive. **Overall, it is recommended to limit the total number of deliverables per work package** (e.g. not more than three deliverables per activity), also keeping in mind that project implementation will be monitored against the deliverables foreseen in the application form.

When planning outputs, please take into consideration the Programme output and results indicators corresponding to your project. Definitions of output and result indicators can be found in *Guidance on monitoring Programme indicators for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria*.

²¹ <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>



Please pay attention also to a realistic timing of activities, deliverables and outputs. Project implementation will have to report project implementation by submitting the deliverables and outputs according to the delivery dates set in the application form.

Investments (where applicable)

There are also no separate investment work packages. Thus, you need to provide detailed information about investments that will be included in the work packages (details are included in the Application form).

Please note that for investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, the expected impacts of climate change need to be described and how climate proofing will be ensured.

For each investment, a clear and concise description needs to be provided, including of the cross border relevance. This shall include a justification of the investment, its physical location, information on its environmental sustainability and risks, technical and legal requirements and ownership. For determining the total amount of the investment, only items falling under cost categories 5 (Equipment) and 6 (Infrastructure and works) should be considered.



During the assessment stage, if applicable, the assessors shall verify how the climate proofing was considered by the project partners for investments in infrastructure, according to the *Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01)*. The Programme requires an assessment of expected impacts of climate change related to *Climate resilience (adaptation to climate change) Pillar*. You must provide the *Documentation of climate proofing*²² (maximum 30 pages) and the related statement, according to the *Commission Notice (including the related requirements set by Annex B.2)*²³. The related statement has an open format and should include the main conclusions/findings of the climate proofing documentation or reference to the documentation of climate proofing.

Please note that the documents shall be analysed and assessed based on the evaluation criteria.

²² Observing the information included in Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01) ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0916\(03\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0916(03)&from=EN)), Section B.2., page 50

²³ As mentioned in the Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/23a24b21-16d0-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, page 8



Please bear in mind, that an independent verification is not compulsory. However such verification providing assurance that the climate proofing adheres to the applicable guidance and other requirements may be required during the assessment process in case the documentation of climate proofing/statement on climate proofing is unclear or not in line with the Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01).




When setting the Work Package and the corresponding activities and outputs, please consider the following aspects:

Cooperation

The projects must promote the cooperation among the partners and should continue beyond the project lifetime. Cooperation could also involve associated partners and lead to cooperation (e.g. cooperation networks, agreements etc.). The cooperation should be sustained through formal cooperation agreements or other types of tools. The cooperation is reflected in the following pair of Programme indicators:

-  Output indicator RCO87 “Organisations cooperating across borders”
-  Result indicator “RCR84 “Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime”




In order for a project to promote and enhance the cooperation, the following conditions should be fulfilled:

-  the cooperation is formalized under other form than the “partnership agreement” signed between the project partners;
-  the purpose of the project is to develop and maintain the cooperation between structures over a longer period of time than the duration of the project;
-  not all the project partners need to sign the “cooperation agreement”, only a minimum of 2 partners.

Investment, pilot actions and strategies, joint plans developed and taken up or up-scaled solutions

Activities will be focused on investments related to water transport, aiming at promoting and enhancing the connectivity along Danube River, development of pilot actions and taking-up/up-scaling the generated solutions in fields related to mobility and climate change. These are reflected through the following pair of indicators:






-  Output indicator RCO84 *Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects*
-  Output indicator RCO83 *Strategies and action plans jointly developed*
-  Result indicator RCR104 *Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations*

The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices.

Innovative solutions could be developed under the projects such as procedures, instruments or tools (including physical objects, methods, concepts, or services etc.). In order to produce results, these solutions must be taken up or up-scaled during the implementation of the project or within one year after project completion. The organisation adopting the solutions developed by the project may or may not be a participant in the project. The uptake / up-scaling should be documented by the adopting organisations in, for instance, strategies, action plans etc.

A pilot action should:

-  Should test, evaluate or demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of new approaches, procedures, instruments or tools. If a project foresees several pilot actions, these should differ from each other in order to maximise mutual learning among the partnership.
-  Be limited in its scope, i.e. in its location, duration, scale, etc. It should be unprecedented in a comparable environment.
-  Be jointly evaluated in terms of results as well as jointly exploited and transferred to other institutions and territories.

Additionally, joint strategies and action plans will be developed, generating solutions that will be taken up at a later stage by the partners.

Pilot actions, strategies and actions plans and solutions are interlinked: Solutions should either be newly developed by the project, or already existing solutions should be tailored to the project context through testing in pilot actions.

The pilot actions can include also investments. The investment must clearly contribute to the project overall and specific objectives. The investments have to comply with relevant legislation and environmental policies as well as with the durability and ownership requirements as laid down Art. 65 from EU Reg. 1060/2021²⁴. Furthermore, infrastructure investments with an



²⁴ Durability of operations

1. The Member State shall repay the contribution from the Funds to an operation comprising investment in infrastructure or productive investment, if within 5 years of the final payment to the beneficiary or within the period of time set out in State aid rules, where applicable, that operation is subject to any of the following:






expected lifespan of at least 5 years have to ensure their climate proofing²⁵ (climate resilience - adaptation to climate change).

In order to ensure the durability of the project and the taking-up/up-scaling of the generated solutions, the partners must focus on:

-  increasing the visibility of the pilot actions so that other organizations can adopt/up-scale them;
-  proposing clear measures for facilitating the adoption/ scaling-up of the pilot actions by the partners of the project themselves (indicate the distribution channels of the pilot actions tested).

Output indicators cover all the thematic fields of interventions of the programme, deriving from its intervention logic and expressing its actions. Thus, the output indicators measure specific outcomes of the actions undertaken by the programme.

-  One project can contribute to one or more output indicator, respectively one or more result indicators. However, each output indicator is linked to one result indicator and this link is mandatory to be kept. A project cannot contribute to a result indicator if it does not contribute to its paired output indicator and vice-versa.
-  Within a certain Specific Objective, the output indicators RCO87 - Organisations cooperating across borders and with its corresponding result indicator RCR84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion cannot be used on its own. They always have to be complemented by another output indicator (respectively result indicator) set for that Specific Objective.
-  When reporting on indicators, the project will report only data stemming from the implementation of that project's activities.



(a) a cessation or transfer of a productive activity outside the NUTS level 2 region in which it received support;

(b) a change in ownership of an item of infrastructure which gives to a firm or a public body an undue advantage;

(c) a substantial change affecting its nature, objectives or implementation conditions which would result in undermining its original objectives.

²⁵Technical guidance on climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027; Commission Notice C(2021) 5430 of 29 July 2021: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2021/07/29-07-2021-commission-adopts-new-guidance-on-how-to-climate-proof-future-infrastructure-projects








-  The lead partner bears the responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the level of achievement for the project's output and result indicators, meaning that they should collect and/or collate relevant data received from the project partners and report against each of the output and result indicator relevant to their project.
-  Please bear in mind that for some result indicators the reporting period is extend even after project completion (1 year after project completion) and/or specific supporting documents are required. The lead partner will take all the necessary measures for that measurement to be done in time and accurately and that the results are reported to the programme structures. For more details, please check the description for each indicator, within the pages below.

The lead partner should take every measure in order to avoid double counting and to ensure consistency between the achievements reported by each partner.

Based on the activities the project needs to implement in order to achieve its specific objective, each project will list in the Application Form the outputs (and the corresponding results) that will be delivered during the implementation.

Please consider:

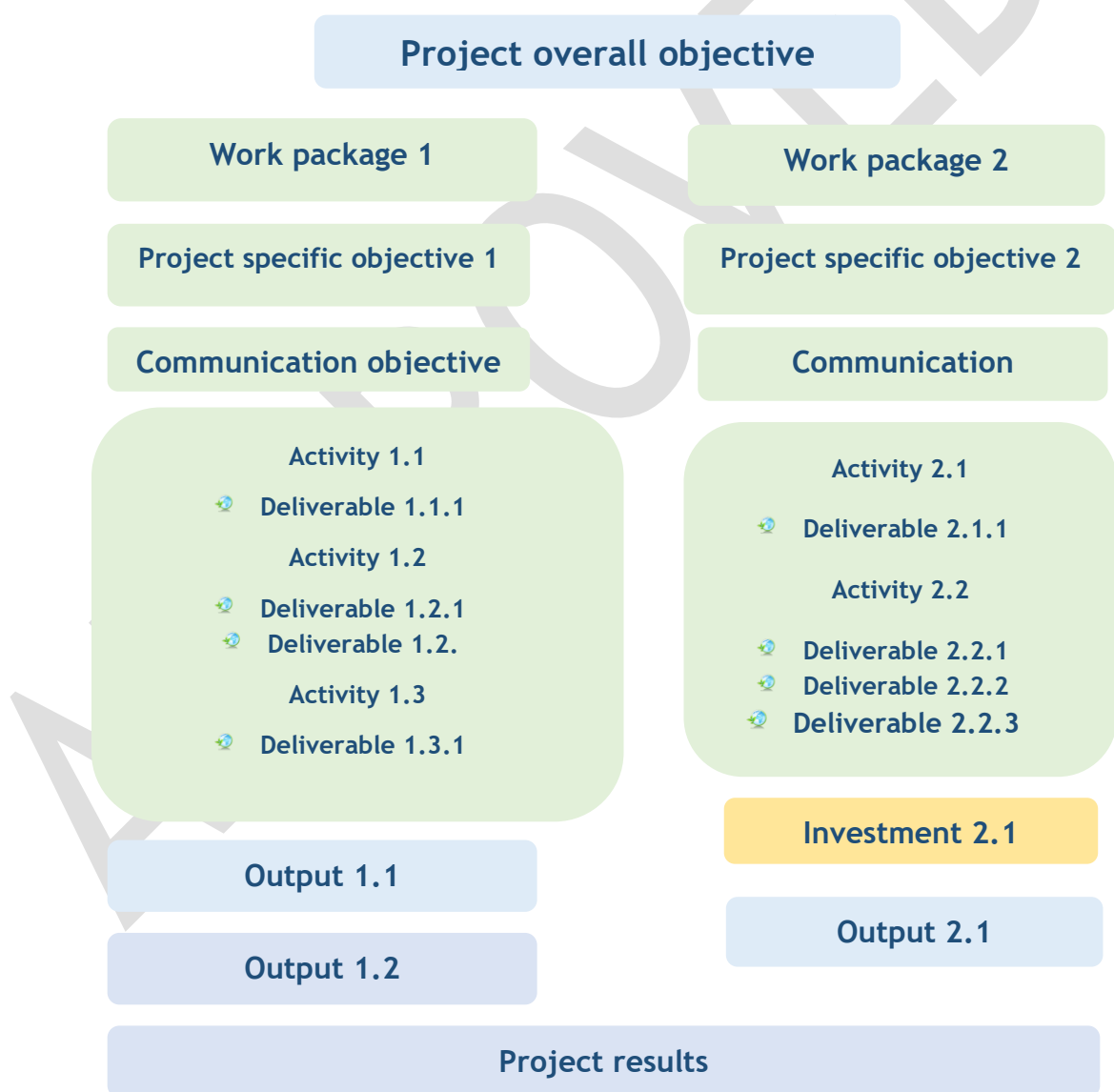
-  Unlike the output and result indicators, which are defined at Programme level and the project only selects (from a drop-down list) the ones it contributes to, the project outputs and results need to be defined and described in detail in the Application Form.
-  When quantifying the targets of the indicators, please set a reasonable, relevant and realistic target value, in direct connection with the Specific Objective of the Programme.
-  Evidence should be collected and considered when setting the targets. Later on, during the implementation phase, relevant evidence (documents, statistics, analysis etc.) shall be used in supporting the reported contribution to the indicators targets.
-  An output is the main achievement of a set of project activities and it is different from a deliverable. More than one project output can contribute to the same programme output indicator.
-  As it can also be seen in the tables below (presented just as examples), the measurement units for both outputs and results are the same as for the output and result indicators defined at programme level. This will allow for the aggregation of data at project and programme level.



Please note that the project outputs and results must have the same measurement unit and definition as the programme output and result indicators, and can be aggregated on project and programme level (project output → programme output indicator; project result → programme result indicator).

All the requirements set for each Programme output and result indicators should be reflected and observed at project level by the outputs and results.

The Work plan in a nutshell (this is just an example):





Tips:

- Set realistic targets (when setting the target of each indicator, please be realistic and based on your previous experience and the data sources).
- When setting the target indicators please consider the data availability, as you have to justify the data sources (e.g. statistic data, surveys, questionnaires etc.).
- The indicators must reflect the project activities.
- The indicators reflect the joint outputs/results (so the reporting will be at project level). When setting the target, all the partners should be involved and commonly discussed.
- Please bear in mind that the output indicators must be reported at the end of the project competition. This means that all the outputs must be completed by the end of the project implementation period, and not during the sustainability period. No contribution from the sustainability shall be considered.
- The result indicators shall be reported within 6 months or 1 year from the date of the project completion (for more details, please check the *Guidance on monitoring Programme indicators for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria*).



Before setting the indicators targets, please read and consider the *Guidance on monitoring Programme indicators for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria*, the section dedicated to your indicators (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>). Also, please have in mind that failure of meeting the targets during implementation, if the project is selected for financing, may result in financial corrections / decommitment of the project's budget.

Project Management and Communication (application form Section C.7)

Projects need to establish a clear management concept including a decision-making structure - a project steering group (more details regarding the PSG are included in the *Annex.AG_H Template Partnership Agreement*). This group will steer and monitor project progress and, in case of unforeseen situations or risks, to adjust project implementation and find adequate mitigation measures.







Furthermore, projects should set clear provisions for quality management, internal communication as well as reporting procedures at the level of partners towards the LP.

The general approach to communication should describe how communication objectives and activities as defined in the individual work packages across the work plan will help to achieve the project's overall result(s). In this section of the application form it should become clear which role communication plays in the project and how it is approached by the partnership. The



description should explain which channels will be used by whom in which way for what reason. It is recommended to define this general approach before defining concrete communication objectives and activities in the thematic work packages.

You must take into consideration the mandatory communication requirements at project level included in the Communication Starter Kit, such us:

-  Designating a communication officer at project level
-  Organising an opening conference of the project or a public promotion event, in compliance with the conditions set by art. 36 paragraph 4, letter e) of EU Regulation 1059/2021
-  Creating a Facebook/Twitter page and/or a dedicated website, if the case
-  Promoting at least 2 press articles during the life of the project
-  Promoting at least 5 photos reflecting “before and after” concept of the project
-  Ensuring promotion on social media of a minimum 2 key life moments of your project.

Details on how to approach the communication activities at project level are included in the documents Communication Starter Kit, the Manual for Visual Identity of the Programme²⁶ and Go Green!

Project capitalization and synergies (Part C)

The Programme promotes the capitalizations of the already implemented projects, financed from different sources. Thus, it is expected that the project partners will research and take on board the outputs and the results of the previous projects financed by the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, as well as other Interreg Programmes or EU instruments.

The following links to project databases will help with searching and identifying relevant outputs and results from [Projects and documents - Keep.eu](#), [Kohesio \(europa.eu\)](#):

Budget planning (Part D)

The Programme is committed to simplification and removal of administrative burden. In this respect, the following simplified cost options have been up-taken and shall be considered during the budget planning phase:

-  Lump sum for project preparation of **14,000 Euro (total value)**
-  Lump sum for project closure of **6,500 Euro (total value)**

²⁶ <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>



- Staff costs** - reimbursed on the basis of a flat rate up to 20% of direct costs
- Travel and accommodation costs** – reimbursed on a bases of a flat rate of up to 15% of eligible direct staff costs.
- Office and administrative costs** - reimburses on a bases of a flat rate of up to 15% of eligible direct staff costs.
- Real costs** (services, equipment, infrastructure and works) + the real costs for project preparation, on the conditions mentioned by the guide.

Tips and tricks for budget planning - Please read carefully the information below when planning the project budget!



A strict correlation between the financial resources allocated within the project, the activities foreseen and the expected results shall be ensured!

For details please see section 2.9. *Eligibility of expenditures.*

3.3. Required documents to be submitted with the Application form

A. Documents mandatory for all applications (the costs related to these documents are covered by the lump sum for project preparation as decided at Programme level for all projects financed via the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme)

For annexes with standard format, please use the template provided by the Programme, attached to this document.

No	Type	Description
1	Lead partner declaration (Annex AF_A1) - standard format	This declaration should be filled in only by the Lead Partner
2	Project partner declaration (Annex AF_A2) - standard format	This declaration should be filled in by each project partner (except for the Lead Partner)



3	State-aid self-assessment (Annex AF_A3) - standard format	The document filled in by each project partners . This State-aid self-assessment document has been developed to help the partners to make an initial assessment of whether State aid is involved in their project and the options for dealing with this
4	Formal mandates (Annex AF_A4) - open format	The formal mandate of delegation from the legal representatives of partners (in case the application form and annexes are not signed by the legal representatives of the Lead Partner/partners), accompanied by their English translation.
5	Documents certifying the ownership status of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) (Annex AF_A5) - open format	<p><u>The property documents must be submitted only for land and construction.</u></p> <p><u>For equipment you must indicate the place of installation, if the case.</u></p> <p><u>Case by case, as mentioned below</u></p>
	5.1. Annex AF_A5.1	Includes: the legal acts, contracts or any other valid proof under the real property law (e.g. law, government decision, decision of local authorities, purchase or bailment, concession, renting contracts etc.) demonstrating that partner(s) have the right of property and/or use over the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) subject to the project's intervention. If the partner(s) hold/s only the right of use, such right should be secured for at least 5 years after the completion of the operation
	5.2. Annex AF_A5.2	if the owner of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) is different from the partner(s), documents proving that the owner has given it's written agreement for the partner(s) to perform the investment on/in the relevant land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure)
	5.3. Annex AF_A5.3	Includes documents related to the registration of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) in the relevant public registers (e.g.



		<p>land register and cadastre).</p> <p>It is recommended that documents related to the registration of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) in the relevant public registers (e.g., land register, cadastre etc.) to be up-to date.</p>
	5.4. Annex AF_5.4	<p>Annex 5.4 is provided ONLY IF the partner(s) cannot provide valid documents certifying the ownership status of the land and/or construction (annexes A5.1-3), they may provide a declaration on own responsibility regarding these documents. Please note that such a declaration must include information on all the above-mentioned requirements from annexes A5.1-3 and a clear statement of the reason why the documents are not available at the submission date of the application. In this case, the documents not submitted together with the application form (annexes A5.1, A5.2 and A5.3) must be however submitted during the pre-contracting phase, upon receiving the notification regarding MC Decision on selection. The project will not be contracted if partners still fail to provide those documents during pre-contracting.</p>
6	Market analysis for items based on real costs (Annex AF_A6) - open format	<p>The justifying documents of the real costs as described in Applicant's Guide (e.g. independent report on prices or print-screens / offers form internet).</p> <p>In order to overcome the impact of future inflation and price instability, the expenditures included in the budget based on the above market analysis could be ²⁷ increased with the average of the national inflation of the last 3 years before the</p>

²⁷ The partner can chose to increase the corresponding budget for covering the inflation, considering the methodology presented in the footnote 29.



		application submission, but not more than 10% ²⁸ . Partners should make use of the annual statistical data on prices available at the level of each country, as published by the national statistical institutes.
7	DNSH declaration (Annex AF_A7) - standard format	This declaration should be filled in by each project partner
8	Project associated partner declaration (Annex AF_A8) - standard format	Issued by associated partner (if the case).
9	Financial Capacity Self-Assessment - spreadsheet file format (.xls or similar) and signed document (Annex AF_A9 - standard format) - and the related mitigation plan, if the case (open format)	<p>Each project partner should fill in financial Capacity Self-Assessment (.xls or similar format as well as in the form of a document certified through signature by the legal representative of the organization or by other authorized person). This document must be accompanied by justifying documents described below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the last balance sheet <i>and</i> - the last available annual profit and loss account <i>and</i> - if the case, the mitigation plan. <p>Annual accounts for the latest financial year for which the accounts have been closed at the moment of submission of the Application must be submitted by the Lead Partner and all project partners, as full unofficial translation(s) in English. The extracts from bank accounts are not equivalent to latest annual account. Only documents (the balance sheet and profit and loss account) providing data about revenues, expenditures, profit and losses will be accepted.</p> <p>Annual Accounts containing only the Balance Sheet without the Profit and Loss Account or a document providing data about revenues, expenditures, profit and losses for the latest financial year for which the accounts have been closed, will be considered noncompliant and therefore missing documents.</p> <p>Organizations recently established (LP and/or</p>

²⁸ The increase shall be reflected distinct in the document, as well as the applied percentage (the average of the inflation rate of the last 3 years, before the application submission. The average shall be calculated at the level of partners, in accordance with the national inflation rate).



		<p>partners), that do not have yet prepared their first annual accounts, must submit the Balance sheet for the last closed month.</p> <p>Please note that if the financial capacity self-assessment signals red or orange risk, the corresponding partner must provide a signed plan for ensuring the financial resources and the mechanism to cover the financial cash-flow of the project and the operation and maintenance costs of the project.</p>
10	<p>Declaration for the absence of the circumstances under Art. 51 of Council Regulation (EU) No. 2022/576 of April 8, 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No. 833/2014 on restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine (Annex AF_A10) - standard format</p>	<p>Issued ONLY by private partners.</p>

In case the project is selected for funding, partners must provide (if applicable²⁹) during the pre-contracting stage, the declaration from the owner of the land and/or construction that the respective property is:

- free of any encumbrances;
- not the object of a pending litigation;
- not the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.

In case the partners do not provide this declaration, the project will not be contracted and proposed for rejection.

B. Documents to be submitted depending on the specificity of the application (the costs related to these documents are reimbursed by the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme based on real cost principle).

No standard format is provided by the Programme. When preparing these documents, the

²⁹ When interventions concern state/municipal public property this declaration is not applicable for BG applicants



partners should use the appropriate formats set by the national/local/internal rules etc.

Please note, that when referring to project partners, this includes all partners involved in the project, including the Lead Partner.

No	Type	Description
1	Annex B1_Cost-Benefit Analysis	<p>The Cost-Benefit Analysis and English translation (if issued in other language than English) will be annexed to the Application Form.</p> <p>This annex is mandatory only for those partners that may have revenues from the supported activities included in the applications.</p> <p>In case a Feasibility study is provided, the submission of the CBA is not required.</p>
2	Annex B2 - Feasibility studies or equivalent technical documents or any other design document elaborated by the licenced designer that contains description of construction works and Bill of Quantities	<p>For Romanian beneficiaries it should be annexed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feasibility study for new investments or • DALI and, if the case, energy audit plus technical expertise for upgrading/reconstruction. <p>For Bulgarian beneficiaries it should be annexed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General of Bill of Quantities and provisional estimation of costs or, • Preliminary Design (<i>Идеен проект, съгласно глава 5 от Наредба №4 от 21.05.2001 за обхвата и съдържанието на инвестиционните проекти</i>), including bill of quantities and provisional estimation of costs or, • Technical Design (<i>Технически проект, съгласно глава 6 от Наредба №4 от 21.05.2001 за обхвата и съдържанието на инвестиционните проекти</i>), including detailed bill of Quantities and provisional estimation of costs. <p>In order to evaluate the technical characteristics of an investment, the applicants must annex the above document to the application form. Their elaboration and approval must observe the national provisions in this matter (elaborated by a licensed designer, content required by norms, bill of quantities included, etc., as the case may be).</p> <p>The Feasibility Study or equivalent technical documents or any other design document elaborated by the licenced designer that contains description of construction works and Bill of Quantities should bear</p>



	<p>the date of elaboration/revision and should provide accurate information at the time of application submission (to allow for proper evaluation of the application). In case such elements are not provided or information are not accurate, clarifications may be requested.</p> <p>Feasibility Study or equivalent technical documents or any other design document elaborated by the licenced designer that contains description of construction works and Bill of Quantities should be submitted in English, as an annex to the application form and should be accompanied by the legal agreements and approvals according to national legislation in force.</p> <p>In case legal agreements and approvals are not submitted together with the Feasibility study/equivalent technical documents, the respective agreements/approvals will be subject of conditions for signing the subsidy contract. All the documents subject to conditioning of signing of the subsidy contract that will be notified within the Notification for selection under conditions must be provided within the deadline indicated by the JS in the notification letter for selecting projects.</p> <p>For investments/infrastructure, proposed under the project, where activities related to the identification of the location/solution etc. are foreseen in the application and technical or/and design documents (feasibility studies, other technical documentation, etc.) are outputs of these activities, the Feasibility Study is not mandatory to be submitted together with the Application Form. In this case, the investment/infrastructure subject of these activities/feasibilities studies should be developed, implemented and completed under the project financed by the Programme and it should be reflected accordingly in the application form.</p> <p>The investments (works, infrastructure and equipment), for which the national legislation does not provide for the elaboration of a Feasibility Study/DALI or preliminary/technical design, the applicants should submit a document including quantities and indicative costs accompanied by the detailed explanations/plans and measurements of the object of intervention, used for estimating the necessary works and costs. If the object of intervention requires the performance of a technical expertise and if the technical expertise is not attached to the application form, then the application form must clearly state that the solution recommended through the technical expertise was considered for the future intervention.</p> <p>Where applicable, for Romanian partners, according with the provisions of Government Decision 941/2013, regarding the</p>
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		<p>Organization and functioning of the Technico - Economic Committee for the Informational Society, all projects comprising IT&C investments with a value higher than 2,500,000 RON must obtain, before submitting the Application Form or starting the procurement procedures during the project implementation period, the permit from the Technico - Economic Committee for the Informational Society.</p> <p>If any of the documents listed in Annex B2 correspond to activities included in the project Work Packages or/and are outputs of these activities, they are not required to be submitted with the application. In this case, the development and completion of these documents shall be properly detailed in the application form.</p>
3	Annex B3_Urban planning Permit (RO beneficiaries only)	<p>Urban planning permit (mandatory for applications including infrastructure related activities - only Romanian partners) will be annexed to the Application Form. Only Romanian beneficiaries have to submit the urban planning permit. In case this document is not available at the submission deadline, it will be submitted during the pre-contracting stage or project implementation if its issue depends of a project activity.</p>
4	Annex B4_ Environmental agreement	<p>Environmental agreement will be annexed to the Application Form, if required by the applicable legislation.</p> <p>If the <u>environmental agreement is not available/required by the legislation, than the applicants should submit</u> an official document from the competent environment authority demonstrating that the project either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> observes the legal provisions of environment protection (For Bulgarian beneficiaries - a letter from the competent body that a procedure under chapter VI of Environmental Protection Act is not required) or completed the first phase of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure - screening (For Bulgarian beneficiaries - the decision of the competent body for the necessity of carrying out of environmental impact assessment). <p>If these documents are not available, partners must provide evidence that they have at least initiated internal steps to obtain the environmental agreement (e.g., internal notes, reports, letters). Alternatively, they may submit a brief description of the</p>



		<p>planned process for completing the required legal steps.</p> <p>The Environmental agreement or the official statement/act from the competent environment authority shall be provided during the pre-contracting stage, or during project implementation, depending on the availability.</p> <p>If the environmental agreement depends on an activity of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form.</p>
5	Annex B5_ Environmental Impact Report or other environmental reports requested by the EIA procedure	<p>If required by law, the environmental impact report or other environmental reports requested by legislation will be annexed to the application form (a summary in English, if issued in other languages than English).</p> <p>If the environmental impact report or/and other environment reports required by the legislation are not available by the date of the application submission, applicants should still provide one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the draft document launched in public consultation, according to the applicable legislation, or • other evidence that the public consultation was initiated, or • other documents proving that their organizations initiated internally the procedures for obtaining the environmental agreement or for drafting the environmental impact report or other environmental reports requested by legislation, if available. <p>In this case, the EIR or other environmental reports requested by legislation must be provided in the pre-contracting phase or, during the implementation period of the project.</p> <p>In case the Environmental Impact Report or/and other environment reports requested by the legislation depend on an activity of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form.</p>
6	Annex B6 _	Documentation of climate proofing (maximum 30 pages), if



	Assessment of expected impacts of climate change	requested by the type of investment, as described in the Applicant's Guide (section <i>Investments</i>). In case this is not available and depends on an activity/deliverable of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form.
7	Annex B 7 - open format	In case partner considers that additional documents/information in supporting/providing detailed information on the way the environmental issues were considered (measures proposed in the SEA Report, DNSH, climate proofing etc.) are needed, they can be uploaded to the electronic system. The information provided in additional attachments are limited to 30 pages and are not considered part of the application form.

Please note that the assessment of the projects is done only based on the information provided in the application form submitted in Jems and the mandatory annexes.



All annexes and documents referenced above in Section 3.3. (points A and B) must be either:

- signed electronically, in PDF format, or
- hand-signed on paper and submitted as scanned copies. Documents issued by third parties (not by the partners) can also be accepted if they are issued on paper, hand-signed, and scanned.

Please note that when scanned copies of original annexes/documents are submitted with the application, partners must carefully retain the originals for future verification. Programme bodies may verify original annexes/documents at any time during pre-contracting, contracting, implementation, and follow-up periods. If originals are not found or if discrepancies exist between original annexes/documents and scanned copies, the contract will not be signed or contractual sanctions may apply, such as interrupting the contract or applying financial penalties and recovery of funds.

All annexes and documents have to be uploaded to JEMS together with the application or as requested through clarification requests or by Programme bodies.

If mandatory annexes/documents are not submitted together with the application, clarifications may be requested. When annexes/documents/clarifications are not



provided upon request during the clarification process, the application shall be assessed based on the information/documents available and the criteria considered accordingly, thus may lead to the application's rejection.

The application shall be rejected (see Annex - A Evaluation grids) without any clarification and further analysis if:

- the project does not have a cross-border character and impact
- the operation does not contribute to the Programme objectives and indicators

Check your application!

After the application form was filled in, before pushing the submission button, please check if:

- The language is simple, easy to understand and follow; the text is coherent!
- Try to assess and score your application based on the evaluation grid!
- All the mandatory criteria are observed!
- All the mandatory annexes were filled in, signed and uploaded!
- The standard templates are observed! No modifications were brought to them!
- All the supporting documents (if needed) were uploaded!

Legal Bases (non-exhaustive list)

- Commission Decision No. 8928/30.11.2022 approving the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments;



-  Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund;
-  Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, , with further modifications and completions;
-  COMMISSION NOTICE Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C 373/01);
-  Other relevant national and European legislation (*Annex AG_J*).

Applicable law:

Projects must be in line with all relevant national and European legislation, including legislation on sustainable development and environmental protection, gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination (art. 22.2 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1059 and art. 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), public procurement (art. 58 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1059) and state aid.

The operations must observe the European legislation provisions on communication, information and publicity (art.36.4 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059)).



Please note that all applicable legal provisions must be observed by the applicants during both project elaboration and implementation phases.

Glossary of terms

For the purposes of the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and its related documents, the following definitions shall apply:

Applicant	Any legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria which submits an application to be financed by the programme
Associated partner	Institutions willing to be involved in the project without financially contributing to it are to be considered as “associated partners”. Such associated partners will not receive ERDF funding, will have to participate with their own funds, and do not account for the fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.



Expenditure incurred by the associated partners might be borne by any of the financing project partners in compliance with the applicable eligibility rules and with public procurement rules.

Beneficiary/Partner	Any applicant whose application has been approved for financing
Biodiversity	The variability of living bodies within the land, sea, continental aquatic ecosystems and ecological complexes; this comprises the intra-specific, inter-specific and ecosystems diversity
Climate	Usually defined as the 'average weather', or more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities of variables such as temperature, precipitation, and wind, over a period of time. The conventional period of time over which weather is averaged to calculate climate is 30 years, as defined by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).
Climate change	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines climate change as '... any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity.' The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines it specifically in relation to human influence, as 'a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods'.
Climate change Adaptation	<p>It is a process, or set of initiatives and measures, to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects. Adaptation can also be thought of as learning how to live with the consequences of climate change. The first consequences of climate change can already be seen in Europe and worldwide, and these impacts are predicted to intensify in the coming decades.</p> <p>Temperatures are rising, rainfall patterns are shifting, glaciers are melting, sea levels are getting higher and extreme weather resulting in hazards such as floods and droughts is becoming more common. Adaptation can also be thought of as learning how to live with the consequences of climate change.</p>



Climate change mitigation	Mitigation – the term used to describe the process of reducing GHG emissions that contribute to climate change. It includes strategies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance GHG sinks.
Climate proofing	It is a process that integrates climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into the development of infrastructure projects. It enables European institutional and private investors to make informed decisions on projects that qualify as compatible with the Paris Agreement. The process is divided into two pillars (mitigation, adaptation) and two phases (screening, detailed analysis). The detailed analysis is subject to the outcome of the screening phase, which helps reduce the administrative burden.
Carbon sequestration	The removal of carbon from the atmosphere and its storage in carbon sinks (such as oceans, forests or soil). Carbon sequestration is achieved through physical or biological processes, such as photosynthesis.
Carbon sink	An absorber of carbon (usually in the form of CO ₂). Natural carbon sinks include forests and other ecosystems that absorb carbon, thereby removing it from the atmosphere and offsetting CO ₂ emissions.
Eligible expenditure	Expenditures made by a partner, related to the projects financed through the programme, which could be financed from the structural instruments, as well as from the state budget and/or own/ private Beneficiary contribution
Ecosystem services	<p>Ecosystems serve a number of basic functions that are essential for using the Earth's resources sustainably. The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity (TEEB) study defines ecosystem services as: 'the benefits people receive from ecosystems'. TEEB also sets out the basis of human dependence on the natural environment. The European-led study builds on the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which defined four categories of ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provisioning services e.g. wild foods, crops, fresh water and plant-derived medicines; regulating services e.g. filtration of pollutants by wetlands, climate regulation through carbon storage and water cycling, pollination and protection from disasters;



- cultural services e.g. recreation, spiritual and aesthetic values, education;
- supporting services e.g. soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling. (TEEB, 2010)

Programme area	The Romanian counties and Bulgarian districts located in the border area, as mentioned in the programming document approved by the European Commission
Operations of strategic importance	Means an operation which provides a significant contribution to the achievement of the objectives of a programme and which is subject to particular monitoring and communication measures.
Expenditure incurred	Expenditure is incurred when the activity that has generated the expenditure (for example the works executed in accordance with the conditions of the contract) has been completed or the services foreseen in a contract have been provided and accepted by the beneficiaries. Proof of expenditures incurred relates to supporting documents indicating the completion of the activity, for instance take over certificates or confirmation of service delivery.
Investment	Works, infrastructure, non-removable installations, fixed and intangible assets, new or renovated building, equipment and software and their installation.
Investment project	<p>A project that spends its resources to acquire or significantly improve the capacity or capabilities of an output or deliverable, that remains in use and in the ownership of the lead partner or project partners for at least five years after the project end date.</p> <p>Categories of eligible investments and their accompanying services: works, infrastructure, non-removable installations, fixed and intangible assets, new or renovated building, equipment and software, investments in access to services.</p>
Infrastructure	Infrastructure is a broad concept, which includes:



- buildings, from private homes to schools or industrial facilities, which are the most common type of infrastructure and the basis for human settlement;
- nature-based infrastructures such as green roofs, walls, spaces, and drainage systems.
- network infrastructure crucial for the functioning of today's economy and society, notably energy infrastructure (e.g. grids, power stations, pipelines), transport (fixed assets such as roads, railways, ports, airports or inland waterways transport infrastructure), information and communication technologies (e.g. mobile phone networks, data cables, data centres), and water (e.g. water supply pipelines, reservoirs, waste water treatment facilities);
- systems to manage the waste generated by businesses and households (collecting points, sorting and recycling facilities, incinerators and landfills);
- other physical assets in a wider range of policy areas, including communications, emergency services, energy, finance, food, government, health, education and training, research, civil protection, transport, and waste or water;
- other types of infrastructure.

Green
infrastructure

Green infrastructure serves the interests of both people and nature. It can be defined as a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of benefits and services. Green infrastructure includes natural and semi-natural areas, features and green spaces in rural and urban, terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine areas. Areas protected as Natura 2000 sites are at the core of green infrastructure.

Greenhouse gas
(GHG)

Any atmospheric gas (either natural or anthropogenic in origin) which absorbs thermal radiation emitted by the Earth's surface. This traps heat in the atmosphere and keeps the surface at a warmer temperature than would otherwise be possible.

Joint Secretariat

The structure responsible for assisting the programme management bodies in carrying out their duties. The Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation Călărași (for the Romanian Bulgarian Border) is hosting the Joint Secretariat for the Programme.



Lead Partner

- (a) lays down the arrangements with the other partners in an agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the respective Union fund allocated to the Interreg operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- (b) assumes responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire Interreg operation;
- (c) ensures that expenditure presented by all partners has been incurred in implementing the Interreg operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the partners, and is in accordance with the document provided by the managing authority pursuant to Article 22(6).

Managing Authority

The structure responsible for managing the Interreg programme. The Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration is the Managing Authority for the Programme.

National Authority

The counterpart of the Managing Authority in the partner state. The Bulgarian Ministry for Regional Development and Public Works is the National Authority for the Programme.

National Legislation

The legislation of the state on whose territory the beneficiary is located.

Natural protected area

Land, aquatic and/or underground area hosting savage fauna and flora species, bio-geographical, landscape, geological, pale-ontological, speleological or other elements and systems with outstanding ecological, scientific or cultural value, governed by special preservation and protection rules in compliance with legal provisions.

Operating costs

Cost incurred in the operation of an investment, including cost of routine and extraordinary maintenance, but excluding depreciation or capital costs.



Partnership Agreement	A document that formalises the relationship between project partners and the Lead Partner. Mutual rights and obligations regarding cooperation in project are laid down in the agreement, also including provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project.
Potential applicant	Any legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria for submitting an application to be financed by the programme.
Potential beneficiary	Any applicant or potential applicant is a potential beneficiary until the decision for financing its project has been issued.
Project	An operation comprising a series of works, activities or services intended in itself to accomplish an indivisible task of a precise economic or technical nature, which has clearly identified goals, expressed as the application form and its annexes.
Reference period	The number of years for which forecasts are provided in the cost benefit analysis.
Revenue generating project	Any project involving an investment in infrastructure, the use of which is subject to charges borne directly by users, and any project involving the sale or rent of land or buildings or the provision of services against payment.
Revenues	Income to be expected from an investment through pricing or charges.
Subsidy contract	Contract between the Managing Authority and the Lead Partner. It determines the rights and responsibilities of the Lead Partner and the Managing Authority, the scope of activities to be carried out, terms of funding, requirements for reporting and financial controls, etc.



Annexes

Annexes of the applicant guide

- 📄 Annex A1 Lead partner declaration (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A2 Project partner declaration (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A3 State-aid self-assessment (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A7 DNSH declaration (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A8 Associated partner declaration (to be filled in, standard format, if applicable)
- 📄 Annex A9 Financial Capacity Self-Assessment (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A10 Declaration for the absence of the circumstances under art.51 of Council Regulation (EU) No.2022/576 (to be filled in, standard format)
- 📄 Annex A Assessment grids
- 📄 Annex B List of eligible expenditure, approved by MC decision no 27/8 of May 2024, is available on the programme website (<https://www.interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>)
- 📄 Annex C Methodologies for using lump sums for project preparation and project closure within the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria, approved by MC decision no 5/3rd of May 2023 - available on the programme website
- 📄 Annex D Complaint procedure for evaluation results
- 📄 Annex E SEA mitigation measures and indicators
- 📄 Annex F Template Framework subsidy contract
- 📄 Annex G Template co-financing contract
- 📄 Annex H Template Partnership Agreement
- 📄 Annex I DNSH Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria level
- 📄 Annex J Relevant EU and national legislation
- 📄 Annex K.1 Application form (off-line format)
- 📄 Annex K.2 Application form_ Budget (off-line format)
- 📄 Annex AG_L Horizontal Issues
- 📄 Annex AG_M State aid








The contract templates annexed to this Guide are only indicative; the final version of all contracts (subsidy contract, co-financing contract, partnership agreement) will be



presented by the Managing Authority to the partners of the selected operations in the pre-contractual phase).

Relevant documents to be considered when preparing the application form:

Relevant documents to be considered when preparing the application form:

-  Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme - <https://interregviarobg.eu/assets/2022/11/interreg-vi-a-romania-bulgaria-programme-approved-by-ec.pdf>
-  Project Implementation Manual - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>
 - Communication Starter Kit
 - Dare to go green!
 - Practical guide on fraud for applicants and project partners
 - Methodological descriptions of Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators - SO 3.2 - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>
-  Manual for Visual Identity of the Programme - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>
-  Code of Conduct for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>
-  JEMS manual - <https://jems.interact.eu/manual/>.



Although we do not plan to, in case changes to the present Guide are necessary, please note that we will use the following means of communication:

- 1. Announcement on the Programme website: <https://interregviarobg.eu/en>*
- 2. Announcement on the Programme Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/RomaniaBulgariaCbcProgramme>*

Please have in mind that during the call, we strongly recommend you to send your questions regarding the rules of this call up to 5 working days before the deadline. Any other question



received in this interval may not receive answer in due time (considering the necessary time for analyzing, drafting replies, consulting within Programme structures, no. of questions aso).

The e-mail addresses where you may send your questions is: helpdesk_robq@calarasicbc.ro

Please note that, all the questions and answers (Q&A) concerning the Programme funding, application form content, the technical functioning of Jems also, are published on the Programme website, in a dedicated section and they are regularly extended and updated, <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/apply-for-funding>. In this respect, projects are invited to consult the Q&A section for updates.

Also, before submitting a question, we are kindly inviting you to check the list of Q&A publish on the programme site for similar questions.

Applicants are strongly recommended to fill in and submit the application form in good time, in order to avoid any problems due to the lack of time and/or any other technical issues.



Please note that during the assessment process as well as pre-contractual - contractual phase, the notifications from the Joint Secretariat will be received through the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS). As such, please make sure you have activated the Notifications in your account (Send notifications automatically to my email).

The date of the communication is considered the date when the document/clarification request was uploaded in JEMS was posted. Lead partners should regularly check their e-mails and JEMS accounts.