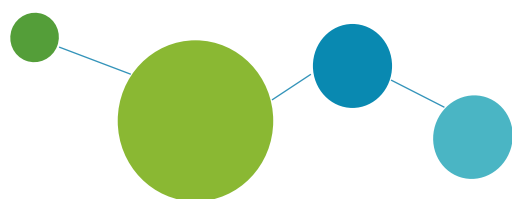




MANUAL FOR BENEFICIARIES FOR STANDARD PROJEKTS

PART 1 – ABOUT THE PROGRAMME





Manual for Beneficiaries for standard projects

PART 1: ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Manual for Beneficiaries of the Interreg programme Slovenia-Hungary for the period 2021-2027, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Prepared and published by the Programme's Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat in cooperation with the representatives of Slovenia and Hungary (National Authority). The Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat is hosted within the official structure of the Government office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority
AB	Audit Body
BWG	Bilateral working group
BAF	Body entrusted with the accounting function
CB	Cross-border
CF	Cohesion Fund
CBC Programme	Cross-border Cooperation Programme
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
EC	European Commission
ECP	European Cohesion Policy
EGTC	European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GODC	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy
CP	Cooperation Programme
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP	Info Point of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Hungary
IP SI-HU	Interreg Programme Slovenia-Hungary
JS	Joint Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NA	National Authority
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PA	Partnership Agreement
PP	Project Partner
RCO	Regio Common Output
RCR	Regio Common Result
RTD	Research, Technology and Development
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SO	Specific Objective
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis
TA	Technical Assistance
TO	Thematic Objective

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Manual is to assist potential applicants in project development and preparation of their application to participate in the Interreg programme Slovenia-Hungary for the period 2021-2027. Furthermore, it provides also the information on selection, implementation and closure of the projects.

The Manual contains provisions concerning all phases of the project lifecycle, from the programme purpose and quality requirements, project generation, contracting through project implementation until closure. Some chapters present the compulsory programme requirements (e.g. eligibility rules) while others intend to guide, inform and support in order to ensure a sound project implementation and management at all levels.

The Manual for Beneficiaries is a part of the Application Pack and consists of different thematic parts. Overall, the Manual aims to provide relevant and useful information on project implementation:

- Part 1: information on the Interreg VI-A Slovenia-Hungary Programme
- Part 2: the information on project development and partnership requirements
- Part 3: submission of the application and assessment process
- Part 4: provides information on eligibility of expenditure
- Part 5: the procedures and requirements for reporting
- Part 6: communication and visibility
- Part 7: archiving and closure

Applicants should therefore read the entire Manual carefully before submitting their application to the programme authorities. The information in this Manual is essential for the preparation of a good project application, as well as for the implementation of already approved projects.

The information provided in this Manual will be, if necessary, further developed and updated during the programme implementation. It is project partners responsibility to follow the manual changes. The notification will be published on the website and the newsletter will be sent. The programme will also provide beneficiaries with training and exchange opportunities in the form of workshops.

Additional information and documents related to the Open Call for Proposals are available for download on the programme website www.si-hu.eu.

2 ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Interreg VI-A Slovenia-Hungary Programme is funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the European Territorial Cooperation goal of EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027.

The overall objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote cooperation between regions and countries to help their economic and social development and tackle the border obstacle.

Improving coordination and cooperation in the SI-HU border area to reduce border obstacles and unleash the potentials for a resilient and competitive region.

The territorial and socio-economic analysis of the programme area (shared by Slovenia and Hungary) has identified several potentials, needs and challenges expressed by the actors in the programme area. These show clearly that important transitions are ahead of us. On the path to a more dynamic and especially more integrated and prosperous space these challenges should be addressed and solved by national/regional/local institutions jointly. Most of the identified challenges concern topics of environment and climate change, sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, nature protection, as well as governance and coordination. The analysis also identified a common interest in finding arrangements to foster cooperation of actors with small-scale projects primarily focusing on building trust and cooperation among people living in the programme area.

2.1 PROGRAMME AREA



The programme area covers 10,658 km², which is home for around 980.500 inhabitants. The programme area comprises two Slovenian (Pomurje and Podravje) and two Hungarian (Vas and Zala) NUTS 3 regions.

2.2 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

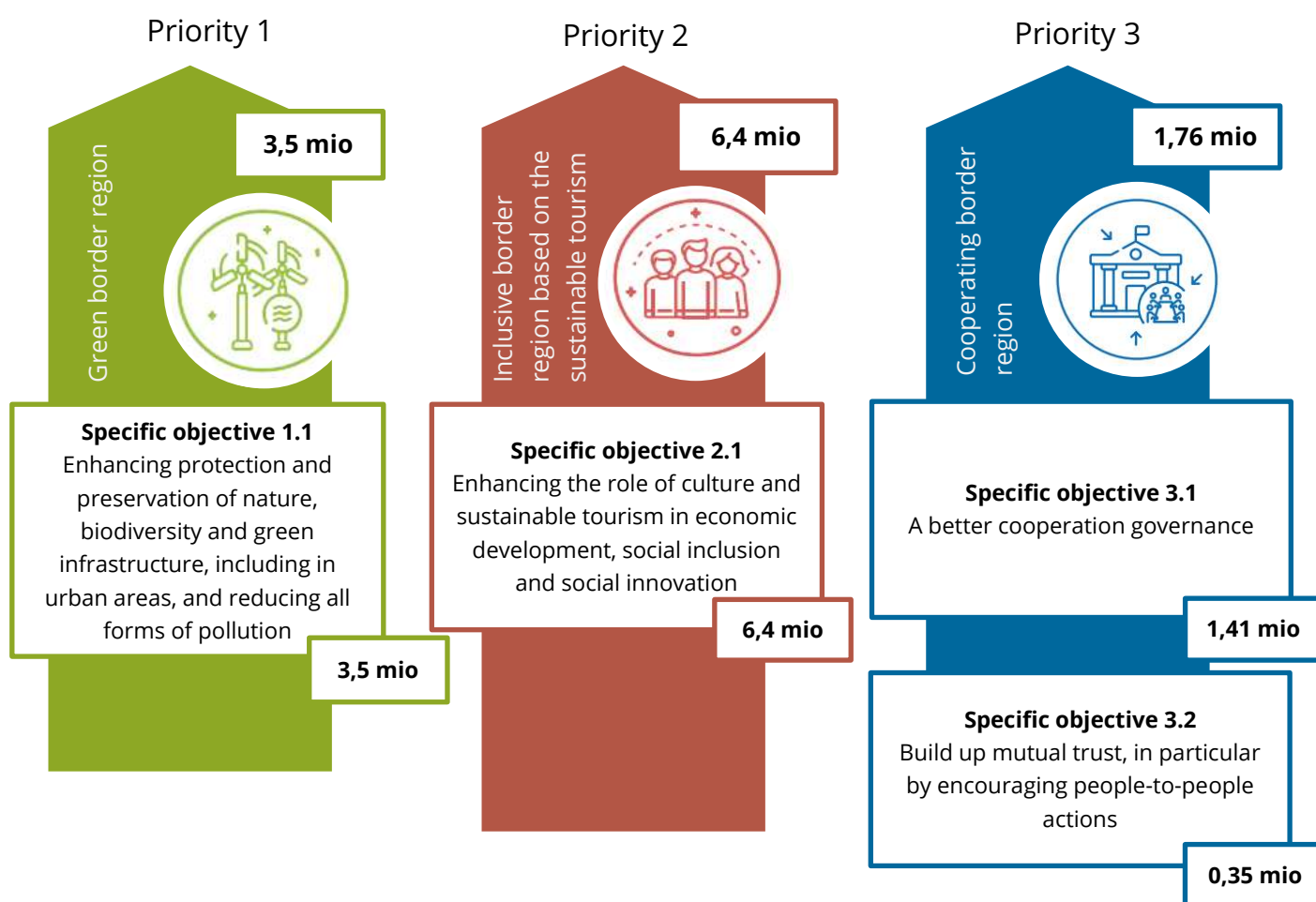
The **overall aim of the programme** is to reduce territorial disparities in the cross-border region.

Based on this aim the following **vision of the programme** has been defined:

"Together we contribute to an active and cooperating programme area aware of its environmental, natural and cultural values, through promoting sustainable utilisation, preservation and exploitation for tourism purposes, setting up a well identifiable and attractive green tourism destination."

The programme is organised along three funding priorities that are further broken down into four programme specific objectives (SOs).

Figure 1: Programme priorities and specific objectives



For detailed information on the description of the priorities, their specific objectives and main activities under each priority refer to **chapter 2** of the Interreg Programme. In order to make your project

compliant with the Programme it is recommended to read and take into account the description under each priority provided in the IP SI-HU¹.

By every type of project, also the horizontal principles of the programme such as sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and promotion of equality between men and women have to be considered. They will be specifically observed in the selection of projects, regardless of the priority they are allocated to.

2.3 PROGRAMME INTERVENTION LOGIC INCLUDING THE RESULT AND OUTPUT INDICATORS

The intervention logic of the IP SI-HU consists of three priorities and related specific objectives. For each specific objective expected results are defined which reflect changes that the programme seeks to achieve for the entire programme area through the implementation of projects. Results and related changes are measured through result indicators each linked to at least one of the programme specific objectives. The principle behind the intervention logic is that projects should lead to change for the better in the regions involved. It demonstrates how supported actions and developed outputs address the territorial challenges and needs tackled by the programme. Programme outputs and results build on outputs and results achieved by the funded projects. Therefore, there has to be a clear coherence between the programme and the project intervention logic. The IP SI-HU indicators will be monitored on the programme and project level. The intervention logic for each programme specific objective is described in detail in chapter 2 of the IP SI-HU.

Figure 2: Programme intervention logic



The **outputs** are the tangible outcomes (deliverables) of the project which contribute to the results. They are directly deriving from the activities carried out in the project. They do not lead to a qualitative judgment on the project's results. In other words, it is not because the project organises a high number of workshops (output) that it will necessarily be successful. Outputs are typically measured in physical units such as the number of jointly developed strategies and action plans, jointly developed and implemented pilot actions, organisations cooperating across the border, jointly organised public events, jointly developed solutions.

The **results** are direct and immediate effects resulting from the project and from the production of the outputs. They represent what is intended to be changed by the project. The production of outputs such as organisation of events, the identification and dissemination of good practices, the production of policy

¹ The Interreg programme Slovenia-Hungary is available on the programme website www.si-hu.eu.

recommendations are only means to achieve the results of the project. Compared to the outputs, they imply a qualitative value, an improvement compared with an initial situation. They have to be measured in physical units such as the number of policy instruments influenced.

Figure 3: Programme specific output and result indicators²

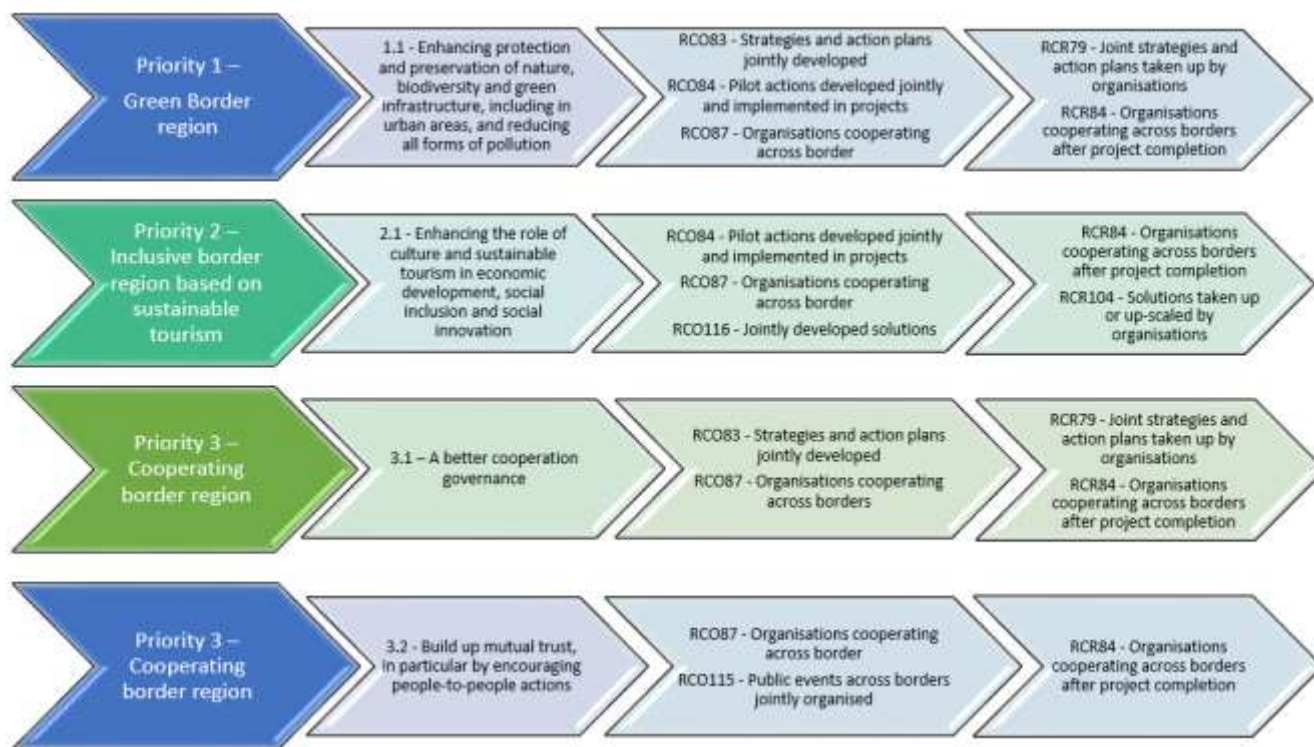


Figure 4: Output and result indicators per priority

INDICATOR	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	
	PSO1.2 Protection of nature	PSO 2.1 Culture and tourism	PSO 3.1 Institutional cooperation	PSO 3.2 Cooperation among people
output				
RCO83 Strategies	✓		✓	
RCO 84 Pilot actions	✓	✓		✓
RCO 87 Organisations		✓	✓	✓
RCO 115 Public events				✓
RCO 116 Solutions		✓		
RCR 79 Joint Strategies	✓		✓	
RCR 84 Organizations	✓	✓	✓	✓
RCR 104 Solutions		✓		

² The detailed description of indicators is available in the Methodological Paper on Indicators.

2.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND THEMATIC FIELDS³

2.4.1 PRIORITY 1, Specific objective 1.1 – Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution (RSO 2.7)

Types of actions
1. Elaboration of cross-border/common analytical studies, strategies, action plans and models for more effective preservation of natural assets, biodiversity and improvement or maintenance of natural assets
Types of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Analysis of water resources in terms of quantity and quality, development of monitoring system; ✓ Research projects in the field of biodiversity, elaboration of cadastres of different species of flora and fauna and their presentation; ✓ Common strategies on nature conservation and biodiversity; ✓ Strategies and action plans for definition of joint measures of protection; ✓ Strategies and action plans for introduction of sustainable ecosystem-based water management approaches, including natural water retention measures and prioritizing nature-based solutions in the border area, particularly on cross-border waterflows; ✓ Improved spatial planning of urban areas and rural landscapes with focus on natural protection; ✓ Modelling biodiversity impacts of climate change for the future and elaboration of pilots for testing possible solutions, including innovative digital solutions; ✓ Elaboration of joint actions for management of nature-related disasters, strengthening the coordination role of municipalities therein; ✓ Action plans for reduction of various forms of pollution (water, air, soil etc.). Management of water bodies.
2. Implementing joint pilot actions contributing to protecting biodiversity, fostering joint water and disaster management and reduction of pollution
Types of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joint actions improving biodiversity, cross-border ecological connectivity and green infrastructure; ✓ Joint protocols, monitoring, intervention schemes for management of nature-related disasters; ✓ Revitalisation, improvement of water quality of and sustainable management of cross-border waterflows, including testing and application of sustainable ecosystem-based water management approaches and natural water-retention measures including support of digital solutions in the border area; ✓ Awareness raising and prevention activities on biodiversity, nature and environment protection, climate protection and adaptation, disasters (e.g. forest fires), fight against various forms of pollution.

³ Information in this chapter are summarisation of information provided in 2nd Chapter of Interreg programme SI-HU, available on www.si-hu.eu

Guiding principles to be followed:

- ✓ Coherence with relevant EU and national legislation;
- ✓ Coherence with international nature protection conventions;
- ✓ Impact on territory targeted;
- ✓ Level of cooperation among partners;
- ✓ Level of coordination of activities under the two types of actions;
- ✓ Sustainability of project outputs.

Main target groups⁴

- ✓ **Primary Target groups:** management bodies of areas responsible for maintenance of biodiversity, i.e. public institutions dealing with nature protection, water management, forestry and land use. These include national parks, nature parks and further public institutions responsible for nature protection, water management organisations, public forest management bodies.
- ✓ **Secondary target groups** are universities and research institutions dealing with methodological support for investigations, preparatory actions, impact assessments etc., as well as local and regional (county) government units and their public bodies responsible for land use, school institutions as target groups for awareness raising.
- ✓ **Further target groups** are publicly or privately owned non-profit organisations dealing with promotion of environmental consciousness and awareness raising, as well as public schooling organisations responsible for involvement of wider target groups.
- ✓ **Indirect target groups** are the wide group of land users: land owners, agricultural producers, the local population, students, pupils, tourists and visitors in the area.

2.4.2 PRIORITY 2, Specific objective 2.1 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (RSO 4.6)

Types of actions

1. **Establishment of joint tourism quality standards and joint tourism destination management models on the basis of significant cultural (and natural) potentials and of cooperation of tourism organisations**

Types of activities:

- ✓ Mapping and collection of existing quality standards;
- ✓ Fostering establishment of joint quality cross-border green tourism standards and brands;
- ✓ Connection of micro tourism destinations to formulate cross-border sustainable tourism destination management systems;
- ✓ Application of creative tools for attracting tourists and promotion, including innovative use of digital solutions and ICT tools;
- ✓ Improvement the human capacity of local tourism sector (awareness raising actions, trainings).

⁴ Applicable for all priorities/SOs: the target groups are not beneficiaries.

2. Implementing pilot actions and joint solutions for better inclusion of culture and cultural heritage in development of quality touristic attractions and connected tourism services

- ✓ Quality improvement of cross-border tourism destinations with special focus on attractions of lesser-known areas (e.g. promotion and adoption of green standards and brands, promotion of sustainable mobility solutions in cross-border tourism product development (biking, hiking, use of public transport), increasing awareness on the climate change effects, promotion of eco-innovation in tourism, capacity building and support for adopting green and circular concepts, promotion of local supply chains, use of renewable energy sources);
- ✓ Creation of joint cross-border eco-friendly tourism products and services focusing on integration of various tourism supply with cross-border relevance;
- ✓ Improvement of cross-border accessibility of tourism attractions.

Guiding principles to be followed:

- ✓ Focus on lesser-known rural areas with natural values and cultural assets;
- ✓ Tourism can only be developed in an environmentally sustainable way. Tourism development should always consider the protection of ecological networks (core areas, ecological corridors, buffer zones) and Natura 2000 sites. Pressures on protected areas should be avoided through appropriate siting of facilities and careful design of tourism products and services;
- ✓ Tourism shall have a positive impact on local cultural heritage, being in accordance with best practices in conservation, maintenance and modernisation of heritage.
- ✓ Capitalisation and upgrading of existing tourism products and packages (especially those ones that were developed within cross-border cooperation projects in the 2014-2020 period) and integration of these into cross-border tourism products;
- ✓ Laying high emphasis on effective cross-border tourism promotion and fostering regional tourism destination management visible at international level;
- ✓ Integration of tourism into local economy, finding innovative ways of involvement of local players (local municipalities, companies, citizens) and facilitating inclusion of vulnerable population into tourism supply.

Main target groups

- ✓ **Primary target groups:** relevant public and non-profit organisations bearing tourism and cultural competence operating in the programme area, i.e.:
 - municipalities;
 - local, regional or national public authorities;
 - tourism promotion and destination management organisations;
 - NGOs operating in the field of tourism, culture, nature, digitalisation, rural development;
 - education and training organisations engaged in culture and tourism;
 - European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs).
- ✓ **Secondary target groups** are local SMEs in tourism and cultural services.
- ✓ **Indirect target groups** are the local population living in the programme area and tourists and visitors in the area, including the vulnerable groups.

2.4.3 PRIORITY 3, Interreg-specific objective 3.1 – A better cooperation governance (ISO 6.2)

Types of actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joint cooperation activities in the field of low-carbon initiatives, inter alia, fostering renovation wave in public buildings and affordable utilisation of renewables, combating energy poverty for households, supporting usage of smart technologies for reduction of greenhouse gas emission, awareness raising of citizens to energy consciousness and sustainable behaviour, exchange of experience for optimal energy efficiency measures, elaboration of curricula on different fields of reduction of greenhouse gas emission; ✓ Circular economy, with attention to circular economy business models, government policies and consumer habits with the aim to increase the share of recyclability of waste and utilization and use of material as secondary raw materials including water (recognizing and capture the full value of water); ✓ Education and labour market cooperation, with particular attention to enhanced knowledge about the education system, requirements of admission, possible joint activities, fulfilment of cross-border traineeship programmes, employment, use of available public services, development of skills and communication, social integration of the youth; ✓ Social and health care, with particular attention to prevention and ageing population including collection of information on demand and supply, system of care provision, physical and human resource conditions, possible niches of cross-border service provision.
Activities to be supported:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joint and coordinated spatial planning for easier development activities; ✓ Elaboration of joint strategies to reduce legal and administrative obstacles of cooperation across the border; ✓ Joint cooperation activities in the field of low-carbon initiatives (energy efficiency, renewable energy, circular economy); ✓ Conceiving joint educational, vocational training programmes complementing/supporting official curricula with special emphasis on language education; ✓ Joint skills development of the target groups and beyond; ✓ Revealing and defining possibilities and fields of cross-border social and health care service cooperation; ✓ Elaboration of joint strategies and action plans addressing social matters and a better integration of horizontal issues (e.g. gender equality and social inclusion, including youth, women and disabled); ✓ Creating and coordinating joint programs by the media in the border area to better inform the local population.
Projects are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improve knowledge of local decision makers in various thematic areas; ✓ Create new bottom-up initiatives for cross-border cooperation; ✓ Result in better harmonised planning systems and processes, data collection and assessment methods, commonly identified regional interests and investigation of new development directions.
Main target groups

Direct target groups:

- ✓ Local, county and regional self-governments and their institutions;
- ✓ National public authorities, governmental bodies located in the programme area;
- ✓ Sectoral agencies, labour market organisations, health and social care institutions;
- ✓ Public research institutions;
- ✓ Youth organisations;
- ✓ Churches and their organisations.

Indirect target groups:

- ✓ Staff members of local, county and regional bodies and their undertakings;
- ✓ Staff members of the local and national institutions and authorities located in the programme area;
- ✓ Private businesses;
- ✓ Population of the border region.

2.4.4 PRIORITY 3, Interreg-specific objective 3.2 - Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions (ISO 6.3)

Thematic focus

- ✓ Cross-border cooperation in arts and culture;
- ✓ Cross-border sport events (tournaments, festivities, camps);
- ✓ Cultivation of traditions of minorities;
- ✓ Promotion of trust and intercultural dialogue;
- ✓ Promotion of cross-border inter-generational solidarity.

Activities to be supported:

- ✓ Trust building activities in the field of arts and culture, sport, minorities, intercultural dialogue, inter-generational solidarity;
- ✓ Organisation of various events with involvement of the target groups and the general public.

Projects are expected to:

- ✓ Generate new links in civil society cooperation in the border region, as well as enhanced individual relationships;
- ✓ Generate new range of actors involved in a wide variety of events;
- ✓ Increased level of mutual understanding resulted by positive experience of cooperation;
- ✓ Contribute to the visibility of the Programme.

Main target groups**Direct target groups:**

- ✓ Civil organisations (NGOs);
- ✓ Cultural and arts associations;
- ✓ Minority organisations (including minority self-governments);
- ✓ Sport associations, clubs;
- ✓ Youth organisations;

- ✓ Schools;
- ✓ Local governments.

Wider target group includes the general public of the border area.

2.5 FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The funding of the Programme available for projects amounts to EUR 11.757.515 ERDF and is allocated to the three programme priorities:

Priority	ERDF (EUR)
P1 Green border region	3.527.250
P2 Inclusive border region based on sustainable tourism	6.466.667
P3 Cooperating border region	1.763.598
Total	11.757.515

The allocation of funds to calls for proposals is defined in the respective Terms of Reference (ToR) of the related open call, available at the programme website.

The **ERDF co-financing rate is max. 80%**, while min. 20% shall be contributed by own contribution or other sources.

On the level of the IP SI-HU two main types of projects will be co-financed:

- **Standard projects** related to SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 3.1
- **Small-scale projects** related to SO 3.2.

For each type of projects, a separate Open Call for Proposals will be launched.

2.6 PROGRAMME LANGUAGE

The official languages of the IP SI-HU are Slovene, Hungarian and English, whereby by discrepancies between different language versions, the English version prevails. The official written communication with the JS or MA in principle is to be carried out bilingually in Slovene and Hungarian. Communication with Project Partners in all three languages is ensured.

The working language of the Programme structures is English.

2.7 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The IP SI-HU is a joint programme of the two Member States, Slovenia and Hungary. The governance and management of the programme is shared among various bodies that are in charge of managing, coordinating, supervising and controlling the implementation of the programme.

➤ Monitoring Committee (MC)

The MC steers the programme, supervises the quality and effectiveness of its implementation and decides on the approval or rejection of the projects for funding. It is composed of representatives of both Member States, Slovenia and Hungary. The list of the Monitoring Committee members is available on the programme website.



➤ Managing Authority (MA)

The MA bears the overall responsibility of managing and implementing the programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and in line with EU regulations ruling the European Regional Development Fund.

➤ Joint secretariat (JS)

The Joint Secretariat assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions and undertakes the day-to-day implementation of the programme. It also provides information and guidance to project applicants and partners.

➤ Info points (IP)

The Info Points are established by the Managing Authority and have the same roles as the other Joint secretariat members which provide information and consultancy service to potential applicants (in the application phase), and ensure programme management tasks related to projects under implementation (in the implementation phase).

➤ Audit Authority (Second level control)

The Audit Authority is assisted by the Group of Auditors comprising of a representative of both Member States participating in the Interreg programme. The Audit Authority is responsible for carrying out system audits, audits on projects and audits of accounts in order to provide independent assurance to the European Commission that the programme management and control system functions effectively and that expenditure submitted to EC is legal and regular.

➤ Body performing the accounting function

The body performing the accounting function submits the payment applications to the Commission and makes payments to the Lead Partners or in exceptional cases to Project Partners (*if applicable*).

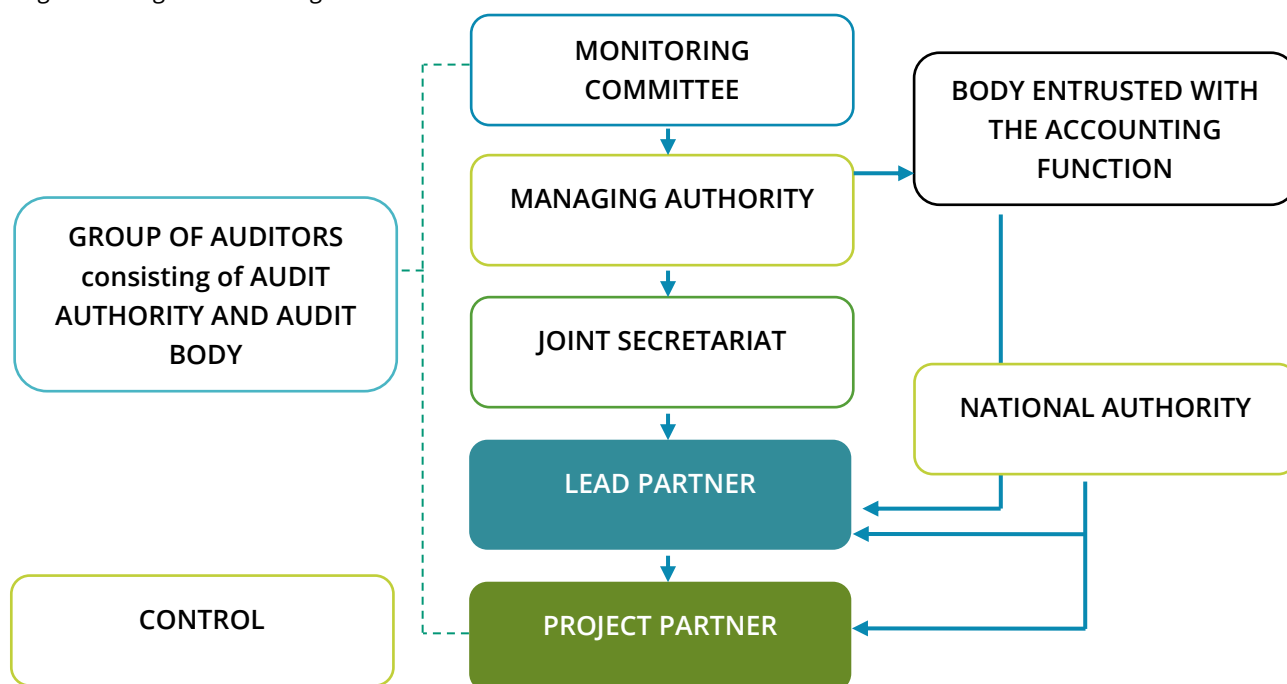
➤ Representatives of Member States

The representatives of the Member States (National Authorities) are providing information to applicants in order to obtain quality projects that will meet the programme objectives and indicators, as well as assisting the MA and JS in organising the support for potential applicants in finding cross border (CB) Project Partners.

➤ Controllers

The Controllers verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared and the compliance of such expenditure with EU rules, programme rules and national rules. For this purpose, each Member State has designated controllers that are responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each Lead and Project Partner participating in a project located (as a general rule) on its territory.

Figure 5: Programme management structure



2.8 ELECTRONIC MONITORING SYSTEM (JEMS)

The Interreg SI-HU Joint Electronic Monitoring System (Jems) is a customised version of the common monitoring system developed by the Interact Programme, which is used by a large community of Interreg programmes.

Jems is an online system conceived to cover the full project and programme lifecycle in one monitoring tool that allows to reduce the need for additional paper processes to a minimum. Furthermore, the concept of “one single entry point” of data is followed, avoiding multiple manual entry of the same data, through automatic transfer of data to different sections in the system. Users can fill in online forms (e.g. application, reporting) and upload/download files.

The IP SI-HU Jems is available at <https://jems.si-hu.eu>. It can be accessed via standard web browsers like Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge or Mozilla Firefox (recent versions). For working in Jems, it is recommended to use a PC or notebook rather than mobile devices. For more information on the Interact Jems initiative, please visit this page: www.interact-eu.net/#o=jems. Upon registration in Jems, users have access to the system as applicant users. Once a project is approved and contracted, the LP user will be assigned to the project, who in turn assigns the partner users to the Project Partners. A helpdesk for technical support specifically dedicated to Jems can be reached via email (si-hu.mkrr@gov.si). In addition, also workshops/trainings on how to use Jems will be organised by the Joint Secretariat.

3 INTERREG VI-A SI-HU KEY PRINCIPLES

3.1 CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

The cross border cooperation is the key principle of the Programme. Projects should set up and foster cross border cooperation between Project Partners that should possibly continue beyond the project

lifetime and provide benefits for wider group of stakeholders (e.g. cooperation networks in the border area).

3.2 RESULT ORIENTATION

The strong focus in this programme period will be given to the result orientation of a project with the demand for visible outputs and concrete results. The result-oriented approach is reflected in the new programme and project intervention logic.

The programme intervention logic demonstrates how supported actions and developed outputs address the territorial challenges and needs tackled by the programme. It also indicates how the programme will deliver its expected results.

Projects have to apply a result-oriented approach strictly, clearly defining the results the project is striving for and linking them with the territorial challenges and needs (see also chapter 2.1 in Part 2 on developing the project intervention logic). The coherence of the project intervention logic (i.e. the project overall objective, the project specific objectives, activities, outputs and expected results) with the targeted specific objective of the programme is a pre-condition for a project to be funded. Projects not showing a clear link to a programme specific objective and/or not contributing to the respective expected programme result will not be supported by the Interreg SI-HU programme

A clear result-oriented approach contributing to a specific objective of the IP SI-HU is required from the projects.

- ✓ Project objectives have to clearly target one single programme specific objective within the chosen priority.
- ✓ The contribution of the project to the respective programme result (and the related indicator) has to be clearly demonstrated.
- ✓ Project activities and outputs have to be logically linked to the targeted specific objective.

3.3 TERRITORIAL RELEVANCE

Territorial relevance is one of the key quality requirements for a project to be funded. The cross-border relevance needs to be clearly demonstrated throughout the entire project, meaning that the problems identified cannot be solved efficiently by individual Member States.

3.4 PARTNERSHIP RELEVANCE

In order to achieve tangible project results it is essential to involve partners who are most relevant and competent for the development, implementation, communication as well as capitalization of the planned project outputs and results. In this respect, for designing a relevant partnership the thematic competence and expertise, geographical and institutional relevance have to be considered.

The partnership should reflect the integrated territorial approach to regional development to be set in place by the project. All partners have to be involved in a way that demonstrates the joint implementation and the cross-border added value of the project.

3.5 DURABILITY

The durability of project outputs and results is crucial for ensuring territorial impact and long-term benefits which continue after the project closure in order to reach the project's overall objectives.

Therefore, projects have to ensure that outputs obtained and results achieved are durable and suitable to be continued or capitalised on after project closure.

In order to achieve sustainability, projects need to adopt from the beginning a longer-term, strategic perspective that leads to desired results for the target groups over an extended time frame. In order to achieve such long-term benefits, it is essential to consider needs of key stakeholders as well as the institutional context already when planning the project. In particular, key stakeholders should be actively involved from the early stages of the project development.

A distinction between the following dimensions of sustainability should be made:

- financial sustainability (financing of follow-up activities and investments, resources for covering future operating and maintenance costs, etc.),
- institutional sustainability ("ownership" of project outputs - which structures will allow the results of the project to continue to be in place after the project end),
- staff sustainability (the staff of the project partner is also provided for the implementation of the follow-up activities),
- environmental sustainability (meet human development goals while also sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services on which the economy and society depend),
- political sustainability (if relevant, preparing policy papers or recommendations can serve the sustainability of project results).

3.6 HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

In all phases of the programme cycle, the horizontal principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, gender equality, accessibility for persons with disabilities and environmental sustainability will apply. The programme authorities have and will through the entire lifecycle of the programme (preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) ensure that the horizontal principles are respected.

No project that could potentially harm the environment will be supported. The project applicants will have to meet the requirements related to protection of the environment and/or health. Moreover, they will be encouraged to promote climate neutrality and sustainable development.

In implementing the programme, the MA will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support strategic objectives (including professionalization efforts to address institutional capacity gaps). Project Partners should be encouraged to pay more attention to quality and lifecycle cost criteria. Where possible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social aspects and incentives for innovation should be included in public procurement procedures.

Actions planned in the programme, in particular those related to specific objective 2.1 Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation should be seen in the contexts of the New European Bauhaus initiative, building enriching, sustainable and inclusive places.

In general, projects submitted under any priority are strongly encouraged to incorporate also activities for tackling environmental concerns and **reducing their environmental impact**, for example by:

- ✓ Contribution to reduced transport and mobility related air pollution (in particular for short travel distances).
- ✓ Contribution to the development of green infrastructures and technologies.
- ✓ Contribution to more employment opportunities, training and education possibilities as well as support services regarding environmental protection and sustainable development.
- ✓ Application of green public procurement in a methodological way.
- ✓ Considering online meetings instead of face-to-face meetings where possible.
- ✓ Organising conferences and events in a sustainable way (e.g. by combining different meetings in one place, reducing printing and using recyclable materials, using video conference facilities, etc).

4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAMME RELATED DOCUMENTS

Projects implemented under the programme must comply with EU rules governing the Structural Funds, the national legislation, and must show coherence and complementarities with national, regional and sectoral development strategies/programmes. The documents listed below (not exhaustive list) are provided on the programme website www.si-hu.eu.

Relevant programme documents

- ✓ Interreg Programme Slovenia-Hungary No CCI2021TC16RFCB045, approved by the European Commission Decision, No C (2022) 8276 final as of 14 November 2022 with all amendments;
- ✓ Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Hungary 2021-2027, Environmental Report, November 2022.

Key regulations for the period 2021-2027

- ✓ 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 (Common Provisions Regulation);
- ✓ 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 (ERDF Regulation);
- ✓ 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 (Interreg Regulation);
- ✓ Implementing acts and delegated acts adopted in accordance with the aforementioned regulations;
- ✓ Other legal acts applicable to the implementation of projects co-funded by the ERDF.

Besides EU rules and rules of the Interreg Programme, also the national rules shall to be respected. We would like to highlight some examples:



- ✓ **Procurement of goods and services:** all Project Partners should comply with the principles of sound financial management and follow public procurement regulations.
- ✓ **State aid:** if the project or its activities are subject to State aid rules, the ceilings of public funding or aid intensity will have to be respected.
- ✓ Valid national legislation ruling **specific fields addressed by the project**, e.g. environmental interventions, natural and cultural heritage, construction, etc., has to be respected in preparing and implementing the projects.