



EVALUATION of the efficiency and effectiveness of the COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA – HUNGARY 2014-2020

17 October 2019, Sormás

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Basic data

- Done by JS
- Continuation of 1st Efficiency and effectiveness evaluation (July 2017)
- The overall cut-off date: 30 April 2019
- The cut-off date for data on the achievement of indicators of the Communication Strategy: 31 December 2018.





Data used:

- the monitoring data gathered by the JS, the data obtained from the eMS application forms, and the data available on the programme website.
- the data collected through interviews and surveys (LPs, PPs, applicants, target groups).

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Interreg Slovenia-Hungary programme. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and the text 'Interreg SLOVENIA – HUNGARY European Union | European Regional Development Fund'. Below the navigation bar, there is a large banner image of bees with the text 'Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary'. The main content area is divided into four columns: 'COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA-HUNGARY', 'OPEN CALL', 'EMS', and 'NEWS'. The 'OPEN CALL' section states that the programme operates on an Open Call system. The 'EMS' section describes it as an electronic monitoring system for project support. The 'NEWS' section provides information about signing up for a newsletter. A large, stylized graphic with the words 'RESEARCH SURVEY STATISTICS' is overlaid on the bottom right of the screenshot.



- 5 deadlines, 143 applications

Table 5: Received and approved projects (1st to 5th deadline for submission) per PA

Applications 1 st deadline	PA1 6c	PA2- 11b	Total
Submitted applications, % of total received applications under 1 st deadline	32 (70%)	14 (30%)	46 (100%)
Administratively compliant & eligible applications, % of received under IP	6 (17%)	5 (35%)	11 (24%)
Approved & signed contracts	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
Applications 2 nd deadline	PA1 6c	PA2- 11b	Total
Submitted applications, % of total received applications under 2 nd deadline	28 (65%)	15 (35%)	43 (100%)
Administratively compliant & eligible applications, % of received under IP	22 (79%)	12 (80%)	34 (79%)
Approved & signed contracts	4 (14%)	1 (7%)	5 (11.6%)
Applications 3 rd deadline	PA1 6c	PA2- 11b	Total
Submitted applications, % of total received applications under 3 rd deadline	14 (54%)	12 (46%)	26 (100%)
Administratively compliant & eligible applications, % of received under IP	5 (36%)	3 (25%)	8 (31%)
Approved & signed contracts	4 (29%)	3 (25%)	7 (27%)
Applications 4 th deadline	PA1 6c	PA2- 11b	Total
Submitted applications, % of total received applications under 4 th deadline	7 (39%)	11 (61%)	18 (100%)
Administratively compliant & eligible applications, % of received under IP	3 (43%)	7 (64%)	10 (56%)
Approved & signed contracts	2 (29%)	2 (18%)	4 (22%)
Applications 5 th deadline	PA1 6c	PA2- 11b	Total
Submitted applications, % of total received applications under 5 th deadline	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	12 (100%)
Administratively compliant & eligible applications, % of received under IP	3 (100%)	8 (89%)	11 (92%)
Approved & signed contracts	1 (33%)	2 (22%)	3 (25%)

Source: JS/MA, programme website

20 projects in different implementation stages, none of projects finished before cut-off date



The evaluation was designed to answer the following set of key evaluation questions:



How effective and efficient are the programme structures?

- ➔ The programme structures related to the implementation of the open call have been effectively set up and operate in a professional manner.
- ➔ **Problems can arise if any staff member is absent for a longer period of time.**
- ➔ Personnel mostly already employed in the previous programming period and continues; a lot of knowledge and experience - high level of institutional memory; competences and experience of personnel in programme implementation and management seem sound.
- ➔ **Occasional work overload causes bottlenecks.**



How effective and efficient are the programme structures?

- ➔ The cooperation quality among programme partners is solid; their communication good; partners work towards fast exchange of information, potential problems are solved quickly and in a constructive manner.

- ➔ Recommendation:

To secure effective implementation of the communication activities, it is important to assign one person to perform this specific task on a daily basis (activity manager).



How effective and efficient are the programme procedures and processes?

- ➔ The procedures related to the implementation of the open call are established and followed by the involved programme bodies.
- ➔ The procedures related to processing of five rounds of applications submitted to the open call were carried out in a fairly efficient and effective manner.
- ➔ The support to potential applicants is well accessible and the overall quality of the provided support is assessed as very good by the users. **Further needs for providing support are indicated.**



How effective and efficient are the programme procedures and processes?

- Compared to previous (2007-2013) period the introduced changes of the programme procedures and processes have to some extent made the programme less user-friendly for applicants; in particular, due to a stricter AB check procedure and greater complexity of the application forms coupled with deficiencies in the performance of the eMS.
- The efficiency of the project assessment and selection process in terms of the time needed until MC makes its decision is relatively good.
- So far, the programme has been effective in terms of ensuring enough deadlines in order to allow for a frequent inflow of applications and give a second chance to the postponed projects or projects rejected at the AB check to reapply in a relatively short period of time.



How effective and efficient are the programme procedures and processes?

- ➔ The programme is running smoothly, even though the team managing it is small and thus has considerable workload while its members have several different roles and tasks to carry out.
- ➔ Recommendations:
 - Consider ways to reduce burden on applicants in the following perspective (e.g. shorten the application form, on the one hand merging some sub-sections in Project description section and on the other, putting more focus on the activities and project content in the Work plan section).
 - Reduce the administrative burden of reporting for PPs and decrease the amount of time needed for checking the reports for FLCs → more effort should be put into use of further simplified cost options already before the submission of project applications.
 - When peaks in workload are expected, additional temporary technical support should be provided.



In how far were simplification and harmonisation of procedures achieved?

- ➔ Programme procedures are constantly under improvement to ease the potential or present burden on programme structures as well as on beneficiaries; applicants found the simplification of AB Check procedure rigorous and had difficulties passing this check in the first deadlines.
- ➔ The programme uses several mechanisms which support harmonisation and alignment between the programmes (HIT tools, eMS, simplified cost options, acceleration of application and reporting procedures through eMS).
- ➔ Use of eMS and fewer accompanying documents add to simplifying matters and reducing the overall administrative burden for the beneficiaries.



In how far were simplification and harmonisation of procedures achieved?

- ➔ Promotion of use of simplified cost options at the workshops and during individual consultations (to reduce the amount of needed paperwork, to speed up the reporting, verification and control procedures). The use of simplified cost options is mandatory for the administrative costs category. It is offered by the programme as the only possible way of claiming this type expenditure (contributes to simplification for beneficiaries and controllers).
- ➔ Recommendation:
Promote and strongly encourage the beneficiaries to use the simplified cost options in the future.



How user friendly are programme procedures and forms?

- ➔ Programme procedures, processes and forms are considered user-friendly by the majority of users.
- ➔ Recommendations:

The programme bodies should further monitor the quality of projects. If appropriate, the option to introduce a two-step application procedure (concept, full applications) in the next programming period should be considered.

Simplified applications especially for the projects of smaller size should be envisaged.

Use of digital signature of documents already in the application phase should be considered (to avoid printing, scanning and uploading steps).

Consider the acceptability of submission of project applications only in one language, i.e. English (executive summary in Slovenian and Hungarian languages) in order to avoid any misunderstanding due to poor translation and/or rejections out of bilingualism reasons in the AB check.



How effective and efficient is the programme implementation?

- ➔ The programme has achieved all milestones (2018) set in performance framework.
- ➔ The programme is performing well and faces no major difficulties that would hinder the implementation of projects and compromise the achievement of set objectives and respective targets.
- ➔ Consequently, the programme was not subject to financial corrections, i.e. decommitment by the Commission.
- ➔ It is expected that the final target values for 2023 will also be achieved (for most of the indicators more than doubled) if the identified activities and target values of the approved projects and established structures progress well.



What are the characteristics of the partnerships?

- ➔ SI – 35 beneficiaries (27-Pomurje, 8-Podravje) vs. HU – 40 beneficiaries (19-Vas, 21-Zala).
- ➔ Lead partners are equally divided to both countries; most (8/20) are regional/local public authorities, 7 NGOs, 3 SME.
- ➔ According to the beneficiaries:
 - partnerships were not very difficult to form
 - majority of project partners knew at least some of the other partners beforehand
 - most hard was to find a suitable partner in a particular field of expertise, or with similar needs in developing a project idea, time consuming was to find a qualified institution in terms of project management, personnel and financial capacity
 - successful communication was hindered by the language barrier
- ➔ Important in forming partnerships and developing quality projects are trust, previous experience and time



What is the progress in implementation of Communication Strategy and achievement of the set objectives?

- ➔ The implementation of the Communication Strategy is progressing towards the set objectives in accordance with the target values of the Communication Strategy indicators.
- ➔ The programme authorities effectively established communication tools for the purpose of both internal and external communication.
- ➔ Access to the programme information and funding opportunities and results of the assessment and selection processes are available to the public.



What is the progress in implementation of Communication Strategy and achievement of the set objectives?

- ➔ Recommendations:
 - Continue with use of wide range of communication activities and tools.
 - Maintain the website as the central, relevant and attractive communication tool serving as the backbone for programme communication.
 - Continue with organisation of events (e.g. ECday), to increase the visibility of the programme and projects and their results, as there has been a very good response in previous initiatives.
 - Continue to apply the manner of spending and monitoring of expenditures for programme communication in place.



What is the progress in implementation of Communication Strategy and achievement of the set objectives?

- ➔ Recommendations:
 - Consider assigning a person to carry out communication activities (communication manager).
 - Consider leaving out the two indicators measuring general awareness or reconsider the methodology used when preparing the programme for the following programming period.
 - Consider planning a higher amount of TA funds for communication activities in the period beyond 2020.



What is the progress of the programme towards the targets of specific objectives?

- ➔ The likely progress towards the targets of specific objectives is assessed on the basis of the projects' contribution to the targets by the cut-off date.
- ➔ PA1 → progress is in particular **promising**.
- PA2 → progress towards achievement of specific objectives is moderate in terms of the number of approved projects and sectors addressed so far.
- ➔ **92.42% of the programme ERDF funds are committed** to the approved projects - effective contribution towards achievement of output indicators.
- ➔ In terms of geographical coverage, the programme achievements are likely to be more visible in the Pomurska region and Vas and Zala counties.



How is the programme adopted by the target groups, especially by relevant stakeholders and by the general public?

- ➔ The people who are in one way or another in contact with the actual programme and the project activities have a positive opinion about it → programme and projects communication contribute to getting the citizens better informed regarding EU support in the region.
- ➔ Recommendations:
 - Continue with use of communication activities (at programme and project level).
 - Intensify communication, particularly in the remainder of the programming period, on/with supported projects and on specific project outcomes.
 - Consider assigning an additional person to continuously work on communication activities. To fill one FTE, one person could manage activities connected with several cooperation programmes.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

