

REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

FOR

ROMANIA- HUNGARY BORDER

Project	EPICAH
Partner organisation	Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association
Other partner organisations involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (PT) • Regional Development Agency of the Pilsen Region (CZ) • Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (EE) • Regional Development Fund on behalf of the Region of Western Macedonia (EL) • Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (ES) • Iberian Association of Riverside Municipalities of Duero River (ES) • Tokaj Wine Region Nonprofit LLC (HU) • Agency for the Development of the Empolese Valdelsa (IT)
Country	ROMANIA
NUTS2 region	<p>Nord-Vest - Județul Satu Mare , Județul Bihor</p> <p>Vest - Județul Arad , Județul Timiș</p> <p>Észak-Alföld - Szabolcs Szatmár -Bereg , HajdúBihar megye</p> <p>Dél-Alföld - Békés megye , Csongrád megye</p>
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1. Introduction

The main objective of the Romania-Hungary border Action Plan project is to provide proposals of improvement of the policy instrument Interreg Romania-Hungary Programme concerning the capitalization and preservation of historical, cultural and natural assets of cross-border area in a coherent manner, in order to develop an integrated cross-border thematic destination that will achieve sustainable development.

The overall intention of this Ro-Hu regional Action Plan is to offer an overview of the state of the joint heritage and the tourism in this region. By articulating the views, needs and demands of local stakeholders, the Action Plan aims to encourage policy makers in national ministries, government agencies and EU institutions to provide the resources and improve the conditions needed for preserving cultural and natural heritage and capitalization through a common approach for the development of interregional tourism activities.

In particular, the Action Plan will play a key role in supporting the Managing Authority with analysis and evaluation of Interreg V Ro-Hu 2014-2020, and it will help the MA and JTS in establishing objectives for the next period, to support cooperation between the many public and private organizations that have a role to play in heritage management and tourism industry in order to increase sustainability and enhance results of the undergoing projects. In the long-term, this will enable the tourism industry to grow in a sustainable and responsible way across the border region.

We have to consider the fulfilment of the pre-condition of having similar objectives selected as structural objectives for the next programming period, as, although an extended and transparent consultancy process started, no decision was yet taken. Another fact to be considered is that tourism is subject to state aid rules, but, as it is not an aim by itself within this action plan, but a tool for preserving heritage, it could be excepted within the framework of the next economic development programmes.

The regional action plan for Ro-Hu border is one of the expected outputs of EPICAH project which aims to promote the improvement of the policy instruments for cross border natural and cultural heritage protection and development, through the exchange of experiences and good practices between partners with large experience in developing strategies, projects and actions in this field based on cross border cooperation processes.

A joint action plan could harmonize and coordinate country-specific approaches by providing a common understanding and umbrella platform for planning and management, but also for better and sustainable use of the results of previously financed projects.

The **main objectives** of the proposed Action Plan are:

1. Promoting a robust institutional framework, including greater vertical and horizontal integration at local, national and cross border level
2. Promoting a policy mix supporting heritage preservation and tourism growth.

The AP itself is foreseen as a framework for awareness of cooperation between interested stakeholders, without creating legal institutional changes at the present stage, only informal arrangements.

Policy context	
Investment for Growth and Jobs programme	
European Territorial Cooperation programme	X
Other regional development policy instrument	

Action Plan type	
Type 1: Implementation of new projects	
Type 2: Change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance)	X
Type 3: Change in the strategic focus of the policy instrument (structural change)	

2. Methodological framework

The base to produce EPICAH Action Plan are :

- joint documents produced within EPICAH :
- reports on Study visits providing useful tools for the action plans' planning;
- conclusions of local work group meetings,
- conclusions of the Cross-border Thematic Workshops,
- CBC Ro-Hu and other EU programming documents.

Also an office research - from all available sources - municipal sites, other websites, strategic documents, statistics collected by their information centres, information and publicity brochures; interviews with specialists involved in decision-making on the protection of cultural and natural patrimony, tourism development, PR and publicity, namely mayors, deputy mayors, department / heritage / PR department managers, PR and international co-operation and information department specialists, and project activities was carried on by the expert and partner representatives.

As EPICAH aims to improve the effectiveness of tourism activity in managing the organization and valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, the most important source for the action plans are the joint documents and the need analysis of each partner's Policy Instrument, finalized with a State of Art report for each project partner. Within the "JOINT REPORT - How is being enhanced the border effect in the protection and development of natural and cultural cross-border heritage in Europe", one of the priorities is the protection of joint values and resources, using them as attractions, building common thematic routes around, and developing mutually advantageous common tourism;"... Coordination across the border is largely lacking – many of the natural and historic values, touristic facilities are standalone attractions, rather than integral parts of a solid package. This is a problem, as these values in themselves not strong enough to attract tourists the lack of strategic cooperation between institutions disadvantages the provision of cross-border services". These documents, as well as some of the best practices presented during the transnational Study Visits and thematic seminars, gave the input for the debates during local group meetings and confirmed the analysis of weaknesses and threats.

3. Policy instrument background (general information and characterization of the policy instrument)

The targeted policy instrument is at this stage Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme, Priority 1: Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources, Investment Priority 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage. The natural, built and cultural values of the eligible area provide an important potential – but equally, their protection and sustainable use is also a major challenge. As they represent the joint heritage of the area, they can be more efficiently developed and used in a coordinated manner. The necessary interventions have major infrastructure development elements to rehabilitate and protect these values, and also soft elements to ensure their sustainable use – 16.12% of the total allocation has been dedicated to these interventions contributing to Ip 6/c.

Priority Axe	Thematic Objective	Investment Priority	Specific Objective	Results Indicators
PA1 - Joint protection and efficient use of common values and resources (Cooperating on common values and resources)	Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area	Tourist overnight stays in the eligible programme area

The integrated approach to territorial development is clearly present in the programme in PA 1, IP 6/c. The SO is the sustainable use of natural, historic and cultural heritage within the eligible area. Instead of one-off individual projects, it is envisaged that a number of cultural and natural heritages are rehabilitated in a specific cross-border area, and thematic routes may be built around the rehabilitated (including also already existing facilities) heritage sites. This can only be done using an integrated approach, bringing together different actors and implementing various interventions (rehabilitation of a number of interconnected heritage sites, improving their accessibility, developing related touristic infrastructure, organizing thematic routes, promoting the new touristic project, etc.) that mutually build on each other and together can make a significant contribution to the specific objective.

The eligible border area of the programme (including 8 counties, 4 from Romania & 4 from Hungary) has many unique & common heritage, natural & cultural values. While some of these common resources are still in poor conditions & would need rehabilitation, several have been rehabilitated but their sustainable use as individual attractions is still problematic and the number of visitors they attract is too low. Therefore, the policy instrument needs to be improved also in terms of the actual contribution to the cross border management of tourism resources & products, since so far the programme has mainly been used to rehabilitate cultural & natural heritage. Former implemented projects have put a special emphasis on the rehabilitation of cultural & natural objectives, without long-term effects in the sense of

developing the tourism potential in the cross border area & raising the number of tourists. Thematic routes developed through projects also had short effects on raising the number of potential tourist, as both sides prefer on the long term the promotion of their own tourism potential.

Although having been present also in the period 2007-2013, the policy instrument Interreg V-A Romania- Hungary did not contribute substantially in terms of transforming the border from a line of separation into an asset. As resources are shared in the border area, also efficient management strategies of these resources need to be common in order to ensure a sustainable development and growth in the border area.

While in the previous financial period, actions in the field of natural and cultural heritage have been rather parallel than integrated, the present programme intends to support actions which lead to cross border results and effects. This intention, together with the large diversity of actions to be supported, is good but needs to be supplemented with real common strategies through which the natural and cultural potential contributes to the development of tourist activities that lead to the economic development and territorial competitiveness of border areas.

The PA 1 and 6 of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary contributes to the 1. Pillar "Connecting the Regions" and Priority Area 3 of the EUSDR "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts".

However, as the partners within EPICAH already agreed and confirmed within the joint document "EPICAH - Effectiveness of Policy Instruments for Cross-Border Advancement in Heritage: Main conclusions about how to improve CBC programmes", "a common Strategy for European Territorial Cooperation should be adopted prior to the identification of programmatic instruments for its implementation. This Strategy should be prepared by Commission Services in close consultation with all stakeholders, cities and metropolitan areas, and other non-governmental entities, with a legal nature and a permanent activity and with extensive experience in promoting cooperation initiatives and in the monitoring of integrated programs in the various European territorial cooperation plans.

Profitable private sector should be considered as a final beneficiary (as grant beneficiaries) as long as their participation is fully justified in terms of provision of maximum sustainability, consistency with the project scope and results durability for the whole project."

The mentioned document also recommends that in each border area partners must agree in a development strategy, based on a SWOT analysis, strategic thematic and priorities to be developed.

Another recommendation concerns pre-financing: The programmes pre-financing by the European Union Funds should go entirely in the beginning of the programme for the final beneficiaries, and not retained by national or regional authorities as managing authorities (MA) - having as a good practice model the pre-financing schemes and conditions of COSME programme.

The Interreg Romania-Hungary Programme could be influenced in terms of its impact on the conservation, management of and the use of the natural and cultural heritage as common

assets that can be better valorised through networking for development of tourism activities, so contributing at the economic development of the border area.

Through the best practice within EPICAH project, we consider that, for an improvement of the programme in the future as well, several ideas should be taken into account at the elaboration of the future objectives, in terms of:

- new types and better quality projects to be funded in the calls for projects to be launched as a result of the experience and knowledge gathered during the activities organized at network and local level.
- an improved governance of the programme following the involvement of the MA representatives in the local stakeholders' group and participation at the network activities during which the MA can learn from the experience of other cross border programmes;
- a new approach of the future programme in which focus will be the networking along the border and the integration of the cross border natural and cultural assets within tourism strategies and activities.
- an improvement generated by the project's results, especially from the lessons learnt by the JTS/MA during the transnational activities but also from the interactions with the members of the stakeholders' group, in terms of new types and better quality projects to be supported, an improved governance, sustainability of the projects' results.

Nevertheless, as European territorial cooperation seems to be the subject of a planned reduction of the co-financing rate to 70%, which, added to the non-increase in the level of pre-financing, now 0, introduces the risk of significantly reducing the participation in implementing the proposed Action Plan, but also in further Interreg projects, for many relevant institutions that play an important role in the territories of cooperation, but with less financial capacity.

4. Cross-border cultural and natural heritage management (characterization of the actual situation)

The unaltered preservation of cultural and natural heritage in Europe in general, and in our region in particular, is a challenge and, at the same time a key condition for ensuring the sustainability of the heritage. It has an important role to play in ensuring social cohesion between different regions, ethnic groups and cultures. The cultural heritage is of particular importance for economic growth, by generating value chains in various sectors, with major implications for creating and strengthening jobs, as mentioned by the European Commission.

The eligible border area has many unique, joint heritages, natural and cultural values. These include nature protection areas, historic monuments and buildings with special architectural values, thermal springs, and intangible cultural values. Geo-tourism and health tourism are important issues in every county of the border line, such as climate and thermal water based hydro/ thermal -therapies and have become one of the leading alternatives uses of natural sites.

Many of these values are in poor condition – need rehabilitation, improvement, or are deteriorated beyond repair. Some of them have already been rehabilitated, but long-term,

sustainable use of individual attractions is still problematic. As these values represent the joint heritage of the CB area, their rehabilitation and also sustainable use need to be ensured based on joint strategies of coordinated development and promotion. While individually they may not attract high number of visitors, if they are developed, and arranged in thematic routes, managed in a coordinated manner, they can become attractive for visitors from inside and also from outside the eligible area.

Nevertheless, the 2 countries and 8 counties are having a different approach to tourism development and heritage preservation. They follow different strategies and use different methods, which can limit the expected positive contributions from tourism and may allow negative impacts of tourism to local communities and the landscape they are living in.

As mentioned in CBC Ro-Hu programming documents, Annex II - Common Territorial Strategy "Strategic planning based on the analysis of the eligible programme area of CBC Programme between Romania and Hungary", natural, historical and cultural heritages of the eligible area (thermal waters and springs, natural protected areas, castles, churches, watermills and other historical and archaeological sites) provide stable base for the higher level of cross border/ international tourism. The CBC Ro-Hu document also mentions, as a lesson learnt from the past programming period, that rehabilitation of natural and cultural heritages proved to be successful only when this was done in an integrated manner, instead of developing standalone attractions, focus on developing and promoting a cross-border network. The programme sets as one of the strategic objectives for 2020 - SO1: Protect and jointly use values and resources of the eligible area. The natural and cultural values, just like the resources are truly joint assets – cannot stop at the state border. Thus, their protection, rehabilitation and responsible use are common tasks – they have to be carried out together, in a coordinated manner.

Based on the programming documents, many problems were identified during the WG meetings and the study visits:

- The low importance (or inexistence) of existing strategic and territorial planning documents on issues such as intangible cultural heritage, the knowledge economy, creative industries, bureaucracy, decision-making transparency or multilingualism;
- Accessibility (road, pedestrian, bike) to some natural and built tourist attractions, as well as economic activities in the area of the old centres of the cities which are incompatible with a central tourist area;
- The lack of a local brand, a tourism marketing strategy, local tourist guides, including insufficient promotion of the few cultural heritage assets, recently restored with European funds - which leads to the practice of transit tourism, with a short duration of stay and reduced economic efficiency;
- Poor development of public-private partnership in tourism;
- Insufficient cultural and sports infrastructure and physical and moral recreational infrastructure (eg. lack of a large showroom, a covered recreation base or appropriate public spaces in the central area for organizing courses or musical events);
- Lack of a professional tourist-cultural departments in the local administration.

Thus, despite the rich heritage of the region and the fact that tourism may represent an important pillar of economic development, in this area the cultural and natural resources are not even in our days well promoted and valued, which is why tourism in this region is not sufficiently developed in order to make a major contribution to economic development. Also, there are not enough tourist products to contribute to the creation of competitive integrated packages offered to the beneficiaries and neither managerial tools to develop a common cross-border strategy, in line with the EU's policies.

The most important obstacles for region's development through cultural tourism are:

1. Information about historical and cultural heritage of the Ro-Hu cross border region is fragmented and presented in different languages and websites; because of that, potential tourists find quite difficult to plan their holidays in this area;
2. Online information in English or in the languages of the neighbouring countries (Ukrainian, Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian) is not always available;
3. Some local museums and other cultural institutions do not own a website and their presence online is limited due to the lack of employees;
4. Even cultural organisations which do have enough employees do not succeed to implement a viable marketing international strategy because they lack training, abilities and knowledge;
5. Cooperation among tourist organisations in the cross-border area is not typical;
6. Travel agencies do not offer packages including cultural or natural attractions located inside and outside of the countries forming the cross-border area, even if some historical events, identities and values cannot be fully understood by visiting only some of these attractions;
7. Many inhabitants of the four/cross-border regions do not know the common history, heritage and culture they share with their neighbours, which is why social interconnection and interaction between them is limited and the sense of social cohesion is not developed enough among them;
8. The full potential value of the tourism is not being realized by local communities and the sites themselves;
9. Unplanned or mismanaged tourism and low level of integrated destination management and marketing are having a negative effect on the touristic attractiveness of the region and on local economies.

In conclusion, the weaknesses that represent barriers in the capitalization of regional cultural heritage and in a competitive common tourist offer are: inadequate cultural marketing, insufficiently trained staff, poorly integrated tourist destinations, reduced visibility and promotion through Internet technologies.

5. Justification of the need of improving the policy instrument (regarding cross-border cultural and natural heritage management)

The future of the Ro-Hu cross border area as an attractive sustainable heritage tourism destination, which is able to compete on the international tourism market, is largely depending on the cooperation of all the sectors (governmental, business, non-governmental) to plan,

develop and manage this region in such a way that the existing natural and cultural resources are maintained and domestic and international visitors can enjoy a great experience.

The tourism sector's competitiveness is closely linked to the sustainability of its base, i.e. the natural and cultural assets. There is a challenge in coordinating tourism infrastructure developments, managing tours and tourist activities to avoid impacts on fragile ecosystems, as well as on the communities that inhabit peripheral border regions. Governments, either national or local are challenged with how to put sufficient and applicable planning and monitoring structures in regarding infra and superstructure developments all across the region.

The reason why the chosen policy instrument should be improved comes from the need to harmonize all the above mentioned strategies with each other and with the ERDF policies – the Regional Operational Program - and put more emphasis on visibility of the existent tourism/heritage promotion programs, to make them potential contributors to the 8 counties development in a sustainable, but progressive manner. The existent several thematic trails lack sufficient visibility, accessibility and connectivity by means of transportation, interconnectivity to promote cycles and support eco-tourism strategy, safeguard of natural and cultural assets, while there is a need to develop more thematic routes which gather the cross-border natural and cultural assets.

The better use and sustainability of obtained results of present or implemented projects through improvement of capitalization is the best way to enhance the impact of ongoing projects by an added value, thus influencing the final steps of implementation of ongoing projects and creating synergies between different successful projects and partners, considering that Interreg Ro-Hu 2014-2020 is under implementation, and that the call for projects for interesting investment priorities closed on January 2018, as the MA specifically stated during the consultation process.

In this context, potential contributions based on the assessment related to the presently proposed Action Plan and on the international experience gained through the EPICAH project should rather focus on an intermediary evaluation of the programme and on capitalizing the experiences to date and, starting from these, on the involvement in the programming process for the next period. In this end, an official position of the Managing Authority of Interreg V-a Romania- Hungary was asked and obtained, as well as observations and recommendations on the draft document, partially solved within the final form of the Action Plan. The Action Plan could produce a change within the programme management in the current period with the introduction of the networking concept/practice in the assessment/monitoring procedures of the programme, as a preparatory action for the networking to be established at the beginning of the next programme.

In the same idea, the LWG meetings, with the participation of JTS representatives, following the presentation of best practices after the study visits, confirmed that the most feasible way to reach the objectives proposed by the EPICAH is to influence effectiveness of the programme management and organization through a better valorisation of the implemented

projects, involving all interested stakeholders in identifying and disseminating results and experiences, maximizing the positive impact of the projects through a joint network approach.

The Action Plan should set measures for an analysis of the cultural heritage resources influenced by public policy and an evaluation of their sustainable use through attractiveness for tourism. The plan would tackle topics related to the notoriety and the attractiveness of the tourist destination where the cultural sites financed through Interreg Ro-Hu 2014-2020 are situated, gathered from the conclusions of the consultations with local actors, the local community, and the visitors, actors that should be permanently considered in view of consolidating the destination's participatory governance.

6. Lessons learned (table - identification and description of the best practices that inspired the action plan)

Best Practice	Lessons learnt
<u>Capacity building in Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013</u>	One of the intervention areas within the Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013 was the "Joint development of networking partnership programme and project planning and management capacities". This action aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy instrument through networking and capacity building. Some of the supported projects addressed cultural issues (e.g. establishment a network for cultural heritage, creation of value map, development of castle routes, joint planning and capacity building, etc.) – involving and mobilizing of the organisation that are responsible in heritage protection. Potential activities included the following measures (at any relevant thematic field): o Institution development: development of integrated organisational structures and joint sustainable thematic co-operation networks for joint regional development activities; o harmonisation of the existing development plans, programmes, and elaboration of joint strategies; o development of joint project planning and management capacities, common trainings for organisations concerning project development and management skills; o public relations work including different types of media to promote and develop cross border activities to the public
<u>Eixo Atlantico strategy to boost tourism at border between Galicia (ES) and North Portugal</u>	Promotes common actions for tourism under the slogan <i>Two Countries, One Destination</i> . The strategy is oriented to promote mutual knowledge, the creation of wealth in the territory and to avoid as much as possible the phenomenon of seasonality. Common actions to promote sustainable tourism in the cross-border area such as developing a tourism guide, organising tourism fairs can be an inspiration for other border regions willing to demonstrate and valorise their cultural heritage in a common manner. The innovativeness of the approach comes from the fact that the regions present a common offer, market it jointly and in this way attempt to create a demand for tourism around borders. The

	Best Practice supports our AP by focusing on networking and on a more integrated tourism approach instead of small-scale and isolated initiatives of each beneficiary.
<u>Duero-Douro Transnational Route</u>	It represents a BP with significant learning potential because it is being developed with the participation/involvement of several public and private stakeholders of Spain and Portugal that are working together, adopting common strategies and actions (making Duero river managing policies closer)
<u>EURO-REGIÓN TERMAL Y DEL AGUA – Eurociudades Chavez- Verín</u>	The BP presented the development of the Chaves-Verín cross-border area through the promotion of the tourism sector linked to thermal springs. The objective is, besides the creation of the Centre for Tourism-Thermal Training and Research of Transboundary Water, producing a thermal route throughout the cross-border area, promoting and valuing a reference territory in thermal baths at European level, as an employment and development anchor. As in our cross-border region, thermal water shows the identity of the Euroregion Galicia-North of Portugal and the best positioned resource as a differentiating element for the economic revitalization of the area. “Ruta Termal y del Agua de la Eurociudad Chaves-Verín” aims to articulate a route that connects Verín's cultural, historical and spa heritage with that of Chaves and Vidago, joining the main sources, spas and thermal springs of the Eurocity. The Eurocity has established itself as a space for thermal tourism excellence, with a common cross-border strategy for the coordinated development and an integrated vision: an innovative and quality offer in the field of infrastructure and specialized services (thermal spas); a professional offer in the field of hospitality and catering: development of services and complementary activities. The BP justifies Action 1, but can be the start point for a Pilot Project aiming to create a Ro-Hu thermal spring route, not yet approached.
<u>The Czech-Bavarian development Study</u>	Presented a comprehensive cross border cooperation structure/process: strategic planning, specialized working groups/subgroups, professional internships for staff, partnership for- during the thematic seminar. The influence of the BP for our AP is the underlining of the importance of a complex image and analysis of the border area, combined with the active involvement of the stakeholders, this being the starting point for a coherent development and the strategic planning of an optimal set of interventions.
<u>Activities on The Golden Way around the cities Tachov (CZ) and</u>	The project gives another approach for the management of cultural heritage and supports experimental archaeology research. It also combines re-creation of cultural and immaterial heritage with tourism, research and education, involving directly the community in managing/financing/operating the park. The project is proving the

<u>Bärnau (DE)</u>	importance of collaboration with education and research, being a scientific reconstruction of a medieval village. It also includes product development: specific thematic tours: historical, crafts, gastronomy, in a very efficient combination. The useful approach for our AP were the identification of potential sites where complex actions could be implemented, defining the complementary activities in order to create complex offers for a better and more sustainable use of cultural heritage. Some elements are suitable to be transferred to Oradea, Arad, Gyula castles, and to other historic /archaeological parks not directly covered by existent project, but suitable to apply for financing in the next period (Mediesu Aurit Dacian Ovens Center, different archaeological sites managed by the County Museum Satu Mare).
<u>Czech-Bavarian Events in DEPO 2015</u>	Digital Solutions for cultural & natural heritage: co-working space, interactive exhibitions, a café, spaces for artistic concerts, conferences and shows, as well as social inclusion. It is a place where people work, get educated, learn a craft, and at the same time enjoy art, concerts, lectures, exhibitions and gastronomy, a complex cultural environment. It is a living proof of what creativity and innovation can add to an intrinsic value of cultural heritage assets, attracting through it a large number of the inhabitants and increasing strongly the tourism.

7. Analysis of stakeholders involved in the Action Plan (table)

In total 17 stakeholders have been selected:

- socio- economic private stakeholders at local/ regional level operating in tourism sector
- technical /environment stakeholder at local/regional/national level (private) operating in field of cultural heritage
- technical /environment stakeholders at national level (public) operating in the fields of natural heritage
- technical /environment stakeholder at regional level (private) operating in the environmental sector
- institutional regional stakeholders (public) in tourism sector
- institutional regional stakeholder at national level operating in the field of cross border programming
- institutional regional stakeholders (public) in administration sector

Stakeholders involved within different activities are:

1. Inter-community Development Agency Satu Mare County
2. County Council Satu Mare
3. Managing Authority Interreg V Ro- Hu
4. JTS-BRECO Oradea
5. Carei City Hall - Direction of Culture
6. Culture Promotion Center Grof Karolyi Carei

7. Satu Mare County Museum
8. Environmental Protection Agency Satu Mare
9. G.M. Zamfirescu Cultural Center Satu Mare
10. Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
11. Romanian Business School of the Chambers of Commerce - Satu Mare Branch
12. Roman Catholic Episcopate of Satu Mare
13. County Center for Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture Satu Mare
14. Negrești-Oaș Town Hall
15. City Hall of Livada
16. Town Hall Medieșu Aurit
17. Kelet-Nyírségi Többcélú Kistérségi Társulás

The stakeholder consultation, engagement and mobilization at regional level has been implemented through: e-mail questionnaires, telephone contact, WG meetings held.

All these methods got to the SWOT analysis:

Strengths:

- The stakeholders involved seem to be interested and opened to collaboration
- The stakeholders want to deepen network opportunities on the subject
- Regional authority is opened to gain new opportunities linked to the heritage protection projects

Weaknesses:

- Lack of networking at the moment
- Lack of project management skills at stakeholders level
- Some stakeholders are not well informed
- Lack of coordination among the regional structures working on the subject
- Lack of knowledge about regional and national regulations

Opportunities:

- The cross border region offers many potential for development, including the development of cross-border thematic routes
- Regional stakeholders' structures cover both sides of the border
- Territory can take advantage of already developed projects and improve them
- Opportunity to finance projects through EU funds
- Presence of research bodies and Universities dealing with heritage protection issues

Threats:

- Lack of finance
- Lack of coordination among the regional and national strategies
- Legislative constraints
- Non-Schengen border crossing

The conclusions of the work group meetings are in line with the focus of interventions for Priority 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage:

- a truly integrated approach: instead of standalone investments, complex developments that are parts of a wider concept need to be implemented: buildings, natural, historic and cultural values to be rehabilitated that together are able to attract a critical mass of visitors and operate sustainably (major increase in visitors number is an expectation)
- there needs to be closely cooperating institutional structures in place that ensure destination management and promotions.

8. Improvement actions:

The improvement actions aim to provide support to the MA for insuring better collaborations in and across the neighbouring countries between cultural, educational and tourist organizations through improved cultural and tourist infrastructure (platform, networking, performing cultural and research centres) and embedding cultural objects of common European heritage into tourism activities through highly interactive demonstration actions at the financed objectives, and thus forming the unique cross-border tourism offers, by sharing of best practices acquired within EPICAH project.

The common cultural and heritage properties from Ro- Hu border region which will preserve both the spiritual values and the economic- social development level in the area represent a challenge for authorities, policy-makers, companies, institutions. The opportunity of the development of programs, projects or activities regarding these issues are obvious. Cooperation and dialogue amongst stakeholders from the public and private sectors, cultural institutions and tourism industries is the leverage of better tourism management.

The Action Plan demonstrates the role and the importance of stakeholders to assist the decision-making processes of planning and managing the tourism activities that enhances the destination purpose. The Action Plan demonstrates that knowledge, education, rapid dissemination of information through modern technology strengthen and reinforce the position of culture and history in an economic frame.

The direct effect of developing and marketing cultural heritage sites as touristic destination assures high quality in tourism and is basis of a competitive industry. This approach creates within the project a strong joint basis for the development of cross-border cooperation, in the direction of promoting local culture and heritage, with the purpose of sustaining the development of cultural tourism in the area. Since cultural and natural heritage of the RO- HU, further more Ro- HU- SK- UA area, transcends the actual physical borders of the four countries, the performance of such challenge is possible only within the close cross-border cooperation between all countries. Thus, cross-border cooperation is provided within implementation stages of the action: technical-preparatory, educational-organizational, main and informational stages. The project focuses on suggesting complex solution of problems of cross-border cooperation by means of the introduction of synchronized approach in obedience to the agreed plan of action and combination of efforts of basic target groups for the successful development of established partnerships and implementation of initiatives.

The Action Plan can improve the policy instrument by:

- information and communication activities for project partners and potential beneficiaries
- ensuring the exchange of information on different project implementation/ proposals

- providing tools for better project generation and development.

The improvement actions foreseen within the RAP Ro-Hu are following the guidelines established in the Satu Mare county development strategy for the period 2014-2020, and also in the county's regional marketing strategy for the period 2013-2020. The heritage protection and valorisation through tourism development has in view measures to develop the ICT infrastructure as a support infrastructure for increasing the economic competitiveness of services and tourism, in particular in direct connection with the following development priorities: "ensuring adequate capacity of structures with good quality accommodation functions, to meet the demand of the target market" and "ensuring that experience heritage-related tourism is one of quality and in line with the expectations of tourists".

The documents responds also to Sectorial Strategy for Culture and National Heritage 2014-2020• Objective: Safeguarding, protection and usage of cultural i-material heritage; National Strategy for Regional Development 2014-2020; Master Plan for Development of National Tourism of Romania 2007-2026, Regional Development Plan for Northern Transylvania 2014-2020; priority 3.4.1. Promotion and economic capitalization of local specific tourism potential, as well as In HUNGARY: Economic Development & Innovation Operational Program; Country Development Strategic and Operative Program of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County; Rural Development Program Hungary 2014-2020.

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVE:

Valorisation of heritage buildings and sites through horizontal and vertical networking - Capacity Building and Destination Management in order to deliver consistently high quality products

As proved within joint document, and confirmed through LWG meetings and study visits, there needs to be a more consistent approach to destination management across Romania-Hungary cross-border tourist destination. The destination's rich cultural heritage and nature and the distribution of interrelated tourism sites make it ideal for cross-border initiatives and regional investment opportunities. Yet a number of challenges are currently impeding its growth and development. The level of product offer, service delivery, hospitality and language skills vary greatly across the region. Tourist information services are sporadic and interpretation is non-existent in some areas. Poor heritage management has also placed intangible and tangible heritage under threat. Community based tourism is yet to reach its full potential.

Several thematic packages/trails organised previously in the region lacked real territorial impact because they were solely organised along attractions and did not build up a functioning network among affected attractions and service providers based on common values and interests.

Within its safeguarding activities of the cultural and intangible heritage, every country should ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups, as also individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.

To ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, every country should draw up, fitting to its own situation, one or more inventories of cultural and intangible heritage present in its territory.

Without prejudice to the provisions of their national legislation, customary law and practices, countries should recognize that safeguarding of heritage is of general interest to humanity and thus undertake to cooperate at the sub-regional, regional and international levels. Safeguarding means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage through creating quality tourism products, activities and services.

ACTIONS

A. Valorization/capitalization of heritage through the establishment of a cross border informal structure for heritage mapping/identification

1. The background

Ensuring that the heritage is protected and valorized through tourism activities requires a holistic and integrated policy framework and an effective and accountable system of governance that enable and encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration in activities planning, development and management, for creating a well-defined framework and implementation of sustainable development strategies.

The capitalization of the objectives of cultural and natural heritage, as a result of investment projects financed from European funds or public budget will enable to outline competitive advantages of the Romanian- Hungarian cross-border destinations but also create opportunities for local communities to diversify the economic profile of the area, through development of tourism and leisure activities based on cultural and natural heritage, and at the same time a balanced economic development for the whole region. The best way to ensure the role of a heritage place in the community is to capitalize on it, to use it. This must occur in a manner that retains and supports the heritage value of the place, its significance. Ongoing use also brings wider benefits, including advantages in terms of social and environmental sustainability.

The best practices provided within EPICAH project underlined the need for new arrangements for the organization of the cultural/natural heritage and tourism, both in respect of public and private sectors, designed to deliver a more streamlined and co-ordinated approach based on effective public-private partnership as informal networks for destination management units. These units must be created through a close partnership and continuous communication of representatives of local public authorities within the destinations, private operators who carry out tourism activity (accommodation units, restaurants, insurance companies, transport for

visitors, travel agents a.o.), administrators or custodians of cultural heritage objectives or protected natural areas, locally active NGOs.

The cooperation among local stakeholders should be systemic and participative in a structured way; it should clarify the best way to interpret the cultural heritage within the cross border territory and how to deliver it as a tourism product. Cooperation should be based on clear common priorities and division of responsibilities and should encourage the diverse contribution every stakeholder can give (public authorities of different level of responsibility, associations, universities, private companies, etc.), joining up efforts in order to achieve the best results.

The mapping activity targets the series of cultural heritage objectives from the rural / urban area which give identity to the respective place (ethnographic museums, memorial houses, tourist objectives which refers to national / international personalities of culture / science, unique cultural attractions, but also natural heritage objectives and resources. All these must be transformed into a catalyst for the cultural life of the locality, educational and training space for the local community and for visitors, also representing a pillar for the preservation and valorisation of material/ immaterial cross border heritage, thus enhancing the impact of the ongoing projects.

2. Action

Creation of a network of stakeholders/associations between the countries for mapping of all financed and potential heritage sites/thematic trails, in order to share projects, opinions and storytelling, mainly based on EPICAH best practices, transmitting know-how for identifying complementary capitalization activities and better use of results.

The structure would meet at least 2 times a year

- Organise network events to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders and disseminate good practices;
- Supporting interested stakeholders in organisation of field visits at request and exchange of experiences at regional level.

The networking would support communication between different stakeholders from various sectors -cultural and natural heritage protection combined with tourism- and facilitate awareness about the outcomes, find tools and means of the improved use of results, identify complementary capitalization activities or even joint strategies for cross development. The introduction of the networking concept/practice could produce a change within the programme management, as it could be used by the Managing Authority as a preparatory action for the next programme.

The involved stakeholders would be able to identify all the Points of Interest (POI): churches, castles, bridges with historical and patrimonial value, shrines, places with archaeological value, sightseeing, swimming, thermal springs, spas, sports equipment, cultural facilities (museums and others), hotels, restaurants, point of sale of local products, craftsmen, tourist entertainment companies, but also traditional/modern festivals and events and much more.

The aim of the action is to identify successful and transferable implementations of the past projects financed by the Programme and the most important replicable success factors, to create synergies between stakeholders and border areas and capitalize important heritage/tourism assets, thus facilitating the more efficient use of the financial resources allocated to the different projects in progress. The network approach can get to more sustainable results, adding value at the outcomes through communication and best practice sharing, possibly even by modifying the final implementation steps of some of the ongoing projects. The information gathered shall be used to create a database with financed and potential natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border area. At the end, the Action Plan should create the basis for a Ro-Hu cross border **Atlas** of the most important historical, cultural, natural and immaterial values to be protected and promoted through tourism instruments- a pilot project to be implemented during the next programming period if fitting into future priorities of the programme.

The network can be also the basis for a think-tank for preparing an evidence-based monitoring of the visitor economy and the sustainability of the heritage sites. Carrying out marketing research is not necessarily a costly activity - with an appropriate approach and design, it can be organized at a reasonable cost, even inexpensive. It is rather a matter of modern culture and the policy of institutions and organizations to get feedback from users of products and services provided.

3. Players involved

The input, endorsement and engagement from a variety of stakeholders are key to ensuring the success of the Joint Action Plan:

The main responsible for implementing the Action Plan is the Satu Mare partner, who would be responsible for inviting stakeholders, creating the framework for meetings, preparing and developing the organizational framework for the implementation, reporting and monitoring the implementation.

Other stakeholders will be:

- Ministries and central public authorities under the subordination / authority / coordination of ministries; in Romania and Hungary, including National Governmental Tourism Institutions;
- Regional Government Authorities;
- Local Authorities;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Academic and research environment (universities and research institutes); educational Institutions;
- Private and public sector stakeholders, representatives of the projects financed: public cultural institutions (museum, theatre, opera, operetta, philharmonic, library, archive, cultural center, etc.), churches, owners or holding another right in rem over the cultural objects to be preserved/restored, classified (if the case), listed as heritage and made accessible to the public; interested SME's

4. Timeframe

2020-2021

5. Costs

Own costs of participant stakeholders

6. Funding sources

Own sources of participant stakeholders

B. Establishing a long-term cooperation relationship with the Managing Authority

1. The background

The participation of Satu Mare partner could help the MA to analyse whether the examined territorial policies attract investments as economic drivers or ways to protect natural and cultural heritage. As a result of EPICAH project and the presented best practices, the MA could identify those good practices which can be drawn by territorial policies and could be replicated for the sustainable protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage sites and objectives.

The constant and coherent actions feeding policies and the Management Authority with data and experiences as well as networking with local stakeholders and other bodies, could lead to useful policy change for the current or future programming period. The Action Plan could produce a change within the programme management in the current period with the introduction of the networking concept/practice in the assessment/monitoring procedures of the programme, as a preparatory action for the networking to be established at the beginning of the next programme

2. Action

Discussing and establishing the frame for a long term cooperation agreement with the Managing Authority considering Interreg VA and next programme, with an exclusively consultative role, without decision-making power, in order to :

- active involvement in the on-going process of the intermediary evaluation and revision process of Interreg Ro-Hu 2014-2020
- presenting a brochure with the good practices and recommendations resulting from the EPICAH project and promoting them during the events with beneficiaries, as well as the results of the implementation of local activities in the development process of the future Interreg Programme.

3. Players involved

ADI Judet Satu Mare, the Satu Mare partner, who would be responsible for collecting all data from members and other interested stakeholders, and transmitting it towards MA

4. Timeframe

2020-2021

5. Costs

Own costs of participant stakeholders

6. Funding sources

Own sources of participant stakeholders

Timeframe: 2020-2021

Financing sources: Cross-border programme, when applicable, other mainstream operational programmes, local budget, private/institutional contributions of participant and interested stakeholders

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	LINE OF INTERVENTION	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	PROGRAM,PROJECT,MEASURE, ACTION
1.Promoting a robust institutional framework, including greater vertical and horizontal integration at local, national and cross border level 2.Promoting a policy mix supporting heritage preservation and tourism growth.	1.1 Valorisation of heritage buildings and sites through horizontal and vertical networking	A. Establishing a cross border informal structure for heritage mapping/identification and valorization/capitalization	-creation of a network of associations between the countries to share projects, opinions and storytelling, mainly based on EPICAH best practices - 2 meetings yearly -organise network events to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders and disseminate good practices; -organisation of field visits and exchange of experiences at regional level. - communication between different stakeholders - facilitate awareness about the outcomes, - find tools and means of the improved use of results, - identify complementary capitalization activities or even joint strategies for development. -a think-tank for preparing an evidence-based monitoring of the visitor economy and the sustainability of the heritage sites.
	1.2 Capacity Building and Destination Management in order to deliver consistently high quality products	Mapping of all financed and potential heritage sites, thematic trails	- mapping of material and immaterial heritage - mapping of state of conservation -mapping of thematic roads - mapping of 'events' or potential ones -mapping of thematic roads related to accommodation/restaurant facilities; - mapping of trails connected to natural and cultural heritage.
	1.3 MANAGEMENT	B. Establishing a long-term cooperation relationship with the Managing Authority	- active involvement in the on-going process of intermediary evaluation and revision process of Interreg Ro-Hu 2014-2020 - the introduction of the networking concept/practice as preparatory action for the next programme - presenting a brochure with the good practices and recommendations resulting from the EPICAH project - promoting BP during the events with beneficiaries

9. Financial plan (summary)

There are no foreseen costs, all activities will be implemented using own resources of the involved stakeholders.

10.Implementation calendar

January 2020- December 2021

11. Indicators (performance/results/outputs)

The result of the proposed Action Plan should be an improvement of the policy instrument Interreg Romania-Hungary Programme for a better preservation, promotion and use of the historical, cultural, natural and immaterial heritage of the Ro- Hu cross border area. The offer and quality of tourism products and services is to be furthered, based on joint efforts and initiatives; new sustainable employment and business opportunities in the sector opened by joint cross-border efforts, and sustainable cultural, social and economic exchanges across the border should be fostered.

The self-defined indicator for the implementation of the action plan can be stated as such: At least 10 participant/active stakeholders, including the program bodies, actively involved in the valorisation and exchange of experiences, learning from each other and working together, supported to develop public-private cooperation models for the sustainable management and marketing of heritage and for the implementation of the above mentioned activities.

12. Risk Assessment Plan set up (steps to be taken if action plan is not approved)

A considered risk is that the MA would not approve the Action Plan in its final form, with a strong impact on the implementation of it. Although the activities would be still carried away by the interested stakeholders, their aim would not be fully reached.

Another considerable risk is of not having similar objectives selected as structural objectives for the next programming period, as, although an extended and transparent consultancy process started, no decision was yet taken, and delays in the timetable for the launching and implementation of programs with European funding and the risk of de-commitment, having a low effect for implementing the present AP, as it targets the present programming period.

Another risk would be the planned reduction of the co-financing rate to 70% for European territorial cooperation which, added to the non-increase in the level of pre-financing, now 0, introduces the risk of significantly reducing the participation in implementing the proposed Action Plan, but also in further Interreg projects, for many relevant institutions that play an important role in the territories of cooperation, but with less financial capacity.

In the case the Action Plan is not approved, the actions foreseen in the Action Plan can still be implemented, at least partially and with less impact, by the Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association.

13. Monitoring the implementation of Action Plan (follow-up of the MAs action plan implementation - steps)

In order to ensure the implementation of the PA, the stakeholders with responsibilities will make reporting, monitoring and organizing regulations - appointing dedicated teams to achieve the agreed plan, which will meet periodically and report to ADI County SM.

Regarding the stage of implementation of the Regional Action Plan Ro-Hu, the majority of the actors directly or indirectly involved in the preparation of the document will be responsible for the implementation of the actions they have undertaken, under direct coordination of the Satu

Mare partner ADI Judet SM. They will also engage, together with MA, JTS and the NGO sector, and in the process of monitoring the implementation of the ROP Ro-Hu and will be part of the Monitoring Committee to be set up locally after approval of the document.

Concerning the categories of stakeholders who will not directly engage in implementing actions and monitoring the Plan, particularly citizens, visitors and tourists, they will be able to offer real feedback, especially direct attendance at activities during local implementation as well as public consultation and civic creativity.

14. Main conclusions and recommendations for the Managing Authority for the programming process for Interreg Ro-Hu 2021-2027 (stress out the importance and added value of the implementation of the actions proposed).

POLICY RECCOMENDATIONS

At programme level

► An intermediate evaluation of the IP implementation, from the perspective of sustainable use of heritage objectives through tourism

► Changes in programme governance:

- o Including new evaluation criteria or reformulating existing criteria related to the projects' contribution to the development of sustainable tourism;

- o Introducing heritage use and tourism strategies/plans in the list of evaluation criteria;

- o Including new types of activities in the category of eligible activities: cultural and creative activities aimed at the activation of rehabilitated objectives, innovative interpretation and guiding activities, etc;

- o Allowing objectives/their public spaces to be used temporarily for activations – enabling creative communities, through their own financial contribution amounting to a specific percentage, to transform degraded spaces (or to contribute to rehabilitation projects) and, in turn, to use those spaces for a certain period of time;

- o Including grant/financial tool systems to support the development of community, cultural and creative activities in the intervention area (depending on the specifics of the rehabilitated objective), thus supporting the activation of heritage objectives.

- o Including the good practices and recommendations resulting from the EPICAH project, as well as the results of the implementation of local activities, and promoting them (so as to be included in the relevant county strategies), during the events with beneficiaries, in the development/planning process of the future Interreg Programme.

At local/regional level

► supporting the financed objectives with examples of good practices from the activities of marketing, digitisation and interpretation;

► supporting a higher number of visitors to the financed heritage objectives as follows:

(1) promoting them through the cultural routes of each region,

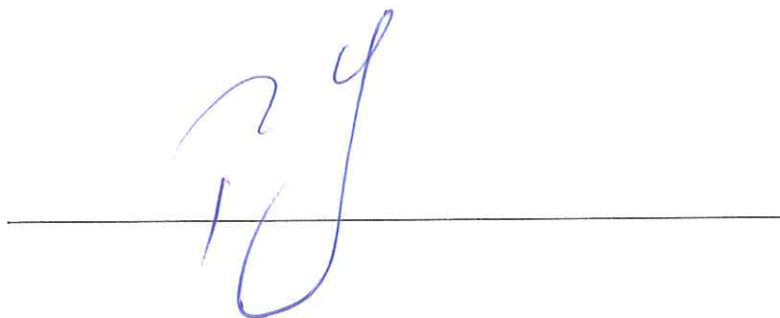
(2) by activating them through events;

► Developing public-private cooperation models for the sustainable management and marketing of heritage and for the implementation of the abovementioned activities.

Drafted :Daniela Culic -CCIA Satu Mare, expert

Signature Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association

President, Pataki Csaba





Ministerul Lucrărilor Publice, Dezvoltării și
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Către: Doamna Daniela CULIC

Director general, Camera de Comerț, Industrie și Agricultură Satu Mare

Str. Decebal nr. 4, Satu Mare,

Județul Satu Mare

Stimată doamnă director general,

Ca urmare a solicitării dumneavoastră prin adresa nr. 3003/10.03.2020, înregistrată la MLPDA cu nr. 40346/10.03.2020, vă comunicăm că Autoritatea de Management a Programului Interreg V-A România-Ungaria agreează conținutul Planului de Acțiune Regional (versiunea transmisă în data de 10.03.2020), elaborat prin Proiectul EPICAH, finanțat în cadrul Programului INTERREG EUROPE, condiționat de eliminarea următoarelor referiri:

- La pag. 19: în cadrul punctului 2 ("Acțiune"), vă rugăm să renunțați la a doua și a treia liniuță, privind contribuția la evaluarea intermediară a implementării [...], respectiv implicarea activă în procesul de evaluare intermediară aflat în derulare și în procesul de revizuire a Programului Interreg V-A România-Ungaria. De asemenea, în tabelul de la paginile 19-20, vă rugăm să eliminați din celula definită prin intersecția ultimului rând cu ultima coloană, referirile la contribuția la evaluarea intermediară a implementării, respectiv implicarea activă în procesul în derulare privind evaluarea intermediară și în procesul de revizuire a Programului Interreg V-A România-Ungaria (a doua și a treia liniuță).

Justificarea se bazează pe faptul că, după cum am precizat și în răspunsul transmis prin adresa 168054/12.2019, evaluarea implementării Programului Interreg V-A

