

## INTERREG VI-A NEXT ROMANIA-REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### ANNEX

#### TEMPLATE FOR INTERREG PROGRAMMES

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1. **Joint programme strategy:** main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. **Programme area** (not required for Interreg C programmes)

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The programme area of Interreg VI-A NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova covers the programme area of the four Romanian counties of Botoşani, Iaşi, Vaslui, and Galaţi, and the whole territory of the Republic of Moldova. The area covers a total surface of 54,089.80 km<sup>2</sup> and a border length of 681.4 km. Of the total programme area, 37.42% of the area is represented by the four Romanian counties and 62.58% by the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

1.2. **Joint programme strategy:** Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learned from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

The present document is drafted based on the Territorial Analysis, which included an overall view of the cooperation area, and a more in-depth analysis focused on the objectives formulated for the area by the Joint Paper on Interreg NEXT Strategic Programming, as well as an additional one approved by Programme’s Joint Programming Committee. The conclusions of the Territorial Analysis have also been adjusted with the contribution of the authorities of the two participating countries and the input of stakeholders collected during the consultations held by the Managing Authority. The cut-off date for the statistical data in most cases is 2019, as the document had sometimes to be adapted to the lack of comparable statistical data between the two countries, as some indicators are missing or are different in the two states.

**POPULATION AND TERRITORY**

The programme area has a total of 5,593,810 inhabitants, out of which 36.7% reside on the Romanian side of the border, while 63.3% on the Moldovan side.

COUNTRY	ELIGIBLE REGIONS	TERRITORY (km <sup>2</sup> )	POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL	DENSITY (people/ km <sup>2</sup> )
Republic of Moldova	whole territory	33,843.50	3,542,708.00	1,527,483.00	2,015,225.00	79.30
Romania	4 counties					
	Botoşani	4,986.00	379,622.00	155,423.00	224,199.00	91.30
	Iaşi	5,476.00	793,559.00	369,557.00	424,002.00	172.40
	Vaslui	5,318.00	373,863.00	153,372.00	220,491.00	93.90
	Galaţi	4,466.30	504,058.00	273,956.00	230,102.00	140.60
<b>TOTAL</b>		54,089.80	5,593,810.00	2,479,791.00	3,114,019.00	

A large part of the population of the programme area lives in high-density urban centres, like Iaşi, Galaţi, and Chişinău municipalities. These urban centres have become gravitational

centres for both population and economic flows. The analysis showed that 44.33% of the population in the programme area live in urban areas and 55.67% in rural areas.

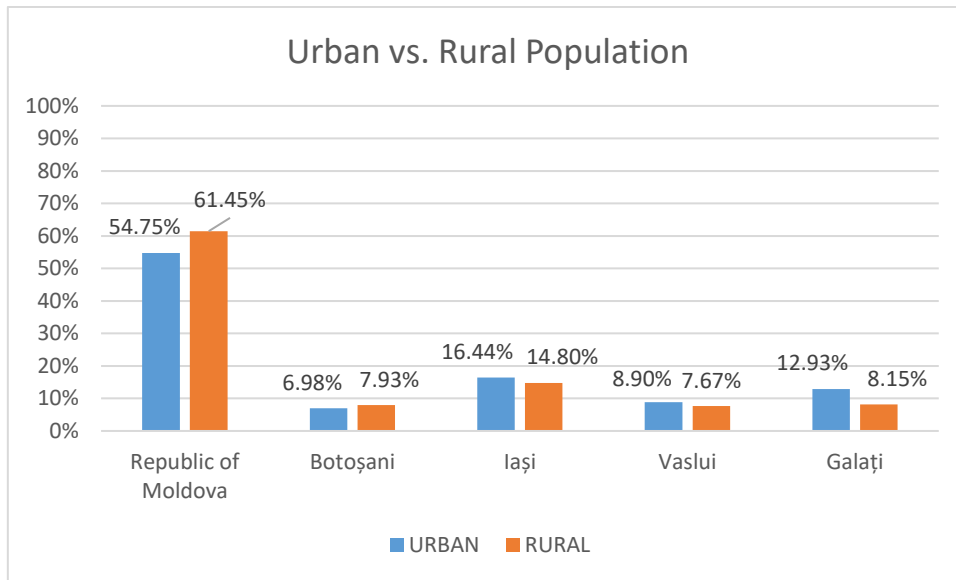


Figure no.1 - Distribution of population in the urban and rural environment

The population of the Republic of Moldova is relatively young, 46.4% of the population being up to 35, while in Romania there is an increase of percentage of the population of 60 years old and above, from 21.7% (in 2015) to 23% (in 2018). The adult population of Romania (15-59) represents 62.3% of the total population, a decrease with 290.2 thousand from 2015. In Romania, the natural population growth was of -3.9 (rate out of 1,000 inhabitants), while in the Republic of Moldova was of -1.0 in the same reference time.

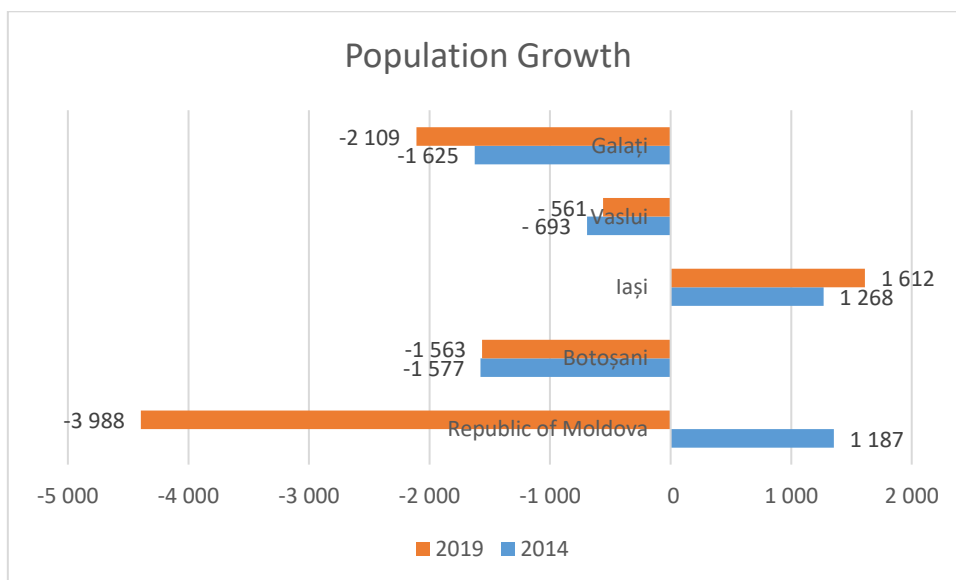


Figure no.2 - Population growth in the years of 2014 and 2019 for Republic of Moldova and Romanian counties

The average age of the resident population of Romania was 41.9 in 2018, as in the Republic of Moldova the same indicator was 38.5.

A major problem in the area is the outward migration trend. Even though large urban centres manage to attract a large portion of the internal and external immigration, outward

migration is still significant. In the year of 2017, 23,156 Romanians are registered to have settled their residence abroad, while 2,111 persons from Moldova settled abroad.

### ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

At a first glance, the GDP analysis in both countries may indicate an optimistic increase in figures per capita. But correlating GDP growth with birth rate decrease during the recent years, one may draw the conclusion that the population welfare state has not met any improvement, but, on the contrary, there is a decline in both states, more visible in the Republic of Moldova.

While in Moldova the GDP per capita has risen to EUR 4,012 EUR (2019), the same indicator reaches 11,530 EUR in Romania, rate that remains anyway significantly below the EU28 average.

GDP structure is rather similar in both partner countries, with an overwhelming share representing services (above 57%), whereas agriculture has a larger share in the Republic of Moldova, as compared to Romania.

Although traditionally Moldova's economy relies heavily on its agriculture sector, featuring fruits, vegetables, wine, wheat, and tobacco, in recent years the IT sector has become one of the most developed and dynamic sectors of the national economy. The volume of exports of the IT sector, according to the data of the National Bank of Moldova<sup>1</sup>, in 2021 was 6.4 billion lei (approx.3.2 mill. EUR). Currently, within Moldova IT Park, 1,055 companies operate, of which 182 with foreign capital from about 40 countries<sup>2</sup>. It is essential to note that the balance between these two sub-sectors - digital content and communications infrastructure - speaks of a qualitative change of this sector from consumption of networks and Internet access services to IT products and services with the highest added value, export-oriented. One of the key projects aimed at stimulating the growth of the IT industry and innovation is the virtual IT park, launched on January 1, 2018. Over two years of activity, over 500 companies have been registered in the park, of which 300 are IT companies with foreign capital.

In recent years there was an increase in the share of exports with other product categories than those mentioned above, namely: food, alcoholic beverages, non-alcoholic vinegar, tobacco; textiles and textile articles; machinery and equipment, electrical equipment and parts thereof; equipment for recording or reproducing sound and images.

This indicates that the local industry (light industry, food, machinery/ technical equipment production) is developing and modernizing progressively, and domestic products are becoming increasingly competitive on foreign markets.

Romania's GDP growth was driven by private consumption and an investment rebound. Investment rose strongly, growing at 17.8 percent year-on-year (y-o-y), owing to strong performance in construction. Exports grew by 3.5 percent, reflecting weaker demand in major export markets, while imports remained buoyant (up 7.2 percent). Construction (up 16.8 percent) and information and communications technology (ICT) (up 8.1 percent) were the main drivers of production.

With a decreasing inflation rate from 6.4 in 2016 to 3.8 in 2020, Moldova follows the general trend of EU member states. Romania registered an inflation rate of 2.6 in 2020, though the COVID-19 pandemic put a high pressure on this economic indicator for the future. In 2021,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bnm.md/ro>

<sup>2</sup> <https://moldovaitpark.md/>



the inflation rate in both countries increased considerably to 13.9% in the Republic of Moldova and 5.1% in Romania.

### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 CRISIS

During the year of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, both Romania and Moldova (as most countries of the world) have registered an economic crisis and radical budgetary challenges. From increased rate of unemployment and companies closing down, to increased health sector expenditures, an overall shift of the economy has been registered.

Apart from the health crisis caused by COVID-19, the pandemic triggered a serious economic crisis which affected all sectors, but most of all the private one (tourism including HORECA industry, transportation etc.), with a huge impact on small enterprises. Unemployment levels reached worrying figures and governments focused on measures of recovery directed to the most exposed ones. Romanian Government provided a fiscal stimulus of 4.4 percent of GDP in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This consisted of financial help to small companies during the lockdown period, negotiated bank loan instalment suspension for the population. Extra payments were made to the healthcare system and procurement of equipment was financed for hospitals and for schools as well, as the on-line schooling became the only solution since March 2020 to May 2021 to most categories of students. On the other side, the Moldovan Government in order to reduce the COVID-19 impact on the economic sector, especially on SMEs, has taken a series of measures, including: suspension or reduction of VAT and other tax obligations payments; implementation of various economic incentives to support national tourism; measures referring to unemployment, specifically, different subsidies for employers and regulation of the remote work.

Affected by the pandemic and the severe drought, the economy of the Republic of Moldova contracted in 2020, the GDP registering a decrease of 7%. The main factors that determined this decline in GDP were the consumption of the population, which also decreased by 7%, followed by investments and stocks. On the supply side, quarantine measures led to a halt in trade and industrial production. The occupancy level has reached the minimum of the last five years. In 2021, the economy gradually began to recover, but Russia's military aggression against Ukraine sharply impacted the Moldovan economy.

At the heights of the COVID-19 crisis, the two countries supported each other through exchanges of specialists and health workers. Also, Romania provided support to the R. Moldova, in the form of medical equipment, healthcare workers and also donated thousands of vaccine doses to the Moldovan population. The actions were supported either by Romanian Government funds or by EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Furthermore, EU Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova is setting out plans for investments of up to €600 million between 2021 and 2024, in close cooperation with EU Member States and International Financial Institutions as part of a "Team Europe" approach, as well as with private investors.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Both participating countries have weaknesses related to high Carbon emissions levels, a low rate of renewable energies in the R. Moldova, a reduced area of forests in Romania and an intensive timber harvesting in the Republic of Moldova.

When referring to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the use of solid fuel and waste combustion for domestic heating and to industry in the R. Moldova, together with a low use of energy efficiency, is the main cause for air pollution. If in Romania (programme area), there are 14 public systems installed for monitoring air quality, on the whole territory of R. Moldova there are

9 manual monitoring systems in place. The governmental policies implemented by both countries positively impacted the reduction of the Carbon emissions, being in line with the European Union measures to meet the targets by 2030. A closer monitoring of air quality in both countries would help take up the measures to reduce air pollution and, therefore, improve life quality, especially in the main urban centres.

In 2019, the share of renewable energy for Romania was of 24.30, while Moldova had in 2019 a share of 23.84. Both countries should focus on increasing it and identifying sources of new energies for the use of public buildings and for population's use. As in both countries the growing trend of energy consumption per capita was around 10% in 2017 compared to 2016, this should determine national authorities to enhance the measures related to increase the share of renewable energy.

By financing activities related to public buildings rehabilitation (such as schools and hospitals) under Interreg NEXT programme priority 2, energy efficiency works may also be performed so as to contribute to the increase of this type of energy consumption in both countries.

MA will monitor the consistency of the financed actions with environmental provisions and commitments, especially for the actions related to infrastructure. The guidelines for applicants will include the recommendation to use best technologies for energy efficiency of buildings, as well as for resource efficiency.

Climate change is showing its impact on the programme area through an increase in the average temperature and changes in the precipitation regime, both with high regional and seasonal variability. Consequences are floods and drought distributed over the year with potential damage to human infrastructure, and heat waves (with impact on human health) and higher risks of forest fires. The past years faced an increase in average temperature, which, combined with drought, led to more frequent forest fires. The emergency intervention forces struggled with forest and fields fires in summer, which required immediate response and adequate equipment. The emergency intervention forces struggled with forest and fields fires in summer, which required immediate response and adequate equipment. Enhancing the use of alternative energy sources on the long run, together with actions aimed at improving the prevention and reaction in case of natural or man-caused disasters will increase the safety of the population in the programme area and will also help slow down climate change effects.

Waste management is a sensitive issue on both sides of the border, with municipal waste collection being an area of interest in order to develop adequate services to collect and to recycle the growing quantity of municipal and industrial waste produced. However, the limited budget of the programme, as well as the difficulty in identifying the cross border benefits of such investment determined not to include this specific objective on the list of those selected for financing under the current programme.

In terms of intensity of the use of forests resources from the clearing point of view, figures indicate quite a stable trend in the R. Moldova from 250 ha in 2016 to the same figure in 2019, while in the programme area of Romania no clearing of the forests resources were reported during 2015-2019. When talking about the use of the forests resources related to timber authorized for harvesting, while in the programme area of Romania there were no authorizations granted, in the R. Moldova the figures vary from 576 ha. in 2016 to 567 ha. in 2019. In this context, in order to contribute to the climate objectives, the programme will finance activities such as afforestation under the specific objective Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in

urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution. The same activity is foreseen as a measure to prevent natural disasters such as floods, by planting trees on the river banks (to be financed under specific objective Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches).

In 2019 the areas in the R. Moldova under the risk of flood are amounting 2,315 sq. km, whereas in Romania the figure is 14,564 sq.km. (no data is available for the individual counties located in the Romanian programme area). Investment is strongly needed on both sides of the border so as to prevent future disasters caused by floods and to better prepare authorities and population in the area.

### CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORT

Accessibility for Romania in the area through motorways and railways is slightly below average if compared to other member states. In the Republic of Moldova, the length of public roads is 9,359 km, out of which more than half (6,016.2 km) are local roads. No highways are available in the Republic of Moldova at present, as Romania reported 920 km of highways at the end of 2020.

The railway transportation has been declining in both countries, as the number of passengers carried by railways fell gradually.

In terms of air connectivity, Moldova has 2 airports with international links (Chişinău and Marculeşti), as in the programme area on the Romanian side there is only one airport in Iaşi, having international connections.

Since 28 April 2014, Moldovan citizens with a biometric passport can travel to the Schengen area without a visa.

Both participating countries need strong investment in the transport infrastructure sector, but the budget for such projects should be considerably consistent. Therefore, there can be concluded that contribution to large transport infrastructure could not have a significant impact in the area, because of the reduced allocation of Interreg NEXT Programme. However, access roads to basic socio-economic objectives rehabilitated/modernised through the programme may be financed under the respective priorities.

### SOCIAL CHALLENGES

In both countries we are witnessing an increased share of the aging population, doubled by an important part of the active population that decided to leave Romania or Republic of Moldova to work abroad.

Moreover, the constant growth of life expectancy in the Programme area is putting a huge pressure on the pension deficit.

In terms of temporary long duration migration, Romania is facing a growing trend of people leaving the country and the vast majority of the emigrants from both states are part of the active population leaving for better paid and sustainable jobs outside their countries.

Investment in public education is a constant need, whether we refer to digital infrastructure, modernisation of schools' buildings or continuous training for teachers so as to be better prepared to deal with modern challenges and adapt their teaching methods to the latest evolutions of society. Although situation in the Programme area improved following the COVID-19 pandemic, when IT devices were bought in order to create the prerequisite for online schooling, there is still a considerable need of financing in this sector.

The high vulnerability of the health system to global epidemics, for instance COVID-19, has demonstrated the need for reform to ensure universal access to essential services, safe, qualitative and affordable medicines and vaccines, robust social protection schemes and basic coverage.

An important problem of the structure of the healthcare workforce in the Republic of Moldova is related to the aging of the current professionals where, according to official data, in 2019, 30.27% of the 12,552 doctors were in the proximity of the retirement date. The same alarming situation is valid also for nurses, with 3,086 nurses being close to retirement in 2019. There are chances for this problem to even deepen in the years to come as the young doctors are not attracted to work in the existing conditions.

Other important issues related to healthcare domain in the Republic of Moldova refer to:

- lack of high-end medical infrastructure;
- the provision of human resources and poor technical equipment for medical institutions is an impediment to the implementation of new methods in medicine;
- unfair public access to primary healthcare services because of insufficient doctors in rural areas and lower population well-being;
- limited access for people from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (such as the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed etc.) to health services;
- imbalance in the provision of human resources in terms of geography and residence environment;
- low level of application/non-existence of modern information systems in the healthcare provision process (i.e. e-health);
- the migration of qualified medical personnel;
- uneven geographical distribution of resources for health institutions.

On the other hand, the healthcare system in the Romanian side of the programme area is characterized by the following main issues:

- a clear difference between the infrastructure and the complex cases to be solved in the 4 counties;
- the smaller hospitals are only treating uncomplicated diagnosed cases, referring to a large number of patients to county seat municipality hospitals;
- inequities in the healthcare services coverage between rural and urban area, especially in counties like Vaslui and Botoşani;
- not a clear evidence of the high-end medical devices and their respective level of usage in the public hospitals;
- lack of human resources, with a reduced number of doctors and nurses compared to the EU average. Moreover, the uneven distribution of the doctors is representing an additional barrier to the access to healthcare in programme area of Romania.
- lack of clear set of indicators targeting the quality of the medical act, so as to stimulate public hospitals to be more efficient.

Investment in health infrastructure and modern equipment, in staff training, in harmonising procedures from both sides of the border would level the quality of services provided for the population in the programme area and would attract more professionals to this field.

## TOURISM

Tourism is an important potential competitive asset for the programme area. The varied relief, the geographical positioning, the varied flora and fauna, and the cultural heritage of the area are key components that can form the base for developing the tourism infrastructure and services.

Having good international flight connection, with Iași Airport (RO) continuously developing and increasing the number of destinations across Europe, the potential of the whole area could be explored and included on the map of city breaks. Moreover, as Republic of Moldova has also become a strong actor on the winery market, this niche tourism could also be promoted, together with common historical sites which relate both countries.

Out of the total number of tourists each country had every year, 46% represent the foreign tourists Republic of Moldova had in 2019, while 11% were foreign tourist in the Romanian counties from the programme area the same year, with a peak of 19% in Iași and the lowest value in Botoșani (5% of the total number of tourists were foreign tourists).

A slight decrease of the number of accommodation facilities in the four Romanian counties has been registered from 2016 to 2019, while the Republic of Moldova registered a constant number of such facilities with a small ascendant trend. In 2021, out of the total number of these facilities resulted a capacity of tourist accommodation of 23,881 beds in Moldova and 8,457 beds in the Romanian counties from the programme area.

Sustainable tourism should be encouraged, so as to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Increasing the tourism services revenues coming from the foreign tourism, developing programmes to stimulate the domestic tourism, digitalization, together with developing tourism strategies would significantly contribute to the economic development of the programme area as well.

#### GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

At present, security in the South-East part of the European Union is under constant challenge, largely due to existing risks, threats and vulnerabilities. Therefore, the border area of Romania with the Republic of Moldova is very active, taking into account the threats that manifest in different forms. In order to meet these challenges, both Romania and the European Union are entitled to seek the most appropriate rapid response solutions to prevent and properly combat any form of laws breach and their negative impact. In order to address these evolving challenges, it is necessary to improve the interinstitutional cooperation of the relevant authorities in the two states.

The quality of the civil service in Republic of Moldova is negatively influenced by the relatively low remuneration of civil servants, which generates a substantial turnover of staff with impact on institutional memory and quality of public policies. Developing joint strategies in various fields of activity, together with joint training scheme for public servants would make public service more attractive and would increase the level of professionalism. Furthermore, discrepancies in terms of public policies between a member state and a non-EU country would be considerably diminished and would enhance cooperation between the two neighbouring countries.

According to the ex-post assessment of the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2016-2020 in the Republic of Moldova, which had as overall objective setting up of a modern, efficient, professional public administration, oriented towards providing high-quality public services, a positive trend towards reaching the strategic goal was ensured through the following elements:

- considerable restructuring of the central public administration - the public administration is now more uniform and leaner;
- regulated elements, required for making operational the integrated strategic public policy planning system;
- increased use of Information Technology (IT) in the public administration, with improved overall efficiency and increased access of citizens to better public services;
- improved business environment;

- standardized and simplified administrative procedures between public authorities and institutions on one side and citizens, and businesses on the other;
- defined procedural framework at the level of central public authorities on budget planning, consistent with the relevant national policy documents;
- operational framework for financial management and control;
- increasing transparency and efficiency of public procurement procedures;
- established solid legal and institutional bases for increasing human resources management in the civil service.

In Romania, EU-financed mainstream programmes have considerably contributed in the previous budgetary cycles to the reform of the public administration, to the development of public policies and strategies. Therefore, the administration in the Republic of Moldova could benefit of the experience already acquired by Romania, within cooperation projects aiming at exchanging experience and sharing best practices.

Prevention and fight against corruption have known considerable progress in both countries, but there is still room for improvement. Involvement of the civil society in reaching this aim would ensure a transparent objective approach.

Despite of the progress registered for both countries in terms of economic freedom and civil society involvement, cooperation in the areas of enhancing the institutional capacity and efficiency of public authorities is still needed.

#### MIGRATION AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

Both countries should make efforts in the field of capacity building on border management issues, so as to strengthen security of EU external borders and to protect supply chains. Joint development and governance strategies may help in addressing disparities and assist in dealing with their most visible effects, such as the increase in regular and irregular, temporary and permanent migration flows, as well as with organised crime.

Outward migration is an important issue throughout the programme area, as young adults leave for work or study (sometimes never returning) and leave behind a significant dependent population - formed out of children and elders.

Romania is facing a growing trend from 187,466 in 2015 to 238,926 people leaving Romania in 2018. 126,893 people left Republic of Moldova in 2015 compared to 155,322 in 2019. Studies conducted in both countries clearly show that the vast majority of the emigrants are part of the active population leaving for better paid and sustainable jobs outside the country.

The main challenge for the area will be to create the proper conditions to limit the outward migration of the young generations and the development of measures aimed at the increase of birth rates in counter-balancing the high death rates, thus creating a positive natural increase.

The Republic of Moldova is largely exposed to migration challenges, being at the same time a country of origin and destination.

The security of the EU borders, exposed in the context of the destabilization of the situation in the Eastern region, is affected by elements of crime, including organized crime, on the various segments of criminal phenomenon.

The day of 24 February 2022 introduced regional security on the top of the action list, expanding to managing new heights of manifestations of hybrid threats, terrorism, extremism, radicalization and trans-border crime.

Because of the military conflict in Ukraine, Republic of Moldova faced an unprecedented inflow of refugees and this number is of high pressure for the country with the population of at most 2,6 ml. citizens. These dynamics led to an increase in population by 15%, corresponding to the emerging of 2 new cities and is by far the largest concentration of refugees per capita.

So far, more than 1/3 mill. of Ukrainians have fled their country entering Moldova and approximately 100,000 are still in the country (mostly women), out of which half are children. More than 1/4 mill. persons transited Moldova (x20 time more border crossings). Over 6,000 asylum applications registered while an annually average is 100.

Data show that the illegal border crossings raised by 4,000% and registered massive influx of cash of 38.6 mill. EUR detected or declared, brought in by various nationalities fleeing from Ukraine. Moldovan border police is facing challenges both in view of the high number of arrivals and sharing a border with an active war zone.

New risks and criminal phenomena were registered, such as arms and ammunition trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling of financial means, precious metals and antiques and cult objects, trafficking in human beings and children, false documents etc.

Joint projects aiming at upgrading border-crossing infrastructure, enhancing information exchange and cooperation between border authorities at the local level or in improving governance via a more coordinated approach to management would contribute to safer EU external borders.

#### THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE MILITARY CONFLICT AND ENERGY CRISIS

In February 2022, Russia started a military aggression against Ukraine, country which borders both Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The military invasion of this neighbouring country caused massive destruction and put at high risk the population of Ukraine, as civilians (mostly women, children and elderly) found themselves forced to flee the danger of war. More than 1.2 million people crossed the borders of Ukraine's neighbouring countries of Romania, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary in the first 10 days after the war had started. These countries faced an unprecedented flow of refugees which needed shelter, basic supplies and support to reach their final destination or to settle and integrate in the communities which welcomed them.

Long queues of vehicles and pedestrians formed at the border crossing points, despite the border authorities' efforts to simplify procedures and to reduce waiting time as much as possible. This situation confirmed the importance of a solid cooperation at borders, of having common or similar procedures and high tech equipment to process an increased number of requests in a short time.

Even though European societies (and not only European) mobilised to send supplies to help refugees, the hardest impact of such flows laid on Ukraine's neighbouring countries. Hardly recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic, the health, educational and social protection systems in Romania and Republic of Moldova had to put in place all emergency intervention equipment and staff, to provide temporary shelters and to manage a large flow of people, and to integrate the children into an educational system.

The military conflict in Ukraine could result in one of Europe's largest humanitarian crises, with seven million Ukrainian expected to be displaced and 18 million to be affected by the conflict, from of a total population of 41 million citizens. Having harmonised mechanisms and legal framework between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, to cope with this crisis, would help diminish the social and economic consequences in the border regions.

Adoption of the *Temporary Protection Directive* mechanism, which grants immediate and temporary protection to displaced people from non-EU countries who have been forced to leave their homes due to an armed conflict, endemic violence or systematic violations of their human rights would lay an increased pressure on Romania, as a Member State, which may have to deal with a high number of refugees on a longer term, especially in the border counties. Developing projects for a better preparedness of local authorities on the Romanian side of the border, together with the Moldovan counterpart may significantly contribute to the resilience of the host communities dealing with the flow of refugees and also reinforce social cohesion.

Heavy economic sanctions applied to Russia by the European Union will have their impact on all countries, and the economies of Romania and Republic of Moldova will have to identify mechanisms to surpass the effects of such sanctions. A better cooperation at the level of state institutions together with a closer cooperation of the civil society should be supported within projects financed under Interreg Specific Objective 1 - *A better cooperation governance*.

Year 2021 came with new challenges in the energy field that have been sharpened by the aggression of Ukraine. At the end of 2021, energy prices in Europe continued to rise, while the energy crisis began to affect indicators of economic growth. The Republic of Moldova declared a state of emergency in the energy sector. As a response to the new challenges, and at the request of Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, the process for synchronisation of the Continental European Power System with the power systems of Ukraine and Republic of Moldova was accelerated. This process of synchronisation has been ongoing since 2017 and was possible thanks to the previous studies carried out within a large scale project under the Programme ENPI Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova. Currently, the stability of the Ukrainian and Moldovan systems is ensured by Continental Europe TSOs.

Moreover, the gas pipeline Iasi-Ungheni, linking the Romania and the Republic of Moldova, built also within a large scale project financed under the ENPI Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova, was extended to Chisinau, so that may offer an alternate source gas supply for the Moldovan population.

## SINERGIES AND COMPLEMENTARITIES

The use of EU funds under the programme must be considered in strong connection with other national/mainstream programmes and cooperation programmes covering the same regions, with macro-regional strategies and other existing financing solutions for the participating countries.

Romania benefits, in the programme area, of regional and sectoral financial support which also contributes to the implementation of Policy Objective 2 - A greener low-carbon Europe and its neighbourhood and Policy Objective 4 - A more social Europe and its neighbourhood via North-East Regional Operational Programme (for Iași, Vaslui, Botoșani counties) and South-East Regional Development Region Regional Operational Programme (for Galați county) or main stream programmes, such as National Plan for Recovery and Resilience, Sustainable Development Operational Programme, Health Operational Programme, Education and Employment Operational Programme, Inclusion and Social Dignity Operational Programme, Just Transition Operational Programme (for Galați county only). While the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience is a temporary recovery instrument, closely linked to the priorities aimed at long-term sustainable and inclusive recovery that promotes the green and digital transitions, the Interreg NEXT Programme fosters long lasting partnerships tackling well-defined objectives and addressing challenges with a cross-border dimension.



Investments in health infrastructure and services, in schools' endowment and staff training will be performed within the programme, having in mind the cross border benefits. Unlike mainstream programmes, Interreg NEXT will look for the cooperation dimension of the investments, with the aim to respond to common problems on both sides of the border. The budgetary constraints of the cooperation programme, as compared to the national programmes will make Interreg a complementary tool to solve local problems and a close articulation among all EU financing instruments in the area will increase the efficiency of the spending.

The composition of the Monitoring Committee will include representatives of the national and local authorities responsible for the mainstream programmes (i.e. Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Regional Development Agencies as managing authorities for the regional operational programmes), which will ensure a close coordination with these programmes when selecting the operations and the avoidance of double financing. The MA will systematically provide information regarding calls for projects, related events and all operations which will be selected for funding. When relevant, representatives of the other Interreg, mainstream or other EU programmes may be invited to promotion events, for jointly promoting synergies among partners.

Moreover, operations envisaging border management are financed under the *Instrument for border management and visa policy*, benefiting of more than 90 million Euro only for similar types of interventions as those foreseen under ISO 2 - A safer and more secure Europe.

The programme ensures, through the financed activities, complementarities with the Connecting Europe Facility and Integrated Border Management Fund: investments in equipment for efficient border mobility, trainings, soft measures as well as small infrastructure interventions related to border crossing points.

The Republic of Moldova developed several national financing schemes (such as National Ecological Fund, National Fund for Regional and Local Development, etc.) dedicated to environmental issues, to energy efficiency investments and water and sewage connectivity, which will be put in place starting with 2021. Furthermore, a new partnership of the Government of the Republic of Moldova with USAID, covering 2020-2025 period is in place. By means of this, direct assistance will be provided to public institutions to catalysing citizen engagement in their communities to drive demand for accountable governance and stronger democratic institutions.

The drafting of the present Interreg NEXT programme envisages potential synergies with other cooperation programmes such as Interreg Danube (projects aiming at promoting climate change adaptation in the Danube region, water management actions, protecting and preserving the biodiversity in ecological corridors and eco-regions of transnational relevance in the Danube Region, accessible and inclusive quality services in education, training and lifelong learning, valorisation of local cultural and natural heritage and improvement of accessibility to this, integrated governance models), Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, (in the field of disaster risk prevention) and it also aims at contributing to the objectives of EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The Programme also creates synergies with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, a sea basin initiative that aims at supporting regional cooperation for a more sustainable Blue Economy in the Black Sea, developed in the broader framework of the Black Sea Strategy. Republic of Moldova and Romania, together with the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Russian Federation, Republic of Turkey and Ukraine, all BSEC Member States are the participating countries. The main areas of cooperation of the Black Sea Synergy where the

programme can contribute are: managing movement and improving security, fighting climate change, education and employment and social affairs.

The programme area is covered by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). This Strategy is supported at the highest political level by all participating countries, which are therefore ready to support those actions arising from its revised Action Plan, provided they also contribute to the specific objectives of the cross-border regions. This requires a good and proactive coordination with the EUSDR stakeholders. The Strategy brings together 14 countries along the Danube river, among which Romania and Moldova.

The Strategy focuses on four pillars, and within each pillar, concrete cooperation actions specify priority areas: connecting the region (improve mobility and transport connections, encourage more sustainable energy, promote culture and tourism); protecting the environment (restore and maintain water quality, manage environmental risks, preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the air and soil quality); building prosperity (develop the Knowledge Society, support the competitiveness of enterprises, invest in people and skills); strengthening the region (step up institutional capacity and cooperation, work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime).

Interreg VI-A NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova Programme strategy will contribute to the following EUSDR objectives:

- connecting the region (promote culture and tourism);
- protecting the environment (manage environmental risks);
- strengthening the region (step up institutional capacity and cooperation, work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime).

The table below shows a clear image of the Programme contribution to EUSDR objectives:

Proposed PO and SOs → EUSDR Pas ↓	PO2 (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	PO 2 (vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	PO4 (ii) Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	PO4 (v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community- based care	PO4(vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	ISO 1 A better cooperation governance	ISO 2 A safer and more secure Europe
PA 1a Water Mobility							
PA 1b Rail-Road-Air Mobility							
PA 2 Sustainable Energy							
PA 3 Culture and Tourism, People to People							
PA 4 Water quality							
PA 5 Environmental risks							
PA 6 Biodiversity and landscapes,							

quality of air and soils							
PA 7 Knowledge Society							
PA 8 Competitiveness of enterprises							
PA 9 People and skills							
PA 10 Institutional Capacity and Cooperation							
PA 11 Security							

## HORIZONTAL ASPECTS

The objectives of the programme take into account the DNSH (do no significant harm) principle. The types of actions included in the programme have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

Furthermore, the specific objectives set by the programme shall also be pursued in line with the objective of promoting sustainable development, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the DNSH principle. Thus, **31.41%** of the projects financial allocation of the future programme is dedicated to achieving the climate objectives, as set out in article 6 CPR, Annex I CPR, recital 5 Interreg and **15.02%** of the financial envelope is earmarked to biodiversity pursuant to the ambition set in recital 11 CPR.

The New European Bauhaus initiative will guide the implementation of actions, as an element of context, providing opportunities for projects to contribute, by embedding elements such as: *reconnecting with nature, regaining a sense of belonging, prioritising the places and people that need it most and fostering long term, life cycle and integrated thinking in the industrial ecosystem.*

Projects can contribute with a wide range of solutions, from educational and cultural activities, which play a key role in the shift of paradigm towards new behaviour and values, to implementation of nature-based solutions which address floods, for example, while making the built environment more attractive.

Creating strong connections with nature, embracing sustainability and inclusion while tackling unsustainable use of resources and waste are all attainable goals within the Programme`s financing priorities.

Also, integrating **5R (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle)** measures, implementing solutions for making cities greener and using sustainably sourced nature-based materials and a zero pollution ambition model, throughout the programme, from environmental actions to tourism, are horizontal objectives which can contribute to the New European Bauhaus initiative implementation.

Fostering healthy, sustainable living by improving/ rehabilitating the common spaces to be used by the local community and making use of the cultural assets (heritage, arts, local craft etc.) and natural assets (landscapes, natural resources etc.) projects can offer opportunities for connection and social interaction, including for people at risk of exclusion or poverty, the binding element that creates a sense of belonging.

Safeguarding the protection of the fundamental rights is both a precondition for obtaining financing and a priority during projects implementation, which will be required to comply with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Ensuring access and opportunities for all, removing barriers to healthcare, education and culture, ensuring availability of timely and quality public services are objectives enshrined in the design of the Programme with sustainability at the core of the Programme interventions.

Investments under all policy objectives will ensure respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with horizontal principles on gender equality, non-discrimination (based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation), and accessibility in all stages of programming and implementation.

In order to ensure that full functionality for all exchanges between beneficiaries and all the programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange, the Programme has signed the license agreement for the JeMS, developed by INTERACT on 19 May 2021, in accordance with Annex XIV of the CPR. Also, using JeMS and the Harmonised Implementation Tools underpinning it, will ensure a higher degree of coordinated approach among the Interreg programmes in the field of horizontal principles during the entire life-cycle of the financed projects (preparation, selection, implementation, monitoring and reporting), pursuant to Article 9 CPR and Article 22 (2) Interreg Regulation.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Most actions proposed for financing under Interreg VI-A NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova are a continuation of the investment made by ENI CBC Romania-Republic of Moldova Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020 and ENPI CBC Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013, however new levels of cooperation and innovative ideas are to be explored by the new programme. Covering the same area, the 2014-2020 programme financed projects in the fields of education, health, disaster prevention, fight against organized crime, cultural heritage, but also transport and ITC infrastructure and research and innovation, the latter not being addressed in the present programme anymore.

The needs that generated the programme strategy for the 2014-2020 programme are still valid for the programme area, while additional issues arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis and the humanitarian crisis caused by the military conflict in Ukraine. With a high number of over 200 applications submitted, the stakeholders proved a high interest for cooperating in the area.

In the past programming periods the strategies of ENPI CBC Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 and ENI CBC Romania-Republic of Moldova 2014-2020 programmes aimed to improve the economic and social development of the area, as well as to enhance the protection of the environment and prevention and management of the emergency situations by joint actions.

The issues targeted by the Policy Objective 2 were addressed by both ENPI and ENI programmes. The ENPI program dedicated a Priority to development of long term solutions to the environmental problems faced by the border areas, particularly those associated with water and sewerage management systems, as well as environmental emergencies, where a co-ordinated approach is essential, while the ENI programme only focuses on issues related to prevention and intervention in case of natural and man-made disasters and management of emergency situations.

Although still significant in terms of needs of the programme area, actions that could improve the mobility in the area are no longer addressed, as they gave raise in the previous programmes to multiple issues linked to the ownership/administration of the infrastructure, high costs associated with the investment, long implementing periods and low level of interest of the relevant stakeholders in submitting and implementing projects.

Also, addressing the significant common challenges in the field of health, education, culture and sustainable tourism has been part of the strategies of the previous ENPI and ongoing ENI programmes covering this area. The interest for these fields in the ENI programme was significant, and tends to continue, according to the conclusions drawn following the various levels of consultations of stakeholders held during the programming process. The projects involved a wide array of partners like local and regional authorities, vocational, technology and sanitary schools, universities, local, municipal and regional hospitals, and NGOs. The partnerships built to implement these projects

proved to be creative, and even innovative for the cross border area, resourceful and committed and may be a valuable starting point for future partnerships and capitalisation.

Border management issues and linked infrastructure were also addressed during the 2014-2020 programming period. The projects contracted during the 2014-2020 financing exercise went beyond the programme targets as regards the number of participants involved in joint capacity building activities (exchanges of experience, study visits, trainings etc.), and the facilities of police, border police and custom services from the programme area modernized with program support. The field attracted participation of central, regional and local level law enforcement authorities, in partnership with local administrations in some cases, cooperating to find strategies, plans, instruments and adequate means to prevent and fight against the cross border criminality.

The new Interreg NEXT programme will build on the existing knowledge and cooperation experience gained in the previous exercises, and use the positive results of the former projects, in order to generate future developments.

Romania-Republic of Moldova 2014-2020 ENI programme has been providing adequate support to its potential applicants in the project's generation phase, using various channels and tools. Face-to-face information and training events and partnership forum organised in the programme area were considered among the most useful tools by potential applicants. However, since the restrictions caused by COVID-19 pandemic have forced the programme to seek for hybrid approaches without diminishing content quality, the online environment is worth being creatively explored. Renewed or upgraded tools and modalities to develop the capacities of potential applicants and further, of programme beneficiaries, need to be considered in this changing environment. Examples can range from e.g. tutorials, web-based partner search facility, online webinars/workshops, to online learning or helpdesk platforms. Project generation could also be supported by a web-library of results following the 2014-2020 exercise, aiming to inform and inspire the interested applicants, providing them hints and ideas about how to replicate, multiply or continue past achievements, while avoiding duplication.

Programme terminology, updated in accordance with the new regulations, must be adequately explained in the Guidelines and during the calls for proposals. The new approach to the intervention logic at programme and project level must be highlighted to ensure that the proposals received, assessed and selected are consistent with EU concepts and directions.

Particular attention needs to be paid to applicants intending to execute infrastructure components requiring, as part of the application package, technical documentations to prove project maturity and preparedness for implementation. Since significant differences exist, in this respect, between legal provisions in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the Guidelines should, with the support of national actors, make clear the specificities in order to limit the number of clarifications requested during the assessment process. Similarly, it is important that any national particularity impacting the content of the application package be considered beforehand and made explicit in the Guidelines for applicants.

The administrative burden at projects' submission can be further reduced by limiting the number of documents required in the application package only to those absolutely necessary and relevant for the purpose of evaluation and selection, using the electronic monitoring system and fully switching submission and evaluation to paper-free mode.

The application form will follow the template developed by INTERACT, possibly adjusted according to the results of the consultations and the decisions of the Monitoring Committee.

The evaluation process was highly prolonged in the 2014-2020, therefore for the purpose of an efficient, equitable and good quality evaluation, aiming to also avoid the risk of de-commitment, the 2021-2027 programme must seek to streamline the entire process and the mechanisms supporting it, capitalizing on the lessons learnt, confidence built during the processes carried out during 2014-2020 period and through a deeper commitment of all parties involved in the process, while considering roles and responsibilities of each party. To this end, all programme structures must join efforts for an optimal use of programme resources with a keen eye on the desired results - good quality projects selected, financed and fully implemented. A first step would be to better focus the assessment efforts on the search of projects that have strong cross border character and clear cross-border relevance, and also good operational features supporting smooth implementation in case they are selected.

When assessing projects, a special attention will be paid to the evaluation of synergies with national/regional programmes in the programme area, as well as to the avoidance of double financing. The Monitoring Committee will include as members and/or observers representatives of the national and regional authorities in charge with mainstream programmes, as well as regional programmes, i.e. Romanian Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Regional Development Agencies as managing authorities for the regional operational programmes. As for Republic of Moldova, there are in place from the previous programming period mechanisms of consultation and coordination at national level that will continue to work to avoid the risk of double funding and ensure the synergies with other funds (i.e. National Working Group). Their input in the decision making process concerning the operations to be financed will ensure complementarity among all EU financing sources in the programme area and efficient use of funds. Nevertheless, the MA will include in the consultation process for selection of projects the EC and the EC Delegation in Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, the double financing risks will be eliminated by means of specific requirements provided in the guidelines for applicants and rigorously checked during projects' evaluation.

Although unexpected circumstances delayed and created repeated bottlenecks during contracting and implementation, the 2014-2020 programme remained attractive for the beneficiaries, while the trust capital in programme structures and EU funding remained positive, thus facilitating a smooth and collaborative working environment. Direct cooperation between regional or local stakeholders, and the programme to unblock certain specific implementation challenges and keep projects on the track has proved to be necessary and efficient. Given the partnership principle, ensuring local ownership over the results is a practice worth to be continued, or even formalized in the NEXT programme procedures.

Having in view 2014-2020 experiences and the orientation towards simplification given by the new regulations, the programme mission will be to review and adjust its internal monitoring procedures, making the most and the best from the risks assessment approach in respect to management verifications.

Attention will also be paid to accelerate, through specific mechanisms at programme level, the public spending and payments towards the beneficiaries, while orientation towards timely results at project level must be strong and clear.



Paper-free monitoring is a long pursued goal and the programme's intention is to make extensive use of JEMS to ensure, to the extent possible, a real time monitoring through the facilities provided by the e-system. Access will be open to all the actors from both participating countries while the administrative burden on beneficiaries and programme structures will thus be reduced.

The programme must join other programmes and initiatives, and look up for diversification of tools, means, and modalities to communicate on the results, and also for relevant information reaching the European contributors about the cooperation area and efforts undergoing at the external EU borders.

During the implementation of the Programme, the Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support financing priorities (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

Respect of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, including for people with a migrant background, will be better emphasized during the implementation of projects, through the implementation procedures.

The participation of citizens in programme preparation and implementation will be encouraged so that to increase the awareness and programme ownership. This will be done through public consultation both in preparatory/programming phase and during implementation of programme. In particular, the programme will make publicly available the various drafts and the final programming document, but also the draft guidelines for applicants, on the programme website, and also on websites of national authorities in each country.

The practice installed during 2014-2020 to require projects to allocate at least 2% from their total direct costs (excluding infrastructure), to visibility measures proved to have positive results and should be maintained as a way to secure sufficient budget for impactful activities, along with an inventory of actions to be mandatorily performed by projects.

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>Policy Objective 2 - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches</p>	<p>Green communities</p>	<p>During the past decade, climate has reached considerable change in the programme area (and not only). From severe droughts to heavy rainfalls, population had to face extreme phenomena more often than in the past. The uncontrolled use of forests resources from the clearing point of view are considered to be one cause for landslides in the programme area. Both countries have shown a strong interest in actions concerning afforestation during the consultation process, with the aim of avoiding natural disasters such as landslides and floods.</p> <p>The consultation process showed a strong intention of the stakeholders activating in the field emergency situations in both countries to continue collaborating for the optimisation of the reaction of the professional service in case of emergency situations, for the improvement of preparedness and prevention of several types of disasters, both natural and man-made. A capitalisation of the previous cross-border EU funded projects in the field of disaster risk prevention would diminish the gap between the two countries in terms of prevention, preparedness and resilience in case of disasters, contributing to a better climate change adaptation. Developing modern mechanisms of monitoring and early warning for natural or/and man-made disasters represents a priority for the authorities. All the above, together with a raised degree of</p>

			<p>awareness of the population would help diminish material damages and loss of human lives in the border area communities.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
	(vii)Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	Green Communities	<p>Apart from raising the security of border communities threatened by natural disasters, investment in the preservation of nature biodiversity would contribute to restore endangered species and to bring new species in the area, resistant to climate change. The development of common management plans and strategies for protected areas together with their recognition at international level via official certification would help both countries increase their natural heritage and develop safe tourism in the programme area. Local communities would benefit of more opportunities to develop and would also become aware of the importance of preserving the biodiversity of the area.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
Policy Objective 4 - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	(ii) Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training;	Social Development across Borders	<p>Investment in public education is a constant need in both participating countries, although the allocated GDP percentage reached nearly 6 in 2019 in the Republic of Moldova, while in Romania the percentage increased from 2.8 in 2016 to 3.4 in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic brought important investment in equipment endowment of</p>

			<p>schools in both countries, when IT devices were bought in order to create the prerequisite for online schooling. However, the consultations held with central and local authorities in both countries revealed an urgent need of investment in education infrastructure, in modernising and endowing schools, universities, vocational education units, and public libraries, of creating new teaching resources. The human resource involved in the educational act also needs constant training and updating, therefore common development activities of the teaching skills and methods would contribute to harmonising the two educational systems and reduce disparities between the two countries. Exchange of experience of teachers and students, developing common curricula, common strategies in the field of education would also help bring the education systems in both countries to the same level and increase mobility in this field.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
	<p>(v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care</p>	<p>Social Development across Borders</p>	<p>In both countries there is a high risk of collapse of the public healthcare system by lack of doctors generated by brain drain, with young doctors leaving both Republic of Moldova and the programme area of Romania and, therefore, a decrease of the quality of the medical act and the response time.</p> <p>In the context of the above-mentioned demographic indicators, doubled also by the increase of the life expectancy and the</p>

			<p>growing aging trend, the healthcare workforce is a sensitive issue that needs to be tackled.</p> <p>Construction of new hospitals, rehabilitation and modernisation of the existing ones and, most important, endowment with high-end equipment would increase the quality of the medical act and the preparedness of the system in terms of infrastructure. Moreover, investment in medical staff training, exchange of experience, development of common procedures is the second condition for a strong resilient medical system. This would also help diminish the process of brain drain and would offer better condition for border communities to live in. The COVID-19 pandemic put the healthcare system at a structural test and revealed its weaknesses more than any period in the last decades. Together with other financing sources, the Programme may contribute to enhancing the system's capability of face current challenges together with any other exceptional situation including by enhanced partnership.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
	(vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	Social Development across Borders	<p>Tourism is an important potential competitive asset for the programme area. The common cultural heritage of the area is a key component that can form the base for developing the tourism infrastructure and services.</p>

			<p>Under the previous programming periods, projects in the field of cultural heritage have been implemented and proved to be of high interest for beneficiaries in the area. Several of them have also been continued along two programming periods (i.e. rehabilitation of Soroca Fortress etc.) as these require a great amount of funds to be invested and in most of the cases there are several stages of works to be performed in order to have a historic monument restored and included in the tourist circuit.</p> <p>In an area sharing plenty of historic and cultural sites, with well-kept traditions, investment in tourism would significantly contribute to the development of local economies of the border communities, by attracting a higher number of tourists and encouraging local crafts. Promoting these touristic assets is a key component of this process, together with the investment in reconditioning and digitizing the cultural heritage sites.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
Interreg Specific Objective 1 - A better cooperation governance	(b) Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	Cooperation across borders	Romania, as a member state of the European Union, has a long experience of accessing and implementing EU funded projects. Authorities at national and regional/local level may share their expertise with Moldovan counterparts and both parties may work together to identify common solutions to the problems of the programme area. Drafting common development strategies in

			<p>various fields of action, exchanging experience via study visits, developing ITC tools, drafting joint protocols, setting up new legislative measures to help cross border cooperation would significantly improve the relations between the 2 participating countries and would help reduce disparities in terms of institutional capacity. Also, border mobility will be enhanced following investment in new equipment, in development of joint procedures, techniques etc.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
Interreg Specific Objective 2 - A safer and more secure Europe	Border crossing management and mobility and migration management	Cooperation across borders	<p>Effective border management requires that the EU's external borders are both efficient (facilitating legal migration, legitimate trade and transit) and secure (preventing illegal trade and transit as well as irregular migration)<sup>3</sup>. This requires close cooperation at the national level, but cross-border cooperation has also an important role to play, for example in upgrading border-crossing infrastructure, in enhancing information exchange and cooperation between border authorities at the local level or in improving governance via a more coordinated approach to border management.</p> <p>In order to have a coherent response, authorities involved in border management, together with police and gendarmerie forces</p>

<sup>3</sup> EC EAS (2020) Joint Paper on Interreg NEXT Strategic Programming

		<p>dealing with crime prevention and fight in the border area need to have common procedures, to undergo similar training and to have similar level of equipment, as their activities are placed at the EU external borders. Therefore, this action under the present Interreg specific objective has been identified as needing considerable financing by both participating countries.</p> <p>Form of support: grants. The chosen form of support is the most suitable for achieving programme goals, in light of the size and the non-profit nature of the projects.</p>
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## 2. Priorities [300]

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

### 2.1. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority):

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

#### 2.1. Green Communities

##### 2.1.1.1 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches (SO iv)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

##### 2.1.1.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

During the past years, significant changes in the average temperature were registered in the programme area, with dangerous consequences for the local communities. Floods produced by heavy rain falls, aggravated by the lack of proper protection works performed in advance, together with natural calamities (landslides) caused by timber harvesting (in the Republic of Moldova) represent a constant risk in the programme area, which can be prevented and addressed by local authorities with competences in the field of disaster risk prevention and resilience. The increase in the average temperature in summer, together with longer periods of drought caused more frequent forest and fields fires, which required immediate response and adequate equipment to cover high risk access zones (mountain area) or widely spread fields usually affected by this natural or man-made disaster. Trained staff, with proper endowment would ensure an adequate response and provide the population safety, as well as diminishing the risk of human and material loss.

An increased awareness of the communities in the exposed areas would contribute to a better preparedness and a coordinated and timely response in case of such events and would prevent casualties and material losses.

Complementary to national investment in risk prevention, Interreg programme will only finance operations bringing benefits on both sides of the border, and will contribute to levelling emergency intervention procedures and endowment.

Since 2007-2013 ENPI programme, at the border between Romania and Republic of Moldova several projects of crucial importance concerning the management of emergency situations and risk prevention have been financed. The interest in this type of projects continue to manifest and competent structures are interested in continuing the cross border cooperation in developing and implementing such projects. During the consultations held by the Managing Authority, a large participation of the structures responsible with the management of the emergency situations was

registered, as well as a significant contribution to projects ideas and potential activities of joint interest.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- Construction/rehabilitation/modernisation of infrastructure in the field of emergency situations intervention and preparedness;
- Endowment with equipment for emergency situations interventions;
- Joint operational plans/procedures/platforms/trainings/exchange of experience for risk prevention and management;
- Water quality monitoring and hydrological monitoring of rivers, water temperature, precipitation measurements, ice regime;
- Protection of the banks of rivers, canals, ensuring the safety of dams, afforestation of river banks;
- Erosion prevention and control activities;
- Awareness campaigns for the population/stakeholders from the areas under the risk of natural or man-made disasters, in the field of prevention and efficient management of risks.

### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of, will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the specific objective *Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Local/regional public authorities, public institutions and NGOs dealing with climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;
- Scientists & researchers;
- Population living in the programme area and local communities.

### 2.1.1.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2

Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Green Communities	Promoting climate change adaptation	RCO 83	Strategies and action plans	Strategies/action plans	1	15

	and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches		jointly developed			
		RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	2	61
		RCO 81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	33	435
		RCO 24	Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against natural disasters	euro	0	14,773,738

Table 3

Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Green Communities	Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy /action plan	0	2022	7	Projects/Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2022	30	Projects/Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0	2022	43	Projects/Programme monitoring system	
		PSR1	Population benefiting	persons	0	2022	1,670,000	Projects/Programme	

			from protection measures against climate related natural disaster					monitoring system	
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**2.1.1.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools**

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

**2.1.1.6 Planned use of financial instruments**

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

**2.1.1.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention**

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.1	58 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches);	9,694,159
			59 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches);	11,277,438
			61 Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (for example earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (for example technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection	536,052

			and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches.	
			64 Water management and water resource conservation (including river basin management, specific climate change adaptation measures, reuse, leakage reduction)	2,235,859

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.1	01 Grant	23,743,508

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.1	33 No territorial targeting	23,743,508

2.1.2.1 Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution (SO vii)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

2.1.2.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The protected areas in the Republic of Moldova (land and aquatic parks) registered a total of 313 in 2019, while in the programme area in Romania the same indicator reached 152. Nevertheless, in terms of surface, the protected areas in the programme area of Romania doubles the total number of square kilometres as compared to the neighbouring country. Apart from highly needed infrastructure investment in these areas, certification and inclusion in the global network of natural reserves would help preserve biodiversity and contribute to the economic development of the communities living in these areas. Another important aspect is raising awareness of the local

communities living in the protected areas about the needs on the sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems, with the aim of achieving sustainable and resilient development.

During the consultations with stakeholders, held by the Managing Authority, the most frequent activities identified were those concerning protecting endangered species, rehabilitation of natural heritage, forest plantation, creation of natural cross-border reserves. Furthermore, the air quality proved to be a concern on the Moldovan side, and investment in the urban green infrastructure would significantly contribute to improve this environmental aspect, together with other measures taken by public authorities and private entities.

In the Romanian programme area, the activities identified for financing concern the inclusion of biosphere reserve on the international list of certifications and also creation of migration corridors for different species.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- Drafting common management plans/procedures for protected areas;
- Assessment, protection and improvement of existing ecosystems (research activities, inventory and monitoring of resources, protection of endangered species, eradication of invasive species, afforestation etc.);
- Awareness campaigns for the protection and eco-safe tourism promotion within protected areas;
- Urban green infrastructure.

#### 2.1.2.3 Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the specific objective *Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Administrations of nature protection areas, such as national parks, nature parks, landscape parks, biosphere reserves etc.;
- Associations for intercommunity development carrying out activity related to the specific field;
- Universities and research institutions in the relevant sectors;
- Public sector institutions and local authorities, NGOs etc.;
- Population living in the programme area and local communities.

#### 2.1.2.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2  
Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Green Communities	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	RCO 83	Strategies and actions plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	1	7
		RCO 84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	Pilot action	1	14

Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year 2022	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Green Communities	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan	0		10	Projects/ Programme monitoring system	

#### 2.1.2.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

### 2.1.2.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

### 2.1.2.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.2	79 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	4,553,226

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.2	01 Grant	4,553,226

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	NDICI CBC	1.2	33 No territorial targeting	4,553,226

### 2.2. Social Development across Borders

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Social Development across Borders



2.2.1.1 Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training (SO ii)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

2.2.1.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The budgetary allocation for the field of education is rather small in both countries. Despite of the fact that COVID-19 pandemic imposed the need to endow schools with IT equipment, and the level of endowment has been increased from this point of view, the educational infrastructure still needs important improvement.

The consultations revealed a strong interest of authorities in projects aimed at construction, rehabilitation, modernisation of infrastructure at the level of primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education, equipment endowment, digitisation, together with soft measures, such as training of staff, cooperation meant to increase the quality of the educational act (IT courses, common curricula, modern teaching materials and approach etc.). Support for development of digital skills became even more important in the pandemic context. Moreover, the educational infrastructure, both basic (buildings rehabilitation, utilities, especially in rural areas) and also specialized infrastructure (laboratories) are essential for a high quality educational process. Also, the exchange of experience between schools and trainings for teachers would be needed in order to increase the quality of the educational act. In this respect, a strong accent laid on the education for children with special needs in this area. A lack of specialization and training opportunities for teachers involved in special education was mentioned. Moreover, cooperation between special schools for inclusive education, for ensuring specialized educational services, and educational support for disabled persons (children and adults) are also relevant for the area.

All investments in education and health care infrastructure must be fully in line with the requirements of the UNCRPD, including General Comment 4 and 5 and UNCRPD committee concluding observations, with due respect for the principles of equality, freedom of choice, right to education, the right to independent living, accessibility and, prohibiting all forms of segregation. In addition, accessibility must be ensured in each investment in line with state of the art EU accessibility standards. The investments will need to demonstrate compliance with and contribute to the deinstitutionalisation strategy, relevant framework for the inclusion of all persons with disabilities and/or with special needs into mainstream education, and relevant EU policy and legal frameworks for upholding human rights obligations namely the UNCRPD and General Comment No 4 and 5, the European Pillar of Social Rights and Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. No investment will be a step back in the deinstitutionalization strategy of existing institutions or contribute to creation of new settings that are not in full respect with the UNCRPD. Following the partnership principle, independent fundamental rights bodies and human rights organizations will be involved in all the stages of programming, implementation, monitoring,

evaluation of investments in education, social and health care infrastructure to ensure the respect of the principles of independent living, non-segregation and non-discrimination in line with the UNCRPD and the Charter.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- construction/rehabilitation/modernisation of education infrastructure;
- equipment endowment of education institutions (schools, universities, libraries);
- development of joint educational tools, e-solutions, programs, networks;
- joint actions in the field of education (strategies, trainings, workshops, exchange of experience etc.).

### 2.2.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the specific objective *Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Students in primary, secondary and tertiary education;
- Teachers, trainers, managers and auxiliary staff of education and training institutions;
- Public sector institutions and local authorities - policy makers and planners, including local authorities, NGOs (including those operating in the field of refugees support), schools and other educational facilities, universities, etc.;
- Population living in the programme area and local communities, including refugees.

### 2.2.1.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2

Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Social Development across Borders	Improving equal access to inclusive and	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	1	36

	quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	RCO 116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	1	13
		RCO 67	Classroom capacity of new or modernised education facilities	persons	0	28,800

Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Social Development across Borders	Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2022	11	Projects/Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	2022	13	Projects/Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 71	Annual users of new or modernised education facilities	Users/year	0	2022	28,800	Projects/Programme monitoring system	

#### 2.2.1.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

#### 2.2.1.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

#### 2.1.1.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

#### Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.1	122 Infrastructure for primary and secondary education	1,714,241
			123 Infrastructure for tertiary education	1,714,241
			124 Infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning	2,096,378
			44 Energy efficiency renovation or energy efficiency measures regarding public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures	2,195,020
			149 Support for primary to secondary education (excluding infrastructure)	1,904,712
			150 Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	952,356
			151 Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	952,356

Table 5

#### Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.1	01 Grant	11,529,304

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.1	33 No territorial targeting	11,529,304

2.2.2.1 Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care (SO v)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care

2.2.2.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

In both countries, the health system has been underfinanced and the data of the territorial analysis have shown disparities between rural and urban medical services in Romania, while in the Republic of Moldova the lack of high-end medical equipment was identified as one of the causes for outward migration of the medical staff.

The high vulnerability of the health system to global epidemics, for instance COVID-19, has demonstrated the need for reform to ensure universal access to essential services, safe, qualitative and affordable medicines and vaccines, robust social protection schemes and basic coverage.

Investment in emergency services has been made, but both states would need a wider coverage of these medical services, correlated to the endowment of modern equipment. The importance of telemedicine was also underlined during the consultations, which would also require high-end equipment.

Existing medical units need rehabilitation and modernisation to respond to the new standards and to have the necessary utilities to allow installation and use of high-end equipment. Furthermore, procurement of modern equipment, using less invasive and more efficient methods of treatment would benefit patients and would also contribute to the reduction of health expenditure on the long run.

Common procedures across borders and similar approach for medical services will level the quality of healthcare in the programme area. Joint trainings and exchange of experience of medical staff from both states will significantly contribute to the increase of quality of the medical act. Difficulties caused by the increasing number of aging healthcare workers nearly retiring the system, and the lack of doctors and medical staff because of their migration would be solved by attracting

new staff to the system, who can benefit of continuous training and have access to high-end equipment.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- Construction/rehabilitation/modernisation of health infrastructure (including improved accessibility to health infrastructure); medical assistance for disadvantaged groups, palliative services;
- Equipment endowment (including IT, digitalization, mobile assets, emergency situation equipment);
- Joint trainings/procedures/exchange of experience;
- Awareness campaigns.

### 2.2.2.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the specific objective *Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community- based care*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Public authorities dealing with healthcare services;
- Regional/local/ institutions acting in the field of health and social policies;
- Public hospitals, clinics and other healthcare facilities;
- NGOs (including those operating in the field of refugees support), universities and research institutes etc.;
- Population living in the programme area and local communities, including refugees.

### 2.2.2.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2

Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Social Development across Borders	Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	4	54
		RCO 81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	16	70

	based and community- based care	RCO 69	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	Persons/year	0	312,000
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Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Social Development across Borders	Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community- based care	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2022	16	Projects /Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0	2022	70	Projects /Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 73	Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities	Users/year	0	2022	312,000	Projects /Programme monitoring system	

#### 2.2.2.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

#### 2.2.2.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

#### 2.2.2.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4  
Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
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2	NDICI CBC	2.2	128 Health infrastructure	9,124,048
			44 Energy efficiency renovation or energy efficiency measures regarding public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures	2,594,930
			129 Health equipment	6,190,378

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.2	01 Grant	17,909,356

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.2	33 No territorial targeting	17,909,356

2.2.3.1 Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (SO vi)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

2.2.3.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The common cultural heritage of the area is an important asset to be valorised and it may also contribute to the development of the tourism in both countries (programme area). Adequate access infrastructure to historical monuments and proper facilities will have an important role in increasing the attractiveness of the area both for internal as well as foreign tourists.

The development and promotion of public tourism assets proved to be of interest for both countries during the consultations held with the purpose of identifying the needs of the area in this domain.



However, activities that address the need of private tourism operators would require putting in place a state aid scheme. The difference in legislation in the two countries regarding state aid and the difficulties that may arise when monitoring this type of scheme would make such activities hard to implement and with a high risk of not being able to absorb the funds. Consequently, funds will be concentrated towards historical heritage and local culture through joint projects that would also help improve the touristic potential of the cross border area, and limit activities to those that do not involve state aid issues.

Increasing the tourism services revenues coming from the foreign tourist visiting the programme area would highly contribute to the development of local economy and would create the premises for a sustainable cooperation in the border area.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- Rehabilitation/preservation/restoration and endowment of cultural heritage;
- Rehabilitation of infrastructure related to cultural heritage sites (including improved accessibility to cultural sites);
- Promotion and accessibility of cultural heritage (promotion campaigns, cultural events etc.);
- Designing and promoting tourism related innovative products and tools (including digital platforms);
- Promoting cultural heritage sites and including them in cross border tourism networks and chains;
- Joint campaigns, publications, studies, strategies to improve cross border tourism potential;
- Exchange of knowledge and best practices in the field of maintenance and revitalization of areas and sites of cultural heritage that increase the attractiveness and tourist potential;
- Establishment of common networks in the field of tourism and culture.

#### 2.2.3.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the specific objective *Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Public and private entities involved in the protection of cultural and natural heritage, museums, cultural/religious/higher education institutions, and other public institutions;
- NGOs, cultural and tourism associations;
- Local business associations in the domain of traditional and craftsmen activities;
- People visiting the Programme area, population living in the border area and local communities.

#### 2.2.3.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2  
Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Social Development across Borders	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCO 87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	3	56
		RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	1	8
		RCO 77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Cultural and tourism sites	0	20

Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Social Development across Borders	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCR 84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	2022	17	Projects /Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan	0	2022	4	Projects /Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported*	Visitors/year	0	2022	20,000	Projects /Programme monitoring system	

2.2.3.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

2.2.3.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

2.2.3.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.3	165 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	2,458,026
			44 Energy efficiency renovation or energy efficiency measures regarding public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures	2,438,268
			166 Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	7,714,084

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.3	01 Grant	12,610,378

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	NDICI CBC	2.3	33 No territorial targeting	12,610,378

### 2.3. Cooperation across borders

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Cooperation across borders

2.3.1.1 Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal, capacity and other obstacles in the border region (ISO 1)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal, capacity and other obstacles in border region

2.3.1.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

Romania, as a member state of the European Union, has a long experience of accessing and implementing EU funded projects. Authorities at national and regional/local level may share their expertise with Moldovan counterparts and both parties may work together to identify common solutions to the problems of the programme area. Cooperation for drafting common development strategies in various fields of action, enhancing capacity building of public authorities and other stakeholders by exchanging experience, study visits, developing ITC tools, drafting joint protocols, setting up new legislative measures to help cross border cooperation would significantly improve the relations between the two participating countries and would help reduce disparities in terms of institutional capacity. Moreover, there has been already established a tradition of institutional cooperation in what concerns security, border management or custom procedures, which started in the previous ENPI and ENI programmes, by means of large scale projects or regular projects successfully implemented.

The large range of fields of cooperation identified by the participants in the consultations, especially on the Moldovan side, aim at improving institutional cooperation, governance and capacity building in many areas, such as research, education, health, economic environment, security, transport etc.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- joint cross border strategies/action plans/trainings/study visits;
- joint solutions for cross border cooperation (which may include equipment endowment, software);
- information and awareness campaigns;

- development and implementation of measures for strengthening of institutional capacities of public authorities;
- sharing experiences, joint preparing of guidelines and procedures for improving assessment, prevention, preparedness and response in case of pandemics, emerging infectious diseases or other unforeseen crises;
- developing common policies and strategies for ensuring an effective border mobility;
- investments in equipment for effective border mobility for goods and persons;
- joint actions to enhance efficient public administration, cooperation between citizens, civil society and institutions, by investing in state-of-the-art methods, technologies, procedures etc.

### 2.3.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the action *Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border region*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- National/regional/local authorities, public entities, NGOs activating in the field of risk prevention, education, health, tourism and culture, youth, refugees support etc.;
- Population living in the programme area and local communities (including refugees).

### 2.3.1.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2

Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Cooperation across borders	Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation	RCO 81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	126	1,260
		RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/ action plan	7	34

	between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border region						
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Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Cooperation across borders	Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border region	RCR 85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0	2022	105	Projects / Programme monitoring system	
		RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan	0	2022	17	Projects / Programme monitoring system	

### 2.3.1.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

### 2.3.1.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

### 2.3.1.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3.1	NDICI CBC	3.1	171 Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	6,594,916
			174 Interreg: border crossing management and mobility and migration management	6,594,916

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3.1	NDICI CBC	3.1	01 Grant	13,189,832

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3.1	NDICI CBC	3.1	33 No territorial targeting	13,189,832

2.3.2.1 Border crossing management and mobility and migration management (ISO2)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Text field: [300] Border crossing management and mobility and migration management

2.3.2.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]

Romania and Moldova share a number of 9 land border crossing points in the programme area. Out of these, 6 border crossing points are open to road traffic, while 3 of them are dedicated to railway

border crossing. Focusing on the cross-border transportation, both countries have registered a decrease of the period of time spent with customs formalities. Improved times for customs clearance in both countries will bring benefits to all fields of economy, from transportation to tourism.

In the programming period of 2014-2020, Romania-Republic of Moldova ENI CBC Programme financed two large infrastructure projects under thematic objective 8 - Common challenges in the field of safety and security, which is now compatible with ISO2 settled for Interreg NEXT programmes.

The consultations held with stakeholders of the programme revealed still an existing need of investment in the infrastructure and equipment for border surveillance, for common intervention missions, as well as for prevention of criminal acts. In order to have a coherent response, authorities involved in border management, together with police and gendarmerie forces dealing with crime prevention and fight in the border area need to have common procedures, to undergo similar training and to have similar level of equipment, as their activities are placed at the EU external borders. The increase of bilateral cooperation through future EU funded projects for border management, including prevention and fight against organized crime will make the border area a safer one and will also ensure EU's security at its external border.

Furthermore, in the current political context, with Republic of Moldova being a neighbouring country to Ukraine, an economy severely impacted by Russia's aggression, the ***EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes'*** action plan of the European Commission will impact both Moldovan and Romanian border crossing points. Establishing alternative supply routes for Ukrainian exports and imports via Moldova and Romania, simplification of customs procedures, improving capacity for the control and inspection procedures, more proportionate application or exemption thereof through improved understanding of the applicable rules would speed up procedures significantly. Interreg NEXT Programme will be taken into consideration as a reliable financing source to reach this goal.

Sustainable and coherent implementation and development of IBM (Integrated Border Management) concept, fostered cooperation in synergy with upgrade of technologies and operations at the border between the border crossing points will ensure overall secure climate at the borders and inside the country with direct positive impact on citizens and residents, including but not limited to refugees crossing the border or accommodated in the Republic of Moldova.

At the same time, a properly equipped border management infrastructure is essential, emerging from the regional crisis generated, but also the migration flow that the Republic of Moldova has faced.

The related types of actions to be financed under this specific objective may be the following:

- joint cross border strategies/action plans/trainings/exchange of experience;
- joint solutions for cross border cooperation (equipment endowment, including IT&C and security equipment, software, vehicles, construction/rehabilitation/modernisation of cross border infrastructure);
- information and awareness campaigns.

#### 2.3.2.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Text field [7 000]



The programme will show its benefits for several direct and indirect target groups. Every project will tackle different target groups in the programme area, which will be direct beneficiaries of the activities implemented. Furthermore, the communities of which direct beneficiaries are part of will indirectly benefit of the use of funds in the area.

For the action *Border crossing management and mobility and migration management*, the main target groups will be formed of:

- Customs services, border police, police, gendarmerie, other national/regional/local public institutions acting in the area of crime prevention, professional associations, NGOs (including those operating in the field of refugees support) etc.
- Population living in the programme area and local communities (including refugees and migrants).

### 2.3.2.4 Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2  
Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Cooperation across borders	Border crossing management and mobility and migration management	RCO 81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participation	0	300
		RCO 83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	0	5

Table 3  
Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Cooperation across borders	Border crossing management and mobility and	RCR 85	Participations in joint actions across borders	participation	0	2022	40	Projects/Programme monitoring	

	migration management		after project completion					system	
		RCR 79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Strategy/ action plan	0	2022	2	Projects/ Programme monitoring system	

### 2.3.2.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use specific territorial tools such as community-led local development or integrated territorial investments.

### 2.3.2.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Text field [7 000] The programme does not plan to use financial instruments.

### 2.3.1.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4

Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	3.2	174 Interreg: border crossing management and mobility and migration management	4,396,611

Table 5

Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	3.2	01 Grant	4,396,611

Table 6

Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	NDICI CBC	3.2	33 No territorial Targeting	4,396,611

### 3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

#### 3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 7

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	TOTAL
TOTAL	0	16,238,607	17,111,561	17,387,767	17,668,998	14,110,385	14,758,116	97,275,434

3.2. Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing  
Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 8

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable) Projects	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/€	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)*		National public (c)**	National private (d)			
PO2	Priority 1 - Green communities	NDICI-CBC	Total	31,303,397	28,296,734	3,006,663	3,478,156	2,956,433	521,723	34,781,553	90%	
PO4	Priority 2 - Social development across borders	NDICI-CBC	Total	46,516,950	42,049,038	4,467,912	5,168,550	4,393,268	775,282	51,685,500	90%	
ISO1+ISO2	Priority 3 - Cooperation across borders	NDICI-CBC	Total	19,455,087	17,586,443	1,868,644	2,161,677	1,847,425	324,252	21,616,764	90%	
	<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>97,275,434</b>	<b>87,932,215</b>	<b>9,343,219</b>	<b>10,818,383</b>	<b>9,197,126</b>	<b>1,621,257</b>	<b>108,093,817</b>	<b>90%</b>	

\*Cofinancing to technical assistance may be provided as in-kind contribution.

\*\*National public contribution includes the contribution to technical assistance and the contribution provided by public and central institutions (calculated as 85% of the total contribution of the beneficiaries considering the precedent of the period 2014-2020)

#### 4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

Text field [10 000]

The programming process for Interreg VI-A NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova started by constituting the Joint Programming Committee and approving the methodology for preparation of the programme in September 2020. The members of the committee were appointed based on the representativeness of the Joint Monitoring Committee for 2014-2020 programme and a balanced distribution between national and regional/local authorities was taken into consideration.

During the process of elaborating the programme, the past expertise of beneficiaries previously involved in cross border cooperation, as well as the inputs from other stakeholders in the programme area, that knew its needs and constraints, were considered. The documents elaborated after every stage of consultation (i.e. Territorial Analysis, Programme Draft) were uploaded on the programme website, [www.ro-md.net](http://www.ro-md.net), for public consultation and largely distributed by means of Social Media and e-newsletters.

The Managing Authority started the analysis of the programme area needs based on the information obtained from rendering the statistical data provided by international, national and local sources, further complemented by the study of different documents relevant for the policy objectives. The reference period for the data collection covered the years of 2016-2019, and even more recent periods where information was available for both states.

The first round of consultations took the form of interviews and focus groups held online during April and May 2021, so as to identify the financing needs of the programme area and to prioritize the policy objectives included in Joint Paper on Interreg NEXT Strategic Programming. When existing, complementarities and divergences between the outcomes from both interviews and focus groups have been analysed in the view of the statistical data of the area and conclusions from the implementation of Romania-Republic of Moldova ENI CBC 2014-2020. The consultations involved national, regional, local, public authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including umbrella organisations, research institutions and universities. In order to ensure a transparent and balanced representation of the civil society in the focus groups, the Managing Authority carried out a selection process of the NGOs invited to take part, based on the organisations' previous experience and relevance to the field of activity as related to the policy objectives addressed.

Apart from exploring the actual needs of the area and partners' orientations regarding the cross-border financing across the Policy Objectives or Interreg Specific Objectives, the events also aimed at collecting inputs for concentration and convergence, by reducing overlaps in the area and reducing the number of Policy Objectives to be financed.

The selection of the Policy Objectives and Interreg Specific Objectives to be financed under the current programme took into account all the above and were submitted for the approval of the Joint Programming Committee in July 2021.

The consultation process continued in September and October 2021, by organising online thematic working groups involving experts from both countries, at national and local level, in order to prioritize the intervention fields to be tackled in the current programme and to list the indicative activities corresponding to each Specific Objective. Simultaneously, the participants in the working groups were encouraged to indicate potential large infrastructure project ideas in their proposals, in order to get an image of the need for this type of financing in the area and, furthermore, to correctly dimension the programme allocation corresponding to the intervention fields and specific objectives. As several large infrastructure projects proposals were identified during the consultations process, the Joint Programming Committee decided to tackle this approach after programme approval, by entrusting the Monitoring Committee with establishing the priorities and criteria to be adopted for LIP selection. However, the decision of financing such projects would only be adopted by the Monitoring Committee.

The second tool used by the Managing Authority to prioritize the intervention fields and identify the list of indicative activities was an online survey. In the period of September- October 2021, the Managing Authority published the survey on [www.ro-md.net](http://www.ro-md.net) aiming at identifying the preference of the stakeholders/public on the intervention fields and to collect proposals of activities to be financed under the preferred intervention fields. Though a low rate of response was registered, most of the respondents stated to be representing the public sector, and over 60% of them had already participated in the previous cross border programmes and expressed their intention to participate in Interreg NEXT programme as well.

The third meeting of the Joint Programming Committee was held in November 2021, when the first draft of Interreg NEXT Programme was approved, together with the initiation of the strategic environmental assessment for the programme. After the approval of the Committee, the draft of the Programme was also published for consultations on [www.ro-md.net](http://www.ro-md.net), and all comments received were analysed and included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> programme draft, as appropriate.

After the approval of Interreg NEXT Programme, the Monitoring Committee (MC) will be set up in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct regarding partnership and with article 29 of the Interreg Regulation. The Programme will seek to ensure continuity between the two programming periods regarding the composition of the MC in order to build on the experience gained by the members in previous programming periods. New partners will be invited to take part in the MC, either as members or as observers, covering a wider range of socio-economic partners and civil society (i.e. environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination). As per the Republic of Moldova, an extended National Working Group will be consulted by the MC members during the decision making processes. All these actors will be consulted during the decision-making process and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme, in order to voice their positions on strategic matters concerning the implementation, as well as on the coherence with other financing sources available and to increase the transparency in decision-making.

In order to ensure impartiality and to avoid conflict of interests, the Managing Authority will dedicate a special section in the MC Rules of Procedures to this issue. Also, as in previous periods, the MC will be actively involved in programme monitoring and evaluation.

The programme will continue to promote transparency through the publication of all relevant documents for public consultation on the programme website.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

Text field [4 500]

Communication and visibility actions will address every programme lifecycle stage, focusing on the following main objectives:

- ensure an efficient and transparent implementation of the programme;
- promote financing opportunities among potential beneficiaries and provide support for project preparation under all priorities;
- support beneficiaries in project implementation by providing clear guidance and assistance;
- increase public awareness on the benefits of EU financial assistance in the field of environment protection, social welfare and better cooperation with neighbouring country.

The communication objectives will be met through activities specific to every stage of programme implementation, and adapted to the needs identified along the process.

The following target groups have been identified as main audience: potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, national/regional/local stakeholders, media, EU institutions, general public in the Programme area and the EU.

According to the research carried out by the MA in 2019, on the efficiency of communication activities and preference of the target groups for certain communication channels, both potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries indicated media and face-to-face communication (training sessions, workshops) as being most preferred, followed by the online tools provided by the programme structures (website, Social Media). A mix of communication tools will be used, and new tools may be developed along the implementation period.

Within ro-md.net site developed for 2014-2020, linked to mfe.gov.ro, a new section was created for 2021-2027, and all programming documents were published herein. To capitalise on the acquired awareness on the website, and to keep users on the already familiar page, the sections dedicated to Interreg NEXT Programme will be further developed and re-designed and all information regarding the launching of calls for proposals, list of operations and other useful information will be published.

Social Media are a very popular tool to communicate with the public, to share project results which impact citizens and raise awareness on the EU financial contribution. The Facebook (Meta) page dedicated to 2014-2020 ENI Programme will be renamed and all followers will be engaged in the promotion of NEXT Programme. Information posted on the website will be translated to more informal language and made attractive to categories of public aged 16+ and shared on Facebook. The ENI Programme library of projects' outcomes will be used to capitalise on past experience and help generate new projects. New visual materials will be produced to promote the programme: short videos, testimonials, infographics, charts etc., to be posted on the Social Media accounts.



Considering the fast evolution of Social Media, the Managing Authority will analyse and develop accounts on other platforms that may prove of interest to the target audience (Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.), with a particular focus on youth.

Programme events will be organized for a wider audience, to raise awareness on the programme benefits in the area. The annual major event will be adapted to the European Cooperation Day topic and will follow the lines of the Interreg visuals and messages.

The programme will aim at engaging multiple audience groups across various media (offline and online), and reinforce the relation with media representatives. Operations of strategic importance will be used as flagships of programme for communication purposes. Dedicated events will be organised for their promotion, by inviting journalists and stakeholders.

Considering the efficiency of the training sessions so far, similar events will be put in place, adapted to programme lifecycles. Events dedicated to projects preparation, trainings on implementation will be timely organised, to provide support during the different stages of implementation.

Outdoor campaigns will address the general public in the programme area and will direct to the online communication tools, to promote the programme and to raise awareness on the programme most reliable information sources.

Less printed publications will be produced, while electronic ones will be distributed to target groups. Eco-friendly promotional materials bearing EU visual identity will be produced.

MA will appoint a communication officer for the programme, who will draft the annual communication plan, including Joint Secretariat contribution, and will coordinate all communication activities developed by programme structures.

The communication and visibility measures will be evaluated taking into consideration the following relevant indicators:

Indicator	M.U.	Baseline	Final Target	Source
Website	Number of visitors	8,987	14,000	Analytics
	Page views	82,600	140,000	Analytics
Social Media(Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	Followers	369	1,000	Insights
	Reach	4,307	8,000	Insights
Events	Number of events	0	30	Internal Monitoring

The estimated budget for communication and visibility activities is 5% of the Technical Assistance funds, as per the following indicative split

Activity	Budget share
Events	50%
Online (website, Social Media)	30%
Promotional materials	10%
Others (publications, outdoor, media ads etc.)	10%

## 6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

Text field [7 000] In the context of the Programme, projects of limited financial volume, between 200,000 and 500,000 Euro (EU funds) may be financed under all Priorities. The purpose and the target groups for the limited financial volume projects shall therefore correspond to the indicators and to the target groups identified for each specific objective.

## 7. Implementing provisions

### 7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 9

<b>Programme authorities</b>	<b>Name of the institution [255]</b>	<b>Contact name [200]</b>	<b>E-mail [200]</b>
Managing authority	Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration	Iulia Hertzog	iulia.hertzog@mdlpa.ro
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)	Ministry of Finance, Republic of Moldova	European Integration and Cross-Border Cooperation Department	
Audit authority	Romanian Audit Authority within the Court of Accounts	Lucian-Dan Vlădescu	autoritateadeaudit@rcc.ro
Group of auditors representatives	Court of Accounts of the Republic of Moldova	General Directorate for Methodology, Planning and Reporting	ccrm@ccrm.md
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration	Daniela Albu	daniela.albu@mdlpa.ro

### 7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

Text field [3 500]

Considering that the roll-over of implementation arrangements from the previous programming period ensures a quick start of the programme implementation, as the designation process would not be required, the MA proposal for the JS was the entity playing this role in the ENPI and ENI

programmes. A selection process for a new organization would involve issues related to the procurement procedure, ensuring the entity with experienced staff, developing new procedures, financial liability and auditing the entity. Thus, a transparent and competitive selection process to ensure equal opportunities, as requested by MD NA, for a new entity was not considered by MA, as this approach would involve risks of delay in starting the implementation.

Considering the experience acquired, trained and experienced staff and lessons learned in previous programmes, the JS is expected to contribute to the programme implementation with simpler, more efficient and transparent processes and procedures, while considering particularities of the entire programme area and ensuring equal opportunities for stakeholders from both countries at all stages. JS will improve internal control procedures and shall exercise enhanced risk mitigation measures in close cooperation with relevant management structures, so as to ensure delivery of expected results. JS will provide more support to applicants and beneficiaries and deliver trainings at all stages for all stakeholders.

The Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation at the Romania-Republic of Moldova border- Iasi (ROCBC) is a legal entity established under the Romanian regional development law, since 2004, with the purpose of supporting regional development and cooperation between the two countries. In its capacity of JTS, the ROCBC performed the tasks entrusted by the Programmes, ensuring support for: programming, call for proposals, selection, contracting, project monitoring, helpdesk for beneficiaries, information and communication about the Programme. The reports and the audit opinion confirm that the implementation system of ENI programme (including JTS) is fully functional. The financial capacity of ROCBC will ensure the sustainability of the organisation to fulfill the delegated functions for JS and provide the necessary financial flow, so as to deal with the new requirements.

The ROCBC will continue implementing the functions of the JS for the next Programme. The partnership, transparency, non-discrimination and equal opportunities principles will be applied to the JS staff and will be considered for any other required outsourced services.

The staff vacancies within the JS, can be filled by competition.

The existing staff of the JS will be evaluated, based on the operational procedures, by the management of the ROCBC. MA will assess and confirm the compliance of the process with the new requirements, and will duly inform the MC.

The staff will be confirmed/renewed based on selection criteria and the job descriptions related to each position approved by the MC. MC shall be informed about the results of the JS staff assessment. The MD NA may also second some persons to be staff of JS, also ensuring the compliance with selection criteria and job descriptions approved by MC.

The MA will carry out annual verification of the JS performance and procedures and will inform the MC for the measures taken towards addressing the shortcomings. The MC will approve the corrective measures.

The MC will be duly informed about the use of the technical assistance.

For a better communication, access to information related to the programme for the Moldovan stakeholders and increase of programme visibility in the Republic of Moldova, but also for supporting the MA in programme implementation, a JS branch office shall be established in Chisinau. The NA MD will provide support for the JS branch office set up and functioning and will be consulted in advance about any programme related event organized on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

[7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs](#), in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

Text field [10 500]

The Managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead or sole partner and reimbursed to the general budget of the Union. Each participating country shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the partner located or registered on its territory and shall reimburse the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to that partner.

Once the participating country has reimbursed the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that partner pursuant to its national law.

The participating countries may decide that the lead or sole partner and the programme's managing authority are not obliged to recover an amount unduly paid that does not exceed EUR 250, not including interest, in contribution from programme funds to an operation in an accounting year.

In the unlikely case that the responsible participating country does not reimburse the managing authority the amounts unduly paid to the partner located or registered on its territory, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the respective participating country. Such recovery shall not constitute a financial correction and shall not reduce the financial support of the European Union to the programme. The amount recovered shall constitute assigned revenue in accordance with Article 21(3) of the Financial Regulation.

With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the managing authority by a Member State, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to the same Interreg programme. The managing authority shall then offset with regard to that Member State in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States set out in the Interreg programme in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission. With regard to amounts not reimbursed to the managing authority by a third country, partner country or OCT, the offsetting shall concern subsequent payments to programmes under the respective external financing instruments of the Union.

#### 8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 10

Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

	YES	NO
Intended use of Articles 94 and 95		
From the adoption the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 94 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)		X

From the adoption the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)		X
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## Map

Map of the programme area



## Appendix 3

### List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable - Article 17(3)

	Priority Axis	Specific Objective	Indicative project theme	Indicative start of implementation
1	1 Green Communities	Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches	Improving the response of cross-border emergency services in case of disasters and establishing a disaster prevention and management system	Q4 2023