

Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia – Serbia 2014 - 2020

Annex 4: Citizens summary

1. Background

The Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 will support cross-border cooperation between the participating countries in the upcoming programming period 2014-2020. The Programme was prepared in 2013 and 2014 during which period key variables of the programme have been agreed between the participating countries through 10 Task Force meetings and workshops, 2 rounds of public consultations with the relevant stakeholders and partners and online consultations as well as programme area shared challenges were identified and measures to address them. This paper summarises the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 in order to provide a brief overview on the strategic orientation of the programme.

In total, the programme area covers 9 NUTS III regions in the cross border territory between Croatia and Serbia. On the Croatian side, the programme area includes 4 counties on the north-east of Croatia: Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, Brod-Posavina and Požega-Slavonia counties, whereas on the Serbian side, the programme area covers 5 districts on north-west of Serbia: North Bačka, West Bačka, South Bačka, Srem and Mačva district. Covering an area of over 25.505 km² the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia is home to about 2.3 million people.

The programme area has a large number of assets but also faces numerous challenges in various fields affecting regional development, which have all been thoroughly analysed before concentrating the programme on four thematic priorities. Results expected from the programme will directly contribute to reaching goals of Europe 2020 Strategy as well as South East Europe 2020 Strategy. The Programme will also make use of the existing cross border cooperation established within 2007-2013 programme in order to further strengthen and extend the scope of cooperation.

2. Priority axes and specific objectives

The overall objective of the Interreg IPA Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 is to strengthen the social, economic and territorial development of the cross-border area through the implementation of joint projects and activities to be supported within four thematic priorities:

TP1 - Health and social care services;

TP2 - Environment, biodiversity, risk prevention, sustainable energy and energy efficiency;

TP4 - Tourism and cultural and natural heritage;

TP7 - Competitiveness and business environment development.

The selected thematic priorities have been translated into four priority axes which will enable the programme to become the tool for implementing smart solutions that answer to the programme area needs and challenges.

Within four priority axes, five specific objectives indicate specific changes that the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 anticipates to achieve through implementation of specific actions and realization of related outputs.

Priority Axis 1 “Improving the quality of public social and health services in the programme area”

The programme area has high number of social care beneficiaries, elderly people and other vulnerable groups living at the risk of poverty but the quality of the services provided by the public health and social care systems do not match their needs. Therefore, the Programme will aim to strengthen the care for elderly by improving palliative care system and implementing joint activities on active and healthy ageing. It will also improve the care for social care beneficiaries and other vulnerable groups by e.g. establishing joint community centres, providing legal counselling services, implementing joint activities or projects on applying ICT solutions and small infrastructural improvements, by equipping small ambulances and mobile teams and emergency help-centres on both sides of the border as well as by developing joint training programmes for education and exchange of experiences in the cross-border area.

For this reason, the programme aims to improve the quality and the delivery of the services and to strengthen the capacities in providing the services in terms of improving facilities and skills in both sectors, thus making them more accessible and effective.

The financial allocation to this priority amounts to 15% of total programme EU funding (about 5,1 million EUR). Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

SO 1.1 To improve the quality of facilities, services and skills in the area of public health and social care

This specific objective will be achieved through cross-border cooperation implementing the following indicative list of actions:

- Developing and implementing joint cross-border initiatives, tools, services and/or related pilot projects aiming to enhance the quality, improve accessibility to and effectiveness of public health care and social services and institutions (e.g. joint health services delivery, active and healthy aging, disease prevention implementation plan, small infrastructure and/or equipment).
- Implementing local ICT solutions in order to improve public health and social care services.
- Implementing joint cross-border strengthening of health care for vulnerable groups with focus on elderly people, palliative care and persons with disabilities.
- Implementing exchange of experience concerning the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches as well support to the sustainability and implementation of the Cross-border Healthcare Directive (2011/24) and European Reference Networks, especially in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion, including territorial aspects and harmonious development of Union territory.
- Developing and implementing joint cross-border lifelong learning/training programmes aiming to provide programme area inhabitants the possibility to gain knowledge / experiences / qualifications in the area of health and social care in line with the labour market needs.

Priority Axis 2 “Protecting the environment and biodiversity, improving risk prevention and promoting sustainable energy and energy efficiency”

The programme area is rich in biodiversity and natural resources and has a vast protected area that needs to be further protected and valorised. In that respect, the Programme aims to strengthen the environmental management and biodiversity protection as well as the

communication between the relevant authorities across the border on monitoring and joint management of protected areas and NATURA 2000 areas.

Programme area is a high risk area as regards to natural disasters, mainly due to climate changes and water richness, which present a common challenge for the participating countries. Several environmental hot-spots and mine-suspected sites in the programme area also present a security problem for people living in the area. Therefore, the programme will aim to develop joint initiatives in relation to emergency preparedness with focus on key existing and expected risks, e.g., floods, mines, droughts and pollution. In that respect, pilot and demonstration projects applying innovative solutions will be implemented in order to enforce risk prevention management.

The programme area has favourable conditions in terms of renewable energy resources, i.e. it has the potential for renewable energy production through use of agricultural waste, solar power, geothermal energy and biomass production. This Programme will aim to address the need for increasing the share of energy saved in public buildings thus increasing the energy efficiency since the programme area is significantly lagging behind EU terms in that field. Therefore, joint cross border initiatives will be implemented in order to increase the capacities for the development of sustainable energy (i.e. investing in small-scale infrastructure and developing joint pilot projects on innovative technologies and solutions) to improve the related planning and legal framework as well as to strengthen joint awareness raising and promotional activities as important tool in the policy of increasing energy efficiency.

The financial allocation to this priority amounts to 35% of total programme EU funding (about 12 million EUR). Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle one of the two specific objectives (SO):

SO 2.1. To enforce integrated cross-border monitoring/ management systems for key existing risks and environmental and biodiversity protection

This specific objective will be achieved through cross-border cooperation implementing the following indicative list of actions:

- Implementing joint actions in the area of monitoring and management of environmental and/or biodiversity protection that address locally specific cross-border priorities and/or contribute to implementation of higher-level regional initiative such as Danube and Sava River Basin Management Plan and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.
- Developing and implementing joint plans for protection of endangered species and protection and revitalisation of habitats, including initiatives related to UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.
- Joint valorisation and promotion of ecosystems and NATURA 2000 sites in the programme area.
- Developing and implementing joint awareness raising activities, information campaigns, education and training in relation to environment and/or biodiversity protection.
- Promoting cross-border cooperation between organisations involved in environmental and biodiversity protection and joint management of protected sites and nature.
- Establishing and/or improving green infrastructure and ecosystem services (e.g. implementing measures that protect or expand natural retention of flood plains and/or establish protection forests in flood risk or erosion prone areas, etc.).
- Developing and implementing integrated risk management initiatives (including ICT tools) addressing key existing and expected risks in the programme area (floods, flushing of land mines during flood events, droughts, toxic pollution accidents, etc.).

- Implementing pilot and demonstration projects applying innovative solutions in the area of risk prevention management related to river Danube and its tributaries Drava, Sava, Vuka and Tisa, including but not limited to activities for improving flood forecasting and warning suited to local and regional needs, developing flood risk and hazards maps in accordance with the EU Floods Directive, harmonizing design criteria and safety regulations along and across border sections, preventing and mitigating pollution of water caused by floods, increasing the capacity and raising the level of preparedness of the organizations responsible for flood mitigation.
- Promoting cross-border cooperation between organizations dealing with emergency preparedness and improving disaster response capability.
- Developing and implementing pilot and demonstration projects including innovative approaches to risk prevention and mitigation.

SO 2.2. To promote the use of sustainable energy and energy efficiency

This specific objective will be achieved through cross-border cooperation implementing the following indicative list of actions:

- Developing and implementing pilot and demonstration projects on innovative technologies and solutions in the field of sustainable energy and energy efficiency (e.g. use of agricultural waste for energy production, demonstration projects for solar power on roofs or build surfaces, etc.).
- Implementing awareness rising, information campaigns, education, training and capacity building on sustainable energy, utilisation of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency.
- Investing in joint infrastructure on sustainable energy and energy efficiency.
- Developing and implementing actions aiming to increase energy efficiency in public buildings.
- Implementing joint incentives in order to improve planning and/or legal framework in the area of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency (e.g. analyses, comparisons, recommendation, local/regional action plans, etc.).

Priority Axis 3 “Contributing to the development of tourism and preserving cultural and natural heritage”

The rich and unique cultural, architectural and industrial heritage reflects the programme area's long and eventful history but also the ethnic, natural and cultural diversity and creates the potential for developing various types/niches of tourism and promoting continental tourism in general. However, the main problems of the border area are poor infrastructure, lack of joint touristic offer, low accommodation quality, low level of marketing of cultural heritage, lack of trained personnel and 'continuing education' training programs, low level of organized tourist offer in the form of products and itineraries visible on the market and lack of integrated destination management.

Therefore, within this specific objective, the Programme will aim to provide platform for strengthening joint cross-border tourism management in order to increase the attractiveness of sites and joint cross-border touristic offer by strengthening joint branding and protection of new touristic products, mapping and designing of joint thematic routes, developing and improving public tourism, cultural and heritage services, organizing joint cultural events as well as joint training of personnel, especially in developing entrepreneurial spirit and destination management skills. The programme will also seek to achieve better cooperation and coordination between the relevant stakeholders in the tourism sector as well as to develop and implement joint tourism strategies, action plans and studies on preservation and restoration of cultural and national heritage assets.

The financial allocation to this priority amounts to 22% of total programme EU funding (about 7.5 million EUR). Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

SO 3.1. To strengthen, diversify and integrate the cross-border tourism offer and better manage cultural and natural heritage assets

This specific objective will be achieved through cross-border cooperation implementing the following indicative list of actions:

- Joint development, branding and promotion of tourism niches: e.g. hunting, bird and animal watching, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, sport and cycle-tourism, wine & food tourism, health and wellness, rural tourism, recreation tourism, memorial tourism, nautical tourism, religious tourism, industrial heritage tourism, etc.
- Joint development and diversification of the cross-border tourism offer, services and capacity, inter alia, by using ICT tools: e.g. standardisation of accommodation support, joint mapping the tourism offer, joint creation of destination management platforms and networks.
- Joint development, branding, protection and promotion of new tourism products: e.g. development of thematic routes, joint promotion events and materials, site exploitation.
- Improvement of recreational and small-scale tourism infrastructure: e.g. walking paths, cycle routes, equipping visitor centre, information points, networking tourism centres, spatial “beautification”.
- Preparing and developing joint tourism strategies and action plans.
- Implementing training and other activities aiming to develop the tourism capacity and destination management skills.
- Implementing cross-border networking activities, including establishing or improving clusters aiming at developing joint cross-border tourism offer.
- Enabling joint cultural cooperation between youth, artistic and cultural organisations: e.g. art colonies and festivals, artistic manifestations and events, joint theatre performances or joint/traveling exhibitions, etc.
- Developing and implementing joint initiatives on valuation, preservation, restoration and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage sites.
- Implementing training programs in quality assurance systems and different types of standardisation (e.g. ISO certification, etc.) of cultural and natural heritage.
- Deploying investments in certification including training, equipment supply, but also small scale infrastructure on cultural and natural heritage.

Priority Axis 4 “Enhancing competitiveness and developing business environment in the programme area”

Taking into account that the programme area is significantly lagging behind EU28 average in terms of economic performance and competitiveness and that the SME sector presents a great opportunity for strengthening local economies and creating new jobs, this Programme will aim to address these challenges of the programme area in terms of improving business support services in order to use business support institutions in helping the SMEs to build up performance and to strengthen their competitiveness.

To create a positive business environment, programme area needs to have strong business support institutions responding to the needs of entrepreneurs. In that respect, under this specific objective, this Programme will seek to promote and establish business networks which will support product protection, marketing and development of cross-border markets

and address the needs of the programme area in expanding the quality of services and products meanwhile improving skills and knowledge on applying innovative technologies.

Furthermore, the programme will aim to support actions towards establishment or further development of laboratories, innovation and technological centres and ICT solutions jointly used by the enterprises in the programme area.

The financial allocation to this priority amounts to 18% of total programme EU funding (about 6.1 million EUR). Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

SO 4.1 To improve competitiveness of the programme area through strengthening cooperation between business support institutions, education and research organisations and entrepreneurs with aim to develop new products/services/patents/trademarks in the programme area

This specific objective will be achieved through cross-border cooperation implementing the following indicative list of actions:

- Development of training programmes aiming at improving knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship, applying innovation and new technologies in their industry, including cross-border internship, exchange and transfer of knowledge.
- Strengthening capacities of the business support institutions in order to enhance competitiveness of the programme area through development of e-business and e-trade.
- Establishment of and support to existing and new business related sectorial networks and organisations in developing new products/services/patents/trademarks, standardisation, product protection, marketing and development of cross-border markets.
- Establishing and supporting development agencies, technological and competence centres, laboratories and local ICT infrastructure for common use of the enterprises in the programme area in order to upgrade the existing and develop new products, services, processes or prototypes.
- Developing and strengthening cooperation between public sector, education, research & development organisations and entrepreneurs in order to improve competitiveness by applying business innovativeness based on smart specialization approach.
- Cross-border development, adaptation and exchange of best practices in application of ICT, new technologies, processes, products or services to be directly used by the enterprises between the clusters or groups of business, R&D and education institutions.

Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 is financed from European Fund for Regional Development as regards to Croatian part of Programme allocation and from Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Fund as regards to Serbian part of programme allocation. The total programme EU co-financed budget is about 34 million EUR.