



## IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2021-2027

### Programme summary – starting points, scope and objectives

November 2021

The IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia- Serbia will support cross-border cooperation between the participating countries in the upcoming programming period 2021-2027. The programme is currently in the preparation phase, during which key variables of the programme are being agreed between the participating countries in line with the programming process consisting of Programming Task Force meetings and consultations with the relevant stakeholders and partners where the programme area shared challenges were identified as well as measures to address them. This paper summarises the current version of the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia- Serbia 2021-2027 providing a brief overview on the strategic orientation of the programme. The Interreg IPA CBC Programme Croatia-Serbia 2021-2027 will build on the achievements, experiences and lessons learned of 2014 -2020 and previous programming periods through the implementation of envisaged joint cross-border activities.

#### 1. Starting points (Background information)

The proposed programme area is identical to the one of the previous programming period 2014-2020 and is defined by NUTS 3 regions - counties in Croatia and Districts in Serbia. The area includes four counties in Croatia: Osječko-baranjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska, Brodsko-posavska, Požeško-slavonska and five districts in Serbia: North Bačka, West Bačka, South Bačka, Srem, and Mačva.

The programme area extends over 25.505 km<sup>2</sup> thus representing 18,4% of Croatian territory and 17% of Serbian territory. The total population of the area is around 2,1 million people (based on estimates for the year 2019).

The programme area has significant potential and numerous advantages, but is also facing different challenges affecting sustainable development such as climate change, environmental degradation, and the transition to a climate-neutral economy. Expected Programme results will contribute to reaching goals set by the **European Green Deal** and underlined by the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The Programme is directly linked to the **European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)** and the **European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**.

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme Croatia – Serbia is also in line with the general objective of IPA III which is to support the beneficiaries in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms required by those beneficiaries to comply with Union values.

#### 2. Programme objectives and scope (Programski ciljevi, prioriteti i područja intervencije)

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme Croatia – Serbia 2021-2027 overall objective is sustainable development of programme area through smart, green and socially innovative projects. Beside to further strengthen the social, economic and territorial development of the cross-border area, the Programme aims is to encourage and support cross border cooperation to make the area more resilient to common challenges (economic transition processes, climate change, and the long-term socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic), through the implementation of joint projects and activities to be supported within three selected policy objectives:



**Policy Objective 1 (SMARTER EUROPE)** - a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

**Policy Objective 2 (GREENER EUROPE)** - 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

**Policy Objective 4 (SOCIAL EUROPE)** - a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The selected policy objectives 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 IPA CBC Programme Croatia-Serbia 2021-2027 anticipates achieving through implementation of specific actions

### **Priority axis 1 – Cooperating for smarter programme area**

More innovative, resilient and dynamic local economies are the key to cope with the challenges within the Programme area. This implies, among other things, a higher innovation performance and a better utilisation of the existing innovation infrastructure. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities should be the focus of financed projects. There is a clear opportunity for the development of projects that would be aimed at 2 goals: digitalisation (1) and SME development (2) - both being equally relevant. The financial allocation to this priority has been preliminary proposed to amount to 18% of total programme EU funding (about 7,2 million EUR), however final decision is yet to be taken by the Programming Task Force. Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

#### *SO 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies*

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

1. Supporting pilot lines, early product validation, certification, advanced manufacturing capabilities and technology transfer, including via science – business collaboration.
2. Strengthening and modernising business support services (including small scale infrastructure) that could help with: trainings; marketing; developing and or implementing new services/products; using ICT and new technologies; implementing innovative solutions in business organisation and processes (blockchain, big data, cloud computing, Internet of Things, advanced manufacturing, robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, etc.).
3. Accelerating innovation and technology transfer (e.g., bio, green and circular economy, agriculture, food production, smart manufacturing, cultural and creative industries, skills development for smart specialization, and future digital technologies, etc.).

### **PA2 – Cooperating for greener and climate change resilient programme area**

Under this priority, the programme directly responds to the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, by boosting the efficient use of resources, protecting and restoring biodiversity as



well as cutting pollution. The financial allocation to this priority has been preliminary proposed to amount to 40% of total programme EU funding (about 16 million EUR), however final decision is yet to be taken by the Programming Task Force. The size of the allocation reflects the needed investments in the areas of sustainable energy/renewable energy, climate change adaptation and risk management. Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objectives (SO):

SO 2.2 - Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/200119, including the sustainability criteria set out therein

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

1. Development of joint solutions to increase the production of additional capacity for renewable energy (e.g. wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, etc.)
2. Development and implementation of joint pilot actions that improve the integration of sustainable renewable energy sources in different sectors (e.g. building and construction sector, industry, agriculture, forestry etc.).
3. Joint solutions, research and pilot actions on RES (e.g. circular solutions, use and reuse of sustainable materials), and raising awareness of general public.

SO 2.4 - Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

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

1. Development and introduction of joint solutions and systems for monitoring, prevention and management of potential risks (e.g. floods, wildfires, landslides, droughts, etc.).
2. Encouraging intersectoral/interstate cooperation in risk prevention and rapid response management through development and implementation of joint protocols, procedures, approaches and measures, such as infrastructure, response vehicles, equipment, shelters, etc.
3. Strengthening of institutional and expert capacities and raising awareness to address environmental issues, climate change and disaster risks reduction (e.g. workshops, methodologies, protocols, educational materials, joint training for civil protection units).
4. Development of cross-border risk assessment and disaster risk strategies for cross-border hazards such as droughts, floods, landslides, fires.

### **PA3 – Cooperating for healthier and more inclusive programme area**

The financial allocation to this priority has been preliminary proposed to amount to 17% of total programme EU funding (about 6.8 million EUR), however final decision is yet to be taken by the Programming Task Force . Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

*SO 4.5 - Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community based care*



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

1. Development and implementation of ICT solutions and (pilot) actions to support digitalization in health and social care.
2. Joint investments (including small scale infrastructure) and improving of health care and long-term care for vulnerable groups, with focus on children, elderly and disabled persons.
3. Cooperation activities to enhance resilience and effectiveness of health care service provision (e.g. high tech equipment for telemedicine, diagnostics, etc.).
4. Transfer of knowledge in the region through exchange of experience, awareness raising, and knowledge and capacity building through online and in-situ trainings in order to improve skills in the field of health care and social care (including primary care and family- and community-based care).

#### **PA4 – Cooperating for more sustainable and socially innovative tourism and culture**

The financial allocation to this priority has been preliminary proposed to amount to 15% of total programme EU funding (about 6 million EUR), however final decision is yet to be taken by the Programming Task Force. Projects to be funded under this priority will have to tackle the following specific objective (SO):

*SO 4.6 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation*

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

1. Developing and implementing joint (pilot) actions to support diversification of the tourism by investing in lesser-known destinations and diverse forms of tourism (cultural, rural, agro, active tourism, etc.).
2. Developing and implementing innovative solutions, creating smart destinations, (e.g., through digitalisation, creative industries and creation of networks of stakeholders – hubs and platforms), and new services and products for specific targeted market segments (seniors, young people or people with disabilities).
3. Development and implementation of measures to protect, develop and promote cultural heritage and cultural services.
4. Support of social innovation in tourism and culture - development of existing or new tourism and culture businesses (emphasizing protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism).