**Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme**

**Invitation for submission of the full application for the project ideas accepted by the Programme in the context of the Integrated territorial strategy, following the first call, deadline 4th of April 2025 (Call 7, 5.2)**

* **conditions for developing the full application**
* **conditions for contracting the projects**
* **guidance on how to develop and fill in the application (STEP 2)**

**Priority: P4 - An integrated region**

* **Specific objective: SO5.2. Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas**

**Disclaimer:**

**The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to applicants when developing projects for PO 5.2 (for step 2) and to set the rules for contracting. When using it for developing the project ideas, please consult it alongside the *Guidelines for concept notes (CALL 1) project ideas financing source: Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*, launched on 15 January 2025.**

**February 2026**

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# **Preamble**

This document (***Invitation)*** represents the bases for developing and contracting the full applications of the project ideas accepted and included in the list of the *Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (ITS)*, under the Priority 4 *- An integrated region*, Specific objective RSO5.2. *Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas*. These project ideas were collected during the first call carried out by Strategy Board (SB) during 15th of January 2025 – 4th of April 2025, and prioritized in September, thorough SB decision 17/30.09.2025. The list of concept notes identified in the ITS context can be consulted here <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/its-1>.

This document was developed based on the *Considerations and methodology for the assessment of the Integrated Territorial Strategy* (https://interregviarobg.eu/assets/2025/08/2025-09-19-considerationsmethodological-aspects-po-5-amandment-2025.pdf).

The project ideas/concept notes accepted[[1]](#footnote-2) for funding under the Programme are developed into full applications (projects), based on this ***Invitation* and only if invited to do so by Programme structures**. During the development process of the full applications, the applicants should continue to observe the conditions previously set in the *Guidelines for concept notes (CALL 1) project ideas financing source: Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area[[2]](#footnote-3).*

The ***Invitation*** is published on the Programme website, equally providing a deadline for the submission of the full application. The ***Invitation*** is open only to the project ideas that were accepted by the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and were included on the ITS list of projects, accepted by the Monitoring Committee.

The language of our Programme is English. Thus, all official communication is conducted in English and all documents regarding the project application are produced in English. If original documents have been issued in other languages than English, applicants will submit those documents together with their English translation. If documents are too large to be translated, applicants will submit the translation of the most relevant parts of those documents.

This ***Invitation*** and its annexes should be read and interpreted together, being mutually explanatory. Still, in the event of conflict between the provisions of the annexes and those of the ***Invitation***, the later shall prevail.

When developing your full application, we strongly recommend you to read all the annexes, as well as the Project Implementation Manual and other supporting documents issued by the Programme (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>).

# **General information**

### **General overview**

The Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme is organized along 4 priorities, out of which Priority 4 - *An integrated region* is dedicated to finance Policy Objective 5 - *Europe closer to citizens* (PO5) by *(ii) Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas (RSO 5.2).*

Policy Objective 5 is implemented through the *Strategy for the Integrated Territorial Development of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*, developed around the EuroVelo6 route (the Integrated Territorial Strategy or ITS). The ITS was approved by the Strategy Board and it can be consulted on the Programme website, <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/its-1>.

The ITS includes a list of project ideas, proposed for funding under Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme by the Strategy Board. Only the project ideas included in the list accepted by the Monitoring Committee are invited to be developed into full applications in the conditions outlined by this ***Invitation***.

### **Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JeMS)**

JeMS, the Joint Electronic Monitoring System, is the Programme Monitoring System for the 2021-2027 period. JeMS is available on line at [**https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/**](https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/).

Details regarding the access and usage of JeMS are provided in the JeMS manual. A helpdesk for technical support specifically dedicated to JeMS can be reached via email at [**jems.admin@mdlpa.gov.ro**](mailto:jems.admin@mdlpa.gov.ro)**.**

**All the project ideas considered by the Programme shall be developed into full applications in JeMS.**

# **Section 1 – Conditions to be observed when developing the full application**

## **General conditions**

The project application follows a two-step procedure. In the first step, applicants were asked to submit a project idea (AF step 1 or “concept note”) via email, at [conceptnotesITS@gmail.com](mailto:conceptnotesITS@gmail.com), by April 2025. SB carried out the assessment of submitted concept notes during this first step. The best proposals were accepted by the Programme structures and the applicants are invited to submit the full application form (AF step 2 – full application).

As such, this document represents an invitation for the partners of accepted project ideas to develop and to submit the full application (AF step 2), via JEMS. Where the case, the recommendations issued by the Programme structures in relation to the project ideas must be considered when developing the full application. These recommendations are issued following the assessment process of the ITS carried out by the Managing Authority and the National Authority, in line with the provisions of the *Considerations and methodology for the assessment of the integrated territorial strategy.* These can take the form of:

* Specific recommendations applicable for a certain project idea.
* General recommendations applicable to all project ideas or a group of project ideas.

Because the full application is the 2nd step of the assessment, the Programme and the applicants have a common interest in bringing applications at the highest possible quality level and in clarifying all possible issues, before reaching the contracting stage. Even though this remains a competitive call and the final decision on funding a project depends on the quality of applications, applicants will benefit from the full support of the Programme in going smoothly through the assessment process. In this spirit, the Programme structures will ensure to the extent possible:

* that applicants get support during the preparation stage to clarify or improve their applications;
* that the assessment is performed with flexibility and with a focus on content and quality rather than on formal requirements;
* that some documents or annexes that have to be submitted together with the application form may be sent/resent based on clarification requests or as recommended by assessors; in this respect, assessors will also be able to request the correction of documents through clarifications.

Nevertheless, if applicants do not reply to clarification requests, if they do not provide convincing arguments and/or if they do not follow the assessors’ suggestions, assessors will have the discretion of proposing the rejection of applications from funding.

## **Budget of this exercise[[3]](#footnote-4)**

The total budget allocated by the Programme for this exercise, under this ***Invitation*** is of **56,250,000 euro**. The indicative allocation is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Full applications developed following the first call carried out between 15th of January – 4th of April 2025 | Indicative ERDF allocation – Euro | Indicative total allocation – Euro  (includes the contributions from national co-financing and the own contribution of partners from both countries) |
| Priority 4 – PO 5.2 | 45,000,000 | **56,250,000** |

The ERDF co-financing rate is 80%. Partners shall ensure the needed co-financing, as set by the national rules:

* Romanian partners – the 20% of the national co-financing is ensured from the state budget (18%) and partner own contribution (2%)
* Bulgarian partners - the 20% of the national co-financing is ensured from the state budget (18%) and partner own contribution (2%).

When assessing and contracting the projects, the Programme structures can adjust the funded value to ensure the sound financial management of the Programme.

For this ***Invitation***, the indicative total available amount for contracting is 56,250,000 euro. The Programme structures may decide to contract projects over this amount, if projects are available and if it is justified by the overall implementation of the programme. If the case, the decision and the available amount for over-contracting shall be provided at a later stage.

## **Programme Objectives and Indicators**

All the project ideas should contribute to the Programme objectives and indicators. The description of Priority 4 and its objectives, together with examples of supported actions, may be found in the IP published on the programme website, <https://interregviarobg.eu/>.

## **Eligible applicants and the partnership**

The conditions of eligibility of the applicants and partnerships are set in the *Guidelines for concept notes (CALL 1) project ideas financing source: Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*, available on the Programme website (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/call-of-proposals-wihin-its>). These conditions are also applicable for the full applications.

## **Type of activities**

The activities included in the concept notes accepted by the Programme should be developed in step 2 based on and in the scope of the indicative types of actions included in the IP.

The projects’ activities must be developed:

* based on and in the scope of the indicative types of actions included in the Programme, and
* in line with the indicative activities included in the concept notes.

Thus, the proposed activities will be checked during the assessment of the application.

Activities that do not align with the scope of the indicative types of actions outlined in the Programme will not be eligible for funding by the Programme. These activities must be financed by the project partners using their own funds.

In accordance with article 22 (i) of Regulation 2021/1059 (Interreg), in order to be selected, the operations must not be *directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of the expenditure or the performance of operations*.

In this respect, before developing the projects, partners are encouraged to check if any reasoned opinion affects the project at the level of Romania and Bulgaria (please search the active reasoned opinions for each country: **EC reasoned opinions website - Infringement Decisions[[4]](#footnote-5) ).** If a relevant reasoned opinion exists, the Programme structures do not recommend the development of the project, except where there are reasons to believe that the infringement is lifted within the deadline for the project submission set by this ***Invitation***.

If there is any reasoned opinion affecting the possibility to implement the project in Romania or Bulgaria, the project application shall be rejected.

Please be aware that this situation shall be checked during the entire assessment process and, if such a reasoned opinion is issued after the project submission, the project will be rejected from financing at any later stage (even if the information was not available for applicants at the moment of project submission, as set by this ***Invitation***).

## **Location of activities**

Conditions referring to the location of the activities to be implemented are set in *Guidelines for concept notes (CALL 1) project ideas financing source: Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*, available on the Programme website (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/call-of-proposals-wihin-its>). These conditions must be observed also by the full applications.

**All the project activities (including services, equipment, works and investments) can be implemented, purchased and used only in the ITS area**.

By exception, activities outside the ITS area can be implemented in duly justified cases. In such cases, the following requirements must be observed by the concerned activities:

* They are for the benefit of the ITS area
* They are essential for the implementation of the project
* They are explicitly foreseen in the application form.

Activities related to investments (equipment, infrastructure, works) should be implemented exclusively in the ITS area. As an exception, in duly justified cases, IT equipment (such as laptops and/or desktops) can be purchased and used outside the ITS, provided they are used in the interest of the ITS and Programme and are necessary for implementing the project activities.

**For Bulgarian partners the investment activities should be carried out on public property (both public and private domain of the state/municipality).**

## **Features of operations**

The initial features for operations were set by the *Guidelines for concept notes under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (CALL 1), - financed from Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs, launched on 15 January 2025.* The maximum project duration and the limits of the financial support are reminded below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Operation** | **Maximum project duration - (mandatory)** | **Limits of the total financial support from the Programme (including ERDF, and the national co-financing from the state budget and corresponding own contribution)** |
| **All** | Maximum 30 months | between 300,000 Euro and 6,000,000 Euro |

In addition, all project applications that would require financing from the *Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme should satisfy the following conditions and rules, including the ones referring to the cooperation criteria.*

**Conditions and rules**

* The **project budget must be within the indicative allocation**. The Programme will grant maximum the amount included in the table from above.
* If the final proposed value is exceeding the indicative allocation, the difference should be included in the budget as **non-refundable / non-eligible funds** supported from different sources. If the case, please include the information regarding the non-refundable/ non-eligible funds[[5]](#footnote-6) in the narrative section A**.2 *Project Summary***. If the project is accepted for contracting, this value shall be included in the subsidy contract, under non-refundable expenditures from the Programme.

As a general rule, the grant value will not be increased. Please note that the project budget is established based on the objectives and activities defined by the project partners and must be structured in a way that guarantees the achievement of these targets in a cost cost-effective way. Consequently, when preparing the full application for your project idea note, you are advised to remain within the budgetary limits estimated in the Concept Note. Please also note that, during implementation, any underspending will generally result in a proportional reduction of the Programme contribution to the project. The final amount of the ERDF and national co-financing will be paid on the basis of the reported total eligible expenditure only.

In exceptional and duly justified cases, depending on the evolution of Programme implementation, Programme structures may accept an increase of the value of the grant for projects contracted under this call. Such an increase may be granted subject to the availability of funds and solely in response to objective developments in Programme implementation. This provision enables the Programme to respond proportionately to unforeseen and justified circumstances that may arise during implementation, such as significant cost increases, regulatory changes or external factors beyond the control of partners. By clearly defining in advance the conditions for any potential increase of the grant value, the provisions preserves continuity and effectiveness of already contracted projects, avoiding the risk of incomplete or underperforming results due to rigid funding constraints.

Please be informed that any decision to increase the grant value should be adopted by the Monitoring Committee, based on the proposal made by the Managing Authority, in consultation with the National Authority. If such a decision is sought, the Monitoring Committee shall consider the Programme status indicators, the availability of funds, the existence or non-existence of projects on the reserve list and the Lead Partners’ justifications. If the case, the increase of the value of the contract shall be done in consideration of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its indicators.

* The project must have an integrated approach and territorial impact
* The project must contribute to the Programme indicators
* The project must have a cross-border character and impact
* The project must integrate, as much as possible the core values of the New European Bauhaus (sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion)
* The project must promote solutions that are friendly with the environment and observe the Do no significant Harm Principle
* The project must promote the equal opportunities, non-discrimination and transparency, as well as equality between men and women, ensuring the compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
* The project should consider, as much as possible, theusage of the green procurement
* In case of projects including investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, the expected impacts of climate change need to be described and how climate proofing will be ensured.

**During the assessment stage, if applicable, the assessors shall verify how the climate proofing was considered by the project partners for investments in infrastructure, according to the *Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01)*. The Programme requires an assessment of expected impacts of climate change related to *Climate resilience (adaptation to climate change) Pillar.* You must provide the *Documentation of climate proofing[[6]](#footnote-7) (maximum 30 pages)* and the related statement, *according to the Commission Notice (including the related requirements set by Annex B.2)*[[7]](#footnote-8). The related statement has an open format and should include the main conclusions/findings of the climate proofing documentation or reference to the documentation of climate proofing.**

**Please note that the documents shall be analysed and assessed based on the evaluation criteria.**

**Please bear in mind that an independent verification is not compulsory. However, if the documentation of climate proofing/statement on climate proofing is unclear or not in line with the already mentioned Commission Notice, such verification or other clarifications may be required during the assessment process.**

**Cooperation Criteria**

**Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of Interreg operations, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both, thereof. Thus, in order to be funded by the Programme, projects must contribute to at least three out of the following four cooperation criteria.**

**Mandatory cooperation criteria (applicable to all projects):**

* **Joint development (mandatory)** - means that the project must be designed in common by partners from both sides of the border. This means that project proposals must clearly integrate the ideas, priorities and actions of stakeholders on both sides of the border. The lead partner is the coordinator of this process but should include other partners from the beginning of the development process.
* **Joint implementation (mandatory)** - means that activities must be carried out and coordinated among partners on both sides of the border. It is not enough that activities run in parallel. There must be clear content-based links between what is happening on either side of the border and regular contact between the two sides. The lead partner is responsible for ensuring that activities are properly coordinated, that schedules are kept and that the right quality levels are achieved.

**Supplementary cooperation criteria (partners should choose one or both of these criteria):**

* **Joint financing (at project decision)** - means that there will be only one contract per project and there must therefore be one joint project budget. The budget should be divided between partners according to the activities carried out. There is also only one project bank account for the EU contribution (held by the Lead Partner) and payments representing EU support are made from the Programme to this account. The lead partner is responsible for administration and distribution of these funds and for reporting on their use. Funding should come from both sides of the border and illustrates the commitment by each partner to the joint project. The distribution of financial resources should reflect tasks and responsibilities of the partners.
* **Joint staffing (at project decision) -** means that the project should not duplicate functions on either side of the border. Therefore, regardless of where the person is located, there should be one joint project manager, one joint financial manager etc., (of course more staff may be required for larger projects). These staff will be responsible for project activities on both sides of the border. The lead partner is generally the employer of core project staff.

In case the project does not have a cross-border character and impact and if it does not observe the cooperation criteria, it shall not be funded under Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme. 

In case the mandatory cooperation criteria are not met by the partners, the project shall be proposed for rejection and the assessment process shall stop without further analysis.

In case 0 is grated to one of the sub-criteria included under 2. Cooperation character (Evaluation criteria - phase 2 – quality assessment - technical and financial evaluation and state aid incidence assessment) the project shall be rejected and the assessment process shall stop without further analysis based on the proposed method[[8]](#footnote-9).

## **Project outputs and results**

The Programme outputs and results are measured by indicators. For this call, the following Programme specific output and results indicators should be considered by the application:

Table 1 - PROGRAMME SPECIFIC INDICATORS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Indicator** | **Measurement unit** | **Target**  **2024** | **Target 2029** | **Indicator** | **Measurement unit** | **Target 2029** |
| **Output** | | | | **Result** | | |
| Pair 1 | RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders | organisations | 0 | 45 | RCR84 Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion | organisations | 30 |
| Pair 2 | RCO77 Number of cultural and tourism sites supported | cultural and tourism sites | 0 | 18 | RCR77 Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported | visitors/year | 32,400 |
| Pair 3 | RCO58 Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported | km | 0 | 200 | RCR64 Annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure | users/year | 5,000 |

If a project does not contribute to at least one pair of the programme specific output and result indicators, it will not receive funding under Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria.

The pair of indicators RCO87 *Organisations cooperating across borders* and RCR84 *Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion* cannot be used as a standalone pair. If this pair of indicators is selected, at least another pair of indicators must be selected (RCO77-RCR77 and/or RCO58-RCR64). Modifications can be made only at the recommendation of assessors or of Programme structures.

When setting the set project outputs and results, please make sure that you checked the definitions and the conditions for each programme output and result indicators, as described in the ***Guidance on monitoring Programme indicators\_Annex 1\_SO 5.2****[[9]](#footnote-10).*

In respect of result indicators RCR64 and RCR77, project partners must prepare and submit, together with the application form, the methodology, which will be used to measure these indicators throughout the lifetime of the project and which sets the project target value for that indicator (1-2 pages maximum). Details regarding these indicators are included in the Methodological descriptions of Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators - SO 5.2 (<https://www.interregviarobg.eu/assets/2025/07/guidance-on-monitoring-programme-indicators-annex-5-so-52-rev1.pdf>).

The methodology needs to cover at least:

* **The target definition**: including the following elements:
  + what is the baseline for the respective indicator. For the new investments, the base line is 0. In case of already existing investments, the base line should be estimated based on data from one year before the start of the intervention;
  + what’s the target value for the respective indicator, what’s the level to be achieved and
  + a brief justification for the proposed target;
* **Data collection:** the explanation about the categories of data to be collected, the frequency of data collection and the data collection methods/sources to be employed (documented by the partners through databases, extracted from public statistical data, data from studies, analyses, surveys etc., and covering the project’s specific geographical area). Please, keep in mind that your data sources have to be well documented and reliable. The available data/evidence should be made available in the Programme monitoring system (Jems) as part of the reporting obligation;
* **Reporting method:** information on who and how the data (on-achieved indicators) will be reported.

Please note that the project outputs and results must have the same measurement unit and definition as the programme output and result indicators, because those will be aggregated at project and programme level (project output 🡪 programme output indicator; project result 🡪 programme result indicator).

All the requirements set for each Programme output and result indicators should be reflected and observed at project level by the outputs and results.

*In addition to Programme specific indictors, the project may include ITS specific indicators, grouped in the following pairs:*

Table 2 - ITS SPECIFIC INDICATORS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Indicator** | **Measurement unit** | **Target 2029** | **Indicator** | **Measurement unit** | **Target 2029** |
| **Output** | | | **Result** | | |
| Pair 1 | ITS01 Number of tourist attractions with connectivity to the EuroVelo6 cycling route | Number |  | RCR77 Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported | visitors/year |  |
| Pair 2 | ITS02 Number of new/modernized connections of EuroVelo6 with public transportation hubs | Number of connections |  | RCR77 Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported | visitors/year |  |
| Pair 3 | ITS03 Integrated strategy brand | Number |  | RCR84 Organizations cooperate across borders after project completion | Organizations |  |
| Pair 4 | ITS04 Number of strategic joint actions (online actions, public campaigns, public events) promoting integrated tourism and green and non-motorized transport (for the EuroVelo6 route and connected routes) organized | Number |  | RCR85 Participation in joint actions across borders after project completion | Number |  |
| Pair 5 | ITS05 Website performance, measured through website traffic and/or click through rate conversion rate | Number |  | ITSR1 Awareness in the territory about the opportunities created for local development by the ITS strategy. |  |  |

Partners are invited to describe the contribution those ITS specific indicators into their project application, under Section A.2 *Project Summary, by indicated the codes of the indicators and the proposed target*. Please note that the ITS specific indicators mentioned above (Table 2) are not monitored by the Programme, but only by ITS Strategy Board.

The application shall be rejected (see Annex - A Evaluation grids) without any clarification and further analysis if:

* the project does not have a cross-border character and impact
* the operation does not contribute to the Programme objectives and indicators.

**Conditions and rules for cycling routes/paths**

The cycling routes/paths financed through the Programme are meant to support the development of EuroVelo6 and of its adjacent cycling infrastructure in the ITS area.

In order to be financed from the Programme and to be considered as contributing to the output indicator **RCO 58 -** **Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported**, all cycling infrastructure financed under this call **should respect the technical requirements set through the national legislation, and to the extend possible, the international best practice**, **in order to ensure accessibility, safety and comfort for bike users**.

As such, partners will have to ensure the **compliance with national legislation and standards** (see the section on Legal Bases and standards from below, mentioning an indicative list of relevant laws, regulations and standards).

If that legislation or those standards are not sufficiently detailed for the project’s specific situation, partners have to ensure compliance of their cycling infrastructure, to the extent possible, with the quality criteria for long-distance cycle routes, as approved by the European Cyclists’ Federation[[10]](#footnote-11) (ECF). If not possible for the project to fully comply with ECF quality criteria for long-distance cycle routes, notably with **the essential certification** **criteria,** partners have to justify it within their application.

In any situation, when planning their cycling route/path, partners are recommended to refer to the following 11 essential certification criteria from the European certification standard for long-distance cycle routes:

Table 3 - List of essential certification criteria for long distance cycling routes - for full description, read the European certification standard published by ECF

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INFRASTRUCTURE** | **SERVICES** | **MARKETING AND PROMOTION** |
| 1. Continuity | 1. Accommodation | 1. Web communication |
| 1. Route components | 1. Food, drink, rest areas |  |
| 1. Surface and width | 1. Bike services |  |
| 1. Gradients |  |  |
| 1. Attractiveness |  |  |
| 1. Signing |  |  |
| 1. Public transport |  |  |

Note: The “route components” criterion requires that the route shall not contain any sections with very high traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section shall be classified as featuring high traffic.

Partners should also consider that, during implementation, the Programme may verify that the existing cycling infrastructure, which is upgraded with financing from the project, should comply with the conditions already set through the *Guidelines for concept notes* *under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area*, launched on 15 January 2025, notably with the definition for “significantly upgraded cycling lanes or routes”[[11]](#footnote-12).

## **Modifications allowed during step 2 (full application)**

**When developing the full application, partners should respect the features declared within the** **concept note. Major modifications of the project idea should be avoided. If recommendations were issued following the assessment of project ideas (partners are obliged to implement them while developing the full application).**

If, during the development of the full application, partners notice that some features need to be modified, these changes may be implemented if observing the following rules:

**Modification of the partnership**

In duly justified cases, the partnership can be modified, if the following conditions are respected. The new proposal shall be subject of the assessment process, considering:

* The new partner(s) observe(s) the eligibility rules set by the Guidelines for Concept Notes launched in the ITS context[[12]](#footnote-13);
* The new partner(s) brings added value to the partnership;
* The maximum number of partners allowed by the Guidelines for Concept Notes (Step 1) is not exceeded[[13]](#footnote-14).
* The Lead Partner cannot be replaced.

**Modification in the intervention logic (work packages, activities and results)**

Project objectives declared in the concept note should be maintained in the full application.

During the development process of the full application, some modifications of the activities and/or working packages may be accepted. If this is the case, the following conditions need to be observed:

* A clear justification for the modification is provided within the application form;
* Project objectives remain unchanged, as declared in the concept note;
* Activities do not change significantly as to alter the intended impact of the project (e.g. changing the type of investment, elimination of key investments declared in the concept note, adding multiple new activities, etc.)[[14]](#footnote-15);
* The definition and number of indicators do not change; targets associated to indicators may be amended;
* Changes in the work packages, activities (including investments) and indicators may be implemented if requested by Programme structures, following their assessment[[15]](#footnote-16).

**Modification of location**

As a matter of principle, all project activities and, particularly, all investments declared in the concept note should be maintained in the initially proposed location. The modification of the initial location (of investments) during the 2nd step may be accepted by the Programme only if the new location respects the same conditions as the initial one, including in respect to the proximity to the EuroVelo 6 route. If the changes of location are important or if new investments are added to the project, in new locations, the Strategy Board will be informed. The final decision on accepting these location changes will stay with the Programme’s Monitoring Committee.

If the project idea included a location of investment which was owned/used by the replaced partner, the modification of the partnership is possible only if the new partner proves ownership/right of use of the respective place of the given investment or if the new location of the investment satisfies the same conditions like the previous one, notably in respect to the proximity to the EuroVelo 6 route.

In case of a modification of location, the following conditions should be respected:

* A clear justification for the modification should be provided within the application form;
* The new location respects the same conditions as the initial one, including the proximity to the EuroVelo 6 route.

**Modification of the budget**

Project ideas have been accepted with a certain value, which **cannot be exceeded when submitting the full application.** Like all project planning, also the financial plans must be jointly developed by all partners, ensuring that the budget is realistic and balanced both at partner level and for the project as a whole. Accordingly, each project partner shall prepare the budget corresponding to the activities for which it assumes responsibility. **At both partner and project level, the budget shall include only justified, necessary, and realistic costs that can be duly incurred and reported during project implementation.**

**In view of the above, it is hereby underlined that the project budget cannot be increased, but it may be reduced, if necessary, in line with the assessment criteria concerning the justification and sound financial management of the project budget.**

Thus, in case of decrease of the initial budget the partners should provided that:

* A clear justification of for the modification is provided within the application form
* The modification does not affect the chances to reach project objectives;
* The budget modification is a consequence of other modifications in the application (intervention logic, partnership, location, period, technical solutions, etc.), not vice-versa;

**No justification is needed in of the recommendation issued by the Programme structures.**

**Modification of the implementation period**

Project implementation period may be increased/decreased compared to the project idea, but it cannot exceed the maximum duration, as specified in the current ***Invitation***.

**General rules concerning modifications**

In addition to the above described modifications, other modifications of various project features between Step 1 and Step 2 may be implemented, provided that substantial justifications are included into the application.

In order to correctly manage modifications of various project features between Step 1 and Step 2, applicants are requested to self-assess their application based on **Annex AF 12-Self-assessment of the modifications**.

The Programme structures will assess all these elements. Based on the justification provided and the self-assessment, the Programme might accept/reject the proposed modifications (which will be reflected in MC funding decision). The rejection of the modifications may also lead to rejecting the whole application from funding, particularly if modifications negatively affect the project’s objectives, the partnership, the project’s duration and budgetary limits or if modifications are not justified.

## **Eligibility of expenditures**

Detailed description regarding the eligibility of expenditures is included within *List of Eligible Expenditures* applicable to PO 5.2.

The project budget should be prepared on the basis of the activities needed to meet the projects’ objectives and the resources required to carry out these activities within the time allowed. Only “eligible expenditure” can be taken into account for financial support. The eligibility of expenditure applies to both public and own contribution, so it is not possible to consider an ineligible expenditure as own contribution.

The budget is therefore both a cost estimate and a maximum ceiling for "eligible costs".

The eligible costs must be based on real costs, except for the lump sums and flat rates, which are automatically calculated.

**If the total cost of the project is above EUR 5,000,000.00 (including VAT) only non-recoverable VAT under national VAT legislation is eligible, otherwise the VAT is considered as not eligible.**

Under this call, the following types of costs shall be applied:

* + Project preparation (based on lump sum and real costs, if the case)
  + Staff costs flat rate
  + Travel & Accommodation flat rate
  + Office & administrative costs flat rate
  + Project closure lump sum
  + Real costs

**Justification of the real costs[[16]](#footnote-17)**

**Cost justification is mandatory during the application preparation phase and partners have to provide it together with the application.**

**All real costs in the project budget must be justified using at least one of the following methods:**

* + **Two comparable offers:** these can include screenshots from websites, contracts from other organizations, or formal offers received via email, etc.
  + **Independent price evaluation** conducted by a certified evaluator or an independent entity.
  + **Reference to a similar contract:** submit details of an equivalent contract already executed by a partnership partner.

The justification indicated in any of the 3 methods must be related to identical or technically similar equipment, services, or works.

Submitting offers with significant differences in specifications or if the applicants do not submit any of the justifications mentioned above, the assessors may propose to reduce or deduct the related amount form the project budget.

* **Exceptions to the rule: for costs covered by Feasibility Studies or other technical documents as outlined in Annex B2, there is no requirement to submit additional offers or evaluations.**

**Lump sum for project preparation of 14,000 Euro (total value)**

The lump sum for the project preparation will be paid by the Programme after the financing contract (subsidy) is signed. The lump sum for project preparation covers the elaboration of applications for financing, including the mandatory annexes, as listed at point *A. Documents mandatory for all applications*.

In addition to the lump sum for project preparation, the projects shall have the possibility **to ask the reimbursement of the costs of the annexes to the application for financing on the basis of real costs.**

These annexes refer to the following documents listed on *B. Documents to be submitted depending on the specificity of the application* (non-exhaustive list): feasibility study or equivalent technical document, Cost Benefit Analysis, studies and costs for documentation necessary to obtain the necessary endorsements and authorizations, documentation concerning the urban planning plan, impact assessments, location studies/appraisals, technical verifications, etc.

Please note that the expenditures for project preparation based on real costs must be requested in the first reporting period.

**Lump sum for project closure of 6,500 Euro (total value)**

The payment of the lump sum for closure is linked to the delivery of predefined output.

**The partners should decide between themselves on the division of the lump sums received within the project;**

**The lump sum for project preparation and the lump sum for project closure will not be included in the basis for the flat rates used by the Programme (flat rate for staff costs, flat rate for travel and accommodation, flat rate for administration costs).**

**Staff Costs**

**Form of reimbursement:**

**Staff costs** will be calculated based on a flat rate **up to 20% of the direct eligible costs of the operation.**

The **calculation basis** for the application of the flat-rate for *Staff costs* for INTERREG VI-A Romania-Bulgaria will consist in the following direct eligible costs:

* **External expertise and services costs;**
* **Equipment;**
* **Costs for Infrastructure and works.**

Project preparation costs and project closure costs will not be included in the calculation basis.

The project partners shall be able to demonstrate the existence of employment/works contracts or other equivalent legal agreement that allow the identification of the employment relationship with the partner’s organisation.

If in the framework of controls and audits, direct costs used as calculation basis for determining staff costs are found to be ineligible, the determined costs for staff must be re-calculated and reduced accordingly.

No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).

Considering the flat rate for *Staff cost category*, please be aware that only external expertise and services for very technical/specific documents/contribution for the project implementation is allowed. Additionally, external services can be considered when there is a lack of administrative capacity within the partner organization. In justifying the need for such expertise from the phase of drafting the Application Form and planning the budget, the partner shall have to prove that the expertise and services to be contracted under External expertise and services is not available at the level of the project management team and that the Staff costs are not already financing the type of external expertise and services (to be) contracted.

**Travel and accommodation costs**

**Form of reimbursement:**

**Travel and accommodation costs** will be calculated based on a flat rate of **up to 15% of the eligible direct staff costs of the operation** (as foreseen under the cost category Staff costs).

Travel and accommodation costs shall cover the participation of project partners in events organised within the project (such as partners meetings etc.) or by other entities, relevant for the project implementation (such as the meetings organized by the Programme’s structures, other projects etc.).

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts (including invited speakers, experts and chairpersons of meetings) and service providers fall under external expertise and services costs and shall be reimbursed on basis of real costs. The same applies to travel and accommodation costs of staff of institutions acting as associated partners, where the case.

No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts (including invited speakers, experts and chairpersons of meetings) and service providers fall under *external expertise and services* costs and shall be reimbursed on basis of real costs. The same applies to travel and accommodation costs of staff of institutions acting as associated partners.

**Office and administrative costs**

**Form of reimbursement:**

Flat-rate **of up to 15% of eligible direct staff costs of the operation**.

No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure is automatically calculated (by the monitoring system).

Office and administrative cost category includes equipment for general office use, for which the exclusive use in the project cannot be demonstrated. In consequence, this equipment shall not be allocated under the *Equipment* cost category. Please refer also to *Equipment*;

Costs of equipment for general office use not exclusively used for the project is not eligible under *Equipment category*, as they are already covered by the flat rate of the *Office and administrative budget line*.

Purchase of consumables that do not fall under the definition of *Office and administrative costs* and that are necessary for the use of laboratory equipment or machines and instruments (*See List of eligible expenditure*) is eligible and should be included under the *Equipment cost category.*

**External expertise and services**

**Form of reimbursement:**

External expertise and services costs are reimbursed by the programme on a real costs basis.

**Points of attention:**

* External expertise and services cost are connected to certain project tasks/activities that cannot be carried out by the project partners themselves and are therefore outsourced to external service providers.
* External service providers’ work must be necessary for the project and should be linked to activities foreseen in the application form.
* External expertise and services cost shall not duplicate costs already budgeted under staff costs or the task of project management team. In this respect, no activities that are foreseen to be externalised will be also performed by partners’ own staff (for example in case of projects externalising parts or hole of the project management, including external expertise related to the organization of the (public) procurement, services related to the financial or technical reporting, or other activities). **In case project management is externalised, the flat rate option for staff costs shall be accordingly diminished.**

**Equipment Costs**

Form of Reimbursement: on a real costs basis.

**Infrastructure and works**

**Form of Reimbursement**: on a real costs basis.

In case of financing construction works, each partner shall foresee in the application form costs for services for quality audit of the performed works.

**It is recommended, in case of buildings, the technical documentations to include rendering plans.**

## **Horizontal issues**

The project will have to clearly describe how will comply with the horizontal principles set in the EU regulations and described in the Programme. This means that horizontal principles and issues should, to the possible extent, be integrated in the project activities, outputs and results, thus ensuring their fulfilment.

The project should respect the fundamental rights[[17]](#footnote-18) and should describe its specific contributions to the main three horizontal principles on sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women, during all phases of the project lifecycle, from its design and preparation to its implementation and reporting.

The accomplishment of the minimum requirements of the law in the fields of promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women and sustainable development is mandatory for all projects and will be monitored during project implementation.

Another horizontal issue that will have to be considered by the applicants and integrated in the projects is the New European Bauhaus[[18]](#footnote-19), an initiative that connects the European Green Deal[[19]](#footnote-20) to the daily lives and living spaces.

Also, the contribution to the European Union Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR)[[20]](#footnote-21), EU Green Deal and EU Territorial Agenda 2030[[21]](#footnote-22) must be proven and detailed in the application form, with clear indication of the Priority Area to which the project is contributing.

In addition, the contribution and synergies with the national, regional and local strategies/plans/strategic documents should be described in the application form.

When drafting the application, the following details should be considered, as they will be assessed and scored.

More details regarding the horizontal issues that need to be approved by the project are included in the *Annex L – Horizontal issues*.

**The following sub-sections include the main headlines of the horizontal issues, but these should be read in conjunction with the Annex L – Horizontal issues.**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Sustainable development has three dimensions that interrelate:

* **environmental sustainability** – ensuring that natural environment is used in a way that will preserve resources for future generation,
* **economic sustainability** – capacity of future generation to earn an income and allow for economic growth,
* **social sustainability** – future generation having the same or improved access to social resources such as human rights, political stability.

**DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM (DNSH)**

The project activities contribute to one of the six environmental objectives and they are compliant with Do no significant harm objectives: Climate change mitigation, Climate change adaptation, Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources, Pollution prevention & control, Transition to a circular economy, Protection and restoration of biodiversity & ecosystems

When developing the application form and the technical annexes, the applicant must include adaptation measures, in this regard please consider at least the measures identified in the *Annex AG\_I. DNSH\_Interreg VI-A RoBg level¸*for the corresponding Priority and Specific Objective.

The adaptation measures included in the ***Annex AG\_I DNSH\_Interreg VI-A RoBg*** level are mandatory for all projects! Therefore, before designing your project and the technical annexes, please check the adaptation measures identified for the Specific Objective and Priority under the project will be submitted.

Please bear in mind that these are minimum requirements, and they can be complemented with additional ones, depending on the legal requirements and the type of the project.

**GO GREEN WITH YOUR PROJECT!**

When designing and implementing your project, you can act in many ways to reduce impact on the environment and reduce the carbon footprint. You are thus strongly encouraged to apply energy efficient and sustainable principles to the project activities. In fact, measures reducing the impact on the environment cannot only add value to the project in terms of credibility, but it can also result in lower costs.

**Mandatory!**

Projects aimed at renovation/modernization of existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings must consider the implementation of solutions to improve energy efficiency, as well as the use of renewable sources of electrical/thermal energy.

**GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is defined as *"a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured[[22]](#footnote-23).*

The Programme encourages sustainable measures and supports the inclusion of additional `green` criteria in tendering whenever legally possible. Thus, by using your purchasing power to choose environmentally friendly goods, services and works, you can make an important contribution to sustainable consumption and production.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Guaranteeing equal opportunities and preventing discrimination are important principles in project implementation. No one should be discriminated based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Instead, project activities should, where possible, increase the possibilities of all groups to participate in the activities of the society. Any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation has to be prevented. Accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account. At the level of projects, applicants are invited to explain in their application form how their project complies with, and possibly even strengthens, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

**EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**

In addition to the general principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination the programme pays attention to the equality between men and women.

Ensuring equality between men and women means in principle to make possible that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. Gender equality implies not only equal distribution between men and women in all domains of society. It is also about the qualitative aspects, ensuring that the knowledge and experience of both men and women are used to promote progress in all aspects of society, placing equal value and emphasis on the knowledge and skills of both men and women, including ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

**NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS**

The New European Bauhaus[[23]](#footnote-24) initiative promotes a new lifestyle where sustainability matches style, thus accelerating the green transition in various sectors of the economy such as construction, furniture, fashion and in the society as well as other areas of our daily life. The aim is to provide all citizens with access to goods that are circular and less carbon-intensive, that support the regeneration of nature and protect biodiversity.

Your project will have to take the opportunity to explore ways to contribute to creating and delivering sustainable, affordable, accessible, inclusive and beautiful products and/ or services, whether we refer to new cycling infrastructure, digitalization of heritage, learning programs or green areas in cities.

Your project can contribute to implement the New European Bauhaus initiative with a wide range of solutions, from educational and cultural activities, to implementation of nature-based solutions, while making the built environment more attractive.

**SEA MITIGATION MEASURES AND INDICATORS**

When developing and implementing the projects, the recommendations and the monitoring indicators set by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report must be observed. The list of the measures and the monitoring indicators proposed for each type of actions is included in *Annex AG\_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators*.

Please consult the provisions of ***Annex AG\_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators*** and consider the proposed measures when developing the project. Details regarding the way these measures were considered by the project partners should be included in the description of the work packages/activities (where relevant). These aspects shall be assessed by the assessors or followed during the implementation stage.

The Bulgarian partners must observe also the recommendations generated by the Bulgarian legislation, as mentioned in ***Annex AG\_E SEA mitigation measures and indicators****.*

## **Communication and branding**

Communication and branding activities refer to the general communication and branding activities and to specific promotion activities of the ITS, in coordination with all ITS projects, as described below. The communication quality criteria will assess both types of activities.

**GENERAL COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING ACTIVITIES**

Co-funded projects have to acknowledge and promote the ERDF support received in all their activities. The overall context of the operations of strategic importance in the cohesion policy regulatory framework is related to visibility and communication, in line with Articles 46(a) and 50(1)(e ) of the CPR.

Each project is required to set out the envisaged approach to communication and visibility of the project. For more details, please see *Communication Kit Starter* (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>).

**Please bear in mind that failure to comply with the visibility legal requirements set out by EU Regulation may lead to the appliance of financial correction by the Managing Authority up to 2% of the ERDF total support of the project, based on the principle of proportionality.**

Projects are encourage to use communication products such as roll-ups and banners to promote the project when organising events.

Promotional items are by definition produced in larger quantities and come custom-printed with the Programme logo. They are usually relatively small and inexpensive. Their production has to respect horizontal principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, sustainable development and environment protection.

Limited types of promotional materials are allowed under the Programme. The list includes: pens and pencils, (Paper) notebooks, bags (made of sustainable materials like cotton, paper or linen), cardboard conference folders, USB sticks.



**The applicants can choose the promotional items from the Programme list, according to their needs.**

**However, at operation level, partners may decide to propose maximum 3 promotional items, additional to the Programme list.**

All promotional items must respect the green principle and the quantity produced should be reasonable and justified. The costs of a single item should not exceed EUR 50.

The public availability of results must be guaranteed also after project closure. Results and outcomes must remain available for at least 5 years after the end date of the project.

Also, please bear in mind that you will need to prove you have planted at least 5 trees, during the project implementation. You can plant your trees on public spaces or near to your headquarters. When selecting the trees, please make sure you have chosen local species (please do not use alien and invasive species[[24]](#footnote-25)). Also, please make sure that you can take care of the development of the planted trees.

**SPECIFIC PROMOTION ACTIVITIES OF THE INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL STRATEGY (ITS)**

In order to ensure a consistent and coordinated promotion of the projects part of the Integrated Territorial Strategy, which are financed by the Programme through this Invitation, projects’ representatives are invited to jointly agree upon and implement a common promotion approach. In this respect, each project is invited to jointly promote the results and to ensure an integrated territorial marketing and branding.

Within a maximum of 6 months from the signing of the first project contract, the partners of ITS projects which are financed by the Programme (having signed contracts by that time), may develop and issue a Joint Promotion Strategy, defining the main communication objectives and joint activities. The Programme recommends that, during the development of the full application, partners of all projects invited to the second step already discuss among them and plan to further implement joint promotion activities, ensuring that associated costs are appropriately reflected in each project’s budget. In order to do so, they may consult with the Programme structures.

For jointly promoting the results, each application shall include in its budget at least one promotion activity, in one of the following formats:

* a promotion event with the public and with the participation of the Strategy Board members
* a promotion event with the participation of representatives from other ITS projects, of national and regional authorities and NGOs from the ITS region, as well as with representatives of the Strategy Board, or
* a mix of the two previous formats of promotion events, or
* a promotion campaign to support integrated tourism and green and non-motorized transport (for the EuroVelo 6 route and connected routes), preferably on-line, jointly planned and delivered by at least 3 of the financed ITS projects, covering the whole ITS area or, at least, a significant part of it, from both Romania and Bulgaria.

ITS projects may cover all related costs, including costs for the participation of SB members, if the case (accommodation, daily allowances and travel costs), where justified and necessary for the proper implementation of the ITS project, and for the overall benefit of the ITS area.

## **State aid**

According to Article 107 (1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, state aid refers to financial support granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition and intra-community market trade by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods. In order to meet the requirements of the European Commission and in order to allow a smooth implementation of the Programme and of its approved projects, in the framework of Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria, State Aid is not permitted.

In case that during project implementation, or during 5 years after the end of project implementation period, illegal state-aid incidence is discovered, MA may apply a financial correction up to 100% for the respective project, as well as penalties and debts for the period between the date of grant award and the effective recovery of funds.

For state aid to take place, the recipient of project funding must be an undertaking, and the Court of Justice has consistently defined undertakings as entities engaged in an economic activity, regardless of their legal status and the way in which they are financed. The term "undertaking" is in this context used in a wide sense as any entity which has an activity of an economic nature and which offers goods and services on the market, regardless the legal form and the way of financing of this entity. Also if an entity is not profit-oriented, state aid rules will apply as long as it competes with companies that are profit-oriented. Therefore, not only private companies are subject to state aid rules but also public authorities, if they carry out an economic activity on the market.

The next step in establishing state aid is to use the set of five criteria that all have to be fulfilled cumulatively in order to be state aid. These criteria are detailed in Annex AG\_N – State aid, and should be considered when developing the application.

**Please bear in mind that for operations financed based on this invitation, no state aid is granted. As such, any activities fulfilling all the above criteria cannot be financed. In this regard applicants have to make an initial assessment of whether State aid is involved in their project and their options for dealing with this. As such, *Annex AF\_A3******State Aid Self-Assessment* must be filled in by each partner and submitted with the application.**

**If activities (and related output(s)) falling under the rules of state aid are identified during the assessment or pre-contracting phase, they shall be considered ineligible, shall be removed from the project, and the budget adjusted accordingly.**

**The observance of state aid provisions is also closely verified / monitored during implementation at all programme levels, so that in case the programme structures find out that the lead partner or any project partner made false declarations regarding state aid, the Managing Authority is entitled to terminate de financing contract, and to demand repayment of the amounts already paid.**

## **Revenue Generating Projects**

The projects are expected to share any outputs and results widely and for free. If a project would happen to generate income, partners should observe the legislation inforce on how to handle such income.

## **Durability, transferability and financial sustainability**

The project must ensure the effectiveness, fairness and sustainable impact of the Funds and should guarantee that investments in infrastructure or productive investment is long lasting and prevent the Funds from being used to undue advantage.

Therefore, the sustainability of a project - or more precisely of its results - is crucial. A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to the project partners and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the project implementation. Hence it is essential to include the aspects of sustainability in the application form. As such, information regarding the necessary financial resources and mechanism to cover the operation and maintenance costs for the operations including investment infrastructure should be provided by the partners.

Also, the durability of the operations in case of investment in infrastructure or productive investment must be ensured for 5 years after the final payment to the project. No cessation or transfer of productive activity, no undue advantage owing to change of infrastructure ownership and no substantial change in its nature, objectives or implementation conditions, undermining the original objective of the concerned investments, are accepted.

Moreover, some outputs/deliverables that will be delivered by the project can be adapted or further developed to be used by other target groups or in other territories. Thus, the project partners should include details and measures for ensuring the transferability of these results to the relevant groups.

**Please bear in mind that the Programme will assess and rank the way you ensure the durability and the financial sustainability of the project, after the project implementation. As such, you must include in the application form detailed information on how you will ensure the financial sustainability and the durability of the project and of its results for a period of 5 years after the final payment to the project.**

## **How to apply and the deadline**

The submission process is organized in “two-steps” procedure, exclusively online. The 1st step was organized under the supervision of the Strategy Board. The 2nd step is organized by the Programme, and it is open only to project ideas accepted by the Programme. The full application (project proposals) must be submitted in English language, only through the web-based programme joint electronic monitoring system (Jems) available at[**https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/**](https://jems-robg.mdlpa.ro/).

JEMS manual provides detailed guidelines on the application for funding process.

Project proposals must be developed and submitted by the lead applicant at the latest by:

**30th of June 2026 at 13:00 PM EET**

# **Section 2 – Conditions for the contracting process of the projects, following 2nd step**

### **Assessment of applications**

**Assessment Process**

The full project proposal shall be assessed based on standardized procedure which complies with the principles of transparency and equal treatment. **The main purpose of the assessment process is to ensure a high quality of the contracted projects. Therefore, this process should be seen as an opportunity to clarify the relevant aspects before the MC funding decision.** The assessment process shall be carried out by an Assessment Committee (AC) based on the criteria approved by the Monitoring Committee (MC) - *Annex AG \_A Evaluation grids*.

When assessing the project applications, assessors shall also check the recommendations issued following the assessment process of the project ideas (in the context of ITS) and of the Programme structures’ assessment (as per Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme *Considerations and methodology for the assessment of the Integrated Territorial Strategy*, mentioned above).

The assessment will be carried out in two phases:

* Phase 1 - administrative compliance and eligibility check
* Phase 2 – quality assessment (technical and financial evaluation and state aid incidence assessment)

The state aid assessment process is also reflected in a state aid assessment grid, which contains guiding questions for the assessment as well as text fields for recording assessment conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment Committee, particularly for projects that present a potential risk of state aid.

Verification of the compliance of project application with eligibility criteria can be made all through the assessment, funding decision, and contracting process; the failure to comply with the established eligibility criteria can lead to the rejection of the application at any stage. The assessment process may be finalized with clear recommendations, which must be taken on board by the partners, including during the pre-contracting stage, if the case.

Assessment Committee (AC) will check the entire application, and if the project does not reach the funding threshold, it will be proposed to be returned for improvement, in a given time and with clear indications (open for modifications in JEMS). In this respect, based on the conclusions and findings of the assessment process of the AC, MC shall decide on returning the application, clearly indicating the recommendations for modifications/improvement and the deadline for resubmission. In case the applicants fail in submitting the new application in the set deadline, the Programme structures shall inform SB about the process.

Considering the fact that the project ideas were already prioritized and accepted for funding by the Programme structures, the AC can request clarifications during the assessment process and take into consideration the new information provided through the clarification answers. The assessment process may be finalized with clear recommendations for the adjustment of the project, which must be taken on board by the partners, including during the pre-contracting stage, if the case.

In order for MC to take a decision on the financing and contracting process of the project, the application must respect the administrative and eligibility criteria and it must receive at least 60 points at the quality assessment.

The Assessment Committee (AC) will check the entire application, and, depending on its findings, it will issue one of the following conclusions/proposals to MC:

* The project is recommended for funding and contracting;
* The project is recommended for funding, subject to conditions (recommendations for the adjustment of the project);
* The project is recommended to be returned for improvement, notably if the project did not receive at least 60 points or if the thresholds for certain quality criteria are not met; Clear recommendations and a deadline for the revision of the project are proposed.

If the project did not receive at least 60 points, it may be returned to the project partners with clear recommendations, for improvement. MC shall set a deadline for revision and improvement of the project.

The assessment process shall start the next working day after the receipt of the full application, even before the submission deadline. Each application may benefit from its own assessment report, meaning that once the assessment of one application is completed, the corresponding assessment report may be transmitted to the Programme structures and to the MC for the financing decision.

The Strategy Board will be informed on the results of the assessment process of the full applications.

**Please bear in mind that no double funding is accepted by the Programme. In this respect, the assessors shall verify the double funding of the operations proposed for contracting, including cross-checks with the Interreg cross-border programmes overlapping the Programme area. MC members will also check for double funding when taking the funding decision.**

**If double funding is discovered, the operation shall be rejected from funding at any stage of the assessment, funding decision, contracting or implementation process.**

**Any attempt to obtain confidential information or to influence the assessors or MC members during the assessment and funding process will lead to your disqualification!**

**Your application will not be financed if proven that you are guilty of misleading of the assessors by providing false information or if you deliberately hidden information that would have led to rejecting the application. Such a behaviour may trigger other legal consequences for declaring false information.**

**Funding and contracting decision**

Projects that received at least 60 points (during the assessment in Step 2) will be contracted, based on the MC decision, within the limits of the available financial allocation.

If the project did not receive at least 60 points, it may be returned to the project partners with clear recommendations, for improvement. MC shall set a deadline for revision and improvement of the project.

If applicants fail to resubmit the amended application within the set deadline or if they fail to improve sufficiently the project’s quality, the application may be definitively rejected from funding.

Contracting will be based on the available budget and a reserve list may be created when the financial allocation is insufficient. If financial allocation becomes available, partners from projects on the reserve list may be invited to sign the contract. Partners will be invited to sign the contract:

* In descending order of the scores awarded to their applications during the 1st (first) step.
* If the project received at least 60 points in the 2nd step.

After the assessment process of an application is finalized, based on its results, MC shall issue one of the following possible decisions:

* **Approving the funding and contracting of the project.** The project may be simply recommended for contracting or it may be contracted under condition. If approved to be contracted under condition, the application form is reverted in JEMS, to be further modified and/or supplementary documents to be attached. This means that the project may go on to the contracting stage, but only after the conditions are met and accepted by the Programme structures during the pre-contracting phase;
* **Returning the project with the proposal to be revised (return for improvement)**. In this case, the project is reverted in JeMS and a new version of the application is created and resubmitted, within the set deadline. Partners will have the opportunity to revise entirely the application and resubmit it within the specified deadline, according to the information included in the notification letter;
* **Rejecting the project from funding and contracting**. Rejection may arise in the following cases:
  + if the project returned for improvement is not improved and resubmitted within the deadline;
  + if the project returned for improvement goes through assessment and it does not reach the 60 points threshold for quality, if the thresholds for certain quality criteria are not met, or if it does not observe the eligibility and administrative criteria;
  + if the project is approved under condition, but applicants fail to implement conditions within the set deadline.

In certain situations, before taking the decision, MC may return the project to the Assessment Committee, for reassessment.

After the MC decision on funding projects, all lead partner receive a notification about the MC decision (on JeMS). It is the responsibility of the lead partner to inform the other project partners about the outcome. The Joint Secretariat will also publish on the Programme website, the list of the approved projects in 5 working days after the Monitoring Committee funding decision.

**Contracting of the projects**

The decision of the Monitoring Committee is followed by the pre-contractual phase and then the contracts will be concluded.

Contracting will be based on the available budget and a reserve list may be created when the financial allocation is insufficient. If financial allocation becomes available, partners from projects on the reserve list may be invited to sign the contract. Partners will be invited to sign the contract:

* In the descending order of the scores awarded to their applications during the 1st (first) step.
* If the project received at least 60 points in the 2nd step.

In case of projects proposed for financing, partners are strongly recommended to start the implementation of project activities as soon as possible in order to avoid any delays in implementation. Therefore, the partners are strongly encouraged to start the implementation of the project activities, preparing their tender documentations and launch the public procurement procedures, before or immediately after the decision on funding of the project by the Monitoring Committee. Contracts may be signed and payments may be enacted, as expenditure is eligible starting with 1st of January 2021.

For the project proposals selected for funding and approved under conditions a pre-contracting procedure is initiated in order to fulfil the requirements/conditions for approval set forth by the MC following the assessment process or to correct any technical errors /inconsistencies detected by the JS in the pre-contracting phase.

Details regarding the contracting process and rules are detailed in Project Implementation Manual[[25]](#footnote-26).

**Please bear in mind that the Managing Authority has the right to decide not to sign a financing contract if a Partner already has in implementation 4 projects.**

**Equally, please be aware that during the pre-contracting phase, additional clarifications/information regarding the non-refundable funds (e.g. a short and clear description of non-refundable funds necessary for implementing the project activities or the necessity of envisaged non-refundable funds for implementing the project etc.) may be requested by the Programme structures.**

The contract templates annexed to this Invitation are only indicative; the final version of all contracts will be presented to the partners of the selected projects in the pre-contractual phase.

**Lead partner and all project partners are responsible for the correctness of information that they provide and also certify that the information uploaded in JeMS is a true and complete, including in respect to copies of original documents (if any). If false information or differences between the electronic version and the original documents are later identified, the project could be rejected/terminated and other legal consequences enacted.**

### **Complaint against MC funding decision**

If the applicants are not satisfied with the results of the assessment process, a complaint can be filed according to the Complaint Procedure (*Annex AG\_ D Complaint procedure for evaluation results*). Following the JS notification to the lead applicant on the MC decision, and within the set timeframe available for submitting a formal complaint, the lead applicant may decide to submit a complaint concerning the MC decision on its project proposal. **The complaint can be submitted only for the project not accepted for contracting (rejected from funding).**

Only the project’s lead applicant, representing the project partnership affected by the funding decision, is entitled to file a complaint. It is therefore the task of the lead applicant to collect and bring forward the complaint reasons from all project partners.

# **Section 3 – Indications and rules for developing the full application (the project) - 2nd step**

3.1. Full application form – general overview

The full application form (AF) is a binding document which describes the project and gives detailed information on the work plan and financial figures. It is the reference document for implementation during the whole project duration. The application form builds on the harmonised template developed by the community of Interreg programmes under the umbrella of Interact.

**Detailed information on how to develop the application are included in the Annex AG\_M How to plan a project, thus this Invitation should be read in conjunction with that annex.**

**General rules:**

* **The information filled in the text boxes shall be in English, precise and concise as the number of characters is limited. Once the AF is filled in and submitted no changes are possible.**
* **It is mandatory to use the PIC number (which can be obtained by registering within the EC Participant Register) when filling in the Partner Identity Information in Jems (**[**https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register**](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register)**).**
* **The application is built on work packages. For each work package, a project shall define one project specific objective to be achieved in the project lifetime through the implementation of planned activities and related outputs and deliverables. Please note that each work package should have a distinct project specific objective (i.e. project specific objectives should not be repeated in other work packages). Each work package should also have at least one communication objective, and related target audiences that contributes to the achievement of the project specific objective. As such, each project is required to set out the envisaged approach to communication and visibility of the WP. Thus, the applicant must identify a communication objective(s) and specific communication activities to be integrated in each work package.**

**The project in a nutshell is presented below:**

**Output 1.2**

**Output 2.1**

**Project overall objective**

**Work package 1**

**Work package 2**

**Project specific objective 1**

**Project specific objective 2**

**Communication objective 1**

**Communication objective objective 2**

**Activity 1.1**

* **Deliverable 1.1.1**

**Activity 1.2**

* **Deliverable 1.2.1**
* **Deliverable 1.2.**

**Activity 1.3**

* **Deliverable 1.3.1**

**Activity 2.1**

* **Deliverable 2.1.1**

**Activity 2.2**

* **Deliverable 2.2.1**
* **Deliverable 2.2.2**
* **Deliverable 2.2.3**

**Investment 2.1**

**Output 1.1**

**Output 1.3**

**Output 2.2**

**Project results**

**For practical details on how to fill in an application in Jems, you may also consult our YouTube tutorial:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sipyi-qVt5A&t=505s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sipyi-qVt5A&t=505s)**.**

**3.2. Required documents to be submitted with the Application form**

**All annexes should be submitted together with the application. If any annexes are missing, they should be requested during the clarification process as part of the assessment. The primary objective of the assessment process is to ensure that the project meets the qualitative standards for contracting and that all required annexes are provided.**

**A. Documents mandatory for all applications (the costs related to these documents are covered by the lump sum for project preparation as decided at Programme level for all projects financed via the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme)**

For annexes with standard format, please use the template provided by the Programme, attached to this document.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Type** | **Description** |
| **1** | **Lead partner declaration (Annex AF\_A1) – standard format** | This declaration should be filled in by the Lead Partner |
| 2 | **Project partner declaration (Annex AF\_A2) – standard format** | This declaration should be filled in by each project partner (except for the Lead Partner) |
| *3* | **State-aid self-assessment (Annex AF\_A3) – standard format** | The document filled in **by each project partners**. This State-aid self-assessment document has been developed to help the partners to make an initial assessment of whether State aid is involved in their project and the options for dealing with this |
| *4* | **Formal mandates (Annex AF\_A4) – open format** | The formal mandate of delegation from the legal representatives of partners (in case the application form and annexes are not signed by the legal representatives of the Lead Partner/partners), accompanied by their English translation. |
| *5* | **Documents certifying the ownership status of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) (Annex AF\_A5) – open format** | **The property documents must be submitted only for land and construction.**  **For equipment, the place of installation, if the case, should be indicated.**  **Documents certifying the ownership status should be submitted, *as the case may be, as mentioned below:*** |
| **5.1. Annex AF\_A5.1** | Partner(s) should present the legal acts, contracts or any other valid proof under the real property law (e.g. law, government decision, decision of local authorities, purchase or bailment, concession, renting contracts etc.) demonstrating that partner(s) have the right of property and/or use over the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) subject to the project's intervention. If the partner(s) hold/s only the right of use, such right should be secured for at least 5 years after the completion of the operation. |
| **5.2. Annex AF\_A5.2** | If the owner of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) is different from the partner(s), partner(s) should present documents proving that the owner has given it’s written agreement for the partner(s) to perform the investment on/in the relevant land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) or to install the equipment. |
| **5.3. Annex AF\_A5.3** | It includes documents related to the registration of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) in the relevant public registers (e.g. land register and cadastre).  It is recommended that documents related to the registration of the land and/or construction (building or item of infrastructure) in the relevant public registers (e.g., land register, cadastre etc.) to be up-to date. |
| **5.4. Annex AF\_5.4** | Annex 5.4 is provided ONLY IF the partner(s) cannot provide valid documents certifying the ownership status of the land and/or construction **(annexes A5.1-3). In such a situation, partner(s) may provide a declaration on own responsibility regarding these documents.** Please note that **such a declaration must include information on all the above-mentioned requirements from annexes A5.1 to A5.3 and a clear statement of the reason** why the documents are not available at the submission date of the application. In this case, the documents not submitted together with the application form (annexes A5.1, A5.2 and A5.3) must be however submitted during the assessment stage, upon assessors’ request. |
|  | **5.5. Annex AF\_5.5** | **Declaration from the owner of the land and/or construction** (building or item of infrastructure) that the respective property is:   * + free of any encumbrances;   + not the object of a pending litigation;   + not the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.   The owner should fill in this declaration (if applicable[[26]](#footnote-27)).  If this declaration is not submitted together with the application form, it should be however submitted during the assessment stage, upon assessors’ request. |
| *6* | **Market analysis for items based on real costs (Annex AF\_A6) – open format** | **The justifying documents of the real costs as described in Invitation** (e.g. independent report on prices or print-screens / offers form internet)**.**  In order to overcome the impact of future inflation and price instability, the expenditures included in the budget based on the above market analysis could be increased [[27]](#footnote-28) with the average of the national inflation of the last 3 years before the application submission, but not more than 10%[[28]](#footnote-29). Partners should make use of the annual statistical data on prices available at the level of each country, as published by the national statistical institutes. |
| *7* | **DNSH declaration (Annex AF\_A7) – standard format** | This declaration should be filled by each project partner |
| *8* | **Project associated partner declaration (Annex AF\_A8) – standard format** | Issued by the associated partner (if the case). |
| *9* | **Financial Capacity Self-Assessment – spreadsheet file format (xls or similar) and pdf signed by the legal representative of the organization or the person responsible at the level of the organization (Annex AF\_A9) – standard format - and the related plan, if the case (open format)** | Each project partner should fill in financial Capacity Self-Assessment. This document must be accompanied by justifying documents described below:   * the last balance sheet *and* * the last available annual profit and loss account *and* * if the case, the mitigation plan.   Annual accounts for the latest financial year for which the accounts have been closed at the moment of submission of the application must be submitted by the Lead Partner and all project partners, as full unofficial translation(s) in English (certified through signature by the legal representative of the organisation). Copies / excerpts from bank accounts are not equivalent to latest annual account. Only documents (the balance sheet and profit and loss account) providing data about revenues, expenditures, profit and losses will be accepted.  Other documents will be considered noncompliant, therefore the application risks to be then rejected for missing mandatory annexes, if not provided at assessors’ request.  Organisations established within the last year for which the first annual account is not yet available must submit the balance sheet for the last closed month.  Please note that if the financial capacity self-assessment signals red or orange risk, the corresponding partner must provide a signed plan for ensuring the financial resources and the mechanism to cover the financial cash-flow of the project and the operation and maintenance costs of the project. |
| *10* | **Declaration for the absence of the circumstances under Art. 5l of Council Regulation (EU) No. 2022/576 of April 8, 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No. 833/2014 on restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine (Annex AF\_A10) – standard format** | Issued ONLY by private partners, if the case. |
| *11* | **Methodology for the result indicators indicated by this document (Annex AF\_A11) – open format** | Open format, including all the elements set by the *Invitation* in relation to the result indicators. |
| *12* | **Self-assessment of the modifications (Annex AF\_A12) – standard format** | To be filled in according to the set template. |
| *13* | **Concept note, submitted under the call and approved by SB (Annex AF\_A13) – standard format set by the related guide for step 1** | According to the template set by the *Guidelines for concept notes (CALL 1) project ideas financing source: Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme & other programs under the Integrated Territorial Strategy for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area* (as submitted to Strategy Board during the call dedicated to concept notes) |

**B. Documents to be submitted depending on the specificity of the application (the costs related to these documents are reimbursed by the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme based on real cost principle)**

**No standard format is provided by the Programme.**

When preparing these documents, **the partners should use the appropriate formats set by the national/local/internal rules etc.**

**Please note, that when referring to project partners, this includes all partners involved in the project, including the Lead Partner.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Type** | **Description** |
| 1 | **Annex B1\_Cost-Benefit Analysis** | The Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) will be annexed to the application form.  This annex is mandatory only for those partners that may have revenues/economic activities from the supported activities included in the applications.  In order to prepare their cost-benefit analysis, partners are requested to use a reliable method to account for costs and effects of their intervention. Partners are encouraged use widely-recognised methodologies for cost-benefit analysis or similar guidance from the European Commission[[29]](#footnote-30).  Partners do not need to submit the cost-benefit analyses if they submit a feasibility study (which includes a cost-benefit analysis). Still, partners need to submit the cost benefit analysis if their Annex B2 (see below) consists of DALI, or other technical documents, or design documents that don’t include an ACB.  Partners are encouraged to carefully self-assess their proposed activities which may have an economic nature (e.g. building/providing accommodation, including in camping sites, providing leisure trips or transportation, building new touristic attractions, providing repair services, etc.). |
| 2 | **Annex B2 - Feasibility studies or equivalent technical documents or any other design documents** | For Romanian beneficiaries it should be annexed:   * feasibility study for new investments or * DALI and, if the case, energy audit plus technical expertise for upgrading/reconstruction.   For Bulgarian beneficiaries it should be annexed:   * **Spatial planning research/study** (*Обемно-устройствено проучване, съгласно глава 3 от Наредба №4 от 21.05.2001 за обхвата и съдържанието на инвестиционните проекти*), including general Bill of Quantities and provisional estimation of costs or, * **Preliminary Design** (*Идеен проект, съгласно глава 5 от Наредба №4 от 21.05.2001 за обхвата и съдържанието на инвестиционните проекти*), including bill of quantities and provisional estimation of costs or, * **Technical Design** (Технически проект, съгласно глава 6 от Наредба №4 от 21.05.2001 за обхвата и съдържанието на инвестиционните проекти), including detailed bill of Quantities and provisional estimation of costs.   In order to evaluate the technical characteristics of an investment, the applicants must annex the above-mentioned documents to the application form. Their elaboration and approval must observe the national provisions in this matter (elaborated by a licensed designer, content required by norms, bill of quantities included, etc., as the case may be).  The Feasibility Study or equivalent technical documents or any other design document elaborated by the licenced designer that contains the description of construction works and Bill of Quantities should bear the date of elaboration/revision and should provide accurate information at the time of application submission (to allow for proper evaluation of the application). If such elements are not provided or information is not accurate, clarifications may be requested.  The Feasibility Study or equivalent technical documents or any other design document elaborated by the licenced designer that contains description of construction works and Bill of Quantities should be submitted in English, as an annex to the application form and should be accompanied by the legal agreements and approvals according to the national legislation in force.  In case legal agreements and approvals are not submitted together with the Feasibility Study/equivalent technical documents or any other design document, the respective agreements/approvals will be subject to conditions for signing the subsidy contract. All the documents subject to conditions for signing the subsidy contract will be notified to partners and must be provided within the deadline indicated by JS.  For investments/infrastructure, proposed under the project, where activities related to the identification of the location/solution etc. are foreseen in the application and technical or/and design documents (feasibility studies, other technical documentation, etc.) are outputs of these activities, the Feasibility Study or equivalent technical documents or any other design documents are not mandatory to be submitted together with the Application Form. In this case, the investment/infrastructure subject of these activities/feasibilities studies should be developed, implemented and completed under the project financed by the Programme and it should be reflected accordingly in the application form.  Investments (works, infrastructure and equipment) for which the national legislation does not provide for the elaboration of a Feasibility Study/DALI or preliminary/technical design, the applicants should submit a document including quantities and indicative costs accompanied by the detailed explanations/plans and measurements of the object of intervention, used for estimating the necessary works/equipment and related costs.  If the object of intervention requires the performance of a technical expertise and if the technical expertise is not attached to the application form, then the application form must clearly state that the solution recommended through the technical expertise was considered for the future intervention.  Where applicable, for Romanian partners, according with the provisions of Government Decision 941/2013, regarding the Organization and functioning of the Technico – Economic Committee for the Informational Society, all projects comprising IT&C investments with a value higher than 2,500,000 RON must obtain, before submitting the Application Form or starting the procurement procedures during the project implementation period, the permit from the Technico – Economic Committee for the Informational Society. |
| 3 | **Annex B3\_Urban planning Permit (RO beneficiaries only)** | Urban planning permit (mandatory for applications including infrastructure related activities – only Romanian partners) will be annexed to the Application Form. Only Romanian beneficiaries have to submit the urban planning permit. If this document is not available at the submission deadline, it will be submitted during the pre-contracting stage or project implementation if its issue depends of a project activity. |
| 4 | **Annex B4\_ Environmental agreement** | **Environmental agreement** will be annexed to the application form, if required by legislation.  If the **environmental agreement is not available/required by the legislation, than the applicants should submit** an official document from the competent environment authority demonstrating that the project either:   * observes the legal provisions of environment protection (For Bulgarian beneficiaries – a letter from the competent body that a procedure under chapter VI of Environmental Protection Act **is not required**) or * completed the first phase of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure – screening (For Bulgarian beneficiaries – the decision of the competent body for the necessity of carrying out of environmental impact assessment).   If these documents are not available, partners must prove at least that they have initiated at internal level the steps to obtain the environmental agreement (internal notes, reports, letters, etc.). Alternatively, they may submit a brief description of the planned process for completing the required legal steps.  The Environmental agreement or the official statement/act form the competent environment authority shall be provided during the pre-contracting stage, or during project implementation, depending on the availability.  If the environmental agreement depends on an activity of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form. |
| 5 | **Annex B5\_ Environmental Impact Report or other environmental reports requested by the EIA procedure** | If required by law, the environmental impact report **or other environmental reports requested by legislation** will be annexed to the application form (a summary in English, if issued in other languages than English).  If the environmental impact report or/and other environment reports required by the legislation are not available by the date of the application submission, applicants should still provide one of the following:   * the draft document launched in public consultation, according to the applicable legislation, or * other evidence that the public consultation was initiated, or * other documents proving that their organizations initiated internally the procedures for obtaining the environmental agreement or for drafting the environmental impact report or other environmental reports requested by legislation, if available.   In this case, the **EIR** **or other environmental reports requested by legislation** must be provided in the pre-contracting phase or, during the implementation period of the project.  In case the Environmental Impact Report or/and other environment reports requested by the legislation depend on an activity of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form. |
| 6 | Annex B6 \_ Assessment of expected impacts of climate change | **Documentation of climate proofing (maximum 30 pages), if requested by the type of investment, as described in the Applicant’s Guide (section *Investments*).** **In case this is not available and depends on an activity/deliverable of the project, it will be provided during the implementation stage (including as part of a project delivery, if necessary). If the case, these shall be detailed in the application form.** |
| 7 | Annex B 7 – open format | If partners consider that additional documents/information are needed in supporting/providing detailed information on how the environmental issues were considered (measures proposed in the SEA Report, DNSH, climate proofing etc.), they can upload to the electronic system some additional attachments, within a 30 pages limit. Those additional attachments are not considered part of the application form. |

Please note that the assessment of the projects is done only based on the information provided in the application form and in the mandatory annexes, submitted in Jems and the clarification process.

The main purpose of the assessment process is not only to verify the quality of the project proposals but also to collect all the necessary documents required for contract signing. Therefore, it is recommended that all annexes to be requested and submitted during the assessment stage. Only in justified cases where this is not possible, the assessors can decide that the missing documents to be provided during the pre-contracting stage.

Failure by the applicant to submit the required documents during the pre-contracting stage will lead to the rejection of the project from the contracting under the Programme.

All annexes and documents referenced above in Section 3.3. (points A and B) must be either:

* signed electronically, in PDF format, or
* hand-signed on paper and submitted as scanned copies.Documents issued by third parties (not by the partners) can also be accepted if they are issued on paper, hand-signed, and scanned.

Please note that when scanned copies of original annexes/documents are submitted with the application, partners must carefully retain the originals for future verification. Programme structures may verify original annexes/documents at any time during pre-contracting, contracting, implementation, and follow-up periods. If originals are not found or if discrepancies exist between original annexes/documents and scanned copies, the contract will not be signed or contractual sanctions may apply, such as interrupting the contract or applying financial penalties and recovery of funds.

All annexes and documents have to be uploaded to JEMS together with the application or as requested through clarification requests or by Programme structures.

If mandatory annexes/documents are not submitted together with the application, clarifications may be requested. When annexes/documents/clarifications are not provided upon request during the clarification process, the application shall be assessed based on the information/documents available and the criteria considered accordingly, thus may leading to the application’s rejection.

Check your application!

After the application form was filled in, before pushing the submission button, please check if:

* The language is simple, easy to understand and follow; the text is coherent!
* All the mandatory criteria are observed!
* All the mandatory annexes were filled in, signed and uploaded!
* The standard templates are observed! No modifications were brought to them!
* All the supporting documents (if needed) were uploaded!

# Legal Bases and standards (non-exhaustive list)

* Commission Decision No. 8928/30.11.2022 approving the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme;
* Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy;
* Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments;
* Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund;
* Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, with further modifications and completions;
* REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union

* COMMISSION NOTICE Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C 373/01);
* Transition pathway for tourism, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/404a8144-8892-11ec-8c40-01aa75ed71a1> ;
* Integrated Territorial Strategy (<https://interregviarobg.eu/en/its-1>) approved through Decision no. 11/30.05.2024 of the Strategy Board;
* Other relevant national and European legislation (*Annex AG\_J*).
* **Indicative** national legislation and standards for the field of cycling and tourism:
  + In Romania:
    - Law no.155/2023 on sustainable urban mobility;
    - Emergency Ordinance no.195/2002 on road traffic on public roads, with further modifications and completions;
    - Government Decision no.1391/2006 for the approval of the implementing regulations of Emergency Ordinance no.195/2002 on road traffic on public roads, with further modifications and completions;
    - Law no. 85/2022 to supplement Government Ordinance no. 43/1997 on the road regime, to amend and supplement Government Emergency Ordinance no. 195/2002 on traffic on public roads, as well as to supplement Law no. 255/2010 on expropriation for public utility purposes, necessary for the achievement of objectives of national, county and local interest;
    - Government Decision no. 441/2022 for approving the methodological norms for creating, arrangement and approval of cycle tourism routes;
    - Government Ordinance no.58/1998 regarding the organization and conduct of tourism activity in Romania;
    - Government Decision no. 31/1996 for the approval of the Methodology for approving urban planning documentation regarding tourist areas and resorts and technical documentation regarding constructions in the tourism sector;
    - Order no. 65/2013 for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the issuance of classification certificates for tourist receiving structures with accommodation and public catering functions, tourism licenses and patents;
    - Standard SR 1848-1:2024 Road signs and signals - Road signs and signals - Part 1: Classification, symbols and location;
    - Standard SR 10144-1:2024 – Streets and cycle facilities – Cross section – Design specifications;
    - Standard SR 10144-2:2024 - Streets. Sidewalks, footways and bicycle tracks. Design specifications
    - Standard SR 10144-4:95 Development of intersections – Classification and design specifications
    - Standard STAS 10144-3:91 Streets. Geometric Elements.

In Bulgaria:

* + - Regulation No. RD-02-20-2 (planning and design of transport systems in urbanized areas)
    - Regulation No. RD-02-20-2 on road design
    - Spatial Planning Act
    - Road Traffic Act
    - Draft regulations for the creation, marking and maintenance of hiking and mountain biking routes – Ministry of Tourism
    - Tourism Law

Applicable law:

Projects must be in line with all relevant national and European legislation. Partners remain fully liable to apply the relevant laws and regulations, depending on the specificity of their project.

Partners are also remembered to strictly follow legislation on sustainable development and environmental protection, gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination (art. 22.2 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1059 and art. 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), public procurement (art. 58 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1059) and state aid.

Projects must observe the European legislation provisions on communication, information and publicity (art.36.4 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059)).

**Please note that all legal provisions must also be observed by the applicants during both project elaboration and implementation phases.**

# Glossary of terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant** | Any legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria which submits an application to be financed by the programme |
| **Associated partner** | Institutions willing to be involved in the project without financially contributing to it are to be considered as “associated partners”. Such associated partners will not receive ERDF funding, will have to participate with their own funds, and do not account for the fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.  Expenditure incurred by the associated partners might be borne by any of the financing project partners in compliance with the applicable eligibility rules and with public procurement rules. |
| **Beneficiary/Partner** | Any applicant whose application has been approved for financing |
| **Climate proofing** | It is a process that integrates climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into the development of infrastructure projects. It enables European institutional and private investors to make informed decisions on projects that qualify as compatible with the Paris Agreement. The process is divided into two pillars (mitigation, adaptation) and two phases (screening, detailed analysis). The detailed analysis is subject to the outcome of the screening phase, which helps reduce the administrative burden. |
| **Carbon**  **sequestration** | The removal of carbon from the atmosphere and its storage in carbon sinks (such as oceans, forests or soil). Carbon sequestration is achieved through physical or biological processes, such as photosynthesis. |
| **Carbon sink** | An absorber of carbon (usually in the form of CO2). Natural carbon sinks include forests and other ecosystems that absorb carbon, thereby removing it from the atmosphere and offsetting CO2 emissions. |
| **Eligible expenditure** | Expenditures made by a partner, related to the projects financed through the programme, which could be financed from the structural instruments, as well as from the state budget and/or own/ private Beneficiary contribution |
| **Ecosystem services** | Ecosystems serve a number of basic functions that are essential for using the Earth’s resources sustainably. The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity (TEEB) study defines ecosystem services as: ‘the benefits people receive from ecosystems’. TEEB also sets out the basis of human dependence on the natural environment. The European-led study builds on the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which defined four categories of ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being:   * provisioning services e.g. wild foods, crops, fresh water and plant-derived medicines; * regulating services e.g. filtration of pollutants by wetlands, climate regulation through carbon * storage and water cycling, pollination and protection from disasters; * cultural services e.g. recreation, spiritual and aesthetic values, education; * supporting services e.g. soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling. (TEEB, 2010) |
| **Concept note** | Concept note = project idea, developed during the first step. The layout will form the foundation to develop a full-fledged proposal soon after the concept note is selected, when the applicants will be invited to submit the full project proposal, in the second step. |
| **Programme area** | The Romanian counties and Bulgarian districts located in the border area, as mentioned in the programming document approved by the European Commission |
| **Expenditure incurred** | Expenditure is incurred when the activity that has generated the expenditure (for example the works executed in accordance with the conditions of the contract) has been completed or the services foreseen in a contract have been provided and accepted by the partners. Proof of expenditures incurred relates to supporting documents indicating the completion of the activity, for instance take over certificates or confirmation of service delivery. |
| **Investment** | Works, infrastructure, non-removable installations, fixed and intangible assets, new or renovated building, equipment and software and their installation. |
| **Investment project** | A project that spends its resources to acquire or significantly improve the capacity or capabilities of an output or deliverable, that remains in use and in the ownership of the lead partner or project partners for at least five years after the project end date.  Categories of eligible investments and their accompanying services: works, infrastructure, non-removable installations, fixed and intangible assets, new or renovated building, equipment and software, investments in access to services. |
| **Infrastructure** | Infrastructure is a broad concept, which includes:   * buildings, from private homes to schools or industrial facilities, which are the most common type of infrastructure and the basis for human settlement; * nature-based infrastructures such as green roofs, walls, spaces, and drainage systems; * network infrastructure crucial for the functioning of today’s economy and society, notably energy infrastructure (e.g. grids, power stations, pipelines), transport (fixed assets such as roads, railways, ports, airports or inland waterways transport infrastructure), information and communication technologies (e.g. mobile phone networks, data cables, data centres), and water (e.g. water supply pipelines, reservoirs, waste water treatment facilities); * systems to manage the waste generated by businesses and households (collecting points, sorting and recycling facilities, incinerators and landfills); * other physical assets in a wider range of policy areas, including communications, emergency services, energy, finance, food, government, health, education and training, research, civil protection, transport, and waste or water; * other types of infrastructure. |
| **Integrated projects** | The European Commission[[30]](#footnote-31) defines integrated projects as those that meet at least one of the following conditions:  a) The project involves different sectors (such as social, economic, and environmental sectors).  b) The project involves different administrative territories (e.g., municipalities).  c) The project involves several types of stakeholders (public authorities, private actors, NGOs).  In the context of this Integrated Territorial Strategy, these criteria should be understood in a manner that enhances effectiveness and impact. Thus, a good integrated project is expected to:   * Have multi-sectoral integration: Bring together, in a complementary and synergistic manner, actions, outputs, and results specific to different sectors. For example, infrastructure projects could address the needs of various sectors (mobility, environment, tourism). They should unite actions designed to support the operationalization of the infrastructure, either by supporting related services, enhancing capacities (e.g., human resources), or promoting users. * Demonstrate multi-level policy coordination: Align local, regional, and national policies on both sides of the border. This should be reflected in the representation of different territorial levels and the coherence of their policies with each other and with the project objectives.   Prove inclusive participation: Engage a broad range of stakeholders, including government entities, the private sector, civil society, and local communities, to ensure diverse perspectives and ownership. Participation could be as members in the partnership but also as participants in different project actions |
| **Joint Secretariat** | The structure responsible for assisting the programme management bodies in carrying out their duties. The Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation Călărași (for the Romanian Bulgarian Border) is hosting the Joint Secretariat for the Programme. |
| **Lead Partner** | (a) lays down the arrangements with the other partners in an agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the respective Union fund allocated to the Interreg operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;  (b) assumes responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire Interreg operation;  (c) ensures that expenditure presented by all partners has been incurred in implementing the Interreg operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the partners, and is in accordance with the document provided by the managing authority pursuant to Article 22(6). |
| **Managing Authority** | The structure responsible for managing the Interreg programme. The Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration is the Managing Authority for the Programme. |
| **National Authority** | The counterpart of the Managing Authority in the partner state. The Bulgarian Ministry for Regional Development and Public Works is the National Authority for the Programme. |
| **National Legislation** | The legislation of the state on whose territory the partner is located. |
| **Natural protected area** | Land, aquatic and/or underground area hosting savage fauna and flora species, bio-geographical, landscape, geological, pale-ontological, speleological or other elements and systems with outstanding ecological, scientific or cultural value, governed by special preservation and protection rules in compliance with legal provisions. |
| **Operating costs** | Cost incurred in the operation of an investment, including cost of routine and extraordinary maintenance, but excluding depreciation or capital costs. |
| **Partnership Agreement** | A document that formalises the relationship between project partners and the Lead Partner. Mutual rights and obligations regarding cooperation in project are laid down in the agreement, also including provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project. |
| **Potential applicant** | Any legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria for submitting an application to be financed by the programme. |
| **Potential beneficiary** | Any applicant or potential applicant is a potential beneficiary until the decision for financing its project has been issued. |
| **Project** | An operation comprising a series of works, activities or services intended in itself to accomplish an indivisible task of a precise economic or technical nature, which has clearly identified goals, expressed as the application form and its annexes. |
| **Reference period** | The number of years for which forecasts are provided in the cost benefit analysis. |
| **Revenue**  **generating project** | Any project involving an investment in infrastructure, the use of which is subject to charges borne directly by users, and any project involving the sale or rent of land or buildings or the provision of services against payment. |
| **Revenues** | Income to be expected from an investment through pricing or charges. |
| **Subsidy contract** | Contract between the Managing Authority and the Lead Partner. It determines the rights and responsibilities of the Lead Partner and the Managing Authority, the scope of activities to be carried out, terms of funding, requirements for reporting and financial controls, etc. |

Annexes

Annexes of the applicant guide

* **Annex A1 Lead partner declaration (to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A2 Project partner declaration(to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A3 State-aid self-assessment(to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A7 DNSH declaration(to be filed in, standard format)**
* **Annex A8 Associated partner declaration (to be filled in, standard format, if applicable)**
* **Annex A9 Financial Capacity Self-Assessment (to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A10 Declaration for the absence of the circumstances under art.5l of Council Regulation (EU) No.2022/576 (to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A 12 Self-assessment of the modifications (to be filled in, standard format)**
* **Annex A 13 Concept note, submitted under the call and approved by SB (Annex AF\_A13) – standard format**
* **Annex AG\_A** Assessment grids
* **Annex AG\_B** List of eligible expenditure applicable to PO 5.2.
* **Annex AG\_C** Methodologies for using lump sums for project preparation and project closure within the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria, approved by MC decision no 5/3rd of May 2023 – available on the programme website
* **Annex AG\_D** Complaint procedure for evaluation results
* **Annex AG\_E** SEA mitigation measures and indicators
* **Annex AG\_F** Template Framework subsidy contract
* **Annex AG\_G** Template co-financing contract
* **Annex AG\_H** Template Partnership Agreement
* **Annex AG\_I** DNSH Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria level
* **Annex AG\_J** Relevant EU and national legislation
* **Annex AG\_K.1** Application form (off-line format)
* **Annex AG\_K.2** Application form\_ Budget (off-line format)
* **Annex AG\_L** Horizontal Issues
* **Annex AG\_M** How to plan a project
* **Annex AG\_N** State Aid details

**The contract templates annexed to this document are only indicative; the final version of all contracts (subsidy contract, co-financing contract, partnership agreement will be presented by the Managing Authority to the partners of the projects accepted for contracting in the pre-contractual phase).**

Relevant documents to be considered when preparing the application form

* Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme - <https://interregviarobg.eu/assets/2022/11/interreg-vi-a-romania-bulgaria-programme-approved-by-ec.pdf>
* Project Implementation Manual - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>
  + Communication Starter Kit
  + Dare to go green!
  + Practical guide on fraud for applicants and project partners
  + Methodological descriptions of Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators - SO 5.2 - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual>)
* Manual for Visual Identity of the Programme - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>
* Code of Conduct for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria - <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/implementation-rules>
* JEMS manual - <https://jems.interact.eu/manual/>.

***Although we do not plan to, in case changes to the present document are necessary, please note that we will use the following means of communication:***

1. ***Announcement on the Programme website:*** [***https://interregviarobg.eu/en***](https://interregviarobg.eu/en)
2. ***Announcement on the Programme Facebook Page:*** [***https://www.facebook.com/RomaniaBulgariaCbcProgramme***](https://www.facebook.com/RomaniaBulgariaCbcProgramme)
3. ***E-mail to the JS database with those interested in the call, who requested support through helpdesk and other means,***

***Please rely on methods 1 and 2, since e-mail dysfunctionalities may appear.***

***Please have in mind that during the call, we strongly recommend you to send your questions regarding the rules of this call up to 5 working days before the deadline. Any other question received in this interval may not receive answer in due time (considering the necessary time for analyzing, drafting replies, consulting within Programme structures etc.).***

***The e-mail addresses where you may send your questions is:*** [***helpdesk\_robg@calarasicbc.ro***](mailto:helpdesk_robg@calarasicbc.ro)

***Please note that, all the questions and answers (Q&A) concerning the Programme funding, application form content, the technical functioning of Jems also, are published on the Programme website, in a dedicated section and they are regularly extended and updated,*** [***https://interregviarobg.eu/en/apply-for-funding***](https://interregviarobg.eu/en/apply-for-funding)***. In this respect, projects are invited to consult the Q&A section for updates.***

***Also, before submitting a question, we are kindly inviting you to check the list of Q&A publish on the programme site for similar questions.***

***Applicants are strongly recommended to fill in and submit the application form in good time, in order to avoid any problems due to the lack of time and/or any other technical issues.***

**Please note that during the assessment process as well as pre-contractual - contractual phase, the notifications from the Joint Secretariat will be received through the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS). As such, please make sure you have activated the Notifications in your account (Send notifications automatically to my email).**

**The date of the communication is considered to be the date when the when the JEMS message was posted. Lead partners should regularly check their e-mails and JEMS accounts.**

**We wish all the potential partners best of luck!**

**As always, we rely on your proposals to improve the eligible area according to the set objectives!**

1. In line with the provisions of the *Considerations and methodology for the assessment of the Integrated Territorial Strategy* and with the Monitoring Committee decisions, it may be possible that only a part of the project ideas to be accepted for funding under the Programme. The lead partners of accepted project ideas are invited to submit the full applications in line with the current *Invitation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/call-of-proposals-wihin-its> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The total financial allocation dedicated by the Programme to the Integrated Territorial Strategy is of 65,000,000 euro. Out of the total amount:

   56,250,000 euro are allocated to development of cycling infrastructure; protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services; protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services; protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites;

   6,250,000 euro is allocated and to the calls dedicated to the SMEs, which will be launched at a later stage;

   2,500,000 euro are allocated to the development to the Governance Project for supporting the Strategy Board. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Please see EC website (the EC site is permanently updated, as such the links in this document might not be in use. At the stage of drafting this document, the link is: <https://commission.europa.eu/law/application-eu-law/implementing-eu-law/infringement-procedure_en#publication>) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Non-eligible costs as defined in the eligibility rules of the Programme and other funds not covered by the Programme at the time of the application form submission considering Programme limitations, but which may later become refundable from the Programme considering the savings at project level [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Observing the information included in Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01) (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0916(03)&from=EN), Section B.2., page 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. As mentioned in the Commission Notice, Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C373/01), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/23a24b21-16d0-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, page 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The application submitted in the 2nd step (full application) shall be assessed by the assessors against all the above criteria. If the total score of the project is below the threshold of 60 points or falls short of the limits set for certain criteria, it will be returned for improvement. When returned for improvement, the assessors shall include all the recommendations/proposals needed to increase the quality of the project. Should the applicant fail to implement all the modifications/recommendations proposed by the assessors within the set deadline, the project will be rejected from funding from Programme. In case of resubmission, the application form (AF) will be rechecked and rescored, and if the new score is still under 60 points or if the thresholds for certain criteria are not met, the project will be rejected from funding. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See the European certification standard published by ECF at: <https://pro.eurovelo.com/download/document/ECS-Manual-2021_online.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Significantly upgraded cycling lanes or routes will meet at least six out of the following ten practical characteristics, inspired by Cycling Design Best Practices (2023), available at <https://www.iurc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Cycling-Design-Best-Practices-Report.pdf> :

    width of cycle infrastructure – minimum 1.5 m for one-way cycle path and 2.5 m for two-way lanes;

    type of cycle infrastructure – cycle lanes in urban areas and cycle paths separated from vehicular traffic in extra-urban areas;

    on-way vs. two-way – one-way in urban areas, bidirectional cycle paths in extra-urban areas;

    avoid conflict between vulnerable users – cycle infrastructure should not be designed at the expense of pedestrian mobility;

    highlight cycle crossings at intersections – horizontal signs and colored paint;

    bike-box at traffic light intersection – space dedicated to bicycles located at the traffic light intersections;

    traffic lights dedicated to cyclists at intersections;

    bicycle parking: racks, velo-stations & bick-boxes;

    signing system with directions, distances, and travel times;

    bike-sharing services (in cities).  [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Registered and/or functioning in the ITS geographical area, public body or NGO (non-profit), legally competent to implement the project, not in any of the situations mentioned under Art. 136 of REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046; Lead partners need to be registered and to operate in the programme area for at least 2 years prior to the application; [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Maximum 5 partners, excluding associated partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The significance of these changes will be assessed by assessors and Programme structures and will be subject to MC approval. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Such changes may be requested following the assessment process of the project ideas (in the context of ITS) and of the Programme structures assessment. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. The justification of the costs is requested during the development process of the application for budget justification for assessors’ usage. During the implementation stage of the project, the costs will be determined by the free market and competition. During the implementation stage, the technical specifications issued by partners should be similar or higher than the ones used for the application preparation, depending on the evolution of technology. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. In accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in compliance with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/about-initiative\_en [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. <https://danube-region.eu/about/> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. <https://territorialagenda.eu/ta2030/> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. For more details regarding green procurement, you can check the European Union site: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. For more details regarding the New European Bauhaus you can check The EU’S site: <https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/about-initiative_en>. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. The partner shall verified/consult the list/studies of the invasive tree spices, before purchasing and planting the trees. The local/regional environmental agencies can be consulted before the process. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. <https://interregviarobg.eu/en/project-implementation-manual> [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. In case interventions concern state/municipal public property this declaration is not applicable for Bulgarian applicants. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. The partner can chose to increase the corresponding budget for covering the inflation, considering the methodology presented in the footnote 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. The increase shall be reflected distinct in the document, as well as the applied percentage (the average of the inflation rate of the last 3 years, before the application submission. The average shall be calculated at the level of partners, in accordance with the national inflation rate). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Partners may use as guidance the *Tool #63 Cost-benefit analysis* from the **Better Regulation Toolbox** of the European Commission - <https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox_en> , or the **Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis of Investment Projects** - <https://jaspers.eib.org/files/library/2014/dg-regio-cba-guide-for-2014-2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)