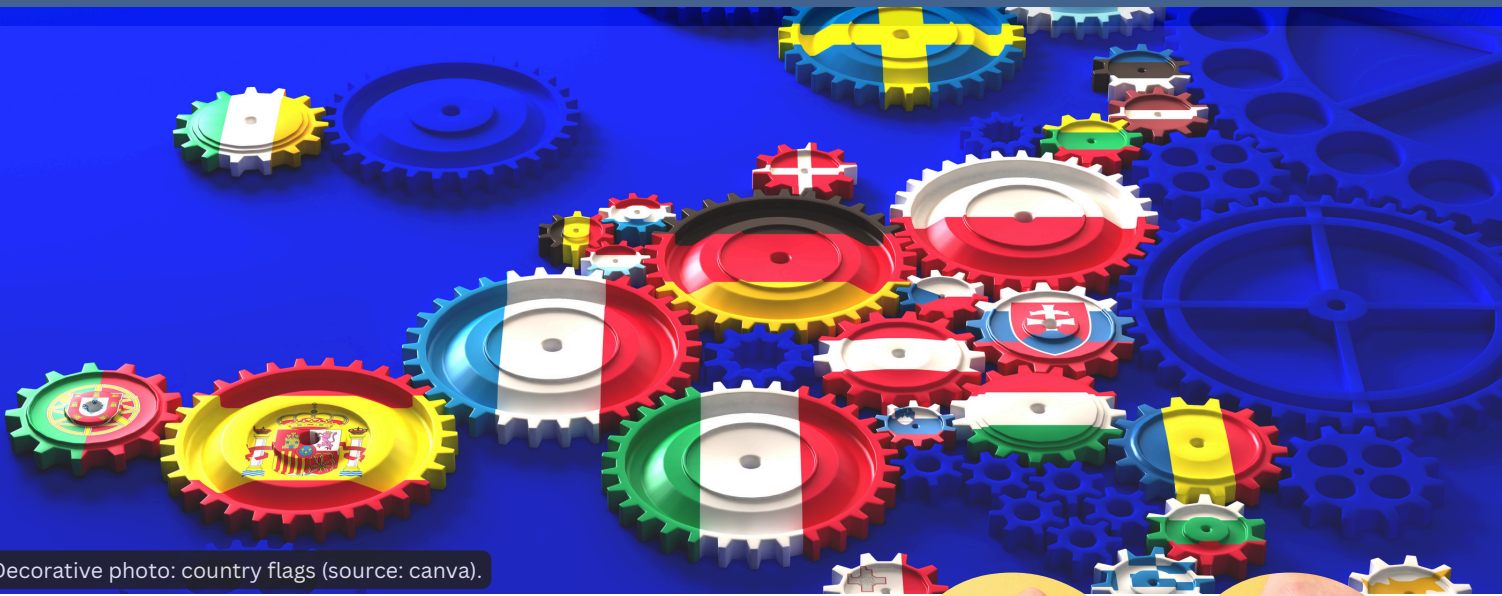


NEWSLETTER

INTERREG IPA ROMANIA–SERBIA PROGRAMME



Decorative photo: country flags (source: canva).

EU enlargement, **page 2**

Enlargement happens when new countries join the European Union. This has taken place several times in the EU's history, each time transforming both the EU and the countries that join. The enlargement of the EU has contributed significantly to the spread of stability, peace and prosperity across the continent.



https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en



Decorative photo: European Union flags.

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European Union enlargement

What is enlargement?

Enlargement happens when new countries join the European Union. This has taken place several times in the EU's history, each time transforming both the EU and the countries that join. The enlargement of the EU has contributed significantly to the spread of stability, peace and prosperity across the continent.[1]

The EU was founded on the values of solidarity, equal opportunities, and cohesion. From the outset, the Treaty of Rome set the goal of “reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions”. This economic and social cohesion, the reduction of internal disparities, has been rightly perceived as benefiting all of Europe and remains equally valid today.

A European State which has applied to join the Union can become a member only when it has been confirmed that it meets the membership criteria established at the Copenhagen European Council in June 1993 (the ‘Copenhagen criteria’) and provided that the accession does not overstretch the capacity of the Union to integrate the new member. Those **criteria** relate to the **stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union, and the ability to assume not only the rights but also the obligations under the Treaties**, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

Progression towards accession depends on each applicant's respect for the Union's values and its capacity to undertake the necessary reforms to align its political, institutional, legal, administrative and economic systems with the rules, standards, policies and practices in the Union.

The enlargement process reinforces peace, democracy and stability in Europe and allows the Union to be better positioned to address global challenges. The transformative power of the enlargement process generates far-reaching political and economic reform in the enlargement countries which also benefits the Union as a whole.



Decorative photo: growth, enlargement.

[1] [EU enlargement – European Union \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-activities/2019/04/Pages/eu-enlargement-2019-04-10.aspx)

European Union enlargement

Paving the way for enlargement

In 2023 EU celebrated 30 years of the Single Market, and this year (2024) there are 20 years after the **historic EU eastern enlargement of 2004**, which is **a clear example of the positive impact of Cohesion Policy**. Countries who joined then have seen their GDP per capita rise from 52 % of the EU average in 2004, to nearly 80 % in 2023, while unemployment rates in these Member States have decreased from an average of 13 % to 4 % over this period. [2]

Both events – **enlargement** and **single market**, represent cornerstones of European integration – and both were underpinned by Cohesion Policy, which has helped every region to make the most of its EU membership.

Since then, Cohesion Policy has been one of the key pillars of the European project. From the creation of the Single Market, the Economic and Monetary Union, to several enlargements, Cohesion Policy has supported every step of European integration – including, in recent years, the green and digital transitions.

Any future enlargements will also have implications for cohesion policy. The EU's Cohesion Policy objectives remain valid in a wider Union, both in current and future Member States. There is a strong correlation between the quality of governance and the impact of Cohesion Policy investments. This calls for strengthening administrative capacity in European regions, including in view of future EU enlargements, since improving the quality of governance at national, regional and local levels can increase the effectiveness of national and European policies and investments.

The EU has land borders with 23 countries, including the candidate countries. Participation in Interreg programmes and in macro-regional strategies, in which member states and candidate countries are equal partners, gives the countries concerned an opportunity to build their capacity to participate in Cohesion Policy programmes, not only at the central but also at the local and regional level, hence preparing them for accession.

Special process for the Western Balkans

Partners in the Western Balkans (WB6) follow a unique enlargement process called the **stabilization and association process (SAP)**. The partners currently involved in this process are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and **Serbia**.

The goal of the SAP is to prepare these partners politically and economically so that they will eventually be ready to join the EU.

[2] According to data presented in the 9th Cohesion Report (March 2024).

European Union enlargement

The European Commission has recently (May 2024) adopted a **new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans**. The aim of this plan is to prepare WB6 for accession through economic reforms and investment and to bring some of the benefits of EU membership to citizens in the region. **The Growth Plan has the potential to double the size of the Western Balkans economies within the next 10 years.**

However, socio-economic convergence with the EU should already start in the pre-accession phase. The Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans have the threefold objective of increased access to the EU Single Market, increased financial assistance and accelerated reform implementation.



Decorative photos: EU regulations, flag, investment.

Also, IPA III aims to support beneficiaries in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms required by those beneficiaries to comply with Union values and to progressively align to Union rules, standards, policies and practices ('acquis') with a view to future Union membership thereby contributing to mutual stability, security, peace and prosperity. IPA III ensures continuity with IPA II (which covers the period of 2014-2020) and complementarity with other Union instruments (in particular the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe) and policies (e.g. on climate change).

Also, in order to ensure that the enlargement process enjoys the support of the EU and WB6 population and does not lose its legitimacy in the minds and hearts of the people, the benefits brought by the EU to the daily lives of citizens in the Western Balkans must be communicated and promoted.



Participants at a culture & sports event financed under the Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme, project RORS-92.

The Interreg IPA Romania – Serbia Programmes play/ed a crucial role in fostering collaboration and development between the two neighbouring countries and some of the examples are presented below:

Cross-border development and cooperation

Support for projects results

- COMMUNICATION FROM PROGRAMME AUTHORITIES
- LOW ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Hindering for projects results

- COVID-19
- ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND ACTIVITIES

PROGRAMME IS SUSTAINABLE

3,5% of the programme area population directly participating in programme activities

10-15% of the population directly or indirectly benefiting from the programme regarding employment and inclusion, healthcare, environment, mobility, tourism

PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASED INTENSITY OF CROSSBORDER COOPERATION

- 80% of programme stakeholders
- 92% of programme partners

Impact evaluated until 2020

public administrative units are involved in 55% of the approved projects

10% of the administrative units existing in the programme area directly benefit from the programme

intensity of cooperation is very high and most of the municipalities taking part in projects implementation have several partners on the other side of the border

Priority Axis 1 - Employment promotion and services for an inclusive growth

46,600 persons involved in cultural, social or health care activities

24,487 persons provided with improved healthcare services

33,575 persons participated in projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion

6,948 disadvantaged persons involved in projects activities

Employment support

- Professional training
- Learning activities for young people
- Language courses
- Trainings for traditional crafts

Youth activities

Cultural inclusion activities

- Training for inmates for their future inclusion

Social inclusion activities

1% of the population has benefited from improved medical services

Impact evaluated until 2020

The Interreg IPA Romania – Serbia Programmes play/ed a crucial role in fostering collaboration and development between the two neighbouring countries and some of the examples are presented below:

Priority Axis 2 - Environmental protection and risk management



400 pupils of all ages received Environmental education

13.777 participants in project initiatives and events for information and awareness rising on environmental issues

Several local strategies for green development adopted



51.666 inhabitants of the programme area benefit from flood protection measures

Population increased confidence in firefighters

Impact evaluated until



All people are better protected by improved flood protection measures and emergency response in case of earthquake will be instantly available



Priority Axis 3 - Sustainable mobility and accessibility



Improved mobility and land transport infrastructure in five municipalities

Improvement of mobility and land transport infrastructure in the proximity of border crossing points:

- interconnectivity between the Mehedinți County and Golubac Municipality
- the reconstruction of the National Road B15 Kikinda-Nakovo (border with Romania)
- the construction of a bicycle path and the rehabilitation of access roads to the National Road No. 59 from Jimbolia to Lunga-Nakovo border crossing point

Improved utilities in six municipalities

83% of projects' partners consider that the programme contributes to the improvement of mobility and transport infrastructure and services

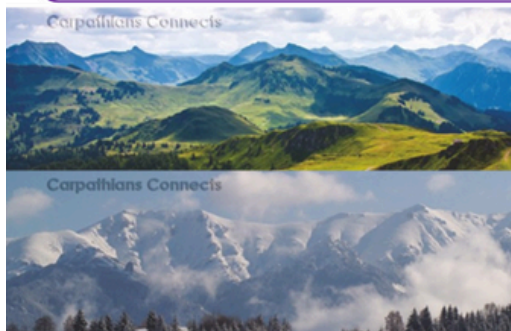
In the localities where projects supporting utilities infrastructure development are implemented, the contribution of the programme to the increased access to public utilities is very large

Rehabilitation of Bega Canal ongoing, providing improved transportation for touristic purposes and connecting Banat with both the Black Sea and the North Sea

The Interreg IPA Romania – Serbia Programmes play/ed a crucial role in fostering collaboration and development between the two neighbouring countries and some of the examples are presented below:



Priority Axis 4 - Attractiveness for sustainable tourism

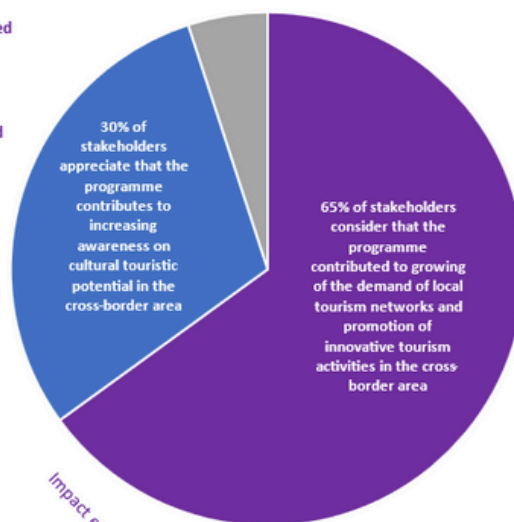


Eight new tourism products created and 11 to be achieved in projects under implementation

New methods to enhance information and institutional promotion of the available tourism resources introduced

Improved the visibility of the existing tourist and recreational resources and facilities

Information and promotion support provided to the relevant local, regional and national tourism production stakeholders



Interreg LISTENS, Communities THRIVE! Help us by filling in our surveys:

To prepare for the **future (post 2027)**, we need the help of **stakeholders** and **citizens** living in the Programme area. In order to keep living up to YOUR expectations, please dive into the list of **key questions** available on our website www.romania-serbia.net, especially designed to make the most out of your experience.

The results will guide us in our journey to transcend national borders and create a **successful story beyond** the current programming period (2021-2027).

You are kindly invited to share your own experience with Interreg and join us for a better future!

Improvement of **healthcare infrastructure**, a priority for authorities in the Romanian–Serbian border region, supported with financing from the European Union



Project partners:

- ♥ Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Timisoara
- ♥ General Hospital "Sveti Luka" Smederevo
- ♥ General Hospital "Djordje Joanović" Zrenjanin



TOTAL contracted funds:

€ 5.000.000

Acronym and Jems code:

SIPHEALTH, RORS00008



Signing of the SIPHEALTH project

On the 25th of June 2024, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration in Romania, together with Prof. Dr. Luca Constantin Tudor, Manager of the Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Timișoara, the **financing contract was signed** for the strategic importance project "**Harmonization of cardiovascular diseases management from prevention to heart transplantation in the cross-border area**" financed through the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme 2021-2027.

The 5 million Euro financing of this project will contribute to improving the population's access to quality medical services for the diagnosis of cardiovascular diseases in the Romanian-Serbian border region. It will also support the modernization of the medical infrastructure by acquiring state-of-the-art equipment.

A collaboration protocol will be established within the project, allowing partners to continue cooperating to find solutions to common challenges in the healthcare sector in the border area and facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by the medical staff working in partner institutions for diagnosis and treatment.

Projects in focus



Project RORS-232 **Development of the intervention infrastructure and common services in case of emergency situations in the cross-border area Drobeta Turnu Severin - Kladovo**

1. Investing in a **Greener Europe** is our commitment to future generations, ensuring that environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and sustainable management of natural resources are at the heart of our development. It's about building a resilient, sustainable and prosperous border area.

2. **SOLIDARITY** = pooling resources, knowledge, and capabilities to strengthen the capacity of all European societies to adapt to changes and build a sustainable future for all.

ADAPTABILITY = the need for societies to be flexible and resilient in the face of environmental changes and challenges. It encourages a proactive approach to planning and risk management to protect communities and natural ecosystems.

3. **Security** of people and property, including in the event of natural disasters; Developing **awareness** towards climate changes.

4. The EU is investing in infrastructure and common services in case of emergency situations to enhance the resilience, safety, and well-being of all Europeans. This investment ensures a coordinated and efficient response to crises such as natural disasters, health emergencies, and security threats. By developing robust infrastructure and common services, the EU aims to minimize the impact of emergencies, protect citizens' lives and property, and maintain essential services and economic stability. Every European benefits from reduced risk, quicker recovery times, and strengthened solidarity among member states, ensuring that support is available when and where it's needed most. This approach not only saves lives but also preserves the social and economic fabric of the EU, making communities more resilient and secure in the face of challenges.

HERE ARE THE ANSWERED QUESTIONS:

1. EU Vision – what will be the desired ultimate status? At local/national/European level.

2. What is the value of this priority to be communicated in our messages?

3. What is the benefit of this priority in the lead target group?

4. Why is the EU investing in this area/how will each European benefit?



Photo of the equipment used as a result of the project.

INTERREG IPA ROMANIA–SERBIA PROGRAMME

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Photo of the Danube between Romania and Serbia.

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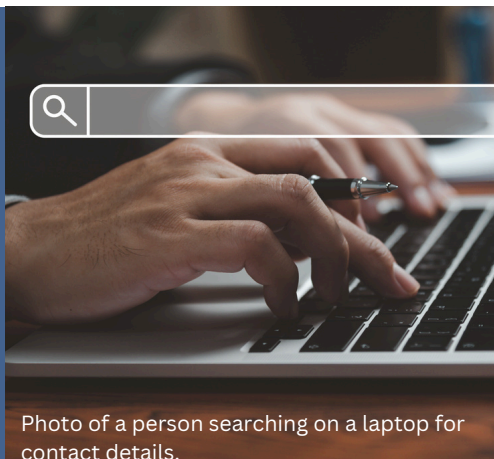


Photo of a person searching on a laptop for contact details.

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