

NEWSLETTER

INTERREG IPA ROMANIA-SERBIA PROGRAMME



Decorative photo: compass guiding us towards the future.

Preparing for the future, **page 2**

The European Commission is prioritizing stakeholder and citizen consultations to prepare for the future beyond 2027, particularly focusing on regions where cohesion policy is implemented.

This process involves us all, alongside local and regional leaders, as well as EU representatives, discussing global challenges and shaping the EU's next priorities.

The consultation aims to strengthen democracy and address local and global issues through public investment and increased fiscal capacity, guided by the EU's economic, social, and territorial cohesion objectives.



Decorative photo: Key questions waiting for your answers!



Decorative photo symbolising cooperation.

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Preparing for the future starts NOW!

Engaging Communities for a Resilient Future: Participate in Shaping EU Cohesion Policy

To prepare for the **future** (post-2027), the European Commission considered it highly important to launch a **consultation process** of stakeholders and citizens living in the European area where cohesion policy is implemented.

This is also a time when **local** and **regional leaders** from the entire continent **come together to discuss global challenges** and **present a vision for the future**. The world faces challenging times, from conflicts and geopolitical tensions to a cost-of-living crisis, deepening inequalities and the triple planetary climate, biodiversity and pollution crisis.



Decorative photo: emoticons representing choice.

As Europe also faces major upheavals and threats today, no state, region or city can tackle these challenges alone. Since **European regions** and **cities** are at the **forefront of these challenges**, the debate will also approach **their future role** as **important** actors in **strengthening democracy** and **addressing challenges affecting people's lives** and **cross-cutting issues** faced by **local communities around the world**.

Basically, 2024 is the year when an ample consultation process between mayors, councilors, regional ministers, and representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission, national governments and civil society was initiated on formulating the **next political priorities of the European Union** and **anchoring EU policies** at **local** and **regional level** by **identifying local solutions to global challenges**.

It called for ambitious, fit-for-purpose public investment underpinned by increased fiscal capacity exploring the EU's own resources to address common challenges. Such investments should be guided by the EU Treaty objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion, applying the **'do no harm to cohesion' principle** to all policies.

The success of future enlargements will also depend on the **Cohesion Policy helping to integrate and develop candidate countries**. Cohesion Policy is vital to address the economic and development challenges faced by potential new Member States from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. The policy should be tailored to the specific needs and challenges of each Candidate Country, ensuring integration and development in line with EU standards and objectives. **This concerns financial support as well as administrative capacity and institution building.**

Why is a consultation needed?

Stakeholders and citizens are most concerned by the policy and know best the needs for territorial cooperation across the EU and along its external borders

Cooperation is not only about territories, it is also about people and stakeholders living in those territories. Local and regional authorities can rely on their specific strengths, as detailed knowledge of the realities on the ground, responsiveness and flexibility. Local authorities are not only responsible to ensure the proper functioning of all public services, but also to build resilient infrastructure, create green jobs, promote diversity and build strong social ties within communities.

In addition to their role as highly efficient centres for implementing decisions taken at higher levels, cities and regions are powerful drivers of change, modernization, investment in the future and protection of citizens.

If there is a common will, change is also an opportunity for municipalities. They can specialize on the basis of strengths, build new partnerships and reform their ways of working. Also, preparing for the future integrates the trend of institutionalization of citizen participation and deliberation in European cohesion policy as a component of deliberative democracy.

Citizens' Dialogues can lead to better results and more legitimacy – if done inclusively, deliberatively, and effectively, lots of good decisions can be taken:

Inclusive: Citizens represent the plurality and diversity of society.

Deliberative: Structured exchanges of different views and experiences lead to joint proposals.

Effective: Commitment from politicians, dialogue with policy-makers and follow-up process for results ensure acceptance and impact.

Moreover, participation and deliberation should not only be questions of democracy. They should be questions of the economy as well, supported by technology.

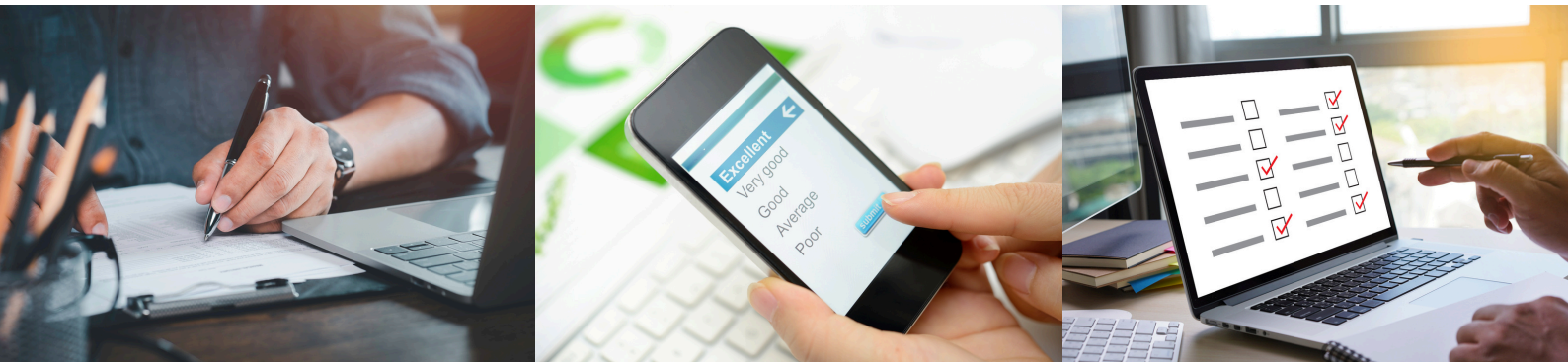
Cohesion policy must remain a cornerstone of the most visible European project. In this context, the European Commission presented in December 2023 the Toolkit: **Cooperation – the skill for our future, Guide for shaping together the future Interreg** and asked Interreg programmes to consult stakeholders and citizens in their programme areas and report back on the results by the end of 2024.

Therefore, the Managing Authority for Romania – Serbia Programme launched in February 2024 the process of consulting stakeholders and citizens living in the Programme area, inviting participants to share their ideas, in order to collectively address them by means of a questionnaire adjusted for each category.

The published questionnaire

The questionnaire, published on Romania Serbia IPA Programme (<https://romania-serbia.net/shape-the-future-interreg-post-2027/>), will also be provided during physical meetings or by email. It includes **10 questions for stakeholders** and **5 questions for citizens** and should be filled in by **September 2024**.

By December 2024, based on the filled-in questionnaires, the Managing Authority for the Romania–Serbia Programme will draft a report derived from all these consultations and submit it to the European Commission. This report will serve as the basis for drafting the European legislation package for post-2027 starting in 2025.



Decorative photos: Filling-in questionnaires, print-screen of the website and a question mark on a blue background.

The Interreg IPA Romania–Serbia Programme **is a strong supporter of cooperation between our border regions**, considering **stakeholders and citizens as vital actors in building a more resilient, integrated and prosperous border area**.

In this regard, we invite you once again to help us transcend national borders and create a successful story beyond the current programming period (2021–2027), **starting with filling in the questionnaire!**



INTERREG in the 9th European Commission Cohesion Report

The Commission published the 9th Cohesion Report on 27 March, presenting an assessment of the state of cohesion in the Union.

Since its creation, the European Union has built on an ideal of solidarity, equal opportunities, and cohesion. This is why the Treaty of Rome set the goal of “reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions.”[1]

Below are quoted some facts and figures related to border regions, cross-border cooperation and other Interreg programmes, as reflected in the 9th Cohesion Report:



Cohesion Policy funding for the 2021–2027 period amounts to a third of the EU’s long-term budget under the Multiannual Financial Framework.

The EUR 378 billion[2] of support is expected to result in EUR 542 billion of investment once national (public and private) co-financing is included. These funds are invested in the pursuit of two high-level Cohesion Policy goals, jobs and growth (national and regional programming) and European territorial cooperation (Interreg). Territorial cooperation (Interreg) allocation is 2.4% (approx. 9 billion euro) of the total EU planned.

Better cooperation across EU regions can also contribute to achieving more balanced territorial development. Cohesion Policy, especially through Interreg programmes, has helped to support interregional collaboration through cross-border and transnational cooperation, including through macro-regional strategies. The Commission launched its ex-post evaluation of the 2014–2020 ERDF and CF programmes with a view to completing it in 2025. The evaluation is composed of: four cross-cutting work packages – on Interreg, Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the macro-economic effects of Cohesion Policy; The war has been a major disruption to the implementation of cohesion programmes, notably Interreg programmes.



[1] Inforegio – Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (europa.eu)

[2] 2021–2027 figures cover shared [2] management, including Interreg programming, and funds managed directly and indirectly by the Commission.

INTERREG in the 9th European Commission Cohesion Report

Border Regions and cross-border cooperation

Border regions account for more than 40 % of the EU's landmass, 30 % of its GDP and 30 % of its population, (...) some 3.5 million people cross one of the 38 internal borders of the EU every day.

Many border regions are peripheral, distant from metropolitan centres, with more limited access to healthcare and other essential services than others.

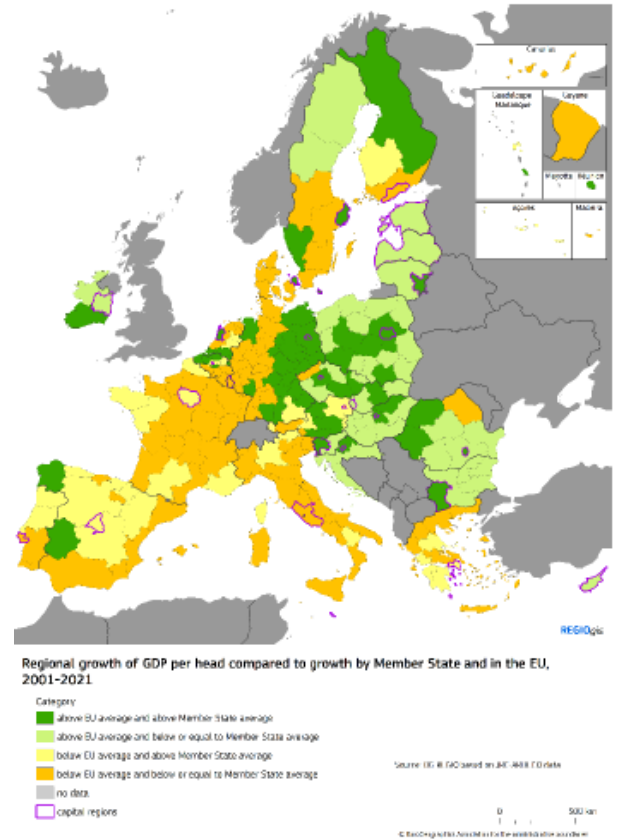
Border regions can also face specific challenges in times of crises, whether linked to restrictions on cross-border movement during pandemics or a sudden influx of refugees from a conflict zone on the other side of the border.

Disaster prevention and precautionary action tend to be more difficult because of differences in governance, and administrative and legal systems.

In border regions, on the other hand, GDP per head has converged towards the EU average since 2001.

Cooperation across borders may be a way of escaping a development trap or demographic decline. Additionally, border areas are places with high growth potential, where cultural and linguistic diversity encourages intense social and economic interaction, where many people carry out daily activities on both sides of the border and where cross-border cooperation between towns and cities provides opportunities for multipolar growth.

These opportunities are behind the logic of Interreg[3] intervention, both at the cross-border and transnational levels. Interreg intervention supports cooperation by linking resources and people and helping to remove barriers to interaction, and building trust and a common identity.



Map of regional growth of GDP per head compared to growth by Member State and in the EU 2001-2021.

[3] Interreg is a key EU instrument that strengthens cooperation between regions and countries within the EU. As part of the EU's Cohesion Policy, Interreg plays a vital role in promoting regional development and cohesion, and reducing economic disparities. For the 2021–2027 period, Interreg runs with a budget of EUR 10 billion and is focused on addressing current challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and social inclusion.

INTERREG in the 9th European Commission Cohesion Report

Towards citizen-driven and people-to-people projects

Interreg has been pioneering closer involvement of citizens in Cohesion Policy. There is an increasing number of programmes promoting citizen-led initiatives and participation through cross-border 'people-to-people' projects and civil society engagement. At the same time, these projects help to build solidarity and change attitudes towards neighbours living on the other side of the border. This is particularly true of projects under the first Interreg-specific objective ('a better cooperation governance') introduced in the 2021–2027 period to improve governance for better territorial cooperation.

Removing obstacles to cooperation

While Interreg support for cross-border interaction increases, cooperation encounters obstacles because of legal and administrative differences on the two sides of the border, which, inter alia, affect the functioning of the Single Market. The removal of these barriers requires decisions well beyond programme management but has potential benefits. It has been estimated that removing 20 % of the obstacles would generate a gain of 2 % in GDP and over 1 million jobs in border regions.

On the other hand, the economic impact of border restrictions introduced because of COVID-19 was for border regions more than twice the average in other regions. In 2020, 44 % of respondents in border regions identified legal and administrative differences as the most important obstacle to cross-border cooperation. The Commission has recently adopted a Regulation on facilitating cross-border solutions to reduce the effect of these differences.

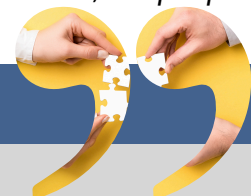
Still missing transport links

While Interreg is not designed for funding large infrastructure projects, there is a clear gap in small-scale cross-border transport connections, as illustrated by an inventory of 57 legal and administrative obstacles affecting public transport[4]. Not all of these take the form of missing infrastructure – in many cases they involve lack of coordination in timetables or ticketing.

Paving the way for enlargement

The EU has land borders with 23 countries, including the candidate countries. Participation in Interreg programmes, in which they are equal partners, and in macro-regional strategies 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, so preparing them for accession.

[4] European Commission 2022.



Projects in focus

Project RORS-273 **Regional Employment Center**



1. The desired ultimate status of the EU Vision involves creating conditions that encourage youth to stay in rural areas, establish businesses, and build families, thus stemming population outflow. This approach aims to address the challenge of youth migration by offering access to education, employment, and necessary infrastructure, ultimately contributing to regional development and a more balanced society.
2. **Regional development:** creating opportunities for economic diversification and innovation, reducing disparities between urban and rural areas. **Empowerment and opportunity:** providing opportunities for youth to build their futures in their birthplaces, including access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship.
3. The lead target group experiences **improved quality of life, increased opportunities**, and a brighter future through the priority of **encouraging youth to stay in rural areas and fostering local economic development**.
4. By retaining youth in rural areas, the EU helps to **alleviate demographic imbalances** and **sustain vibrant rural communities**, preserving **cultural heritage** and **social cohesion**. Investing in local economic development creates opportunities for **job creation, entrepreneurship**, and **economic diversification**, leading to increased **prosperity** and **well-being for individuals and communities** alike. Fostering regional development in rural areas contributes to **balanced growth** and **resilience** across the EU, reducing disparities between urban and rural areas and promoting **sustainable development**. Overall, investing in this area aligns with the EU's commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, enhancing the **quality of life for all its citizens**.

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 taken after a training course with people holding their diplomas.

Projects in action



Parța Museum Point is Hosting "PreHistoria" - A Festival of Experimental Archaeology!

Join the event on **May 25 and 26, 2024**, for an incredible journey back in time.

What is "PreHistoria"?

"PreHistoria" is not just a **festival**; it's a time-travel **experience** that brings the daily lives of **Neolithic communities** in **Banat** to **life**.

What to Expect:

Demonstrations of **ancient pottery** and **weaving**;
Fascinating **discussions** on **Neolithic tattooing**;
A **live concert** featuring ancestral music;
A **pyrotechnic theatre** showcasing the bravery of the first humans;
Workshops on **stone** and **bone knapping** and **polishing techniques**.

Why You Should Attend:

This is a great chance to **engage with history** in a **hands-on, interactive, and educational** way. Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity to explore our ancient past!



Photos from Parța, ready to receive tourists.



DISCOVERY

About Parța Museum Point:

Home to the replica of the Parța Neolithic Sanctuary, the museum was established with the support of the European Union under the Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme 2014-2020, project RORS-467 *Enhancing tourism in Banat cross-border area by capitalizing of the potential of Parța and Majdan archaeological sites*.

Find out more about the project here: <https://www.pamarose.ro/>

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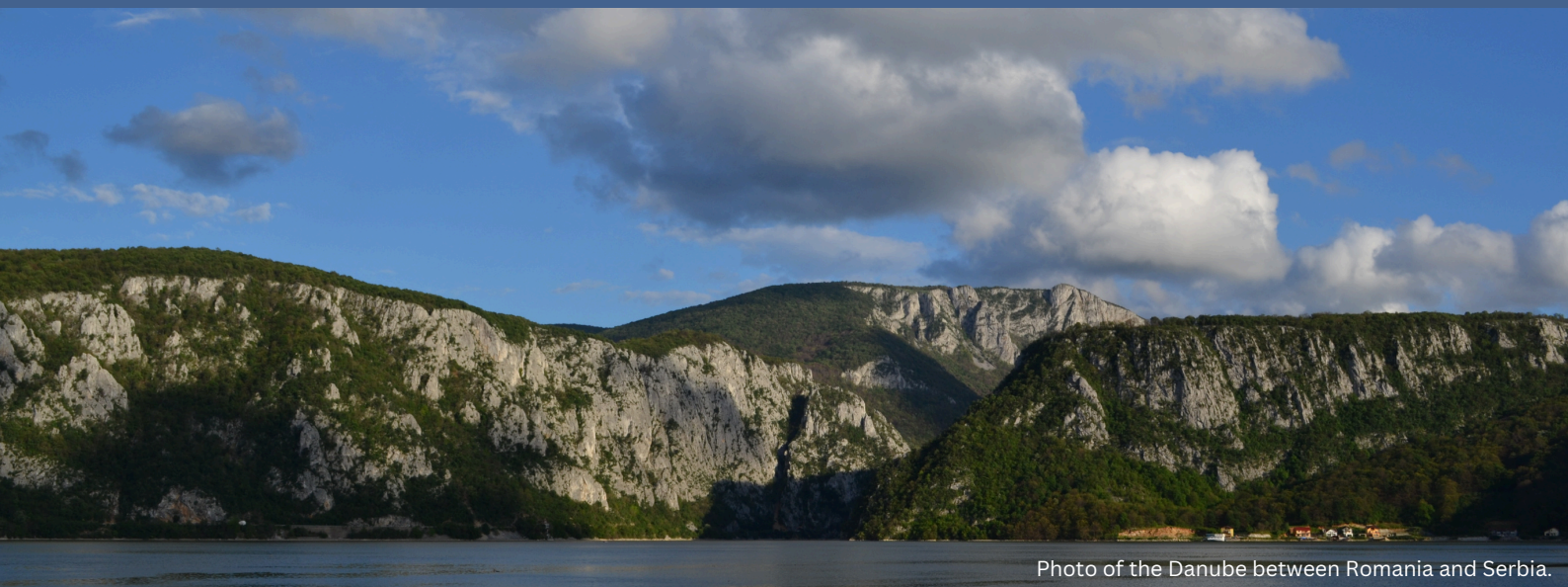


Photo of the Danube between Romania and Serbia.

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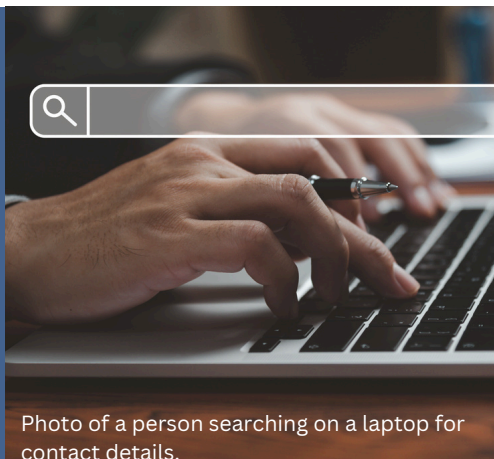


Photo of a person searching on a laptop for contact details.