



Interreg 

Austria-Hungary 2014-2020

European Union – European Regional Development Fund

CITIZEN'S SUMMARY

of the Annual Implementation Report 2020



The current report gives an overview to the broader public about the implementation of the EU-funded Interreg V-A Austria-Hungary Programme that supports cross-border co-operations since the end of 2015 in four thematic priorities.

A continuous call has been open for applications that can be submitted at any time. Decision is taken by the Monitoring Committee (MC) about projects that are submitted to the Joint Secretariat (JS) 70 days before the MC meeting. Specific dates are available on the programme webpage. Application and project implementation procedures are fully carried out in our electronic monitoring system (eMS) that provides harmonised and transparent solutions developed initially by Interact and widely used by Interreg programmes throughout Europe.

Until the end of 2020 altogether 120 applications had been submitted to the programme, 55 of them were approved by the MC in four thematic priorities. As a result, more than 71 million Euros of European funding will be invested in new Austrian-Hungarian initiatives, and the percentage of the ERDF budget already committed to projects has reached 97% of the available programme budget. New applications and project extensions to already running projects that were approved in spring 2021 consume the rest of the available funding. As of April 2021, the programme will not accept new applications any more, but concentrates on supporting the successful implementation and finalization of selected projects. At the same time, the programme management has been actively preparing the programme document for the new cycle.

News about the programme, its supported projects and their achievements are available on the programme webpage (interreg-athu.eu) and on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/interregathu/>). The contacts to the programme authorities and to our regional coordinators are available on the programme webpage, but you can also reach us on Facebook. The programme homepage includes primarily "formal" information, including guidelines to the application and selection process, requirements in terms of contribution to the programme targets, eligibility-, communication- and project implementation rules (including contracting, reporting, project modification, etc.), statistics, important programme news, and of course links to the microsites/websites of our supported projects. Our Facebook page is more colourful, there you'll find not only what is closely linked to the Interreg Austria-Hungary Programme, but also European news, project success stories, online competitions and more!

The Austria-Hungary Interreg programme supports projects in a broad circle of themes:

- Related to competitiveness services enhancing the involvement of women in technical activities and to support them in their jobs in public administration. SME networking, wood industry initiatives, start-up networks, digitalization and support to the local products are just a few other topics in the broad field of enterprise development that receive funding in the programme.
- In the circle of sustainability actions are supported to protect the natural and cultural heritage and to improve the region's tourism potential, natural- and nature park co-operations innovative landscape conservation measures and various environment protection activities, as well as water management and monitoring projects are funded.
- The programme puts great emphasis on sustainable mobility. Our transport development projects deal with issues like cross-border mobility concepts for public and individual transport, multimodality, transport safety, awareness raising for soft mobility, and many more. Also (relatively) small railway and road development projects supported by the programme help citizens to get better access to important transport nodes.
- Educational co-operations have a span from kindergarten through vocational education to university, from early language training to specific topics such as energetics, digitalization/robotics, traditional crafts or poultry. Interreg funded projects support the harmonisation of the labour market and various other networking initiatives are also part of the programme. Successful projects support the elderly,





experiences of good governance are exchanged across the border, and we take care that allergen pollens spread to the least possible extent.

The programme is proud to support projects that have several direct and indirect links to the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Almost all priority axes across the four pillars of the EUSDR (Connecting the Danube region; Protecting the environment in the Danube region; Building prosperity in the Danube region; Strengthening the Danube region) are reflected in our projects, and a few of them were specifically supported with a letter of recommendation by the Steering Group of their respective EUSDR Priority Area.

This great variety of initiatives is connected by one thing: Austrians and Hungarians in the border region act together to conquer common challenges.

The Interreg Programme Austria-Hungary approaches the end of implementation. Some supported projects have already finished, beneficiaries and programme institutions work on their administrative closure. A large number of projects are in the middle of implementation, and reports about achievements are rolling in. Until the end of last year beneficiaries have declared total expenditures of more than 45.5 million euros, which is almost half of the total programme budget. Until December 2020 ERDF payments have approached 40 million euros. With the advanced implementation of projects more and more achievements become visible, partly under the programme's own homepage at the dedicated micro-sites of the projects (see <https://interreg-athu.eu/en/current-projects/>) and partly at the projects' various own communication platforms.

The coronavirus crisis has not left the Interreg Programme untouched. Many physical meetings and events of our projects had to be postponed or cancelled, some investments are delayed and a large part of activities had to be moved to the online space. As Interreg programmes are about cooperation, the lack of opportunities for meetings is a major obstacle to interaction. Nevertheless, the vast majority of project holders have successfully sought and found alternative solutions to continue their projects, and the programme institutions have also made efforts to help beneficiaries by using flexible procedures and, where necessary, by extending the project implementation period.

Despite the difficulties, selected projects are on the right track in terms of their contribution to achieving the programme's objectives and the related indicator targets. Achievements also need to be effectively communicated to the general public and visibility has to be given to the support provided by the European Regional Development Fund: throughout the implementation period, but especially when the projects reach closure and the objectives they have set are accomplished. To this, the programme provides space at the project micro-sites, and also offers the possibility to be featured on its Facebook page. Another ever more pressing task is the timely closure of all projects at latest until the end of the eligibility period on 31.12.2022, and the related final reporting.

As the end of the programme cycle is nearing, the start of the new period is approaching. Representatives of the two member states and actors of the current programme have started the planning process for the Interreg Programme Austria-Hungary 2021-2027. According to the currently available information, the new programme will be thematically focused on the following policy objectives: a green and resilient border region (PO2), a competent border region (PO4), an integrated border region (ISO1), and a better-connected border region (PO3). Due to the generally smaller envelope for Interreg, the budget of the Austria-Hungary programme is also expected to be much smaller than in the current programme cycle, but several simplifications and further harmonised procedures are supposed to ease the job of the project holders. The approval of the programme by the EC is expected in the first half of 2022, and the first call for project applications may probably not be earlier than in the second half of that year.

