

Newsletter

June 2024



Nr. 1/ June 2024

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Dear partners and friends,

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your dedication, and exemplary contribution over the years when the Romania-Ukraine programme was implemented.

Together, we have finalized and highlighted valuable projects and built bridges of understanding and cooperation between our communities.

We wish you continued success and hope that the partnerships we have developed will remain strong and productive.

Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat

Promoting Regional Prosperity with Education, Research, and Innovation

The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020 is all about working together for eligible regions to help both countries grow and succeed.

One big focus of the programme was to support education, research, technology, and innovation. This means border communities are committed to learning more, creating jobs, coming up with new ideas, and making the regions stronger and more competitive.

A key goal was **to improve schools and the quality of education** in Romania and Ukraine. Over 50 schools and around 36,000 people benefited from 12 projects that made education better, improved learning materials, and encouraged academic cooperation across borders, contributing to the creation of a dynamic educational environment that supported students and institutions on both sides of the border.

The programme also encouraged **joint research projects** involving experts from 15 institutions in Romania and Ukraine. By working together on projects in fields like green energy, environment, and genetics, the programme aimed to solve common problems, share knowledge, and push forward in different areas of study. This cooperation approach fostered a culture of innovation and established a solid foundation for addressing regional issues.

The focus on education, research, technology, and innovation was a strategic move to create a prosperous and smart region. By investing in education, encouraging research partnerships, and promoting new ideas, the programme structures hoped to unlock the potential of the eligible area and make a positive impact on the economy, society, and technology of the region.



Celebrating Heritage: Sharing Local Culture and Preserving Historical Treasures



The programme Romania - Ukraine also highlighted the importance of local culture and historical heritage. It aimed to celebrate the unique traditions and history that bring both countries together.

One main goal was **to promote local cultures and preserve historical sites in Romania and Ukraine**. Projects improved 13 cultural and historical places, like the Pniv Fortress in Ukraine and the Ardu Fortress in Romania, as well as theater buildings in Satu Mare and Uzhorod. This effort wasn't just about preserving buildings but also keeping traditions alive through festivals and cultural events that brought communities closer.

Through 9 projects, cultural exchanges between different communities were held, partnerships were formed, cultural events were organized, and meetings were held to strengthen the bonds between regions, promoting understanding and respect.

In today's digital age, using technology to explore and protect cultural heritage was vital. From high-quality images to virtual reality, technology allowed people worldwide to experience museums, historical sites, and artifacts from their homes, preserving culture for future generations.

By promoting local culture and historical heritage, the programme also aimed to boost sustainable tourism. By showcasing the region's unique culture, economic opportunities while safeguarding cultural treasures were created for the long term.

Through teamwork, people from Romania and Ukraine worked together to create a shared narrative that celebrated their culture and history, uniting them across borders and paving the way for a culturally rich future.



Building Bridges: Improving Accessibility in the region

The cross-border programme Romania-Ukraine focused on **making regions more accessible and improving transportation infrastructure**. This objective aimed to connect people, goods, and information seamlessly across borders.

Against the backdrop of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the programme assumed the commitment to support road and transportation initiatives, and to contribute to the European Commission initiative Solidarity Lanes to establish alternative logistics routes, to help Ukraine.

About 13 kilometers of roads to the border points were rebuilt or upgraded to make travel easier and boost economic growth in the eligible area.

A distinctive feature of this thematic objective was its emphasis on cross-border cooperation. Recognizing that connectivity knows no borders, within the 5 projects implemented, 3 joint mechanisms to support improvement of cross border infrastructure and 1 environmentally friendly transport initiative were developed.

The programme symbolized resilience and unity amidst the challenges the people of Ukraine are facing. By contributing to initiatives like Solidarity Lanes, the programme stood for connectivity, accessibility, and unity even in tough times.



Safety and Security at the borders: Addressing Common Challenges



The Joint Operational Programme Romania- Ukraine 2014-2020 addressed common safety and security issues by focusing on improving health services, preventing disasters, and fighting organized crime. These efforts aimed to create a safer environment for everyone in the cross-border regions.

Improving health services and healthcare access in Romania and Ukraine was a key priority. Through 14 projects, healthcare infrastructure was upgraded in cities like Suceava, Tulcea, Chernivtsi, and Odesa, benefiting around 7.5 million people. 24 medical service infrastructure units were improved and ready to provide good quality medical care. By working together, the partners tackled health challenges and made the regions more resilient.

To reduce the impact of disasters, 11 projects focused on early warning systems and community preparedness. In times of emergency, swift and coordinated actions are crucial. The programme also set up a joint training center for rescuers from both countries, ensuring they were well-prepared to handle emergencies effectively.

In the fight against organized crime, 10 projects were implemented in order to enhance capacity building and information sharing among law enforcement agencies. By modernizing facilities and promoting collaboration, the programme aimed to address security challenges and protect communities.

By promoting cooperation among health professionals, emergency responders, and law enforcement, the implementation of the programme strengthened ties between Romania and Ukraine and made efforts to address safety and security challenges more effectively.



Retrospective of the Promotional Campaigns of the Romania-Ukraine Cooperation Programme (2019-2024)

Through community involvement and the promotion of shared values, the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border Programme has demonstrated the importance of dialogue and cross-border solidarity. Continuing these initiatives is essential for a prosperous and harmonious future in the region. Each image tells a story, capturing moments of joy, emotion, and collaboration that reflect the essence and positive impact of this cooperation Programme. Through various activities and events, the Programme has united communities, promoted shared European values, and strengthened cultural and social ties between the two states. All these initiatives

were organised in the spirit of celebrating the European Cooperation Day #INTERREG, events that annually mark the European Union's commitment to sustainable development and reducing disparities.

The Managing Authority (Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration) and the Joint Technical Secretariat (Regional Office for Cross-border Cooperation Suceava) for the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme celebrate this occasion every year in September with a major event.

We now look back on a remarkable journey filled with progress, continuous learning, and countless valuable experiences:

➤ 2019: Blood Donation Campaign

In 2019, European Cooperation Day was marked by organising a blood donation campaign across the Programme area, in the cities of Suceava, Botoşani, Tulcea, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhhorod, and Odesa. This initiative, carried out under the slogan "Europe for YOU! You for LIFE! Be a DONOR!", mobilized over 900 donors from

both countries, eager to contribute to saving lives. The campaign aimed to support the health and well-being of local communities. This act of generosity highlighted the strength of human unity in the face of challenges, demonstrating community solidarity in addressing medical needs.



➤ 2020: Outdoor Advertising and Epidemiological Prevention Campaign

The year 2020 brought new challenges with the global pandemic, and the Programme responded by launching a public health promotion campaign under the slogan "Together, Safely," featuring outdoor and online advertising for a month.

This campaign included an awareness and epidemiological prevention component by distributing protective face masks and wrapping public transportation vehicles in Romania (Suceava, Botoșani, Tulcea, Baia Mare, Satu Mare) with prevention messages. Additionally, electronic banners were posted on news and economic websites in Ukraine (Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhhorod, Odesa) to increase digital interaction.

The campaign contributed to raising awareness about the importance of protective measures, demonstrating that together, we can navigate even the toughest times. The increased visibility of this campaign showcased the European Union's commitment to citizen protection and enhanced public confidence in the measures taken for their safety. The main messages during the European Cooperation Day event focused on cooperation, digitalization, and prevention.

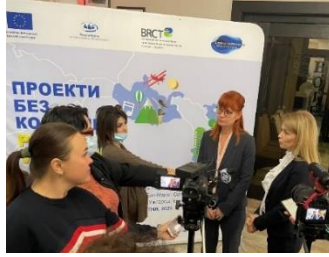


➤ 2021: Cooperation Brunch - 9 Events, 2 Countries, One Celebration

In 2021, European Cooperation Day was celebrated by organising nine cooperation brunches in each region of the Programme area, both in Romania and Ukraine, under the slogan "Projects without Borders. Romania – Ukraine."

In addition to the nine regional physical events designed to facilitate direct dialogue between Programme beneficiaries and journalists, the campaign also included radio promotion in both countries. These nine events provided excellent

opportunities to showcase cooperation projects to the public and promote cross-border cooperation, highlighting the European Union's financial support and the improvements brought to the lives of people and communities in the border area. The brunches were enthusiastically received, and positive feedback from over 150 participants, representing 45 projects and 63 journalists across the Programme's territory, underscored the importance of these meetings for strengthening cross-border relations.



➤ 2022: Mural Painting and Interreg Slam Competition Victory

In 2022, European Cooperation Day was marked as a dedicated event for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people under the theme "Message for Ukraine." The goal was to convey a message of solidarity in a contemporary artistic format and enhance the sense of belonging among our beneficiaries to the European cross-border community.

The programme organised an art competition culminating in the creation of a large-scale mural on the facade of the "Mihai Eminescu" National College in Suceava. The painting competition, titled "Message for Ukraine," brought together

talented youth from both programme countries, encouraging them to express their vision of friendship, European solidarity, and cross-border cooperation. From over 60 submissions, a 15-year-old from Odessa was selected as the winner following public selection and voting for her work "Birds of Victory and Freedom."

"Message for Ukraine" campaign also included the distribution of over 500 school supply packages to 5 schools in Ukraine, one in each eligible region within the Programme area, to support efforts in maintaining access to education for Ukrainian youth.



In the same year, the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020 received notable recognition through the project "Virtual Reality Unites the Carpathians: Interactive School Laboratories," which won the grand prize at the Interreg SLAM competition.

This innovative project, implemented by 5 partners from Zakarpattia (Ukraine) and Satu Mare County (Romania), was lauded across Europe for integrating virtual reality technology into lifelong education in schools along the Romanian-Ukrainian border.



➤ 2023: Skills Workshops - Skills for the Future

European Cooperation Day in 2023, under the event umbrella "Skills for the Future," focused on skills development with the organisation of three workshops. Approximately 50 high school students from Ukraine travelled to Maramureş, Tulcea, and Suceava counties for these workshops.

Each workshop offered a variety of engaging activities hosted by prestigious

institutions, organisations, and authorities that successfully implemented projects funded by our Programme in each of the three cities. Designed as educational and cultural experiences, each workshop emphasized personal development and understanding the importance of cross-border cooperation. Their promotion demonstrated the programme's commitment to the future of younger generations and enhanced confidence in projects supported by the European Union.



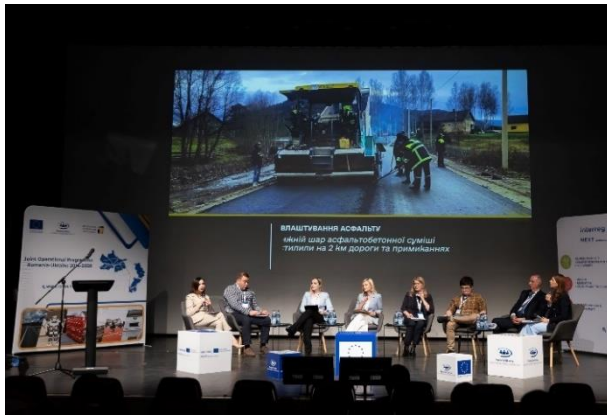
➤ **2024: April 17th - Final Conference of the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020**

In 2024, the programme reached its peak with the organisation of a final conference attended by over 250 participants from Romania and Ukraine at the theatre hall in Suceava. Representatives included those from the European Commission, management structures of the programme from both participating states - the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration of Romania, the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, representatives from the General Consulate of Romania in Chernivtsi, and the Embassy of Ukraine in Bucharest, local authorities, as well as numerous partners and funding beneficiaries were present at the event.



The conference, held on April 17th in Suceava, provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements and plan for the future of cross-border cooperation. Major accomplishments of the programme were presented, challenges encountered were discussed, and future directions for strengthening cooperation were outlined.

Authorities responsible for implementing the programme spoke about the difficulties faced over the 8 years of implementation and the measures adopted during this period to successfully complete projects. From the digitalization of the entire process (contract signing, report preparation, online or hybrid event execution) to budget supplements for projects affected by material price increases, and extensions of project durations because of pandemic restrictions and Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the programme was successfully concluded, and EU funds were used for the benefit of border communities.



Partnerships within the programme transformed challenges into opportunities, highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships and solidarity in achieving common investments. The event brought together over 50 partners from 25 funded projects who presented the benefits and impact of their initiatives on communities in border regions.



Through these cooperation initiatives, partners were inspired to collaborate, innovate, and create sustainable solutions for their communities. In the context of the calls already launched by the 2021-2027 Interreg NEXT Romania-Ukraine cooperation programme, but also those that will follow, the partnerships already created will be used to access new European funds.



At the end of the conference, there was a special performance of a play performed by the talented actors of the "Matei Vișniec" Municipal Theatre of Suceava. An experience that delighted everyone's hearts and brought smiles to the faces of the participants, regardless of nationality.

➤ **Project Tour - April 18th:**

The following day, a delegation comprising representatives from the European Commission, programme structures from Bucharest and Kiev, as well as journalists, participated in a project tour of cross-border projects in Suceava and Botoşani.

The tour was guided by representatives from the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Regional Bureau for Cross-Border Cooperation (BRCT) Suceava, a

permanent presence in the programme area.

The group had the opportunity to explore on-site the tangible results of joint projects and directly observe how European funds were utilized for the development of educational, medical, and cultural infrastructure to the benefit of communities in Romania and Ukraine.



➤ **2024: Inauguration of the Second "Message for Ukraine" Mural in Chernivtsi – June 25th**

In June, the inauguration of the second large-scale mural, a symbol of long-term cross-border cooperation between Romania and Ukraine, took place in Chernivtsi.

The new mural in Chernivtsi continues the manifesto of solidarity for Ukrainian partners launched in the summer of 2022 and marks an important moment: the completion of projects funded under the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme and the transition to the new Interreg NEXT cooperation programme Made on the façade of the Municipal Creation Centre for Children and Youth in Chernivtsi, this painting is a replica of the one on the "Mihai



Eminescu" National College in Suceava, emphasizing European solidarity. #StandWithUkraine

The author of the mural "Birds of Victory and Freedom," Tetyana Lebedenko from Odessa, was present at the inauguration in Chernivtsi. Her presence added authenticity to the event, highlighting the potential of the younger generation to contribute to a better future. Tetyana underscored the importance of European values for her generation - freedom, democracy, and human dignity.



These events dedicated to closing the Romania-Ukraine Programme once again underscored that cross-border projects and EU support continue to play a crucial role in promoting cultural exchanges, improving educational, medical, and road infrastructure, and supporting innovation in the region.

Communication actions played a significant role in highlighting European financial support, contributing to strengthening the programme's image among the public, thus emphasizing the European Union's commitment to the development of cross-border cooperation. Through these visibility efforts, the aim was not only to inform but also to increase confidence in the projects implemented, demonstrating the positive impact of cooperation on the involved communities.

Recognition of these events at the Interreg programme community level further underscored the efforts of the programme's management structures. In the "Best Local Initiatives" competition, the Romania-Ukraine Programme was declared the winner of the "Best Advertising Award" for two consecutive years, 2022 and 2023.



We send our heartfelt congratulations to all the Programme structures and thank everyone for their support and continued involvement in these essential projects for cross-border cooperation!

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and co-financed by the participating countries in the Programmeme. The Programmeme is dedicated to the border areas between Romania and Ukraine and will contribute to the overall objective of the European Neighbourhood Instrument: progress towards an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness for the benefit of Member States and non-EU members through cross-border cooperation actions.

www.ro-ua.net/en/



Programme funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION



Romania-Ukraine
ENI-CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their knowhow, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.