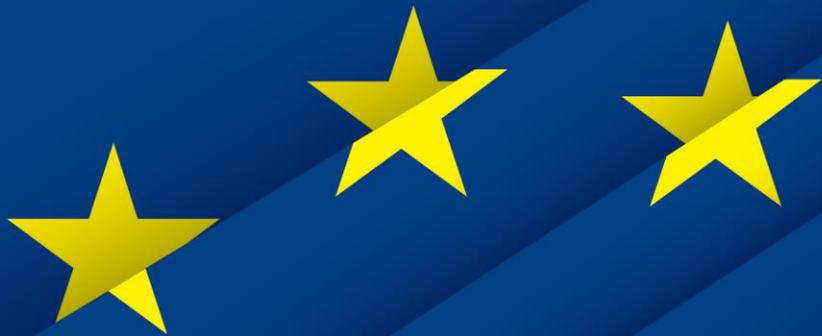


Newsletter

Nr. 1 / 2021



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CONTENTS

[Preliminary consultations for Romania-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme](#)

[Status of RO-UA 2014-2020](#)

[Branch Offices in Odessa and Chernivtsi: updated contact details!](#)

[Project Story: Cross-Border Cooperation in the Age of Closed Borders](#)

[Project Story: COOP 4 FIRE is successfully completed!](#)



Preliminary consultations for Romania-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme

During the 2021-2027 period, EU member states will benefit from non-reimbursable community financial assistance for the development of cross-border cooperation programs and projects, with the purpose of improving exchanges at the regional and local level and addressing shortcomings in developing border areas by encouraging cooperation and the exchange of good practices between the European Union (EU) states and the non-EU neighbouring states.

Therefore, in the context of the future Operational Programme Romania - Ukraine 2021 - 2027 and with a view of conducting preliminary consultations (focus groups) with all stakeholders for the identification of funding directions, the Managing Authority for the Operational Program Romania - Ukraine 2014 - 2020 launches the [public call for submission of the intention to participate at these focus groups](#) for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in the fields of **environment** (particularly climate change and environmental risks, biodiversity and natural resources, air pollution), **digital connectivity, sustainable, smart and intermodal infrastructure, education, health and social inclusion, culture, institutional capacity, civil society** (especially cooperation between communities), **border management, disaster risk management**.

The participation in the focus groups will be carried out in online format between April and May 2021, will be voluntary and will not be remunerated. In case of a large number of organizations that express an interest in participating in these groups, priority will be given to those that have a longer activity in the targeted field, within the limit of two (2) NGOs per focus group (organized under the Policy Objectives envisaged in the programming phase).

The interested organizations are invited to send an email expressing their intention to participate to the address info.ro-ua-md@mdrap.ro by **12 April 2021**, indicating at least the following information:

1. **Romania - Ukraine programme**
2. **Field concerned**
3. **Relevance of the organization's activity for the chosen field (maximum 10 lines)**
4. **Date of establishment of the organization**
5. **Experience in cross-border cooperation (maximum 10 lines)**
6. **Contact details**



If your organization will be selected to participate in a group focus, you will be informed at least with 5 days in advance of the date and time of the meeting, and you will receive the meeting link and login instructions.



Status of RO-UA 2014-2020

59 projects up and running

A few numbers and some percentages, but behind them resides a huge amount of work, mobilization, determination and above all, the desire to see these projects completed, for the benefit of the communities on both sides of the border they have been dedicated to.

3 grant contracts to be signed

2020 was a difficult and demanding year for both our beneficiaries and the programme structures. The projects had to adapt to the circumstances and carry on, although numerous and repeated restrictions compelled us to rethink all activities on the one hand, surely the pace of implementation slowed down because of travel restrictions, quarantine or illness of implementation team staff. There definitely was a contraction of economic activities, visible both in Ukraine and in Romania, which led, for example, to difficulties in awarding procurement contracts due to lack of prospectors for services, goods and works required under projects.

43.4 Million EUR contracted

5.23 Million EUR still to be contracted

Not all projects were able to identify immediate alternative or adjustments suitable to the new context, therefore the programme gave them the opportunity to suspend activities for a limited period of time or the possibility to extend their implementation period.

62 projects funded

90% contracting rate

A positive effect brought to light in this period was the improvement of communication, both at the level of project partnerships, but also between projects and the programme, the possibility to conduct meetings promptly and successfully in online format, whenever the situation required it.

38% in payments to grant beneficiaries

At this point in time, in 2021, both the projects and the programme are called upon to also act independently and mobilize all available resources to catch up, accelerate implementation, complete projects and meet the expected results of the European funding. Thus, it is indispensable to speed up the submission of interim report with payment request to ensure the financial resources needed to continue projects in good condition, increase the pace of

activities and achieve results, accounting for savings at project level, especially because of events and circumstances which marked the year 2020 and the identification of activities and / or results to which these unconsumed financial resources can be redirected and used until the end of the implementation.

Together with regional stakeholders, such as regional administrations in Ukraine, the programme has monitored and will continue to constantly monitor the progress of projects in order to identify potential risks and / or needs for assistance and support, provide training to beneficiaries and give high priority to the verification of payment requests.

We all hope that through sustained efforts among the projects, the programme, the national structures and the stakeholders, we will accelerate the implementation pace and will overcome the current difficulties, will carry out our projects in good and fruticious conditions, materialise our results and maximize the use of funds available on the Romanian-Ukrainian border.





In attention of all Ukrainian grant beneficiaries

Branch Offices in Odessa and Chernivtsi: updated contact details!

The JTS of Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Program announces contact details updating of Branch Offices in Chernivtsi and Odessa. The offices are available to Ukrainian beneficiaries for support in the implementation of projects funded by the program and can be contacted as follows:

BRANCH OFFICE CHERNIVTSI - “Bukovinian Agency of Initiatives and Development”, Chernivtsi.

It is addressed to the grant beneficiaries from the **Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpattia** regions.

Address for Branch Office: Apt. 10, Kobylanska Str. 20, Chernivtsi 58000, Ukraine.

Contact Data:

- **Key experts (Chernivtsi):**

Julian ANDRIIESH – Tel.: +380 502 93 45 99

E-mail andriiesh.baid@gmail.com

Olena LAVRUK – Tel.: +380 668 76 29 16

E-mail varvariuk.baid@gmail.com

- **Key experts (Kyiv)**

Herman KARPENKO - Tel.: +380 689 00 34 46, Email: hermankarpenko@gmail.com

The mailing address for the helpdesk / ex-ante approvals for communication and information materials is: ro.ua.chernivtsi@gmail.com .

BRANCH OFFICE ODESSA - Association of Ukrainian regions «EU Strategy for the Danube Region»

It is addressed to beneficiaries in the **Odessa** region.

Address for branch office: 4, Shevchenko Ave., postal code 65032, Odessa, Odessa region, Ukraine.

Contact Data:

- **Key expert (Odessa):**

Olga BOLON – Tel.: +380 674 82 04 27

E-mail ushki@ukr.net

Natalia SEREBRYANNIKOVA – Tel.: +380 677 04 79 09, E-mail nserebryan@gmail.com.

- **Key experts (Kyiv)**

Julia KAPUSTINA - Tel.: +380 675 02 42 33, Email: julia.n.kapustina@gmail.com

The mailing address for the helpdesk / ex-ante approvals for communication and information materials is: odessa.ro.ua@gmail.com.

The branch offices address the Ukrainian grant beneficiaries from the Romania-Ukraine Program area and their role is to ensure a better communication with the program structures, as well as to facilitate the access to information related to the program.



Cross-Border Cooperation in the Age of Closed Borders

Advancing our projects means our beneficiaries must look after the people involved, their goals and performance. This will require adopting a swift status, continually analysing risks, and adjusting operations. Here is an example of how our projects managed to preserve their continuity in the face of the pandemic.

At the time of writing, the designers of the cross-border project **Educational University Romanian-Ukrainian Cross-Border Cooperation - UNIV.E.R-U**, which would later receive the “code name” EMS ENI **2SOFT / 1.1 / 115**, did not foresee, as nobody worldwide did, as a matter of fact, what followed in 2020 and, later, in 2021. Enthusiastically, because there were no indications that any activity would ever have to be hastened, rethought or re-budgeted, the creators of the project, from Suceava and Odessa, drew some clear directions of action, but later realigned to the global epidemiological context.



The project coordinator, Marcela Șlusarciuc, together with the two project managers from the beneficiary institutions, Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava and the National Polytechnic University of Odessa, Ștefan Purici and Mykhailo Lebid, respectively, were prone to initiate a robust calendar of activities in the project. Therefore, the two project teams got to know each other fairly well, through the two meetings organized on-site in

the first months of 2020. The kick-off meeting, preceded by the first press conference of the project, took place in Suceava, in the presence of representatives of the Odessa partner. It was very clear then that the implementation period of the project was to be 18 months, but later, partially, the UNIV.E.R-U agenda would change... However,



the main objective of the project team, which is to develop and improve the higher education system, through cross-border cooperation, for the direct benefit of students, academic communities and Romanian/Ukrainian minorities in Suceava and Odessa, was the beacon that guided the project in times of storm. The keywords of the project were then established in Suceava: curriculum, students, transfer of good practices, summer school, winter school, information and research. In numbers, the UNIV.E.R-U projection looks like this: 120 students trained in summer/winter schools; 10,000 students informed about bilateral cooperation programs, mobility, research internships etc.; 30 academics/researchers involved in exchanges of experience and transfer of good practices; 700 teachers/research informed about the results; 10

young people directly involved in offering the possibility to the Romanian/Ukrainian national minorities to study in higher education institutions in their native language; 15 informed universities on cooperation in the field of education and innovation.

The meeting of the Joint Communication Group scheduled in Odessa in March 2020 increased the level of adrenaline of the representatives from Suceava, not as much regarding the topics and activities developed, but the hardships of simply travelling from point A to point B, crisscrossing the unprecedented measures, unknown until then, that began to be implemented by governments. While the discussions opened the door to cross-border cooperation for the target group, physical borders for everyone in Europe were closing, Romania and Ukraine entering in a state of emergency.

But not our project. Cross-border cooperation moved in the online environment, and during the period of "shutdown" of the vast majority of activities, UNIV.E.R-U "opens" to target groups and the general public by creating its own logo and branding for promotional materials. In May 2020, the project started to have its own identity in the virtual space through the website: <http://univer-u.org/>. Meanwhile, the attractive activities of the project are constantly reflected in the three newsletters, launched so far, based on close and fruitful collaboration between the teams of the two partner universities.

In a slalom between the reports on the evolution of the project and the realization of a study of "awareness of the other" among the students and academic staff from Suceava and Odessa, we managed to open the Cross-Border Cooperation Centers. They operate within the two universities, starting July last year. The good atmosphere generated by this structure of the project was also reflected in the organization of the most important and awaited event within UNIV.E.R-U: Winter School [CON] ACTION - STUDENT CONVENTION ON CROSS BORDER ACTION.

It started on Monday, March 15th 2021, at Gura Humorului, after a long time of online



activities for students, being structured in two series of five days each. 27 students, master students and doctoral students from USV and 26 students from ONPU, English speaking and highly motivated, were selected. Truly a winter school, as



at Gura Humorului it snowed every day, it offered participants the opportunity to benefit from interactive work sessions. Organized in a hybrid system, on-site and online, with various activities focused on cross-border cooperation issues and related topics, it was led by USV lecturers with assistance of the ONPU team.



And because the period of extra-curricular "hibernation" was long, the program of activities of both series had a strong applicative character, including courses, practical applications, virtual cultural-recreational tours.

The organizers successfully facilitated the interaction, in the safest conditions, both on-site and online, between the students from Romania (located in Gura Humorului) and Ukraine (located in Odessa). The testimonials of the participating students give us confidence that we will achieve the proposed objectives.

It was very fun and completely different from other experiences so far. I interacted with students from other countries, learning not to be afraid to try something new and to control my shyness. Everything was wonderful!

Valeria Mospan (ONPU)

I was excited and curious to solve the tasks. The biggest gain is creating friendships with students in Odessa, discovering more about them, their culture and, at the same time, improving my communication skills in English. It was great to communicate and work with them and I thank them for their patience.

Ieselin-Elena Drăgănescu (USV), speaking on behalf of her colleagues.

Feedback is still being collected from the participants. Another grand step to overcome is just around the corner. Summer School is coming! We invite you to follow UNIV.E.R.U's activities and we will keep you posted! RO-UA 2014-2020 projects will continue, despite the compulsory mind shift, fluctuating restrictions new protection measures, economic headwinds new challenges. All of this made us gain new levels of agility and ability to set our core priorities.



COOP 4 FIRE is successfully completed!

The cross-border projects are not just indicators, budgets, reports and payments. Although these are their inseparable elements, above all each project hides the specific ideas, values and dreams of people implementing it, as well as the stories of those who benefited from its implementation. And because we want to bring some of them closer to you, we further present COOP 4 FIRE – a project that worked to increase emergency response capacity.

Cross-border COOPeration for Fire & REscue services - COOP4FIRE (2SOFT/4.2/89) is the first Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020 CBC project to have completed all its activities. The project started in January 2020 and it was implemented until January 2021 by Vladeni Commune in Botosani County (Romania) and Novoselytsia Town in Chernivtsi region (Ukraine).

Within the 12 months of operation, COOP4FIRE's ambition was to sustainably contribute to the emergency services development in Botoșani - Chernivtsi cross-border area. The project beneficiaries jointly worked to improve the skills and abilities of volunteer firefighters and managing emergencies local service managers to increase reaction capacity to fires and other risks. One of the major results of the project is the reduction of response time to interventions by up to 10 minutes in Vladeni commune and by 8 minutes in Novoselytsia United Community.



Within the framework of the project, the following three major problems facing the two communities

(~12,200 population) have been solved:

- **endowment with specialized equipment** of the two voluntary services for emergency situations;
- **training of 30 volunteer firefighters** - 15 from Vladeni and 15 from Novoselytsia;
- **improving the management of risks** caused by natural and man-made disasters in the border region.



It is noteworthy that the partners ensured efficient management in the implementation of the project, all decisions being taken by mutual agreement by the project steering committee and applying the principles and modalities of the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI).

The total value of the project is 331,100 euro, of which 184,450 euro were allocated to the project Lead Beneficiary - Vladeni commune, Romania - and 146,650 euro were allocated to the Ukrainian partner - Novoselytsia. The European Union contributed with 297,990 euro (90% of the total value of the project), and the partners with 33,110 euro.

Looking back at the expectations at project start, *Mr. Voicu Murariu, mayor of Vladeni commune – Lead Beneficiary*, emphasizes that *“all the project planned results have been reached. The project has directly contributed to the achievement of the main indicator of the CBC Program for priority 4.2 - Supporting joint activities for the prevention of natural disaster, including through joint investments in infrastructure in the field of emergencies. Yet, no one could have imagined what health conditions were to come, and it must be said that using the benefits of the digital environment helped the project successfully sail through the pandemic storm”*.

Mr. Murariu mentions that it is particularly valuable that the project implementation led to a fruitful exchange of experience in the field of emergencies, as well as to a good practices brochure of emergency services in Novoselytsia and Vladeni commune.

More than 210,000 euro were used to purchase and equip the two emergency services: a truck equipped for rapid fire interventions until the arrival of professional firefighters, auxiliary equipment (including two trailers with a transport axle), radio stations -reception installed on special vehicles, professional communication systems (2 walkie-talkie sets and 14 mobile phones), complete suits for 2 teams of volunteer firefighters and various tools and devices needed for interventions.

It goes without saying that the partnership determines the success of the project. In COOP4FIRE, the beneficiaries established a good cooperation, and Mrs. Maria Nikorych - Mayor of the United Community of Novoselytsia, points out that *“the project`s sustainability was ensured by building and implementing a common strategy for developing emergency management within the 2 voluntary services, approved by local councils, but even more through the Cooperation Protocol for 2021-2026 established to be maintained after project lifetime.”*

Therefore, by applying these cooperation tools, the partners will continue the joint regular training of volunteer firefighters, the exchange of experience and know-how, but also the dissemination of COOP4FIRE project results. In addition, the partners agreed to take advantage of the opportunities that will be offered by the new 2021- 2027 programming period.

In order to improve the professional training of 30 volunteer firefighters, 6 joint specialized actions were organized: two seminars, two trainings and 2



practical exercises and trainings, in which the members of the target group participated.

“Citizens of the two communities were informed about the state of implementation of the project through local and regional press, awareness campaigns and a major event organized in Vladeni commune. On this occasion more than 500 participants from all localities of Vladeni commune and Novoselytsia Community were apprised of the importance and role of voluntary services for rescuing goods and people in case of fires, floods and other risks, as well as the action of volunteer firefighters with the new trucks purchased with European funding”, details Vladeni communication manager, Gheorghe Ciobanu.

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and co-financed by the participating countries in the Programme. The Programme 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.

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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.