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2020 has changed the way we see the world, has dynamited our social behavior and mannerisms, as well as innovated the paradigms of work and performance. Whereas some of us were totally taken by surprise by the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on economy and personal space, as time goes by, we have to come to terms and accept the collective action needed and embrace the necessary sacrifices in order to solve this global problem.

Where is Romania – Ukraine programme now?

There is no doubt, COVID-19 pandemic challenged the ways we are implementing the programmes financed by the European Union. However, in spite of this, both the beneficiaries and the programmes managed to cope with the situation, finding alternatives and making steps further.

Thus, Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020 joined the efforts of the European Commission and of other territorial cooperation programmes across Europe to support the projects and their beneficiaries. To this end, a coordination meeting of all the programmes sharing Ukraine as partner country took place at the beginning of June 2020 and benefitted of the participation of the European Commission. This action aimed at identifying and setting forth unitary approaches regarding our similar challenges, sharing good practices, and acknowledging the newest national developments impacting on our projects. Everybody invested time, energy, and commitment to ensure that the funding available will continue to benefit the communities and people living in this large geographic area.

Since January 2020, our programme has been focused on finalizing evaluation and selection of projects having an infrastructure component of more than 1 MEUR that aim at improving transport infrastructure, health services and fight against organized crime, the so called „hard” projects. By July, the process was finalized and the awarding decision of the Joint Monitoring Committee is expected in the coming period.

Steady progress was also made to contract the selected projects and, to this day, 44 projects are on the roll, including 4 large infrastructure projects (LIP)¹, each of them seeking to improve the condition of communities in the program area, to solve common challenges through cross border partnerships. Hard projects are soon to start the contracting phase which we anticipate to be completed by the end of fall, 2020.



Compelled by the pandemic context, our approaches were adjusted, for instance, by requesting documents in electronic format, using electronic signature whenever possible, and organizing virtual meetings with project partners. The projects contracted by the programme up to now attracted over 30 MEUR to Romanian and Ukrainian regions. As they are progressing, their stories will follow.

Pandemic brought unexpected challenges to our beneficiaries, limited travels, meetings and live events. Some of them decided to temporarily suspend project activities, but the large majority followed through and creatively switched to online alternatives, where appropriate.

It has been noted a stronger connection with programme structures (joint technical secretariat, managing authority) as projects sought for our support, counselling and assistance more than ever. Meetings with partners took place on weekly basis via internet platforms, online sessions trainings,

¹ LIP projects have been selected through direct award and their implementation started in 2019.

partners were held to prepare them for crucial moments of implementation i.e. start-up, submission of the first reports.

There was a lot of work behind the scenes and the programme decided to support projects even further by putting at their disposal various tools and instruments, such as frequently asked questions following the trainings or a dedicated implementation manual. Beneficiaries will find here practicalities and answers to their questions, tips and good practices drawing attention on sensitive aspects and guide them to a better understanding of the process (see www.ro-ua.net for further information).

New payment requests are expected to be received from projects at the beginning of the fall, therefore training of auditors performing verification of expenditures incurred by the beneficiaries from Ukraine is planned to take place during the summer, most probably by using an online platform.

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www.ro-ua.net/en/



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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.