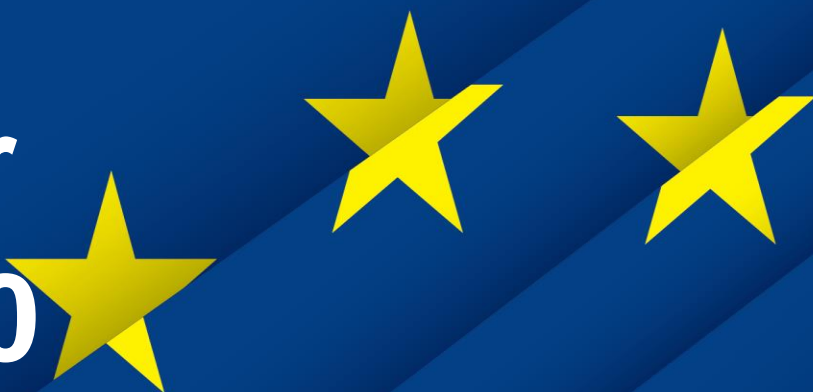


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Silver linings and shift of mind. Testimonial puzzle.

When facing crucial emergencies, often we find that windows of opportunity open. And sometimes, these openings are purposefully utilized to change old and stiff approaches. Coronavirus is thus providing with a whole new opportunity.

COVID-19 will likely reshape a few thoughts and ideas on how we live our lives, but with proper guidelines in place, like taking on a new habit after discarding old ones, instead of recoiling to the pre-coronavirus days, a few changes may become permanent. And they, whatever they will be, will be a huge relief to our overworked, burdened environment. On the other hand, the crisis has also shown the incredible resourcefulness, ingenuity and solidarity between the peoples of Europe, proving once again that cross-border cooperation is not only wanted by Europe's citizens, but it is also essential for the livelihoods of many of them.

"We are facing times that we never thought we would experience. We had all been put in the position to adapt to this new reality, the population, business sector and public administration. For a programme whose specificity is cross-border cooperation, travel restrictions, difficulties in crossing the border have only made the contracting process and the development of projects more difficult. Fortunately, both the beneficiaries of the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine and the management structures have made every effort to find solutions not to block the system and reduce the potential negative consequences for those who have put their hope in it. We especially appreciate the speed with which the beneficiaries of the projects procured the necessary equipment to carry out their activity online and their willingness to find solutions for activities that initially required physical interaction, such as events, conferences, trainings and which have been moved to the virtual space, overall, the desire to carry on with the projects, despite these changes.

With the support of each of us, in compliance with the indications provided by the specialized institutions, we want to overcome this major challenge, to diminish the negative economic effects and to adapt as soon as possible to the new normality". (Iulia HERTZOG, Head of Managing Authority for ETC Programmes in Romania).

"As professionals, pandemic was and still is about our capacity to adapt and face the unexpected and disruptions without losing balance and the sense of purpose. To this end, pragmatism, enhanced communication and creativity are the new energies now required to move our programme forward and farther." (Ingrid Bucşa, Director of the Joint Technical Secretariat of Joint Operational Program Romania - Ukraine 2014-2020)

"COVID-19 has slowed down many projects and our office current tasks, but it generated a clear result for everyone: the digitalization. The digitalization did not count borders. Instead, it upgraded the connections between Romania and Ukraine at a next level. Each crisis has its own opportunities and the digitalization is the best till now. For our organization, this means working from home, electronic signature, video conferences. It displayed once more the need for implementing digital services for our employees and for all the projects beneficiaries from Romania and Ukraine. Pandemic crisis succeeded to force citizens' digital skills and open new approaches for us. It confirmed the critical role of the digitalization of the public and private sector in creating resilient and adaptable societies in both countries." (Cezar Grozavu, Executive Director of Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation Suceava)

"COVID-19 has significantly changed the work style of many. For several months we learn to be creative, work remotely, keep in touch with our beneficiaries online and by phone and provide them with the maximum possible support from us in the difficult conditions they may face when implementing projects. We sincerely hope that the current restrictions will become the basis for even more fruitful cross-border cooperation and understanding of common challenges and opportunities." (Olena Lavruk, Chernivtsi Branch Office of Joint Technical Secretariat of the Joint Operational Program Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020).

"Implementing a cross-border project that contains elements of social bonding during a pandemic is a real challenge. On the one hand, our efforts should bring members of society closer, make them more receptive and friendly. On the other hand, the recommendations indicate that social distance should be maintained. Online methods of coordinating events helped us a lot. This is a common challenge that needs to be overcome together. Only through cross-border solidarity will we be able to succeed." (Marin Herman, project coordinator of „Bucovinian Ethnic Special Treasure" 2SOFT/2.1/46)

"The year of 2020 has made its adjustments in the lives and plans of each of us. But it also gave us many new perspectives and benefits! Virtual communication with partners can also be interesting and opens new horizons. Conferences in "ZOOM" - we can, we do, we practice! The possibilities of the Internet are endless! The work can go on indefinitely... as long as there is electricity." (Svitlana Skrykuliak, Mamaliga village council, project coordinator of "Common Solutions to Common

Problems: Natural and Man-Made Disasters at the Romanian-Ukrainian Border” 2SOFT/4.2/160 and “Joint Actions for Preventing Natural and Man-Made Disasters at Romanian-Ukrainian Border” 2SOFT/4.2/179)

„After the initial uncertainty caused by COVID-19 restriction measures, activities under the RESFOR project have continued according to plans with insignificant delay. Partners have been united in performing a risk assessment and adaptive management. Scheduled physical meetings have successfully taken place online, and budget savings may actually lead to the maximization of project results via new opportunities.” (Monia Martini, project manager of “Promote deadwood for resilient forests in the Romanian-Ukrainian cross border region” RESFOR, 2SOFT/1.2/13)

"In life, you cannot predict all the threats and problems that await people, society. The main thing is that through working and learning something new, we gain new experience. This makes us more aware of the latest trends, more open to innovation. Thanks to the support of the Lead Beneficiary and Joint Technical Secretariat Suceava specialists, we accept any challenges in a balanced and calm manner and are aware of the tasks. During the project implementation period, including 5 months of work in difficult conditions due to the spread of coronavirus infection COVID-19, we formed a team of like-minded people who care about children with special educational needs, gained practical knowledge about working on the Internet, effective use of remote forms of work communication. Practice has shown that we are ready for challenges, for successful completion of tasks, for self-improvement and finding new solutions. Even if we are lagging behind in something, we strive to catch up through efforts, gaining new experience and the help of others. Today we are beginning to feel the joy of the work process, and therefore the achievement of success. We are going all out, improving our experience." (Natalia Tkachuk, director of Chernivtsi special secondary boarding school №2, project coordinator of “Special Education in the cross-border area Suceava - Chernivtsi: modern, inclusive and adequate to labor market”, 2SOFT/1.1/35)

We had the chance to implement our motto “We can transform challenges into opportunities” and the ACTEDJ team manages not only to successfully implement its projects, but also to contract new ones. We found new support systems and worked together in a cross-border context, growing together. (Natalia Budescu, Association of Cross-border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”, LIP Cross – Border Health Infrastructure).

These testimonials show that in no way we have to put a hold on our projects and future plans, but adjust our methods in order to reach maximum productivity and of course check our day to day goals aiming towards each milestone. The current unprecedented crisis has put to test all aspects of our life, including cross-border cooperation which is facing its most challenging times in decades.

The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020 is funded by the European Union through the 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.