

EU Neighbours in action: Knowledge across borders

Agenda



19 – 20 May 2026

Sava Center, Milentija Popovića 9,
Belgrade | Serbia





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Outline

The EU enlargement and neighbourhood agenda increasingly highlights the strategic importance of cooperation at the EU's external borders. Candidate countries - the Western Balkans countries, Moldova and Ukraine - face significant operational and strategic challenges in implementing cross-border programmes. Ensuring alignment with EU policy objectives, while achieving high-quality results and creating lasting impact in the border regions remains everyday challenge for majority of programmes. At the same time, programme authorities and EU stakeholders continuously seek effective mechanisms to support cooperation, enhance resilience, and promote shared European values.

Objectives

This event provides a platform for exchange, peer learning, and discussion of practical approaches between programme authorities and national stakeholders from both EU and candidate countries.

Participants will be able to:

- Share experiences and good practices across programmes and countries to address common operational and thematic challenges.
- Discuss emerging trends in cross-border cooperation, including project quality, partnership development, communication, and how to create added value of cooperation overall.
- Explore practical solutions to improve programme implementation, strengthen cross-border collaboration, and prepare for operational challenges and opportunities in the post-2027 programming period.
- Consider how external cooperation programmes contribute to the EU agenda, integration, resilience, and the promotion of European values.

Through a combination of thematic workshops, moderated discussions, and networking participants will engage in focused, interactive exchanges aimed at mutual learning, concrete approaches, and strengthening professional networks. The event will enable participants to identify solutions and create new ideas, to reinforce cooperation. This can be used as important input or at least as inspiration to start preparing for the future programming period.

Format

- Thematic workshops: Explore practical examples of implementation, partnership development, communication, and skills needed to achieve success
- World Café discussions: Moderated sessions to discuss shared challenges and practical options.
- Interact knowledge corner: Informal space to share tools, guidance, and publications relevant to programme implementation.

Who is it for

This event is for programme staff and national authorities involved in external cooperation, including:

- Interreg IPA, Interreg NEXT and IPA-IPA programme bodies
- National authorities managing external cooperation programmes



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- European Commission services and EU Delegations engaged in enlargement and neighbourhood cooperation

Day One

Tuesday, 19 May 2026

08.30 – 09.00

Registration

09.00 – 10.30

Opening plenary | Welcome, success stories and setting the scene

Welcome and practical information, *Interact*

Welcome speeches

- Moray Gilland, Head of Unit, Macro-regions, transnational/interregional/external cooperation, enlargement, DG REGIO
- Mauro di Veroli, Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation in Serbia
- Nemanja Martinović, Acting Assistant Minister, Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia
- Nuria Aldao, Regional strategy and investment, Cross-border cooperation coordinator, DG ENEST

Panel discussion | Why cooperation is a strategic European asset

- Djordje Bojovic, Policy advisor, European Parliament
- Nadija Afanasieva, Director, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics (UIIP)
- Teofil Gherca, Director, URBACT Interreg Interregional Programme
- Oana Cristea, Head of Unit, Managing Authority for Romania-Serbia Interreg IPA Programme

10.30 – 11.00

Coffee/Tea break

11.00 – 12.30

Parallel sessions:

- **Room 1 | Achieving project quality**
- **Room 2 | Connecting project results to wider policy priorities and cooperation frameworks**
- **Room 3 | Visibility sprint - Turning cross-border results into impactful messages**

12.30 – 13.30

Lunch break



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13.30 – 14.30

Knowledge corner: discover the world of different tools and information sources to support your work

14.30 – 16.00

Parallel sessions:

- **Room 1 | Cooperation works**
- **Room 2 | Creating the right project partnerships**
- **Room 3 | Small actions, big values: Mapping external cooperation's contribution to European values**

16.00 – 16.30

Coffee/Tea break

16.30 – 17.30

Agora space: Can cross-border cooperation programmes and projects bring added stability and trust to their regions?

Open debate based on programme and project experiences

19.00

Networking reception

Day two

Wednesday, 20 May 2026

09.30 – 10.30

1st round

Room 1 | Enhancing cooperation programmes beyond 2027

Room 2 | From reactive crisis management to resilient programmes beyond 2027

10.30 – 11.00

Coffee/Tea break

11.00 – 12.00

2nd round

Room 1 | Enhancing cooperation programmes beyond 2027

Room 2 | From reactive crisis management to resilient programmes beyond 2027

12.00 – 13.00

Closing plenary | Lessons learned and looking forward

- Petra Masáčová, Head of the Interact Programme Managing Authority
- Christina Antoniou, Team Leader D1 Unit, DG REGIO
- Nuria Aldao, Regional strategy and investment, Cross-border cooperation coordinator, DG ENEST

13.00 – 14.00

Farewell lunch