

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2013



Bulgaria – Serbia
IPA Cross-border Programme

CCI No. 2007CB16IP0006

May 2014



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PREFACE

This report is elaborated in accordance with provisions of Article 112 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007 of 12 June 2007 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 establishing an instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA). The Annual report (2012) on the implementation of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme (2007-2013) encompasses information related to progress in Programme implementation, achievements measured by relevant indicators at the level of priority axis, financial implementation, monitoring and evaluation, summary of significant problems encountered and measures taken to resolve the respective problems, issues related to technical assistance, measures taken to provide information and publicity, to be transparent and to facilitate stakeholders as well as to make activities more visible, etc.





I. IDENTIFICATION

The Annual Implementation Report (AIR) is drawn up in accordance with the provisions under Article 112 of the Commission Regulation № 718/2007.

The current report is the fifth AIR for the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme, CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006 and is covering the period from 1st of January 2013 till 31st of December 2013.

The Managing Authority (MA) for the Programme is the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development (MRD) having as counterpart the the Serbian European Integration Office, the National Authority (NA).

Objective concerned:	IPA Cross-border Cooperation	
Programming period:	2007 - 2013	
Programme:	Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme	CCI No. 2007CB16IPO006
Eligible area concerned:	On the Bulgarian side (NUTS III regions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vidin District (11 municipalities) ✓ Montana District (11 municipalities) ✓ Sofia District (22 municipalities) ✓ Pernik District (6 municipalities) ✓ Kyustendil District (9 municipalities) ✓ Sofia-city District (1 municipality) 	On the Serbian side (NUTS III regions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bor District (4 municipalities) ✓ Zaječar District (4 municipalities) ✓ Nišava District (11 municipalities) ✓ Pirot District (4 municipalities) ✓ Jablanica District (6 municipalities) ✓ Pčinja District: (7 municipalities)
Reporting year:	2013	

Date of approval of Head of MA:	14 May 2014
Date of approval of the annual report by the Joint Monitoring Committee:	27 May 2014





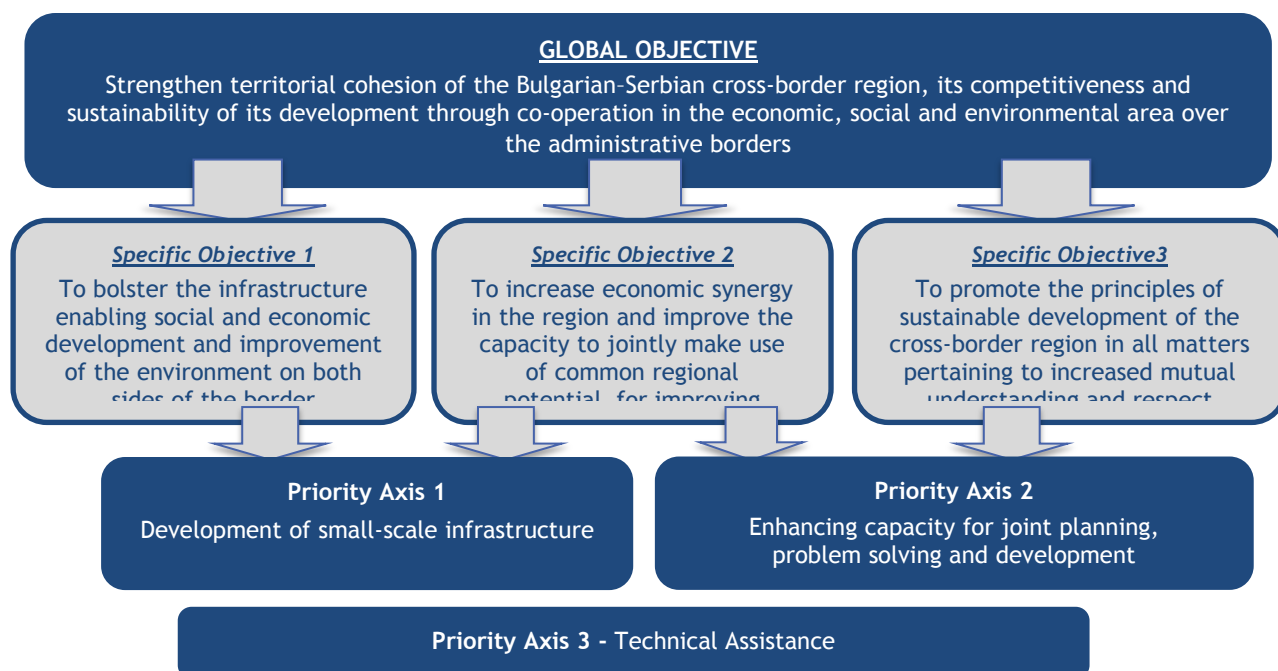
II. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme (2007-2013) was approved by the European Commission on 25 March 2008 (Decision no. 1058) and amended by European Commission decision C(2010) 4142 of 21 June 2010. Following positive opinion on description of management and control systems preconditions to intensify the implementation of the Programme were in place.

Within the period till December 2013 there were organized two open calls for proposals, under the Programme, which attracted over 370 applications. This is a positive sign for the dynamics of the bilateral collaboration and intensity of cooperation, at the stages of project ideas elaboration and preparation of project proposals. At the same time, it shows good will and increased interest in launching common cross-border initiatives to contribute for the sustainable development of the region.

The number of subsidy contracts signed till the end of 2013 is 136, involving **343 project partners** (181 Bulgarian partners and 162 Serbian partners) both from Bulgarian and Serbian side. The projects cover variety of thematic issues including small-scale infrastructure, knowledge sharing and education, innovation, science, cultural exchange, sustainable development through enhanced ecology, tourism, etc. The projects under the Programme are often relatively small, but create valuable cross-border partnership, influence territorial cohesion, contribute for sharing the European values and facilitating integration.

Cross-cutting issues are addressed in the programme through the implementation of specific actions (within the financed projects) contributing to the promotion of equality between men and women; environmental protection, as well as concrete actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination. The objectives and priority axis of the Programme are presented in the figure below:





2.1. ACHIEVEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESS

WHAT HAS THE PROGRAMME ACHIEVED?

The results achieved by the Programme to date *provide evidences of the cross-border added value for the eligible region in terms of strengthening of the institutional and cooperation capacity of the public authorities and organizations, involving participation of 343 project partners*. The programme appears to have a genuine cross border impact, measureable in terms of:

- *Number of partnerships created and joint information services established (350 new partnerships created at target 56);*
- *Improved small-scale infrastructure addressing information and social infrastructure, business and innovation facilities (targets 2016 are overachieved);*
- *Number of common marketing initiatives (33) and institutions participating in knowledge economy activities (350);*
- *Increased cross-border movement of people and exchanges of good and services in the region (7745 people involved in the cross-border projects initiatives).*
- *Public awareness raised regarding sustainable use of regional resources (20340 people informed);*

During this programming period, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance replaced the pre-accession programmes as PHARE and CARDS and brought new challenges to the management structures and to the project beneficiaries, who had to changeover the well-known implementing conditions with the new criteria for shared management and joint actions applied for this programme period. As a result of the implementation of the current programme, it could be summarised that the implementing structures and the management and control systems established in both countries are fully operational with the necessary capacity for implementing the joint IPA Programme. There is evidence that the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme *is selected by beneficiaries even when alternative sources of financing are available*. Best practices from programme implementation are presented in Annex II.

WHO HAS BENEFITTED?

The programme is in benefit to a variety of regional entities (municipalities, district administrations, NGO's, cultural and educational institutions, associations and business support organizations, etc.), who are directly beneficiaries under the programme. Indirectly, the programme benefitted the inhabitants of the cross-border region through the direct programme investments in the region and the involvement of more than *50 000 citizens in programme activities (from which 12 636 in "people to people actions")*.

The Programme contributes also to the assistance, which the IPA Assistance provides to the Republic of Serbia in their progressive alignment with the standards and policies of the European Union with a view to forthcoming membership. The Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC programme benefits Serbia by facilitating the transition to the EU practices on a multi-level basis (becoming more familiar with the use of the instruments in place for implementing mainstream EU interventions, the transfer of know-how between Bulgarian and Serbian coordinating structures, etc.).

WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE FOR ACHIEVEMENTS?

A precise and reliable source of information about the state of programme achievements are the monitoring data and the final evaluation report (with its exclusive summary), prepared by the evaluation team from "Ernst & Young SRL" for the purposes of the external on-going evaluation of the programme carried out between December 2012 and July 2013.





2.1.1. Information on the physical progress of the Programme:

▪ Status of the projects

1 st Call for Proposals	No. 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1
Launched on 30 th of November 2009 Budget: € 12 230 771	
110 project proposals received within the deadline	
Assessment	12 th of July 2010 – 18 th of April 2011
Contracting	May 2011 – August 2011
53 project financed	Total amount € 11 778 977

A total of 53 projects were financed under the First call for proposals of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme, the total value of which is 11 778 977,37 euro. The initial amount allocated for the projects under the First Call was 7 239 272 euro, representing the financial allocation for the years 2007 and 2008. However, due to the fact that the overall quality of the project proposals was very high the Managing Authority proposed re-allocation of the budget for the year 2009 in the amount of 4 991 499 euro, adding up to the total of 12 230 771 euro. Joint Monitoring Committee approved the proposal during an official meeting on the 13th of May 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

All financed projects under First call for proposals been successfully completed till the end of 2013. Based on the final visits conducted by the JTS, it could be assessed that all planned projects activities have been successfully implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Subsidy contracts. For each of the projects, a special summary presenting the project's basic information (project partner names, total budget sum, project duration) and results achieved as well as the best available photos illustrating the project results has been developed. All the project summaries have been uploaded to the Programme web site: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/page.php?c=59>

In relation with the financial implementation of the projects under the First call for proposals, some general information as of 31st of December 2013 (in euro) is presented in the table below:

Priority axis	Contracts	Total contracts amount (IPA + national co-financing*)	Advance payments (IPA + national co-financing)	Interim and final payments (IPA + national co-financing*)	Total payments (IPA + national co-financing*)
PA 1	15	6 968 579 €	1 308 361 €	3 994 505 €	5 302 866 €
PA 2	38	4 810 398 €	909 402 €	2 767 571 €	3 676 973 €
TOTAL	53	11 778 977 €	2 217 763 €	6 762 076 €	8 979 839 €

*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.





2nd Call for Proposals		No. 2007CB16IPO007-2011-2
Launched on 22 nd of November 2011		Budget: € 20 397 606,05 ¹
257 project proposals received within the deadline		
Assessment		October 2011 – February 2012
Contracting		January 2013 – November 2013
83 project financed		Total amount € 20 573 626

The Second call for proposals was opened for all areas of intervention under 1st and the 2nd priority axis of the Programme. The call attracted more than 260 applications, of which 257 (two hundred and fifty seven) applications were submitted within the deadline. The total value of the submitted project proposals was accounted on 75 486 765 euro.

Summarized data from the evaluation phase showed that 159 proposals with total requested amount of 42 870 212, 46 euro have passed the threshold of 65 points for qualitative worthwhile applications. Based on the large number of the proposals submitted under Second call for proposals as well as the significant number of quality projects, the Joint Monitoring Committee made decisions to re-allocate the commitment appropriations for years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and to use the generated savings from projects completed under the First Call for funding of quality worthwhile projects under the Second call for proposals. As a result, 83 projects on the total value of 20 573 626 euro were awarded during 2013 and it is expected additional projects to be awarded within the available savings in 2014. All projects are on-going since the first 21 projects with duration up to 12 months finalise in first trimester of 2014.

In relation with the financial implementation of the projects under 2nd Call for proposals, some general information as of 31st of December 2013 (in euro) is presented in the table below:

Priority axis	Contracts	Total contracts amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments
		(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing)	(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing*)
PA 1	21	12 675 341 €	2 149 858 €	130 185 €	2 280 043 €
PA 2	62	7 898 285 €	1 101 495 €	878 388 €	1 979 883 €
TOTAL	83	20 573 626 €	3 251 353 €	1 008 573 €	4 259 926 €

*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.

¹ According to the JMC decision taken during the attendance meeting on the 14th of September 2012 in Belogradchik, Bulgaria.





▪ Modifications of the subsidy contracts

During the project life-cycle, due to the certain reasons, the following types of modifications in the Subsidy contract might be necessary for the smooth project implementation: partnership changes, project content changes, budget changes, extension of implementation period and administrative changes.

It depends on the type of the changes and the effect, which it has on the project/outcomes/results, the contracts modifications could be proceed with notification, written approval or addendum and it is subject of approval by the relevant administrative structure - Joint Technical Secretariat, Managing Authority or Joint Monitoring Committee.

Modifications frequently occurred during the project life-cycle are mostly related with:

- ✓ *Changes of the project team*, which are the most requested modifications during project implementation;
- ✓ *Changes of the project's content* due to revision of the action plans and fine-tuning of project activities;
- ✓ *Budget changes as reallocation* between budget lines/sub-lines in the limit of 10% and modification related to budget reallocation between budget sub-lines. The planning of VAT in the separate budget line is one of the main projects' omissions.

Substantial modifications of the Subsidy contracts such as changes in the partnership, changes in the projects' outputs and results (and relevant indicators), and extension of the projects' implementation period *are exceptions* rather than common practice and in any case needs prior approval by the Joint Monitoring Committee and signature of addenda.

Since the first call for proposals, where a significant number of project teams' changes have been requested for the financed projects, the modification procedures was improved in line of the principals of the sound management with aim the administrative burden to be reduced. *Currently the modification procedures are the day's routine and do not have influence on the proper programme's implementation.*

2.1.2. Indicators

The Programme indicators are vital to the efficient and effective implementation of the Programme, and they serve to monitor and evaluate the extent to which the Programme has achieved its objectives, and the efficiency with which it has done so. The table below presents the result indicators which are used to monitor the progress at Programme level with baselines and achievements till 2013, calculated in compliance with the elaborated by the MA Methodology of Programme output and result indicators assessment.

Programme Result Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
<i>Improved small-scale infrastructure</i>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	29	2				
	Target 2016	2.5%										
	Baseline*	31										
<i>Increase of public</i>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,081				





transport coverage (% of population)	Target 2016	2% (3,55 km)											
	Baseline	3,480 km.											
Decreased pollution in the region	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	0	30					
	Target 2016	2%											
	Baseline*	3											
Increased attractiveness of the region based on preservation of natural resources	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	20					
	Target 2016	2%											
	Baseline*	8											
Projects actually applied	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	1	1					
	Target 2016	3%											
	Baseline*	10											
Number of joint information services established	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	30	0					
	Target 2016	3											
	Baseline*	32											
Improved environment for development of relationships across the border	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	33	0					
	Target 2016	3%											
	Baseline*	43											
Increased cross-border movement of people and exchange of goods and services in the region	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	11 (7745)	0					
	Target 2016	1.5%											
	Baseline*	34											
Increased public awareness regarding sustainable use of regional resources	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	8 (16296)	4 (4044)					
	Target 2016	2%											
	Baseline*	42											
Number of new partnerships created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	163	187					
	Target 2016	7											
	Baseline*	49											

* The above presented indicators had been calculated on the base of the elaborated Methodology of Programme output and result indicators assessment. Source of data are Interim and Final project reports of the successfully finalized projects till the end of 2013.

The table above represents summarized data for the achievement of the result indicators for the year 2013, achieved by the implementation of the projects. During 2013 the subsidy contracts signed within the First Call for proposals were in final stage of implementation. All subsidy contracts under the Second Call for proposals were in stage of implementation.

For year 2013 there is reported data for the whole scope of defined result indicators. For most of the defined result indicators there are reported figures for achieved results, which reached or exceeded the targeted figures for year 2016 (result indicators):

- "Improved small-scale Infrastructure" under measure 1.1;
- "Decreased pollution in the region" and "Increased attractiveness of the region based on preservation of natural resources" under measure 1.2;





- “Increased cross-border movement of people and exchange of goods and services in the region” and “Increased public awareness regarding sustainable use of regional resources” under measure 2.2;
- “Number of new partnerships created” under measure 2.3.

There are some results indicators, which target values are not yet achieved within 2013:

- Increase of public transport coverage (% of population) under measure 1.1;
- “Projects actually applied” under measure 1.3;
- “Number of joint information services established” and “Improved environment for development of relationships across the border” under measure 2.1.

However, the fact that there are 65 more projects related to: creation of joint information services, improving the environment, reconstruction of road infrastructure, etc., ensures the achievement of the result indicators in the next reporting years.

All details related to the achieved results could be found in the database of the MIS of the Programme (<https://mis-bgrs.mrrb.government.bg>). The information is also available in the relevant project progress reports.

2.1.3. Financial information (All financial data is presented in euro)

The total value of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - Serbia for the period 2007 – 2013 (after the procedure for automatic de-commitment of funding for year 2012) is 34 089 013 euro out of which 28 975 661 euro are EC funding and 5 113 352 euro national co-financing from state budgets by both partnering countries. The division of financial support between priorities 2007-2013 is shown in the table below:

Breakdown of priority axes by source of funding:

Priority	Community Funding	National Public funding	Total funding	Co-financing rate (%)
	(a)	(b)	c=a+b	a/c*100:b/c*100
Priority Axis 1				
Economic development and social cohesion	15 936 614 €	2 812 344 €	18 748 958 €	85:15
Priority Axis 2				
Improvement the quality of life	10 141 481 €	1 789 673 €	11 931 154 €	85:15
Priority Axis 3 -				
Technical Assistance	2 897 566 €	511 335 €	3 408 901 €	85:15
Total	28 975 661 €	5 113 352 €	34 089 013 €	85:15

**The table above represents data for the period 2007-2013 according to the approved by the JMC decision from 3th October 2011 amendment related to new financial allocations covering the period 2012 and 2013 of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross border programme which follows the adoption by the EC of the Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework 2012-2013 and approved Programme amendment related to the de-commitment procedure for 2012 (Decision C(2014) 1534 on 06.03.2014).*





▪ **N+3 Rule (pursuant to Article 166 of the Council Regulation №1605 of 25th of June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities)**

The amount that had to be certified during 2013 in order to achieve the requirements of the N + 3 rule is 4 808 474 euro (IPA). The total amount of the IPA funds certified to 31.12.2013 is 4 919 669 euro. All the measures taken by the MA for speeding up the verification process (possibility for additional verifications of expenditures, trainings for beneficiaries, individual consultations etc.) *resulted in the higher level of absorption of the funds by the project partners during 2013 over the expected target.*

In the table below it is shown the accomplishment status of n+3 rule by 31st of December 2013:

Programme Payment targets					EC advance payments	EC reimbursements	Total advance + reimbursements	Amounts to be included in application for payment in order to avoid N+3 Risk		
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007-2009	2007-2013*		2014	2015	2016
0	0	1 061 448	4 714 194	4 808 474	5 775 642	6 787 326	12 562 968	4 904 646	5 002 738	10 878 436

* Cumulated amounts 2007-2013

▪ **Data from quality check performed by the Certifying Authority**

Within the 2013 the “National Fund” Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Bulgaria, acting as Certifying Authority (CA) for the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross border programme 2007-2013 has conducted a regular on-the-spot check before certification. As a result of the common efforts of the joint management structures – Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat four certification report were submitted to CA in 2013 amounting at 4 922 844 euro (IPA funding). Based on the results from on-the spot checks, desk-based checks of the submitted MA's reports on certification, as well as on assessment of other available information by the Certifying Authority, 3 175 euro were excluded from the total amount proposed for certification to EC by the CA.

2.1.4. Information about the breakdown of use of the Funds

The table below presents actual financial data for year 2013. As it is evident from the presented information for year 2013 the project beneficiaries submitted to the MA requests for interim and final payment amounted to 6 127 257 euro.

Priority axes by source of funding (EUR)

Expenditure paid out by the beneficiaries included in payment claims	Corresponding Community and Public contribution (IPA + National)	Private expenditure	Expenditure paid by the body responsible for making payments to the Beneficiaries	Total payments Received from the Commission (excluding adv. payment)
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	sent to the MA	public)	(IPA + National public)		
PRIORITY AXIS 1	3 910 922 €	3 910 922	0	2 675 798	2 292 857
PRIORITY AXIS 2	1 909 267 €	1 909 267	0	1 492 428	905 778
PRIORITY AXIS 3	307 068 €	307 068	0	205 573	207 325
GRAND TOTAL	6 127 257 €	6 127 257	0	4 373 799	3 405 960

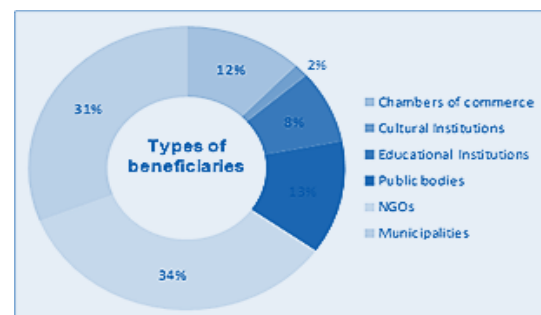
The projects under implementation within the First and Second calls for proposals are 136 for the total amount of 32 352 603 euro (respectively: under the First call for proposals – 11 778 977 euro and under the Second call for proposals – 20 573 626 euro). In relation with the financial implementation of the projects under the First and Second call for proposals, the information as of 31st of December 2013 (in euro) is presented in the table below:

Calls for proposals	Contracts	Total contracts amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments	Comparison total payments to total contracts amount
		(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing)	(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing*)
1 st Call for Proposals	53	11 778 977 €	2 217 763 €	6 762 076 €	8 979 839 €	76,24%
2 nd Call for Proposals	83	20 573 626 €	3 251 353 €	1 008 573 €	4 259 926 €	20,67%
Total	136	32 352 603 €	5 469 116 €	7 770 649 €	13 239 765 €	40,92%

*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.

2.1.5. Assistance by target groups

Varieties of entities (municipalities, district administrations, NGO's, cultural and educational institutions, etc.) are the direct beneficiaries of the programme. The number of entities implementing projects under the Programme, classified by target groups (state of play as of 2013) is shown in the next chart:



2.1.6. Assistance repaid or re-used

Not applicable





2.1.7. Qualitative analysis

During 2013, the efforts made by the programmes structures – MA, NA and JTS for speeding up implementation process was resulted at *avoiding de-commitment for year 2013 and high contracting rate*.

The delay in starting of Bulgaria –Serbia IPA CBC Programme was successfully overcome with significant progress in the contracting rate and the good financial results gathered in absorption of the programme's funds. For year 2013, the total certified amount of the IPA funds exceeded the programme's payment targets, thus till the end of 2013, the overall amount certified was 8,3 million euro or 28,65 % of the Programme budget (IPA funding) for the period 2007-2013.

The programme has attracted more than 370 applications under the two calls for proposals opened under the programme. Based on the large number of quality proposals under the second call, the Joint Monitoring Committee taken a decision for reallocation of funds (years 2012 and 2013) to the purpose of the second call and consequently 83 contracts were financed in 2013 on the total amount of 20,573 million euro. Thus *the contracted amount is 32 352 603 euro or 94,91 % of the Programme budget (IPA funding & National co-financing²) for the period 2007-2013*. During 2013, the overcontracting of the accumulated savings under the programme was approved by the JMC and additional projects will be awarded within the available savings in 2014.

The level of absorption of funds was apparently increased in 2013 based on the optimization of the financial control process and the improvement of the FLC systems on the territories of the both countries. Having in mind that Bulgaria and Serbia has adopted different systems for FLC, the prerequisite for the proper operation of the programme control system was the bilateral collaboration and intensity of cooperation between with MA and NA.

Based on the audit findings and recommendations given by the on-going evaluators, the MA has elaborated pool for the free-lance controllers in Bulgaria in accordance with their specialization by Fund (IPA vs ERDF). Additionally, the MA has adopted procedure for appointment of the controllers for the project's lifetime with regularly updated checks. As a result of the improvement of the control procedures, the process from the submission of a request for FLC verification until the reimbursement of the payment claim was accelerated and the period for its execution was shortened up to 90 days. *Thus the financial control process could be assessed as efficient* considering the overall duration of the process.

The management and control system of the programme were audited in 2013. The assessment of the Audit Authority regarding the scope of the audit assignment was level 1: „*Works well, only minor improvements are needed*“.

During 2013, *no significant problems were encountered for the programme implementation* and no risks events were identified for the programme performance. The financed projects under the programme contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the IPA CBC programme are correlated with the pillars of Danube strategy, by targeting on the one hand the development of infrastructure that facilitates

² National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.





connection between the two countries and, on the other hand, creation of linkages between business, education and research entities that can foster socio-economic activity and development.

The *cross-cutting issues* are also taken into consideration through the standard format of the application form developed in the context of the Programme. The environmental horizontal priority is integrated within Priority axis 1 projects through investments for environmental protection and tourism development and in Priority axis 2 for awareness raising in regards to EU environmental policies and sustainable tourism development. The projects also comply with the gender equality and non-discrimination principles although they are not directly targeting through the programme priorities.

When measuring the progress in terms of *Programme indicators* at the end of December 2013, it results that output indicators showcase a good degree of achievement. For both output and result indicators there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of the target values, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence of the indicators and on the other hand, as a result of gaps in the programming process that resulted in lower target values and absence of clear baseline values. The conclusions from the analyses for the output and result indicators is taken into consideration for the preparation of the new bilateral IPA CBC programme for the programming period 2014-2020.

In regards to the *preparation of the new Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC programme 2014-2020*, the year 2013 was assigned to the wide discussion for the geography of the IPA programmes, which Bulgaria will manage in the new programming period. The initial EC's proposal for discontinuation of the three IPA programmes with Serbia, former Republic of Macedonia and Turkey as bilateral programmes and convert them in one quadrilateral programme "Bulgaria Gateway" was controverted by some of the partnering countries. The broad discussions were finalized with the official position of the European Commission (letter with Ref. Ares(2013)3245606-15/10/2013) and their favorite opinion for continuation of the bilateral character of the three IPA programmes between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and former Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey. Shortly after that, the preparation process has started with first meeting of the Joint Working Group for preparation of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC programme 2014-2020 conducted on 7th of November 2013 and with the Service contract signed on 9th December 2013 with the selected consultant for facilitating the programming - Consortium Project Planning and Management.

2.2. INFORMATION ABOUT COMPLIANCE WITH COMMUNITY LAW

There are no problems encountered relating to the compliance with Community law in the implementation of the Programme.

The Programme has been prepared in accordance with Community Strategic Guidelines 2007 – 2013 priorities – especially in the area of improving of the attractiveness of the cross-border region and further developing of the human resources.

The Programme is compliant with the main EU strategic documents, notably with the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies, targeting sustainable development, equal opportunities and cross-border partnership.





The overall strategic goal and the priority axes of the Programme are fully compliant with main Bulgarian and Serbian national strategies and programmes, which are indicated in the Programme document. In order to ensure sound financial management of the Programme, the MA initiated a respective procedure and Decree No 221 of Council of Ministries for eligibility of expenditures was adopted on 11th of September 2009.

➤ Memorandum of Understanding

The MoU was signed on 18th of March 2011. Meanwhile, a decision for amendment of the approved programme was issued by the EC concerning the mechanism for ensuring the Serbian national co-financing which led to necessity an addendum to be signed to the MoU. The Addendum was signed on 11th July 2012. Formal procedures for entry into force of the MoU and Addendum on the Serbian side were completed on 31.01.2013.

2.3. SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THEM

No significant problems for the programme implementation were encountered during 2013.

The risk of de-commitment was successfully avoided in 2013 and the financial targets were overachieved on the base of the joint efforts made by the MA, NA and JTS for speeding up the programme implementation and the relevant procedures. The measures taken by for avoiding de-commitment are related to:

- ✓ *Effective coordination between the Programme authorities as regular meetings and close cooperation;*
- ✓ *Scenario for achieving the financial targets and programmes objectives discussed regularly between Programme authorities;*
- ✓ *Overcontracting of the accumulated savings under the programme.*
- ✓ *Improvement of the relevant monitoring, verification and control procedures in order to be reduced the administrative burden;*
- ✓ *Quarterly based risk assessment for identification of projects and themes/situations at risk;*
- ✓ *Action plan in regards to the recommendations given by the on-going evaluation;*
- ✓ *Facilitation of the beneficiaries in project generation and implementation by the JTS through variety of actions as trainings, open days, day-to-day consultations, close monitoring during the project lifetime and guidance for programme procedures and PRAG rules.*

2.4 CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The Programme document drafted jointly by the two countries through a large partnership with national, regional and local stakeholders was approved by the European Commission with Decision C(2008) 1058 on 25 March 2008. It sets out the general framework of intervention of IPA in the Programme cross-border area.





Since its approval, the Programme document has been amended with Decision C(2010) 4142 on 21 June 2010; Decision C(2012) 4939 on 17.07.2012, and Decision C(2012) 9424 on 17.12.2012 and Decision C(2014) 1534 following the procedures for financial allocations or automatic de-commitment of the programme's commitment appropriations.

In line with Article 166 of Council Regulation (EC, EURATOM) 1605/2001 and Article 5 of the Financial Agreement between the European Commission and Government of the Republic of Serbia, in 2013 the European Commission has started the procedure for automatic de-commitment of funding (for year 2012) on the total amount of 1 413 335 euro from the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance under the Programme. Based on the implementation of the projects under the First call for project proposals, the Managing Authority prepared revised financial plan and amended Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme. The amendment has been approved by the European Commission by Decision C(2014) 1534 issued in 2014.

2.5 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS

The logic of intervention of the Programme has been developed taking into account the IPA Programming Framework, the evidences resulting from a quantitative socio-economic analysis of the region, the qualitative inputs provided by Programme Stakeholders and complementarities with other EU Interventions available in the Programme area. The Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme is of complementary character to national programmes and it contributes to the achievement of the national priorities in the variety socio-economic sectors, encouraging the sustainable regional development of the border areas with emphasis on the bilateral cross-border cooperation.

Complementarity with other financial instruments is ensured through mechanisms foreseen in the programming document. Programme coordination with other financial instruments is done by the national structures in both participating countries, which representatives actively participates in JMC.

The entire territory of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme is part of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Despite the fact that there are neither programming nor implementation arrangements in place aimed at creating synergies between the Programme and the Strategy, *both priority axes of the IPA CBC programme are correlated with the pillars of Danube strategy*, by targeting, on the one hand, development of infrastructure that facilitates connection between the two countries and, on the other hand, creation of linkages between business, education and research entities that can foster socio-economic activity and development.

The goal to develop connection measures that facilitate communication and mobility laid down in the first pillar of the Danube strategy could be reflected in the measure 1.1 (Physical and Information Infrastructure) of the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA CBC programme, while the promotion of culture and tourism, and people to people contacts are directly oriented to the objectives of measures 2.2 (Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources) and 2.3 (People to people actions) of the programme.





The second pillar of the Danube strategy aims, among others, to restore and maintain quality of waters. This issue can be observed in the measure 1.2 (Infrastructure concerning environmental issues) and 1.3 (Assistance for project preparation) of the IPA CBC Bulgaria – Serbia programme. Also, the Danube strategy looks at the management of environmental risks, and so does through measure 1.2, but also to reservation of biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils, targeted by measure 1.3 of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC programme.

The third pillar of the Danube strategy aims to develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies, similar to measure 2.1 (Links and networking on the institutional, business and education levels) of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC programme. The strategy's support for the competitiveness of enterprises, including cluster development, is reflected in measure 2.2 and the interest to invest in people and skills in measure 2.3 of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC programme.

The fourth pillar of the Danube strategy, related to improvement of institutional capacity and cooperation and to tackling of organised and serious crime, is partially reflected in the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC programme. In particular through measure 2.1 (Links and networking on the institutional, business and education levels) and 2.3 (People to people actions), although overall the programme addresses cooperation.

A non-exclusive list of relevant projects implemented under programme which results could be multiplied in order to contribute for Danube strategy values are presented below:

Thematic scope	Selected projects as of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC programme (2007-2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ environment; ○ education and skills; ○ investing in people; ○ research activities; ○ networking, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Zones of growth. Investment promotion of brown and green zones in the Vidin, Zajechar and Bor regions; ✓ Assessment of flood risk – a base for sustainable development in upper part of Nishava catchment; ✓ Green Ambassadors for Climate Change Prevention: Raising the awareness of young people on climate change and responsible environmental and civil behaviour; ✓ Creation of a database of pollutants from industrial waste in a trans-boundary aspect and a logical framework for problem solving; ✓ Increase the competitiveness of enterprises by focusing on technology and know-how transfer between SMEs, research, industry and educational institutions in the sphere of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and ICT for the Sofia and Nishava district; ✓ Linking innovation with SME performance in Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria; ✓ Renovation and creation of small scale infrastructure and sports development in the municipality of Lom and the city municipality of Pantelej -





town of Nish;

- ✓ Energy efficiency in households – a long road or just a step away;
- ✓ Cross-Border awareness raising activities on Management standards for enterprises - good practices for business development;
- ✓ Building cross-border competitiveness through partnership and networking;
- ✓ Constructing of Recreation park, Tourist information centre, renovation of an existing eco-trail route, an information infrastructure that will serve the needs of the Tourist information centre, etc.

2.6 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Monitoring of the Programme is focused on ensuring quality of implementation and compliance with applicable rules and procedures. The Description of management and control systems ensuring reliable accounting, monitoring and financial reporting system The European Commission issued (May 2011) the letter with positive assessment on the Description of management and control systems (in accordance with Article 115 and 116 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007) on Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme.

■ Implementation manuals and Management Information System (MIS)

➤ Programme Implementation Manual (IPA CBC Manual)

Aiming at improvement and facilitation of overall management and control procedures under the three IPA Programmes managed by Bulgaria, since August 2011 common manual (IPA CBC Manual) for the three IPA CBC Programmes: Bulgaria-Serbia, Bulgaria-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria-Turkey is used. The manual with its annexes and appendixes describe in detail the specific rules and procedures for implementation of the Programme.

The system for revisions and updates of the manual gives an opportunity the programme implementation to tackle with legislative modifications or other amendments, which has a direct impact on the programmes' progress. During the reporting period some amendments related to optimization of the procedures and reflection of the recommendations given by the Certifying Authority and Audit Authority was made in the IPA CBC Manual.

➤ Project Implementation Manual (PIM)

The Project implementation manual (PIM) is a guiding tool prepared by the MA, NA and JTS to help the beneficiaries in the process of project management and implementation. PIM consists of several main topics, as: Legal and Institutional Framework, Contracting and contract's modifications, Project's implementation, Procurement, Financial Management and Control, Information and Publicity, Monitoring and audit of the project, etc. The PIM is regularly updated in order to reflect legislative amendments in the applicable rules and regulations. During the reporting period the PIM was revised in order to reflect the amendments in Practical Guide for external actions.





➤ Management Information System (MIS)

In order to facilitate the overall implementation of the Programme, at both programme and project level, the Management Information System is created as practical tool for performing the task of the relevant authorities (Managing Authority, National Authority, Certifying Authority, JTS). The system's scope covers all programme and project level such as programme data (priority structure, budget, indicators etc.) are recorded in order to facilitate programme-level monitoring and aggregations; project module (application, contract and modification data, implementation data - management of progress reports and request for FLC, etc.); financial section for ensuring sound management of Community funds.

The information system is fully operational and regularly upgraded. During the current functionality's updating, a section for the programme reporting and evaluation will be established. The system is accessible via Internet at <https://mis-bgrs.mrrb.government.bg> and the entries are controlled through user permissions.

▪ Monitoring measures and risk assessment procedure

➤ Programme level

The Managing Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) are responsible for monitoring the Programme implementation in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The Joint Monitoring Committee observes the monitoring of the Programme implementation and ensures the achievement of the Programme objectives through a rational use of the allocated resources.

On 26th of September, 2013 in the town of Vladicin Han (Serbia) an attendance **JMC meeting** was carried out with focus on the savings under the programme and their re-allocation for funding of the next quality worthwhile projects in the reserved list of the second call for proposals. The meeting was held in the premises of a training centre constructed within one of the successfully implemented projects under the programme. During the meeting the re-allocation of the savings generated so far was broadly discussed and approved by the JMC for the purpose of the second call for proposals.

Additionally, several **JMC written procedures** were organized in 2013 for consideration and approval of:

- ✓ *Revision of Programme document in regards to procedure of the de-commitment for year 2012;*
- ✓ *Annual implementation report for year 2012;*
- ✓ *Results from the on-going evaluation of the Programme;*
- ✓ *Other issues as Negotiation reports for contracts under second call for proposals; TA budget for years 2013 and 2014, Job descriptions for JTS experts, subsidy contracts' modifications, etc.*

A series of technical meetings between MA, NA and JTS were carried out within 2013 for discussion of different issues related to the smooth implementation of the Programme and to enhancement of the programme's performance. Issues related with the preparation of next programming period 2014-2020 were also discussed.





➤ Project level

The overall monitoring at the Projects level is carried out by the JTS for Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross border Programme with main office located in Sofia, Bulgaria and a branch office placed in Nis. The JTS implements the main monitoring tools – on the spot checks and checks of PPR, verifying the proper implementation of the projects in conformity with the provisions of the Subsidy contract, objectives of the Application form and Programme rules.

During the reporting period, **78 Initial monitoring visits/meetings** were held in the period March-December in the premises of the Lead partners of projects financed under the Second call for proposals or in the JTS premisses. The main purpose of the initial monitoring visits is to be checked the available resources for the project implementation, to be discussed the readiness for the tender procedures and the project implementation strategy; and to be performed the initial risk assessment and etc. During 2013, JTS managed to carry out all initial visits within the first 3 months of implementation, as required by the IPA Manual.

During the year 2013, on the basis of the Risk assessment analysis and Risk response plan **5 Ad-hoc monitoring visits** of the projects under the First call for proposals have been performed by JTS. The subject of the monitoring visit is the progress of the project to be checked in compliance with the terms and conditions set out in the implementation plan and the physical check to be performed of the investment activities and services delivered. In the period between January - May, JTS has organized technical meetings with project beneficiaries from the First call facing delays in implementation. During these meetings it was discussed thoroughly the problematic issues as the appropriate resolving measures were formulated.

During the year 2013, on the basis of the Annual Working Plan for Monitoring, **36 final monitoring visits** were performed. 53 projects were finalized under the First call of the Programme, 11 of them during 2013.. Some projects were implemented without any or insignificant delay (less than 1 month). Others showed serious delay in the course of their implementation. In most of the projects the delay was successfully overcome by active measures, provided by JTS and the respective project teams. Less than 1/6th of the projects assessed were identified with significant delay. For one project there were difficulties faced by the project team related to activities to manage and implement all activities covered by the project.

➤ Risk assessment

The risk assessment under the Programme is carried out on the quarterly base by a Risk Management Group (RMG) consisting of MA and JTS representatives. The main task of the RMG is to perform risk assessment through determination a baseline categorization of potential risks events and subsequent analysis and assessment. The RMG prioritizes the identified risks and provide a Risk response plan to reduce the likelihood or consequences of the risk impact.

During the reporting period, there are no identified risk events at Programme level. The most common risk events identified as a constant in the projects implementation cycle, are as follows:





- ✓ *Financial risk* – risk the project partners to face problems to meet current expenditures on the projects implementation within the planned time schedule;
- ✓ *Operational risk* – delays in the implementation, due to non-proper planning and starting of the project activities, poor communication between the project partners, changes in the project teams and/or in the project content, delays in sub-contracting, problems with documentations and language of the Programme.

The common risk event identified in the beginning of the project implementation is usually the *procurement risk*, which is related to beneficiaries without experiences in procurement procedures under PRAG rules. In addition, *some institutional risks* related to the overall project management and coordination by the LP; internal partnership communication and the unexpected partnership changes could become serious obstacles for the proper projects implementations.

In order to mitigate the ascertained risks and untimely completion of the planned project activities, MA and JTS undertook several measures to observe the project progress and to support the beneficiaries. In relation to the Risk Response plan, during 2013 the JTS took the following measures:

- ✓ *Strict monitoring of the projects progress with identified risks, and discussing measures with the LP /PPs to overcome the problems in the implementation process;*
- ✓ *Monitoring visits and day-to-day consultations related to preparation of PPR, implementation of the procurement plan, project timetable, etc.*
- ✓ *Participation (as observers) in opening sessions of specific procurement procedures for the projects with procurement risks.*

Based on the measures taken by the MA and JTS to prevent the risks incurrence, the most of the identified project risks events were overcome and the respective projects in risk were smoothly implemented.

▪ First Level Control system

The FLC system is developed in accordance with Art. 16 of Regulation (EC) 1080/2006 in order to make possible in the framework of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA CBC Programme (2007-2013) to verify:

- ✓ *Delivery of the products and services (as described in the approved Application Form which is the reference point for the approval decision regarding the activities and finance; and/or the project subsidy contract – which sets the legal background for the implementation of the project.);*
- ✓ *Soundness of the expenditure declared;*
- ✓ *Compliance of such expenditure with Programme, EC and national rules.*

In Bulgaria, the FLC system is decentralized and the freelance controllers are selected by the Managing Authority and rotate during each reporting period. Serbia has adopted a centralized FLC system and as for most of the centralized FLC systems adopted in other ETC Programmes, controllers are full-time employees, being responsible for performing verifications during the whole life-cycle of a project.





The financial control process is characterized by the existence of two levels of control, performed respectively by the First Level Control (100% expenditure verification) and MA (verifications of payments claims) and initially it took approximately 110 days from the submission of a request for FLC verification until the reimbursement of the payment claim, out of which 30-40 days are absorbed by FLC and 60 days by the validation and payment procedures by the MA. Additionally, MA carried out quarterly quality check (on the sample bases) over the work performed by controllers.

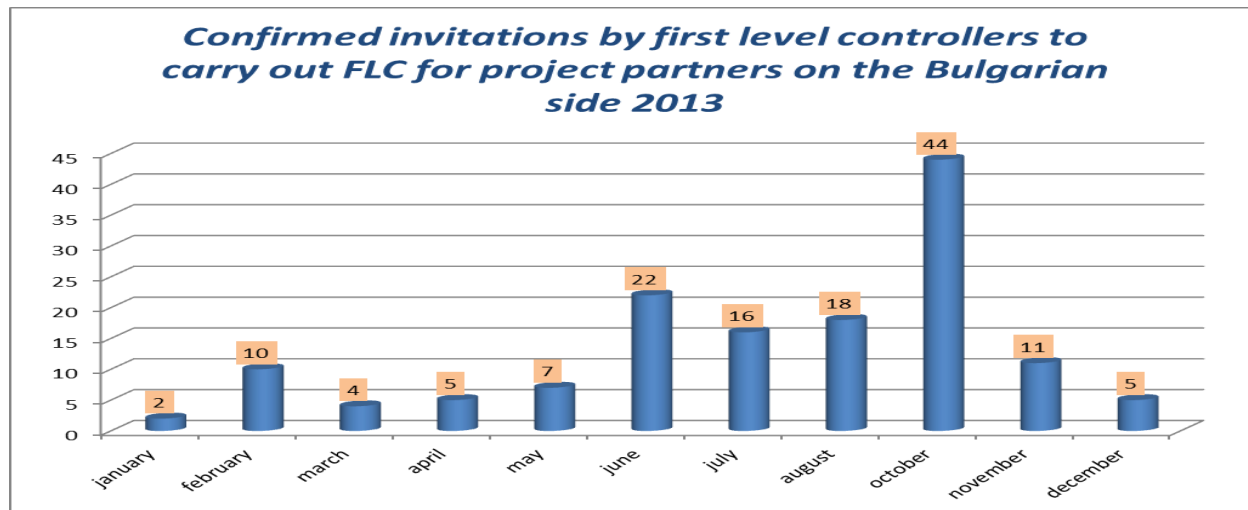
During the year 2013, the FLC system was duly implemented for the purposes of verification of expenditures for amounts spend by the project partners implementing projects signed under the First and the Second call for proposals. Within the reporting period, the MA took measures for improvement of the system, based on the audit findings and in order to enhance effectiveness of the FLC controllers performing verifications for Bulgarian project partners. Within the established pool of external independent controllers separation depending on the type of territorial cooperation programmes for which FLC is carried out was introduced, consequently a list of “IPA specialised” first level controllers was established in order to enhance performance and facilitate them in operating with single set of rules, procurement requirements, reporting templates, etc. The possibility to avoid rotation of first level controllers who carry out verifications for single subsidy contract was considered in order to enhance effectiveness taking into account that the first controller who is aware with the contract performing first on-the-spot visit will be in position to perform more efficient verifications on the same subsidy contract than another controller who need to get aware with the project at later stage of implementation. Consequently, the controllers included in the list for IPA Programmes, were assigned to perform all verifications under the same project. In order to optimise the efficient use of resources, for the subsidy contracts under the Second call for proposals the first level control is performed on six months periods with an option a request for FLC to be allowed on three months basis depending on the spent amounts. As a result of the improvement of the respective procedures, the financial control process from the submission of a request for FLC verification until the reimbursement of the payment claim was accelerated and the period for its execution was shortened up to 90 days. *Thus the financial control process could be assessed as efficient* considering the overall duration of the process.

The Bulgarian First Level Control for 2013 under the programme includes 144 on-the-spot visits on the premises of respective project partners in Bulgaria which represents 72 projects.

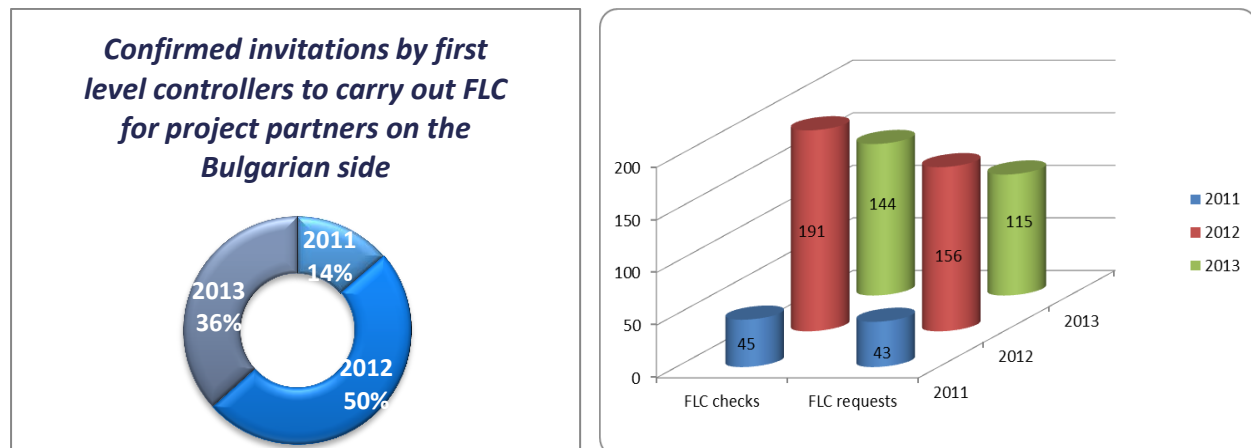
For year 2013, the Serbian First Level Control under the programme encompasses 147 checks on the expenditures of respective project partners in the Serbian area on the total verified expenditures amounted to 2 000 422,10 euro.

Within the year 2013, 115 requests for First level of control were submitted by project partners. The chart below represents the flow of confirmed invitations by First Level Controllers on monthly basis for the Bulgarian side.





The confirmed invitations in 2013 for FLC for Bulgarian project partners within the programme represents share of 36%.



The summarized data related to confirmations by First level controllers for performing FLC on Bulgarian project partners under the programme show dominated share for years 2012 in comparison with 2011 and 2013.

Audits under the Programme

➤ System audit

In accordance with the Annual audit plan of Bulgarian executive agency of Audit of European Union Funds (AEUFEA), the AA performed the third system audit under the Programme in the period August – October 2013. The system audit objective was to obtain reasonable assurance about the effective functioning of the management and control systems of the Managing Authority, National Authority, FLC system and JTS under the Programme in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) 718/2007 and Regulation (EC) 1828/2006. The audit was carried out at the Managing Authority – General Directorate “Territorial





Cooperation Management” at the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria and in National Authority - Serbian office of European integration (SEIO).

The audit activities were performed by auditors from AEUFEA and the Audit body - Audit Authority office of EU Funds to the Government of Republic of Serbia - for the checks on the territory of Republic of Serbia. The scope of the audit includes the key requirement 7 „Necessary preventive and corrective action where systemic errors are detected by the audit“. The audit team examined the respective control activities undertaken by the MA and NA during the period from 30th of July 2012 to 30th of July 2013.

The results of assessment of management and control systems established in NA on the territory of Republic of Serbia were submitted on 11th of October 2013 by the Audit body. The Serbian auditors gave an assessment of the management and control systems at the NA, the FLC system and the JTS Antenna, according to the four-level scale, at level 1 – Works well, only minor improvements are needed.

Based on the overall analyses carried out the assessment of the Audit Authority regarding the scope of the audit assignment is *„Works well, only minor improvements are needed“ (grade 1).*

➤ **Audit of operations**

Within the 2013 the AEUFEA has conducted audit of operations for assurance that the certified expenditures are correct and the underlying transactions are legal and regular. During the audit mission expenditures certified in the period 01.01.2012 - 31.12.2012 were checked. The AA has underlined four findings with financial impact, amounted to 1 367,28 euro, for which the relevant corrective measures have been undertaken by MA.

▪ **Evaluations under the Programme**

Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013 was elaborated and approved by JMC on 13th May 2011. The Evaluation Plan defines and explains the overall coordination arrangements for the on-going evaluation process under the programme. Following the evaluation plan, the Programme is subject to *three evaluations* aiming to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the strategy and implementation of the Programme, taking due attention to sustainable development issues and horizontal objectives..

➤ **Evaluation of the communication plan**

The first programme evaluation was performed in 2011 and aimed at examination of the level of achievement of the objectives set out in the Communication plan for the period of 2007 - 2010. Detailed information about the findings and recommendation from the internal analysis was presented in the Annual implementation report 2012.

➤ **Examination of output and results indicators which are going to be achieved in result of project implementation under 1st Call for proposals**

After the first internal analysis of the output and result indicators in 2011, a Methodology for output and result indicators under the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme and recommendation for using the





methodology during the preparation of the Application Form was incorporated in the Guidelines for applicants under the Second call for proposals.

During 2012 the MA performed internal analysis of the programme's indicators (output and result), based on the information presented in the Application Forms of the approved for financing projects under First call for proposals and the Application Forms of selected projects during the evaluation of the offers for the Second call for proposals. In particular, the outputs and results indicators' quantities provided by the applicants have been compared to the relevant Programme ones, in order to assess the extent of achievement of all Programme's indicators (output and result indicators) after successful completion of respective projects.

Detailed information about the findings and recommendation from the internal analysis was presented in the Annual implementation report 2013.

➤ On-going evaluation of the Programme

The on-going evaluation of the programme was carried out by external consultant in 2013 aiming to:

- ✓ *Assess the current performance (interim results) and review likely impacts of the Programme as a whole (in terms of relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, consistency of the management and the implementation of the programme, identification of ways for improvement of activities);*
- ✓ *Measure the effectiveness of the FLC system, the programme's and project indicators;*
- ✓ *Present an independent opinion and recommendations for improvements which could contribute for successful implementation of the programme, decision-making process and potentially for the new programming period.*

The evaluation used data covering the period till end of 2012 and the main findings and recommendations were presented in a summary attached to the final report. *Most of the recommendation were taken into consideration by MA and put on place.* The brief description of the conclusions is presented below as:

Findings

✓ Consistency and appropriate complementarity

The logic of intervention of the Programme has been developed taking into account the IPA Programming Framework, the evidences resulting from a quantitative socio-economic analysis of the region, the qualitative inputs provided by Programme Stakeholders and complementarities with other EU Interventions available in the Programme area. As a result, the general and specific objectives of the Programme are addressing the key opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the Programme area.

As a consequence the results achieved by the Programme to date, provide evidence of the cross-border added value for the eligible region, in terms of strengthening of the institutional and cooperation capacity of the public authorities responsible for the joint management and implementation of the Programme.

Horizontal issues are addressed at Programme Level, generally understood by beneficiaries and subject to scoring in the assessment process of applications, however there are some inconsistencies between definitions at Programme level and in implementation tools.



✓ Effectiveness and efficiency

The implementation system of the Programme is in place and there are procedures covering among others the process of project assessment, selection and contracting, first level control, financial management and verifications and monitoring.

The procedure for project assessment and selection, despite the long duration for the projects submitted under the first call, is positively appreciated by beneficiaries, also in terms of transparency. Overall there appears to be one particular area of improvement, concerning the communication of results of the assessment and selection process, towards unsuccessful applicants which would provide a useful feedback for the improvement of future applications.

When assessing the cost-efficiency of the first level control in Bulgaria, the adoption of a centralized system would cut costs by approximately 35% provided that changes are adopted in existing procedures leading to a better calendarization of first level control requests and through possible adjustments to pre-financing mechanisms. The full externalization of first level control through a technical assistance contract would imply higher costs eligible under the technical assistance budget freeing on the other hand human resources within the Managing Authority.

Overall, the beneficiaries' awareness of project implementation rules is satisfactory, being further enhanced by the set of documents available. In addition, both the JTS (and JTS antenna) and FL Controllers offer on-the-spot assistance to beneficiaries, in dealing with implementation related issues, a fact highlighted by beneficiaries' answers to the on-line survey. The main difficulty faced by beneficiaries in implementation relates to the application of PRAG public procurement rules, while the lead time for obtaining reimbursements is a critical issue in particular for NGOs. Cooperation among project partners on both sides of the border is strong and does not represent a bottleneck for implementation.

✓ Relevance of the Programme

The analysis of a sample of projects and questionnaire responses prove that the programme adds benefits to the development of the cross-border area. Project beneficiaries understand that the BG-RS IPA CB Programme is the right tool for finding joint solutions to common problems and they choose to implement projects under the programme, even if alternative sources of financing are available.

Most applicants covered the four "joint criteria" in their projects – joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing, also stating that their project ideas addressed problems that were characteristic to both border areas. However the application form templates do not require providing exhaustive explanations on how these criteria are met.

The projects financed under the first and second call for proposals are coherent with 7 (out of 11) thematic objectives defined under the draft EU regulation for Cohesion policy 2014-2020. Assuming that these interventions address issues relevant to the Programme area, these 7 thematic objectives should be taken into account in designing the future Operational Programme.



Recommendations

✓ *Current programming period*

- ▶ Continue performing communication activities towards beneficiaries aimed at raising awareness regarding the decommitment targets and the importance of the beneficiaries' contribution to the achievement of such targets;
- ▶ Provide proactive assistance to project beneficiaries by strengthening JTS support focusing on issues where beneficiaries are facing problems, such as application of public procurement;
- ▶ Verify the legal grounds for possible modifications of subsidy contracts, aimed at introducing rules for decommitment at project level and consider setting thresholds for revocation in the most critical cases (if there is a pipeline of viable projects that could be financed, on the reserve list);
- ▶ Shorten the overall duration of the financial control process by reducing the period of 60 days available for verifications of the Managing Authority, either by increasing staff headcount or revising the verification activities performed.
- ▶ Consider a revision of the FLC based on the lessons learned and practices developed on both sides of the border, without changing at this stage the respective systems structure (centralized / decentralized). Revisions should aim at harmonizing the following elements of control systems: Controllers should be appointed for the lifetime of a project and regularly update independence checks in case of external ones. Controllers should be specialized by Fund (IPA vs ERDF). Controls to be performed on the spot over a period of 30 days; Verification of controllers' work to be made on a sample based both for documents and on the spot (taking into account the Bulgarian experience); Ensure that a sufficient number of controllers is available on both sides of the border given that projects contracted under the second call will shortly enter in implementation.
- ▶ Continue close monitoring of projects under implementation, to ensure completion according to the approved financial plan and timing and the generation of expenditure necessary to avoid decommitment in 2013. For projects approved under the Second Call, strong support should be provided since the early stage, in order to support beneficiaries in setting-up the project implementation framework correctly. For addressing the difficulties in the application of secondary procurement under PRAG rules, information campaigns or material could be used to increase the level of understanding of bidders on the Serbian and Bulgarian sides of the border.
- ▶ Synergies with the Danube strategy could be strengthened through targeted awareness raising activities and a dedicated call for proposals financed through possible economies of projects from the first call.
- ▶ Information and publicity activities should further disseminate the concept of added value of cross-border cooperation. The implementation of a "best practice section" on the Programme website shall also serve this purpose.



✓ Future programming period

- ▶ In the preparation for the new Programming period, enhanced and institutionalized coordination with the MAs of other IPA Programmes of the area should be pursued to ensure further effectiveness in the use of IPA financial resources by establishing for example a joint regional working group that should meet during the programming phase. Efforts should be made in order to expand the availability of statistical data concerning the Programme Area. European macro-regional strategies relevant to the cross-border area should also be taken into account from the stage of Programming. When defining the strategy and the 4 thematic objectives that will be addressed by the future programme covering the cross-border area, the findings of the socio-economic analysis and ex-ante evaluation should take into account the 7 thematic objectives (listed among the 11 thematic objectives) that have been addressed by the projects financed in the current programming period as an indicator of the relevance assigned by beneficiaries to these topics.
 - ▶ Regarding launching of calls for proposals: schedule sequence and type of calls taking into account the progressive achievement of Programme objectives - a first call should be used in order to “test” the response of applicants and trends in terms of performing and underperforming KAIs, geographic participation and type of applicants. Once these are known, corrective actions can be taken in the form of communication campaigns and targeted/thematic calls (on specific PAs or KAIs or calls with geographic focus). Bottom-up approach, through which the programme stakeholders give the possibility to local actors to take part in the decision-making process regarding the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local areas.
 - ▶ Increased transparency during the assessment and selection process could be pursued by providing applicants the details related to the scoring assigned during the technical and financial assessment as this would also increase the quality of future applications.
 - ▶ Revision of the FLC system may be considered. The choice between centralized and decentralized system should be based on cost-efficiency considerations and a thorough assessment of the elements which are derived from a review of FLC systems in 19 Member States of the EU.
 - ▶ Consider introducing rules on de-commitment in the initial contracting templates, for projects to be financed in the next programming period, and raise awareness among beneficiaries about the issue already in the start-up phase of the Programme.
 - ▶ For the future programming period the Operational Programme could include a framework for defining the concept of added value. Selection criteria and indicators should be adopted for the purpose of mainstreaming and monitoring added value. Furthermore, application forms should be developed to encompass individual text fields in which applicants detail the ways in which each of the joint criteria is to be integrated in the project.
 - ▶ Further consistency should be ensured on the horizontal issues described in the programming and implementation documents.
 - ▶ The Danube Strategy could be further integrated in the Programme Intervention Logic (e.g. dedicated measures), or in terms of implementation arrangements (e.g. selection criteria).
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III. IMPLEMENTATION BY PRIORITY

3.1. PRIORITY AXIS 1 “DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE”

Objective

Improvement of the cross-border infrastructure towards spatial integration, better quality of the environment and accessibility, favorable business environment for new business activities and attractiveness for inhabitants and investors.

The specific objectives of Priority Axis 1 are:

- ✓ to bolster the infrastructure enabling social and economic development and improvement of the environment on both sides of the border;
- ✓ to increase economic synergy in the region and improve the capacity to jointly make use of common regional potential for improving regional well being.

Measure 1.1 “Physical and information infrastructure”

Measure 1.2 “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues”

Measure 1.3 “Assistance for project preparation”

3.1.1. Achievement of targets and analysis of the progress

▪ Information on the physical and financial progress of the priority

Following the financial plan for the period 2007-2013 the funds available for the Priority axis 1 amounted to 18 748 958.00 euro (incl. 15 936 614.00 euro Community funding and 2 812 344.00 euro National funding).

First and second call projects under Priority axis 1 were selected in open calls for proposals, to which public bodies and non-profit organisations from the border region could apply. Priority axis 1 attracted a high number of good quality applications and in total 36 projects were financed.

15 First call projects were implemented under Priority Axis 1, out of which 11 were under the Measure 1.1 “Physical and information infrastructure”; 3 projects under Measure 1.2 “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues” and 1 project under the Measure 1.3 “Assistance for project preparation”. Value of the contracts amounted to 6 968 579,20 euro.

In 2013, 21 Second call projects under Priority Axis 1 (amounting to 12 675 346,79 euro) started their implementation. 14 projects were in implementation under Measure 1.1 “Physical and information infrastructure”; 5 projects - under Measure 1.2 “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues” and 2 projects - under the Measure 1.3 “Assistance for project preparation”.

The majority of contracted projects cover measures 1.1 and 1.2, while under measure 1.3 there are quite a few contracted projects.



Financial progress of projects under Priority axis 1, as of 31st of December 2013 (in euro):

Call for Proposals	Contracts	Total contracts amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments
		(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing)	(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing*)
1 st Call for proposals	15	6 968 579	1 308 361	3 994 505	5 302 866
2 nd Call for proposals	21	12 675 341	2 149 858	130 185	2 280 043
TOTAL	36	19 643 920	3 458 219	4 124 690	7 582 909

*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.

Indicators which are used to measure the progress of measures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are shown in the tables below:

Measure 1.1 Physical and information infrastructure

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Number of small-scale projects addressing physical infrastructure improvement	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	17	4				
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	6										
Number of small-scale projects addressing information infrastructure improvement	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	4	0				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										
Number of small-scale projects addressing social infrastructure improvement	Achievement	0	0	0	0	7	7	1				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	3										
Number of small-scale projects addressing business and innovation facilities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	7	0				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	9										
Number of existing facilities upgraded	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	26	1				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	6										
Number of institutions/bodies reached by Programme activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	6	106	17				
	Target 2016	45										
	Baseline	24										
Training places created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	5	6				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										



Measure 1.2 Infrastructure concerning environmental issue

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Number of joint friendly environmental projects	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	6	1				
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline*	2										
Number of small-scale infrastructural projects concerning environmental protection	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	6	0				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										
Number of projects for pollution prevention and flood reduction	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	4	0				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	3										
Partnerships for cases of natural disasters established	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	0				
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	0										
Number of joint eco-itineraries created/developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	6	0				
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	3										
Number of institutions/bodies reached by Programme activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	19	9				
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	8										

Measure.1.3. Assistance for project preparation

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Feasibility studies	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	10	0				
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline*	4										
Preliminary and detailed design works	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	7	0				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	8										
Project environmental assessments	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	2	0				
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	1										

* above tables represent data on the grounds of contracted projects level and successfully finalized activities.



■ Qualitative analysis *(TO BE PREPARED BY MEP DEPT.)*

The measures under Priority Axes 1 support the investment activities in the field of physical and information infrastructure and in environmental protection. The priority was attracted by 112 applicants, from which only 36 projects are financed on the total amount 19 643 920 euro. The actually contracting amount exceeds the programme amount for the priority axis, due to procedure for overcontracting started in 2013.

The output indicators shows a good degree of achievements, however both for the outputs and programme results indicators there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of the target values presented in the Programme, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence of the indicators and on the other hand, as a result of gaps in the programming process that resulted in lower target values and absence of clear baseline values.

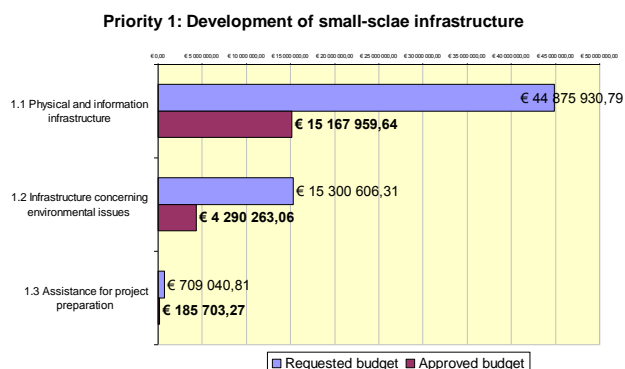
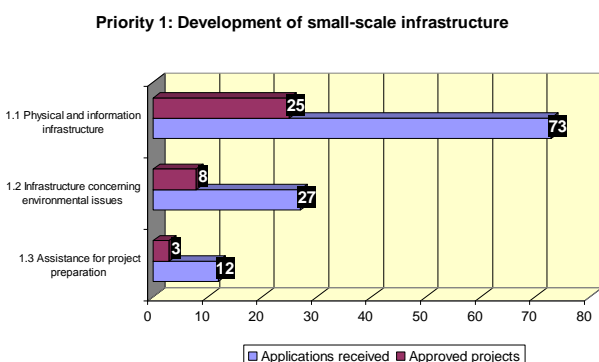
Majority of projects implemented under Priority Axes 1 are based on balanced and adequate partnerships and demonstrated clear link between activities and results. Irrespective of their delayed start, which led to multiple project changes (project staff, budget or duration), majority of the projects under the First call for proposals were successfully implemented and the planned outputs were delivered. Envisaged activities were realized with the involvement of the target groups.

In regards to the type of beneficiaries in approved projects under this priority, 83% are public bodies and 17% non-profit organizations.

The objective for bolstering the infrastructure enabling social and economic development and improvement of the environment on both sides of the border was directly addressed by 33 projects, while few projects targeted the assistance for project preparation. Detail information on the results achieved under priority will be given by the ex-post evaluation of the programme.

All details related to the successfully achieved projects could be found on the programme web-site (<http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/>).

The graphics bellows illustrate the quantitative data related to Priority Axes 1:



3.1.2. Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

No significant problems could be encountered in implementing the priority.



3.2. PRIORITY AXIS 2 - ENHANCING CAPACITY FOR JOINT PLANNING, PROBLEM SOLVING AND DEVELOPMENT

Objective

To improve the capacity of the region in regards to identification of problems and tracks for solutions, establishment of models for cooperation based on best practices and common needs, strengthening of institutional and business structures to respond to market requirements.

The specific objectives of Priority Axis 2 are:

- ✓ to increase economic synergy in the region and improve the capacity to jointly make use of common regional potential for improving regional well being;
- ✓ to promote the principles of sustainable development of the cross-border region.

Measure 2.1 “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”

Measure 2.2 “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources”

Measure 2.3 “People to people actions”

3.2.1. Achievement of targets and analysis of the progress

▪ Information on the physical and financial progress of the priority

Following the financial plan for the period 2007-2013 the funds available for the Priority axis 1 amounted to 11 931 154.00 euro (incl. 10 141 481.00 euro Community funding and 1 789 673.00 euro National funding).

The projects under the Priority axis 2 are also selected by open calls for proposals, to which public bodies and non-profit organisations from the border region can apply. In total 96 projects were financed.

Under the First Call for proposals, the projects implemented under Axis 2 were 38, of which 13 under the Measure 2.1 “Links and networking on the institutional, business and educational levels”, 13 under Measure 2.2 “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” and 12 under Measure 2.3 “People to people actions”. The value of the contracts amounts to 4 810 398,17 euro.

Under the Second Call for proposals, the projects implemented under Axis 2 were 58, of which 19 under the Measure 2.1 “Links and networking on the institutional, business and educational levels”, 25 projects under Measure 2.2 “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” and 14 projects under Measure 2.3 “People to people actions”. The value of the contracts amounts to 7 385 315,87 euro.

The contracted projects under the first two calls for proposals equally cover the both measures.

Financial progress of projects under Priority axis 2, as of 31st of December 2013 (in euro):



Call for Proposals	Contracts	Total contracts amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments
		(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing)	(IPA + national co-financing*)	(IPA + national co-financing*)
1st Call for proposals	38	4 810 398	909 402	2 767 571	3 676 973
2nd Call for proposals	62	7 898 285	1 101 495	878 388	1 979 883
TOTAL	100	12 708 683	2 010 897	3 645 959	5 656 856

*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.

Indicators which are used to measure the progress of priority measures are shown in the tables below:

Measure 2.1. Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Number of linkages between different institutions created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	70	0	138				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline*	22										
Number of joint databases created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	7	2	18				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	32										
Number of management plans/strategies /researches developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	15	77	91				
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	63										
Number of education/business partnerships	Achievement	0	0	0	0	101	0	196				
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	90										
Number of common marketing initiatives	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	9	20				
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	7										
Number of institutions participating in knowledge economy activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	47	28	275				
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	81										
SMEs involved/ addressed in CBC projects	Achievement	0	0	0	0	169	12538	18054				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	380										
Number of people involved in projects' activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	821	18677	19795				
	Target 2016	400										
	Baseline	4858										
Management and job-related training	Achievement	0	0	0	0	12	47	10				
	Target 2016	15										



courses	Baseline	14										
Number of people trained	Achievement	0	0	0	0	230	802	345				
	Target 2016	250										
	Baseline	1203										

Measure.2.2. Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Number of common cross-border tourist products and services	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	32	8				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline*	18										
Tourist destinations created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	15	5	9				
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	0										
Number of projects concerning common cultural heritage	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	13	3				
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	6										
Number of cultural events carried out	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	18	4				
	Target 2016	15										
	Baseline	20										
Number of projects concerning common products and services	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	23	5				
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	7										
New jobs created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	68	51				
	Target 2016	50										
	Baseline	2										
Number of projects concerning exchange and transfer of know-how	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	18	3				
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	8										
Number of cross-border business events, seminars, workshops carried out	Achievement	0	0	0	0	11	43	43				
	Target 2016	15										
	Baseline	83										
Awareness campaigns carried out	Achievement	0	0	0	0	20	66	20.5				
	Target 2016	30										
	Baseline	46										



Measure 2.3. People to people actions

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Number of people to people collaboration projects	Achievement	0	0	0	0	148	150	490				
	Target 2016	50										
	Baseline*	32										
Number of institutions/bodies involved	Achievement	0	0	0	0	59	120	132				
	Target 2016	100										
	Baseline	93										
Number of people involved	Achievement	0	0	0	0	777	5596	6263				
	Target 2016	300										
	Baseline	1624										

* above tables represent data on the grounds of contracted projects level and successfully finalized activities.

■ Qualitative analysis

The measures under Priority Axes 2 support the cooperation activities encouraging the networking on institutional, business and educational levels, joint actions for efficient utilization of regional resources and people to people actions. The priority was attracted by 247 applicants, from which 102 projects are financed on the total amount 12 708 683 euro. The actually contracting amount exceeds the programme amount for the priority axis, due to procedure for overcontracting started in 2013.

The output indicators shows a good degree of achievements, however both for the outputs and programme results indicators there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of the target values presented in the Programme, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence of the indicators and on the other hand, as a result of gaps in the programming process that resulted in lower target values and absence of clear baseline values. Detail information on the results achieved under priority will be given by the ex-post evaluation of the programme.

Majority of projects implemented under Priority Axes 2 are with balanced and adequate partnerships and demonstrated clear link between activities and results. Irrespective of their delayed start, which led to multiple project changes (project staff, budget or duration), majority of the projects under the First call for proposals were successfully implemented and the planned outputs were delivered. Envisaged activities were realized with the involvement of the target groups.

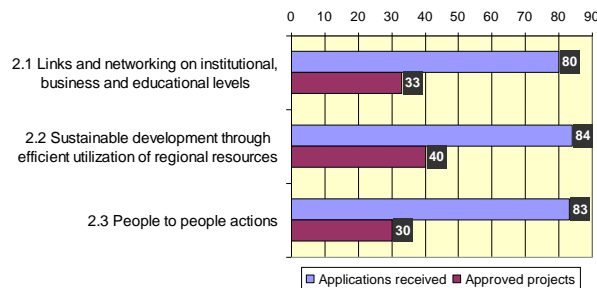
In regards to the type of beneficiaries with approved projects under this priority, 43% are public bodies and 57% non-profit organizations.

All details related to the successfully achieved projects could be found on the programme web-site (<http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/>).

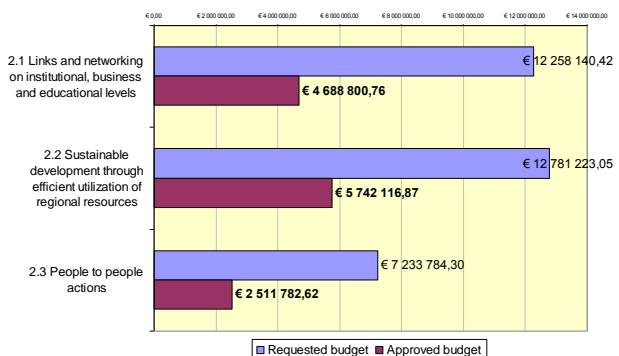
The graphics bellows illustrate the quantitative data related to Priority Axes 2:



Priority 2: Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development



Priority 2: Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development



3.2.2. Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

No significant problems could be encountered in implementing the priority.

IV. MAJOR PROJECTS

Not applicable – no major projects were financed under the Programme during the reported period.

V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (PRIORITY AXIS 3)

The aim of the Technical Assistance (TA) is to ensure an effective and efficient programme management and information flow, thus improving the quality of cross-border cooperation and management tools. The priority axis “Technical Assistance” finances the preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities of the programme as well as activities to reinforce the administrative capacity for implementing the programme, promotion of the Programme, awareness raising, pro-active project generation, etc.

➤ Measure 3.1 Overall administration and evaluation of the Programme

The objective of this sphere of intervention ensures:

- ✓ Support to the MA and JTS for tasks related to preparation of the necessary documents, appraisal and selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation of activities, control and audit of the Programme including daily allowances, travel accommodation costs covering the expenses for the participants from both countries (representatives of the MA, JTS, CA, AA, JMC, persons who are not directly involved, for example interpreters, drivers etc.) in events concerning the programme.
- ✓ Determine administrative costs concerning the JTS (Main and Branch offices) including rent of premises, repair works furniture and equipment, expenditures for electricity, heating, phones, water, consumables etc. and also staff remuneration costs for the JTS (Main and Branch offices).
- ✓ Support to Joint Monitoring Committee and any other structures involved in supervision of the



Programme;

- ✓ *Support to the Programme evaluation;*
- ✓ *External expertise for development of programme implementation and monitoring procedures,*
- ✓ *Information system for programme administration as well as assessment and first level control of projects;*
- ✓ *Organisation of capacity building exercises for Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat (Main and Branch offices) for development of know-how and skills in programme administration.*

➤ **Measure 3.2 Publicity and communication**

The objective of this sphere of intervention ensures:

- ✓ *Preparation, translation and dissemination of the Programme related information and publicity materials including but not limited to the programme website, official Programme documents, procedure manuals, bulletins, brochures, posters, etc.; as well as expenses for consumables as paper, files, folders, cases, diskettes, compact disks, etc.*
- ✓ *Organisation of public events as conferences, seminars, workshops, round table discussions, trainings for beneficiaries, networking and awareness-raising events, partner search forums etc. including rent of halls and equipment (audio-, video-, translation- equipment), expenses for interpreters, lecturers, trainers (should not be persons involved in the programme); expenses for coffee breaks, refreshments, business dinners and lunches for all participants in the events;*
- ✓ *Purchase of advertising materials, such as CDs, USBs, hats, bags, note books, folders etc. as well as expenses for publications on media: radio, TV and press.*

For the period 2007-2013 amounts of 2 897 566 euro Community funding is available for this Priority axis “Technical Assistance”.

In order to implement the activities under Priority axis 3 – Technical assistance, an Annual technical assistance plan is prepared by the MA, together with the other structures involved in the Programme implementation. The Annual Technical Assistance Plan is designed to provide detailed information about the Programme related activities envisaged to be carried out by the Managing Authority (MA), the National Authority (NA) and the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) under Priority axis 3 - Technical assistance of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme and is subject of approval by the JMC.

Total budget forecast for 2013 is amounted to 931 057 euro, from which 689 905 euro allocated for MA and 241 152 euro for NA. The detailed indicative breakdown of budget for 2013 was approved by JMC on 28.1.2013.

The 2013 TA budget encompasses administrative expenditures, travel and accommodation expenditures, meetings, trainings, promotional events, information and publicity, external expertise, supply, maintenance of equipment and other expenditures.

The main activities carried out under priority axis “Technical assistance” within 2013 are as follows:



✓ *Trainings for the Programme staff:*

During 2013, MA, NA and JTS staff attended to various thematic seminars and training events organized by INTERACT in order to acquire practical knowledge and information, to share their experience with colleagues from other European territorial cooperation programmes in the field of management techniques, financial issues, European regulations, communication, strategic orientation, policy development, etc.

✓ *Organisation of events:*

- ▶ Contract awarding and training for the first group of beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals was organized on the 23rd of January 2013. The ceremony and training took place at the “Grand Hotel Sofia” in Sofia, Bulgaria. Total of 96 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Training for the first group of Serbian beneficiaries under the Second Call took place on the 8th of February 2013 at hotel “Aleksandar” in Nis, Serbia. Total of 74 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Training for the first group of Serbian beneficiaries under the Second Call concerning the PRAG procedures took place on the 25th of February 2013 at restaurant “Gazela” in Pirot, Serbia. Total of 57 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Contract awarding and training for the second group of beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals was organized on the 25th of April 2013. The ceremony and training took place at the “Tami Residence Hotel” in Nis, Serbia. Total of 182 participants took part in the event;
- ▶ Training for the second group of Bulgarian beneficiaries under the Second Call took place on the 8th of May 2013 at “Sofia Princess Hotel” in Sofia, Bulgaria. Total of 118 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Training for the second group of Serbian beneficiaries under the Second Call concerning the PRAG procedures took place on the 10th of May 2013 at Hotel “Srbija - TIS” in Zajecar, Serbia. Total of 66 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Training for the Serbian beneficiaries under the Second Call concerning the PRAG “Works” procedures took place on the 15th of July 2013 at the “Regional Center for professional development” in Nis, Serbia. Total of 22 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ “European Cooperation Day 2013” celebration took place on the 21st of September 2013 at the premises of the “Baba Vida” castle in Vidin, Bulgaria. Approximately 300 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Joint Monitoring Committee meeting took place on the 26th of September 2013 at the “Connection” training center in Vladicin Han, Serbia. Total of 45 participants took part in the meeting.
- ▶ Contract awarding and training for the third group of beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals was organized on the 4th of November 2013. The ceremony and training took place at the Ministry of Regional Development of Bulgaria in Sofia, Bulgaria. Total of 35 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ Training for the third group of Serbian beneficiaries under the Second Call took place on the 12th of November 2013 at hotel “Aleksandar” in Nis, Serbia. Total of 53 participants took part in the event.
- ▶ On the 31th of May 2013 in Sofia, Bulgaria at the premises of the Ministry of Regional Development of Bulgaria training session for First Level Controllers took place.



✓ *Regarding expenditures for external expertise*

In 2013 the technical assistance budget was mainly used for remuneration of First Level Controllers appointed to perform checks of expenditures made by the beneficiaries from Bulgaria.

On 29th of November 2012 a service contract was signed with external consultant for conducting of On-going evaluation of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC programme (2007-2013). The contract has been implemented by Ernst & Young SRL till July 2013, when the final report with its exclusive summary was submitted to MA. The contract has been finalised in 2013.

✓ *Programming for the period 2014-2020*

Regarding the new programming period 2014-2020 the MA opened a call (restricted service tender procedure) for awarding a contract for preparation of IPA Cross-border cooperation Programmes 2014-2020 for which the Bulgarian side will act as a Managing Authority.

The tender procedure was announced in 2012 and after successful assessment the contract for preparation of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border cooperation Programmes 2014-2020 was award to Consortium between Project Planning and Management Ltd (BG) and ÖeAR Regionalberatung GmbH (AT), Consulting & Management Ltd. (SK), Austrian Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Planning (ÖIR) (AT), and Pliska Consulting Ltd. (BG). The contract is issued on 09.12.2013 with period of implementation – 7 months.

The main objectives of the consultancy activities encompass elaboration of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014 – 2020 in compliance with requirements for cooperation Programmes as set out in the relevant EU regulations and taking into account the specificities of the Programme area and respecting the principle of multi-level governance. The consultancy tasks cover elaboration of situation analysis of the eligible Programme area; drawing up the SWOT analysis of the eligible Programme area; laying down the strategy of the future cross-border Programme; elaboration of indicator table of the Programme, financial plan; examining and referencing the potential links of the Programme with other development Programmes and policies of the 2014-2020 financial perspective; description of appropriate application of horizontal principles; participation within Joint Working Group meetings; organization of regional consultations to Programme stakeholders; ensure compliance with recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation and the strategic environmental assessment.

VI. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

The focus of the information and publicity strategy is centred on increasing the awareness and promoting the positive work of the Bulgaria – the Serbia IPA Cross Border Cooperation Programme. For the purposes of implementation of the information and publicity strategy, a detailed Communication Plan is elaborated and approved simultaneously with programme approval. The aim of the Communication Plan is to ensure broad dissemination of the information about the Programme, to guarantee the transparency of the Programme's implementation and to increase the awareness of the local stakeholders about the Programme's possibilities. The implementation of the Communication plan is responsibility of the Managing Authority, National Authority and JTS.





During 2013 various tools for information and publicity were used to reach the wide audience:

- ✓ *Programme website*
- ✓ *Promotional materials*
- ✓ *Information seminars*
- ✓ *Mass media campaign*
- ✓ *Active training*

Programme Website

During 2013 the official website of the Programme www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu was one of the main publicity tools used to promote the Programme and disseminate the relevant information. The whole range of information concerning the Programme (e.g. general information, priority axes, documents, questions and answers etc.) was presented in a user-friendly version of the sitemap structure, which allows the users to find the necessary information more easily. One of the most important improvements on the website, which is integrated with the MIS system is the Project Database established for funded projects (displaying an interactive region map of the Programme) and which ensure the transparency and it is a prerequisite for raising awareness of positive contributions by the European Union. A special access tools for the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) members from the website for sharing documents and information is also established, as well as a new calendar on the main page sorting the events on monthly basis and a special banner “Alerts on Irregularities”.

The website has been regularly updated with relevant information on the Programme. The Joint Technical Secretariat is responsible for the maintaining and updating of the Programmes web site with the relevant information about the Programme. The “News” section was particularly useful to both general public and the potential beneficiaries since it was continuously updated with information on all relevant events, trainings, info-days, and news in general.

In order to ensure broad publicity, information on the Programme has been also disseminated through regional and national websites as well as on the websites at the European level:

- www.mrrb.government.bg - Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development
- www.eufunds.bg – EU Structural Funds website
- www.seio.gov.rs – Serbian European Integration Office (National Authority).

The above described efforts for regular update of the Programme website led to maintaining of high level of the number of website visits – 29 912 visits, or 37% decrease compared to the previous year. This fact can be explained due to the reason that there were no new Calls for proposals announced during 2013.

The figures below present share of the Programme’s web site visitors.

Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme website statistics is as follows:

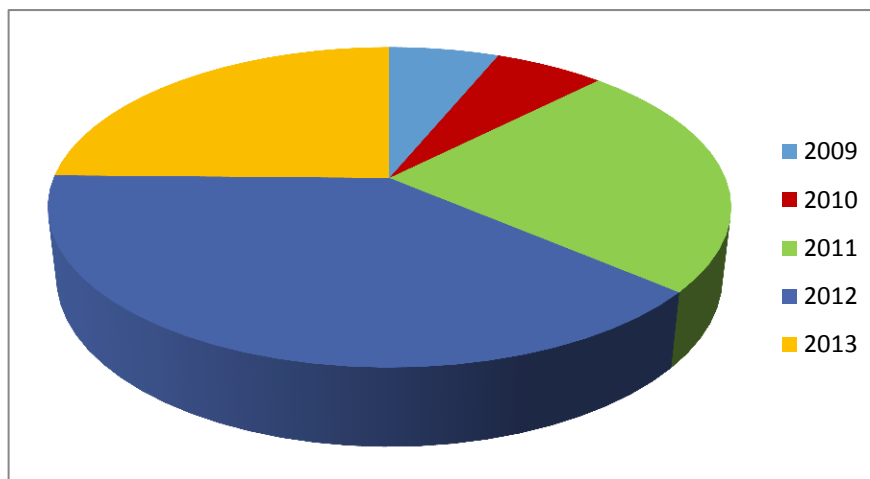




Table with overall number of visits, per year.

Year	Visitors	Unique	Impressions
2009	8 034	6 386	50 186
2010	7 105	6 404	28 628
2011	30 270	24 616	130 170
2012	47 527	40 214	166 896
2013	30	25	93

Chart with unique visits, per year:



Promotional materials

In 2013 no tender procedure for elaboration and preparation of promotional materials was launched. All visibility materials distributed included previously elaborated materials. The materials have been used for promotion the Programme on various occasions (trainings for beneficiaries, Joint Monitoring Committee meetings, European Cooperation Day 2013, etc.). All the materials follow the visual guidelines set in the Communication Plan as well as the “Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions” of EC. During the year almost all promotional materials have been distributed.

Information seminars

Due to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2013 there were no “Information days” campaigns either. However, the Programme and the projects were actively promoted during the celebration of the “European Cooperation day 2013. The celebration of the European Cooperation Day took place on the 21st of September 2013 at Baba Vida castle in Vidin, Bulgaria. The celebration in the form of a medieval festival brought together performers from both Bulgaria and Serbia, including two associations for preservation of medieval arts and crafts, and Balkan medieval music group. The enthusiastic performers displayed great talent illustrating the rich and colourful past of the two countries through an open air



exhibition of traditional arts and crafts, calligraphy, blacksmith, leatherworking and tailoring workshops, medieval games, a fighting tournament and even a live music concert of authentic medieval music from the Balkans. More than 300 people took part in the celebration, including numerous representatives of the regional and national media.

Mass media campaign

In addition to the promotion through the Programme website and the websites of the official institutions directly related to the Programme, both the Programme and the projects funded received a good deal of media attention through specific Programme press-releases (in all the three languages), online publications (other than on the Programme website), radio advertisements, video and television clips, publicities in local and national newspapers.

Active training

Nine trainings for beneficiaries under Second Call for proposals and one series of individual consultation have been organized during 2013. **Trainings of beneficiaries** were organised by the JTS. Three active trainings were organized in Bulgaria and six in Serbia. All beneficiaries were trained on all the aspects of project implementation, when the main topics were:

- Financial and technical implementation of the financed projects;
- Contract modifications;
- Sub-contracting procedures;
- Financial implementation and irregularities;
- Visibility rules.

The **series of individual consultation** were held in Bulgaria in July, 2013. Beneficiaries under 19 projects participated in the consultations. A variety of topics have been covered at the meetings ranging from the more general ones such as the content and preparation of a project progress report to the more particular questions such as budget reallocations and procurement of very specific items and services.

During 2013 variety of activities included in the Communication plan have been organized and performed accordingly: various types of promotional materials have been disseminated to the target audience, the Programme Web site has been redesigned and maintained, and trainings for beneficiaries have been successfully organized. The mass media campaign and the participation of different events greatly contributed to the successful promotion of Programme and the Call for proposals. The Programme' visual identity and graphics standards have been maintained and widely disseminated to all the Programme's stakeholders. Detailed information is presented in Annex III to this report.

Detailed information of the information and publicity activities is attached to this report.



2013 Annual Implementation Report

Indicators for communication and publicity measures

	Activity	Indicator	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Programme website	Website functionality	Number of web-site visits	0	0	8 034	7 105	30 270	47 527	29 912				
		Target 2016	2000 per year										
		Baseline	0										
		Increase in the number of web site visits (on a yearly basis)			n/a	-12%	+326%	+57%	-37%				
		Target 2016	2% per year										
		Baseline	0										
	Partners' search facility	Number of new potential PPs in the database	0	0	92	2	193	193	4				
		Target 2016	20 per call										
		Baseline	0										
Promotional materials	Leaflets	1) Number of leaflets produced	0	0	1 000	0	3000	6000	0				
		Target 2016	500 per call										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of leaflets distributed			100		95	5600	400				
		Target 2016	80% of leaflets produced										
		Baseline	0										
	Brochures	1) Number of brochures produced	0	0	750	0	1000	1300	0				
		Target 2016	500 per year										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of brochures distributed			100		95	1250	50				
		Target 2016	80% of brochures produced										
		Baseline	0										
	Other promotional materials (gadgets)	1) Number of materials prepared for promotion of the Programme	0	0	3 002	0	5890	3950	0				
		Target 2016	200 per call										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of materials distributed					4123	3000	950				
		Target 2016	80% of the materials produced										
		Baseline	0										
Information seminars	Info-days	Number of organizations/bodies attending	0	0	300	0	120	0	0				
		Target 2016	40 per event										
		Baseline	0										
	Thematic seminars/ workshops	Number of organizations/bodies attending	0	0	650	80	97	60	78				
		Target 2016	20 per event										
		Baseline	0										
1 a		Number of newspapers publishing	0	0	4	0	4	8	17				





2013 Annual Implementation Report

	Print media campaign	issue(s) concerning the Programme											
		Target 2016	4 per year										
		Baseline	0										
	Press conferences	Number of press conferences held				n/a*	2	3	2				
		Target 2016	2 for the duration of the Programme										
		Baseline	0										
	Press releases	Number of press releases published				n/a*	6	3	5				
		Target 2016	1 per call										
		Baseline	0										
	Press Advertisements	Number of press advertisements published	0	0	5	0	2	0	0				
		Target 2016	2 per call										
		Baseline	0										
	Internet media advertisement	Number of advertisements/eBanners				n/a*	2	2	2				
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	0										
	eNewsletter	Number of eNewsletters				n/a*	1	17	113				
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	0										
	Participation in regional initiatives and forums	Number of events				n/a*	1	1	2				
		Target 2016	1										
		Baseline	0										
	TV and Radio campaign	1) Number of TV advertisements aired					0	0	0				
		Target 2016	1 for the duration of the Programme										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of radio advertisements aired					2	1	1				
		Target 2016	1 per country for each Call										
		Baseline	0										
Active training	Increasing the competence of the potential beneficiaries	Percentage of submitted projects that pass the minimum threshold of 65 points					74	61	0				
		Target 2016	50%										
		Baseline	0										
	Strengthening the capacity of the MA/NA/JTS through attending trainings/seminars	Number of participants					48	83	19				
		Target 2016	min 50% of the total staff										
		Baseline	0										





2013 Annual Implementation Report

	Increasing the availability and quality of the information disseminated to the public	1) Increase in the number of project proposals submitted for the last Call for Proposals in comparison to the number of projects submitted for the preceding Call for Proposals				n/a*	132	132	0				
		Target 2016	2%										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Percentage of submitted projects whose final assessment score that pass the minimum threshold of 65 points				n/a*	74	61	0				
		Target 2016	min 50% out of the total number of projects submitted for the relevant Call										
		Baseline	0										
	Beneficiaries' trainings	1) Number of participants					630	243	703				
		Target 2016	min 20										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					5	4	9				
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										
	Controllers performing FLC trainings	1) Number of participants					75	94	27				
		Target 2016	min 30										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					3	2	1				
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										
	External assessors trainings	1) Number of participants					14	20	0				
		Target 2016	min 10										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					1	1	0				
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										





2013 Annual Implementation Report

Attachments:

ANNEX I to the Annual Report 2013

The annex encompasses a comprehensive list on communication and information activities during 2013.

Promotional materials

Programme web site

Programme trainings

Technical meetings and JMC meeting

ANNEX II to the Annual Report 2013

Best practices from the first call for proposals under the programme.

ANNEX III to the Annual Report 2013

An exclusive summary of the evaluation report for the on-going evaluation of the programme.





Comprehensive list of Communication and information activities

Activity 1: Web site

The official Programme web site was effectively released on the 21st of August 2009. The address of the web site is: www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu

The web site includes comprehensive information on the Programme and its Priority axes, accompanied by all documents concerning Programme implementation. The web site has been regularly updated with relevant information on the Programme (events, news, documentation etc.). The web site also includes a tool for partners search with project partner database, thereby facilitating the integration among actors and promoting joint activities and ideas.

During 2013 the web site was one of the main publicity tools used to promote the Programme and disseminate the relevant information. The “News” section is particularly useful to both general public and the potential beneficiaries since it is continuously updated with information on all the relevant events, trainings, info-days, and news in general. The news section in particular was **updated 91 times during 2013**, with 29 press releases in Bulgarian, 29 press releases in Serbian and 33 press releases in English language. Press releases with the same contents translated in the three languages are always published simultaneously in order to secure the equal treatment of all three language groups visiting the Programme web site.

In order to ensure broad publicity, information on the Programme has been also disseminated through regional and national websites as well as on the web sites at the European level:

- www.mrrb.government.bg – Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development web site,
- www.eufunds.bg – EU Structural Funds web site,
- www.seio.gov.rs – Serbian European Integration Office (National Authority) web site,
- www.ecday.eu – European Cooperation Day 2013 web site.

As it is visible from the statistical data provided below, the web site activity in 2013 has dropped to the level from 2011, equalling approximately 30 000 visits per year. The significant decrease in the number of visits compared to the year 2012 is most likely linked to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2013, and consequently no Information days open to the public and no media campaign promoting the Call as well as the Programme. The Second Call for proposals was open until the late February 2012 and all the relevant information concerning the evaluation during that year was regularly published on the web site in all the three languages, ultimately resulting in higher number of visits. Understandably, in 2013 the web site attracted most visits at times when the major Programme events were taking place, such as the contract awarding ceremony in January (2929 visits) and contract awarding ceremony in April (3019 visits). The data suggests that in the periods when there are no new Calls for proposals, the public events such as contract awarding and the EC day celebrations can help improve the Programme visibility in general.



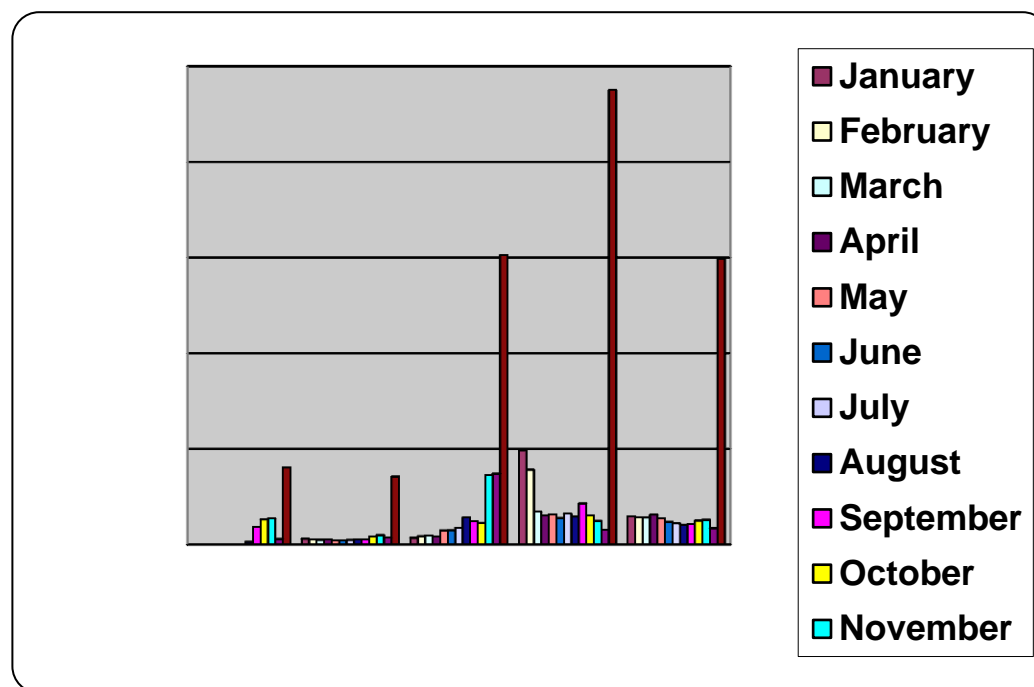


2013 Annual Implementation Report

Overall, the number of visits in 2013 is very good, especially having in mind that the indicator for number of visits in “Annex A” sets the minimum number of visits to 2 000 per year and that the number of visits did not significantly drop compared to the period when the Second Call for proposals was launched in 2011. However, the indicator related to the overall increase in the number of visits to the web site should be revised in the light of the most recent findings. Instead of being measured per year as it is the case at the moment, the indicator could be related to the Calls for proposals, or it could be scraped altogether since the lack of increase in the number of visits does not necessarily mean that the publicity campaign is ineffective, especially if the overall number of visits to the web site is continuously on a very high level.

Number of visits to the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme website

Month/Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	0	588	683	9835	2929
February	0	547	867	7818	2831
March	0	483	942	3429	2807
April	0	555	844	3015	3109
May	0	442	1470	3150	2715
June	0	452	1486	2783	2379
July	0	480	1741	3226	2209
August	278	534	2819	2911	2071
September	1839	521	2460	4292	2134
October	2613	810	2269	3036	2491
November	2729	980	7281	2476	2538
December	575	713	7408	1556	1690
TOTAL	8034	7105	30270	47527	29903



Detailed statistics concerning the number visits to the Programme web site can be found here: <http://www.tyxo.bg/d/82609/monthly>

In order to secure the traditionally high level of transparency concerning the Programme policies and work in general, **two new sections have been added** to the Programme web site main menu in 2013: “**Successful projects**” and “**2014-2020**”.





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The **“Successful projects”** section features a comprehensive list of all the projects that have been successfully completed under the Programme. In order to make the section easy to use, the project list is organized by project number in an ascending order, with project name and the Lead Partner name also visible.

Each project listed in the section is linked to a brief summary report which contains the most important information about the project completed such as the project title, partners, budget and duration. In addition, each projects summary lists the major results achieved under the projects, links to the project web site (if applicable) and the best photos and pictures which illustrate the project results. The information is mostly extracted from the Final Project Summary (Annex 3.1 of the Project Implementation Manual) as provided by the beneficiaries but it is refined and summarized even further in order to be more accessible and understandable to the general public and the media.

The **“2014-2020”** section is entirely dedicated to the preparation of the new programming period, 2014-2020. Starting from the 2nd of December 2013 the section has been constantly updated with the relevant news concerning the new programing period such as the first meeting of the Joint Working Group in Sofia and the announcement for wide public consultations related to the specific cross-border needs and perspectives as seen by the local stakeholders. Due to the high importance of the news in the section the most important articles are also featured on the “Home” page of the web site.

Project ID	Project title	Leading partner
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-003	CENTRE FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON CROSS-BORDER ECONOMIC COOPERATION	Centre for development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts, Serbia
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-005	LEGENDS AS A TOURISM ENFORCING INSTRUMENT IN THE REGION KULA-ZAJECAR-VIDIN	Municipality of Kula, Bulgaria
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-007	RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LOCAL ROAD IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	Municipality of Surdulica, Serbia
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-008	CROSS-BORDER AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES ON MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR ENTERPRISES – GOOD PRACTICES FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	Association “Horizonti”, Bulgaria
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-009	EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS	Agency for Economic Development Kostinbrod, Bulgaria

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
February 2014

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

Questionnaire concerning the new programming period 2014-2020

03.02.14 | HOME

In November 2013 the process of preparing the **Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020** has been launched with a first meeting of the Joint Working Group. It will be prepared as a result of building on many inputs, from the situation analysis of a broad array of fields (economy, infrastructure, transport, environment, demography, labour market, education, cultural relations etc.) through the comments and suggestions to be received from the Task Force, the Joint Working Group and the stakeholders from the eligible programme area, to the lessons learned from previous co-operation programmes. In line with the EU Cohesion Policy, a **greater thematic concentration** within the programme will be required.

An important step in this programming process is to seek the views of stakeholders on the shape and content of the future programme. The wide **public consultations** shall contribute to the programming with experience and know-how. Furthermore, it shall help to identify specific demands and expectations towards the new programme among potential target groups.

PARTNER SEARCH DATABASE

Country: -- Choose --
Region: -- Choose --
Project priority: -- Choose --

Find Add partner

The **“Successful projects”** section (on the left) and an announcement on the **“2014-2020”** section (on the right)





2013 Annual Implementation Report

Three of the sections that have been added to the Programme web site in 2012, “**Projects funded**”, “**Joint Monitoring Committee**” and the “**E-newsletter**” have proven particularly useful in 2013.

The “**Projects funded**” section has been updated three times in 2013; after each of the contract awarding ceremonies. Due to the large number of projects funded under the Programme a regular table listing all the contracts would not be easy to use by the general public. Instead, the interactive map available in the section allows the user to filter the projects in a number of ways such as by Call for proposals (First or Second) or by simply clicking on a specific region on the map. This function has proved useful for the Programme staff as well because it allows for a quick and easy preparation of reports and press-releases containing information about specific types of projects funded.

The “**Joint Monitoring Committee**” section on the Programme web site is a very useful tool which allows all the JMC members a quick and easy access to all the written procedure documents. The access to the section is restricted and each JMC member has to login using his/her own unique user name and password in order to see the available documents. The section is particularly useful for approval of documents which take up a lot of memory space and cannot be sent out to the JMC members via e-mail. In 2013 as many as **13 separate JMC written procedures** have been conducted using primarily the new section on the Programme web site. The section proved to be very useful not only because it saves time and removes the necessity of sending cumbersome e-mails but also because it allows the JMC members to have a good overall perspective over each previously conducted procedure since all the documents are stored and ordered according to their respective number and the date of launching.

The **eNewsletter** section allows to visitor to register for regular e-mail updates whenever there is new content on the web site. In order to register for the eNewsletter, the visitor needs only to submit and confirm his/her e-mail address. In 2013 as many as **113 people have sent a subscription request** for the newsletter out of which 61 have confirmed their subscription, adding to the 11 previously confirmed subscribers. Thus, the “Newsletter” section has proved to be a useful tool for securing regular visitors to the Programme web site.

Project ID	Acronym	Project title	Leading partner
2007CB16IPO005-2011-2-071	ELFS (e-LEARNING FOR SPORT)	Establishment of E-learning centres on the basis of IT infrastructure for joint program implementation at Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Nis and National Sports Academy in Sofia	Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Nis
2007CB16IPO005-2011-2-250	JIS "One Health"	Joint information system for process optimization "One Health" in the CBC area	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency-Pernik Regional Food Safety Directorate
2007CB16IPO005-2011-2-197	"Bridge over the mountain"	"Bridge over the mountain" - development of community cultural centres in the cross border	Municipality of Chuprene
2007CB16IPO005-2011-2-202	SICBR Montana Pirost	"Modernization and renewal of the sport infrastructure in the cross border region of Montana and Pirost"	Sport Center Pirost
2007CB16IPO005-2011-2-257	Success	Social Infrastructure for child-care through sport education	City Municipality of Pantelej

JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE

Period: 11-2013

Joint Monitoring Committee Written procedure No. 37 for 18-11-2013 (2.96 MB)

Category: Joint Monitoring Committee
Uploaded on 18 November 2013 11:02 •
Uploaded by Nebojsa Nikolic •
Downloaded 3 times •

Joint Monitoring Committee Written procedure No. 36 for 14-11-2013 (3.84 MB)

Category: Joint Monitoring Committee
Uploaded on 14 November 2013 14:50 •
Uploaded by Nebojsa Nikolic •
Downloaded 10 times •

JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

To subscribe for the latest news from the programme, please enter your e-mail.

Subscribe

The “Projects funded” section (left), the “Joint Monitoring Committee” section (center) and the “Newsletter” section (right)





Activity 2: Promotional materials

There has been no procurement procedure for supply of promotional materials during 2013. Instead, the Joint Technical Secretariat has been using and distributing the materials left from the previous year such as: leaflets in Bulgarian and Serbian language, brochures in English language, folders, binders, conference bags, paper bags and business cards. Some of the previously procured visibility props such as the “quick” Programme banner, table “skirt” banner, and table flags are still in good condition and are being used for visibility purposes in all Programme events. Still, since most of the promotional materials have been depleted during 2013 it is necessary for a new public procurement procedure to be completed as soon as possible in order to secure proper visibility of the Programme in 2014.

The few available promotional materials have been most useful during the three contract awarding ceremonies. All the awarded contracts have been arranged in the Programme binders and the representatives of the Lead Partner received, along with their contracts, a symbolic gift containing the Programme promotional materials. Press-kits distributed to the journalists during the Programme events also contained several of the leftover promotional materials such as the cardboard folders, leaflets, and plastic pens.



Proper Programme visibility was ensured at all Programme events by using the available promotional materials, especially banners and table flags



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Almost all of the leftover leaflets and brochures have been distributed to the public during the celebration of the “European Cooperation day 2013” at the “Baba Vida” castle in Vidin, Bulgaria. A special information point was set at the premises of the castle in a form of a medieval pavilion since the theme of the event was a “medieval festival”. At the information point the JTS experts also distributed a variety of project promotional materials, mostly brochures and leaflets, provided in advance by the beneficiaries and the EC day specific promotional materials provided by the INTERACT programme such as brochures, posters, t-shirts, magnets and bookmarks. A special “quick” banner and a “vinyl” banner have been acquired during preparation of the EC day 2013 celebration and will be used for the future celebrations as well.



Distribution of promotional materials during the celebration of “European Cooperation day 2013” (left and center) and the new “EC day” banner (right)

Activity 3: Information seminars

Due to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2013 there were no “Information days” campaigns either. However, the Programme and the projects were actively promoted during the celebration of the “European Cooperation day 2013”. The second annual celebration of the European Cooperation Day took place on the 21st of September 2013 at Baba Vida castle in Vidin, Bulgaria. The celebration in the form of a medieval festival brought together performers from both Bulgaria and Serbia, including two associations for preservation of medieval arts and crafts - “Modus Vivendi” from Bulgaria and “Beli Orlovi” from Serbia, and the Balkan medieval music group “Eriney” from Bulgaria. The enthusiastic



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performers displayed great talent illustrating the rich and colourful past of the two countries through an open air exhibition of traditional arts and crafts, calligraphy, blacksmith, leatherworking and tailoring workshops, medieval games, a fighting tournament and even a live music concert of authentic medieval music from the Balkans.

The festival was open by the Minister of Regional Development of Republic of Bulgaria, Desislava Terzieva, who highlighted the importance of such events for popularization of tourist sites in the region and highlighted the fact that the two countries share common history and a joint future as well. Among other official guests were: the President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, Mihail Mikov; Regional governor of Vidin Region, Krastyo Spasov; Mayor of Vidin, Gergo Gergov; and the Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in the Republic of Bulgaria, His Excellency Vladimir Curgus. The host of the festival was the Vidin Museum of History, represented by its director Fionera Filipova. More than 300 people took part in the celebration, including numerous representatives of the regional and national media.



Activity 4: Publicity campaign

During 2013 the Joint Technical Secretariat has been primarily involved with supporting the remaining beneficiaries under the First Call for proposals and actively training and supporting the beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals. Programme in general and the individual projects have been promoted at the public events such as the contract awarding ceremonies and the “European Cooperation day” celebration but also through a variety of media. The communication officer actively assisted the beneficiaries on strategies and rules concerning promotion of the individual projects. Special attention was given to preparation and carrying out the contract awarding ceremonies which attracted significant public and media attention. As previously mentioned, great deal of care was put into using the available promotional materials and props such as banners and flags in order to secure proper Programme visibility.

The official ceremony for awarding of the **first group** of subsidy contracts under the Second Call for project proposals was held on the **23rd of January 2013** at „Grand Hotel Sofia“, Sofia, Bulgaria. The contracts were awarded by the Deputy Minister of the regional development and public works Mr. Nikolay Nankov, as Head of Managing Authority of the Programme, and the Assistant Director of the Serbian European Integration Office Ms. Sanda Simic, as a representative of the National Authority. Following the ceremony Mr. Nankov was interviewed by the media (the first photo on the left).

The official ceremony for awarding of the **second group** of subsidy contracts under the Second Call for project proposals was held on the **25th of April 2013** at „Tami Residence“ hotel in Nis, Serbia. The contracts were awarded by Maria Duzova, Head of the Managing Authority, Director General of the Directorate General “Territorial Cooperation Management” at MRD and Ognjen Miric, Head of the National Authority - Deputy Director and Coordinator of EU Funds, Serbian European Integration Office, Government of the Republic of Serbia. A press conference was held right after the official ceremony during which both Maria Duzova and Ognjen Miric answered the question from the media. Consecutive translation from Serbian to Bulgarian language was provided in order to ensure clear and easy communication with the journalists (the second and third photo).



From left to right: Sofia, 23.02.2013, press conference in Nis, 25.04.2013 (the second and third photo) and the press conference in Sofia, 04.11.2013.



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The official ceremony for awarding of the **third group** of subsidy contracts under the Second Call for project proposals was held on **4th of November 2013** at Ministry for Regional Development of Bulgaria in Sofia, Bulgaria. The contracts were awarded by the Minister of Regional Development of Bulgaria, Desislava Terzieva, and the Minister of Regional Development and Local Self-government of Serbia, Igor Mirovic. The two ministers gave a press conference right after the official ceremony, again with the support of professional translators (the fourth photo on the page above, from left to right). Due to the fact that two ministers awarded the contracts personally, the ceremony attracted significant media attention and the ceremony was, like the previous two, reflected in the news reports on both the local and national level.

Media

• Internet

In addition to the promotion through the Programme website and the websites of the official institutions directly related to the Programme, both the Programme and the projects funded received a good deal of online media attention. In order to reach even broader audience, JTS Communication officer regularly prepares and sends out specific Programme press-releases in all the three languages to the representatives of local and regional media as well as to the “EU Funds” web site (administered by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers) Furthermore, the JTS encourages the Programme beneficiaries to promote the Programme and the respective projects by using the web sites and social media pages of the project partners. Some of the beneficiaries have created project specific web sites which are of great use to the general population for learning more about the Programme and project results. During 2013, **more than 80 separate online publications** other than on the Programme website have featured information about the Programme in general and the projects implementing the two Calls for proposals, including the web sites of the very popular national media from the two countries such as “Radio Television of Serbia”, “Dnevnik.bg”, “Bulgarian National Television - BNT”, “Focus” radio and “Darik” radio. HTML, PDF and screenshot records of these web sites and the articles published are available in annex to this report.

Vesti.bg Sportni.bg Sinoptik.bg Pariteni.bg Edna.bg Потребител

VESTI.bg

О във Вести в Мрежата

НАЧАЛО | БЪЛГАРИЯ | СВЯТ | ПАРИ | ИНЦИДЕНТИ | НАУКА И ИТ | РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯ | ЕКО | ФОТО | ВИДЕО | СПОРТ | ПОСЛЕДНО

23.01.2013 16:21 0 193

ЕК възстанови средствата по програмата за сътрудничество България-Сърбия

Европейската комисия възстанови всички заявени към този момент средства по Първата покана по Програмата за трансгранично сътрудничество България-Сърбия.

Това съобща зам.-министърът на регионалното развитие и благоустройството и ръководител на Управляващия орган на програмата Николай Нанков, съобщиха от МРРБ. На официална церемония днес той връчи 26 договора за изпълнение на проекти по Втората покана за набиране на проектни предложения по програмата. Общата им стойност е близо 7,3 млн. евро. Получените проектни предложения по втората покана са 257. Одобрените проекти са 70 на обща стойност почти 20,4 млн. евро, съобща зам.-министър Нанков. Кандидатите са били 2,5 пъти повече тези за предишната покана, подчерта той. Пет от сключените договори са за изпълнение на инвестиционни проекти на обща стойност 4,4 млн. евро. 21 предвидат реализация на проекти от типа "меки мерки" на стойност близо 2,9 млн. евро. /БГНЕС /

ДНЕВНИК

НОВИНИ БИЗНЕС ЕВРОПА АНАЛИЗИ СПОРТ БЕЛЕН LIVE СЛЕДЪ

КУЛТУРА СВЯТ ИТ РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯ ПОРСКИ ДЕТОЛИ ДОМА НА ПЪТ ПОЛИТИКА СЪБИТИЯ

Топ теми Нападението срещу Доган Сателт "Норели" Спорът "Вулкан" - БТВ и ТВ7 Колежниците

Видео 6"1-3" ОНОВИ 1.575 БИТКО 286.730

Теле на днес Референдумът за АБВ Дебат за приквата децентрация: Да участват ли в играта, която винаги губим?

25 яну 2013, 09:00

"Качи се на колело" и пропътувай 400 км в България и Сърбия

Препоръчана (28) 1 Like 329

Последна прочитана в 09:00 на 25 яну 2013, 2893 прочитания, 19 коментара

Изображение на статията

Изображение на статията

Филтър

- 14:00 Лисов Харис се нахвърля на възбуждане на близкостроителния мирен процес
- 13:00 Британски ще предостави консултантски доклад за Рузвълтския следващата седмица
- 12:00 Експертите оценяват лекаря с подкрепена крана проба за съкърта на лезионата на 14-месечен
- 12:00 Бразилия и ЕС призовава за бързо споразумение за свободна търговия с МЕРКОСУР 1 коментар
- 12:00 Великобритания, Германия и Холандия призовават гражданите си да напуснат Београд 4 коментара

Početna > Projektna aktivnosti > Projektna aktivnosti > Dan evropske saradnje u Srbiji

Početna

Srbija i Evropska unija

Projektna aktivnosti

Najuspešniji projekti

Aktivnosti delegacije

Interaktivna mapa

Kako do fondova

Putujte u EU

Mediji

O nama

Publikacije

Linkovi

Video

Povezani linkovi

Evropska Unija

Dobitnik Nobelove nagrade za mir za 2012. godinu

European Union

Recipient of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize

Dan evropske saradnje u Srbiji

Kancelarija za evropske integracije Vlade Republike Srbije inicirala organizovanje proslave Dana evropske saradnje u 2013, čime će se Srbija pridružiti ovoj velikoj manifestaciji koju je, prošle godine, po prvi put, obeležilo više od 40 država širom Evrope

Facebook 1 Share 1 0 Twitter 5

EUROPEAN COOPERATION DAY

Sharing borders, growing closer





• Radio

During 2013 there have been no new Calls for proposals and, therefore, there have been no radio advertising campaign. However, as a part of the media campaign promoting the celebration of the “European Cooperation Day 2013” in Vidin, JTS organized production and 10 prime-time airings of an advertisement on the “**Radio Vidin**” during the week prior to the event. “Radio Vidin” station is a regional radio station of the “**Bulgarian National Radio**” and has an excellent coverage of the region in which the event was organized. Since the advertisement was aired on a regional radio station, the financial cost for production and airing of the advertisement had been sufficiently low for the very limited budget allocated for organization of the event.

Some of the beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals also used radio as a medium for promotion of their respective projects during 2013:

- **Project 56**, “Promotion of Cultural Tourism in the Cross-Border Region”: a radio announcement concerning the Traditional Folklore Festival was aired on “**Darik Radio**” on the 24.09.2013. Three more radio advertisements were aired with aim to promote the project: on “**Radio Vidin**”, broadcasted on the 24th of June, 22nd and 26th of July and 18th of August; on “**Belle Amie Radio**”, broadcasted on the 24th of August; and on “**F-Radio**” from the 26th of August until the 2nd of September.
- **Project 65**, “Youth Music Master Workshop”: a radio interview concerning a choir event was aired on “**Radio Belgrade 2**” on the 4th of November during a morning show.
- **Project 89**, Innovation and rehabilitation of water supply systems in municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek: two radio reports were aired on the local radio in Donji Milanovac in the “Morning Informative Program”, on the 18th and on the 19th of December. Another radio report was broadcasted on the “**Radio Television of Majdanpek**” on the 18th of December. The project was promoted in total of radio 25 broadcasts.
- **Project 138**, “Youth Career Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship Networking and Transfer”: a radio interview was conducted and aired on the “**Radio Television Bor**”, both on the radio channel and the TV channel of the station, on the 18th of January.
- **Project 174**, “Business without borders”: a radio report was aired on the “**Municipal Radio Pernik**” following a press conference on the 16th of July. A reportage concerning the training seminars organized in Pernik was aired on “**Radio Krakra**” on the 20th of October.
- **Project 208**, “Strengthening the capacity of milk producers and processors”: a radio interview was conducted and aired on several radio stations on the 28th of June – “**Radio Hristo Botev**”, “**Radio Focus**”, and “**Radio Blagoevgrad**”.

• Television

For the same reasons mentioned above concerning the radio campaign, no paid television campaign was implemented for the purpose of promotion of the Programme in general. However, just like the representatives of all the other media, journalists from the local and national TV stations have been invited to each of the press conferences held under the Programme and the TV crews participated in both the public events in Bulgaria and Serbia, as evident from the event photos. It is not clear however which of the television crews attending the events ended up





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producing and airing news reports on their respective stations, despite the direct appeal from the communication officer to be informed in case such reports were aired. In case of the beneficiaries, many have promoted their respective projects on the local television stations in the regions, while some managed to attract the attention of even the national Television stations. The TV reports on the national television stations have been published on the respective web sites of the stations and are available for viewing through the links provided below.

The following projects under the Second Call for proposals have been promoted on television in 2013:

- **Project 38**, “Unity-Partnership for knowledge and good neighborly unity”: Television reportage was produced and aired on “**TV Vidin**” on the 22nd of July, aiming to promote the beginning of the project and the round table event. Additional TV report was aired on “**RTV Best**” on the 23rd of July.
- **Project 54**, “Music, Art, Tourism - Uniting the Balkans”: The official opening of the recording studio funded by project has been covered by two local television stations in Kyustendil region, Bulgaria – “**Color TV**” and “**Cabel Sat Zapad**” on the 30th of September. A 60 minutes long project promotional film was produced and broadcasted on “Cabel Sat Zapad” and on the “**NTV**” television in Nis during the 3rd quarter of project implementation.
- **Project 65**, “Youth Music Master Workshop”: Nis pop-rock concert was broadcasted in full length (120 minutes) on the 27th and 29th of September on “**NTV**” television. In addition, one TV report was broadcasted on “**Krakra**” television on the 23rd of October and two television interviews were conducted on the 7th of November for the “**NTV**” television and on the 8th of November for the “**Belle Amie**” television.
- **Project 89**, “Innovation and rehabilitation of water supply systems in municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek”: Television report concerning the project were broadcasted on “**Radio Television of Majdanpek**” on the 18th as well as on the “**TV Journal**” and on the “**RTV Best**” on the 19th of December.
- **Project 138**, “Youth Career Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship Networking and Transfer”: a media appearance was made on “**RTV Best**” on the 15th of October, an interview was broadcasted on “**TV Istok**” and “**TV Bor**” on the 21st of October, a media appearance was made on “**RTV F**” from Zajecar and “**RTV Best**” on the 21st of October. Several other media appearances and interviews broadcasted on the above mentioned local television stations. A special reportage was broadcasted on the “**Bulgarian National Television**” on the 4th of December³, an interview in morning block of “**Bulgaria on Air**” television was broadcasted on 3rd of December⁴ and an interview with “**TV 7**” was broadcasted on the 5th of December⁵.
- **Project 174**, “Business without borders”: Reportage on a press-conference held in Nis was broadcasted on “**RTV Belle Amie**” on the 27th of June. The same TV station reported three more times on the project – on the 3rd, the 8th and the 17th of December. Training seminars in

³ <http://archive.bnt.bg/bg/news/view/113082>

⁴ <http://bgonair.bg/shows/2013-12-03/kak-da-si-mlad-i-predpriemchiv-sega-i-v-bylgariq>

⁵ <http://goo.gl/kFY2D3>

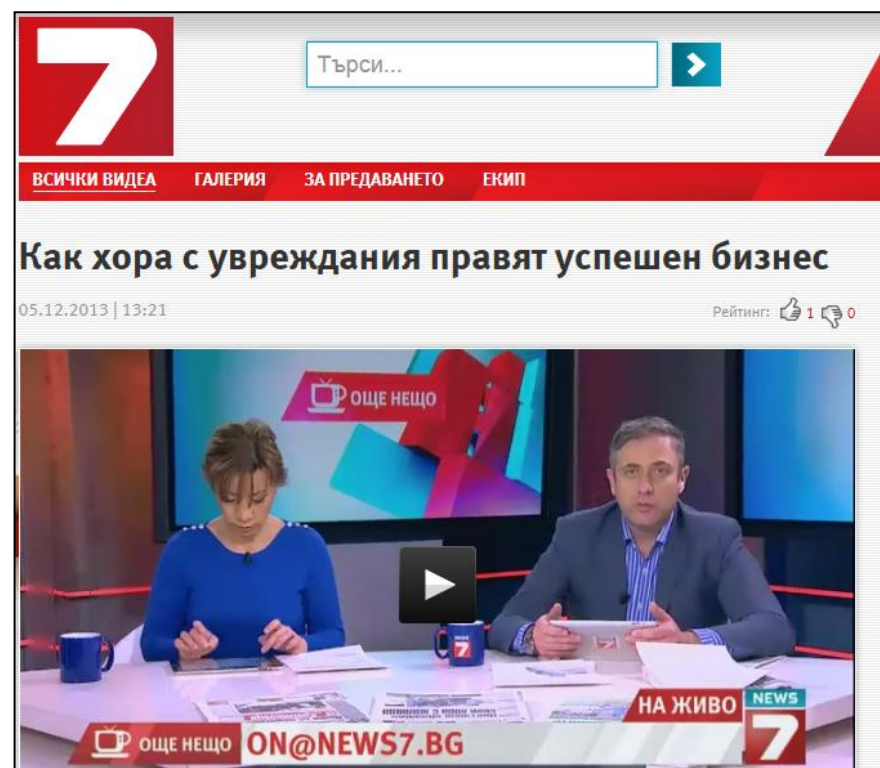




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Pernik were covered by the CTV “**Krakra**” on the 20th of October while the “**Kopernikus TV**” and “**NTV**” covered the project training seminars in Nis on the 17th of December.

- **Project 195**, “Balkan Consumer Bridge”: Report was broadcasted on “**TV 7**” during the “Barcode” program on the 5th of December. Another TV report was broadcasted on “**NTV**” on the 29th of October.
- **Project 208**, “Strengthening the capacity of milk producers and processors”: A promotional video clip was broadcasted 40 times at various dates on each of the following local television station - “**Belle Amie**”, “**Kopernikus**” and “**NTV**”.



Project 138 managed to attract significant media attention, including the national TV stations such as BNT and TV7





• Newspapers

Programme related coverage in the printed media during 2013 is primarily focused on individual projects. The printed media participating in the Programme press conferences have been publishing positive press releases on their web sites but there is no information on how many of such press releases were published in the printed format, except in one particular case. Following the celebration of “European Cooperation Day 2013” in Vidin, a very popular national daily newspaper “**Vestnik Standart**” published a large photograph from the event on the cover page on the 22nd of September. As for the coverage related to individual projects, most of the press releases were published in the local newspapers in the cross-border region. Publishing a paid article in the national newspapers is usually too expensive for the project budgets and such publications are ultimately unnecessary from the project perspective because their target audience is not the entire population of a country but the local population in specific regions.

The following projects under the Second Call for proposals have been promoted in the local and national newspapers in 2013:

- **Project 38**, “Unity-Partnership for knowledge and good neighborly unity”: one press publications in local newspaper “**Timok**” on the 17th of October and one publication in “**Almanac Exarch Antim I**” on the 1st of December.
- **Project 56**, “Promotion of Cultural Tourism in the Cross-Border Region”: press releases in local newspaper “**Zov**” on the 3rd and 31st of July, as well as on the 12th of September, a press releases in regional newspaper “**Vidin**” on the 21st of April, and 11th of August, and 4 articles in the regional newspaper “**Timok**” - on the 17th of May, 18th of July, 13th and 23rd of August.
- **Project 65**, “Youth Music Master Workshop”: two newspaper articles have been published on the 24th of October in the local newspapers “**Viara**” and “**Gradski vestnik**”.
- **Project 89**, “Innovation and rehabilitation of water supply systems in municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek”: two press releases in regional newspaper “**Vidin**” – on the 19th and 28th of August, and an article in the weekly magazine “**Timocke**” on the 27th of December.
- **Project 95**, “In Search for Economic Reviving and Development: Preparation for Joint Promotion of the Cross-Border Region Business Potential”: a full page article was published in the local newspaper “**Nasa rec**” on the 16th of August.
- **Project 138**, “Youth Career Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship Networking and Transfer”: article in the national newspaper “**Novinar**” on the 28th of November, two articles in the national newspaper “**Standart**” on the 28th and on the 29th of November, and two articles in national newspaper “**Kapital**” on the 2nd and on the 5th of December.
- **Project 174**, “Business without borders”: An article was published in newspaper “**Rival**” on the 16th of July, articles in “**Gradski vestnik**”, newspaper “**Viara**” and the newspaper “**Duma**”, all on the 17th of July, an article in “**Narodne Novine**” on the 27th of July, an article in “**Gradske novine**” on the 17th of October and in newspaper “**Rival**” on the 15th of October.





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- **Project 195**, “Balkan Consumer Bridge”: An article was published in the newspaper “**Monitor**” on the 6th of November and an article was published in newspaper “**Jivota Dnes**” on the 10th of December.
- **Project 208**, “Strengthening the capacity of milk producers and processors”: an extensive article was published in the December issue of the “**Agrocompas**” journal and an article in the national newspaper “**Kapital**” was published on the 4th of July, four articles have been published in “**Narodne Novine**” in the period from the 20th until the 23rd of September and an article was published in newspaper “**Mlyako+**” on the 15th of October.

Some of the projects from the First Call have also been promoted in the press during 2013. For example, the final results of **project 52**, “Cooperation for sustainable development of cultural tourism in the municipalities of Bobov Dol and Palilula” were promoted in “**Struma**” newspaper on the 9th of March and “**Viara**” newspaper on the 8th of March. Similarly, newspaper “**Vranjske**” published a full page review of the results achieved under the **project 3**, “Centre for exchange of information on cross-border economic cooperation” on the 20th of June; and **project 19**, “Mount a bike” - development of mountain bicycle routes in Western Balkans”, was promoted in the regional newspaper “**Vidin**” on the 28th of January 2013.

Activity 5: Active training

The Joint Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the Managing Authority and the National Authority, had organized **nine trainings for beneficiaries** under the Second Call for proposals during 2013. The training seminars were attended by more than **700 project management experts**. Six out of the nine trainings were comprehensive in nature and covered a whole range of topics relevant for project implementation such as: Financial reporting and eligibility of expenses, public procurement procedures under the PRAG regulations, Visibility rules and recommendations, etc. Three of the comprehensive training sessions were organized in Bulgaria and three were organized in Serbia. All of the trainings were held in the local languages in order to help the beneficiaries with the language barrier they often face while reading the manuals in English language.

In order to assist the beneficiaries regarding the public procurement rules and regulations set in the PRAG, the Joint Technical Secretariat had organized three special training sessions dedicated entirely to the topic of public procurement. All three PRAG training sessions were organized in Serbia since many beneficiaries from that side of the border have expressed special interest in this topic. Similarly, the beneficiaries from Bulgaria have expressed their interest for additional training on the topic of PRAG rules and procedures but also on a variety of other topics. As a response to the inquiries and interests of the beneficiaries from the Bulgarian side of the border the JTS main office organized a series of individual consultations at the premises of the JTS main office. Nineteen meetings were held with the representatives of the Bulgarian organizations, partnering in the following projects under the Second Call for proposals: 14, 27, 34, 38, 82, 91, 92, 95, 96, 99, 104, 105, 108, 137, 138, 147, 250, 255 and 257. A variety of topics have been covered at the meetings ranging from the more general ones such as the content and preparation of a project progress report to the more particular questions such as budget reallocations and procurement of very specific items and services. Following each meeting the JTS officers prepared the minutes which describe the specific topics discussed and advice given to the beneficiaries.





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The training seminars and individual consultations for beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme were successfully completed as follows:

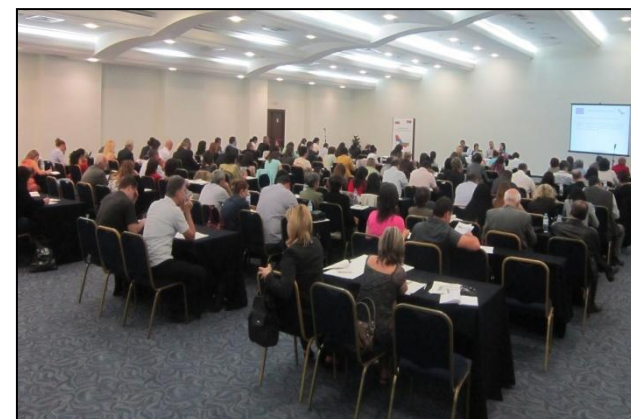
- On the 23rd of January a comprehensive training seminar was held in Sofia, Bulgaria;
- On the 8th of February a comprehensive training seminar was held in Nis, Serbia;
- On the 25th of February a training session on public procurement according to the PRAG regulations was held in Pirot, Serbia;
- On the 25th of April a comprehensive training session was held in Nis, Serbia;
- On the 8th of May a comprehensive training session was held in Sofia, Bulgaria;
- On the 10th of May a training session on public procurement according to the PRAG regulations was held in Zajecar, Serbia;
- From the 20th of June until the 1st of July a series of individual consultation were held in Sofia, Bulgaria;
- On the 15th of July a training session on public procurement according to the PRAG regulations was held in Nis, Serbia;
- On the 4th of November a comprehensive training session was held in Sofia, Bulgaria;
- On the 12th of November a comprehensive training session was held in Nis, Serbia.





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Photos from the training sessions for beneficiaries under the Second Call for proposals during 2013





**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

ANNEX II to the Annual Report 2013

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-3
Project name: CENTRE FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON CROSS-BORDER ECONOMIC COOPERATION (CONNECTION)

Project partners:
▪ **Lead partner:** Centre for development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts, Serbia
▪ **Project partner 2:** Municipality of Vladicin Han, Serbia
▪ **Project partner 3:** Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bulgaria

Budget: 444 537,40 Euro
Project duration: 22,5 months

Project description:

The project was aimed at enabling effective exchange of information, best practice exchange, creating connections and successful economic cooperation of the private, public and civil sector in the cross-border area. The project partner worked closely together on the creation of the Joint Centre for exchange of information on cross-border economic cooperation available to the entrepreneurs, persons with disabilities – future entrepreneurs and other social and economic partners in compliance with EU standards. The project achieved all of its goals and most prominently:

- Constructed and equipped joint training centre CONNECTION in Vladicin Han municipality on the total floor area of 350 m² in compliance with the EU standards which is accessible to persons with disabilities – future entrepreneurs and other social and economic partners;
- Jointly designed Multilanguage web portal and online library of the CONNECTION for the development of entrepreneurship which is accessible to persons with disabilities as well. The number of pooled joint services is 20: <http://connectionproject.net/>

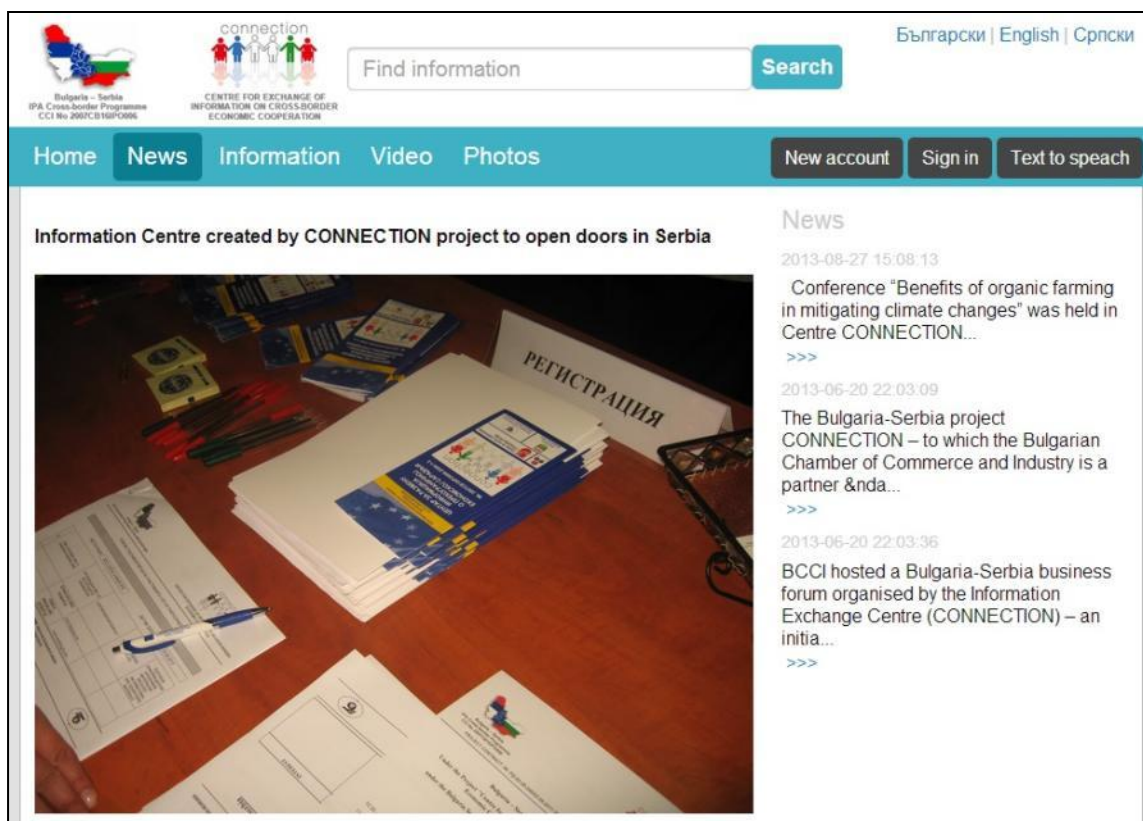
The project was successfully completed in June 2013.



The newly constructed joint training centre CONNECTION



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



Specialized equipment for people with disabilities at the CONNECTION center (top) and a screenshot of the project web portal (bottom)





**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-7

Project name: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LOCAL ROAD IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Municipality of Surdulica, Serbia
- **Project partner 2:** Municipality of Tran, Bulgaria

Budget: 545 107,14 Euro

Project duration: 14 months

Project description:

The main project objective was to improve the existing capacity of the institutions for road infrastructure of the neighbouring border municipalities Surdulica and Tran through cooperation, exchange of the experiences, mutual maintenance of the local roads and mutual coordination on reconstruction of the part of the local road, which connects the monastery of “Vavedenje Svete Bogorodice”, settlement Palja with the international route M1.13 situated nearby the checkpoint at Strazimirovci, in accordance with the EU standards. The project achieved the following results:

- The local road connecting the border area of Palja (the monastery of “Vavedenje Svete Bogorodice”) with the international route M1.13 was reconstructed in length of 3.081 km;
- The total of 5 seminars were organized, 2 in Surdulica and 3 in Tran, concerning the exchange of experience in road building and maintenance in accordance with the EU standards;
- A mutual plan was developed for local road maintenance and usage of the multi-functional vehicle in municipalities of Surdulica and Tran;
- The multi-functional vehicle was acquired and the local roads in both municipalities in length of 100 km were cleaned.

The project was successfully completed in October 2012.



*The road **before** reconstruction*



*The road **after** reconstruction*



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



The reconstructed road connects the border area of Palja with the international route M1.13



The multi-functional cleaning and maintenance vehicle used for cleaning 100 km of local roads in the cross-border area



**The Programme is co-funded by the
 European Union.**



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-19
Project name: MOUNT A BIKE – DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN BICYCLE ROUTES IN WESTERN BALKANS

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship Timok Zajecar, Serbia
- **Project partner 3:** Regional Development Agency and Business Centre 2000, Bulgaria

Budget: 425 006,25 Euro
Project duration: 18 months

Project description:

The overall objective is to contribute to the joint tourism development in the cross-border region by encouraging and enabling mountain biking tourism, networking between the local tourism companies in the cross-border region and improving their competitiveness with special attention to the safeguarding of the environment.

To achieve this broad objective the project has the following specific objectives:

1. To create a well-maintained and signposted network of bicycle routes with picnic areas and cross-border rent-a-bike service in order to set the preconditions for mountain bicycle tourism development;
2. To promote the mountain biking routes created within the project to local and international tourists in order to increase the number of tourists visiting this unique part of our cross-border nature and network Bulgarian and Serbian tourism companies benefiting from the growing number of bicycle tourists;
3. To preserve ecology in this part of the Western Balkans, promoting nature-friendly attitude and presenting typical for the region species;
4. To create new jobs in tourism and improve the living standard of local people.

The project has achieved all of its objectives, it also attracted significant public and media attention, and its results were commended even in the national daily newspaper “Dnevnik”. Detailed information about the project can be found on the project web site: www.mountabike.eu



Participants in one of the project cycling events



The Programme is co-funded by the
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**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**



The project cycling events attracted significant public attention



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Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



Bicycle routes are clearly marked on the maps and are color coded according to their difficulty



The Programme is co-funded by the
 European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-52
Project name: COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BOBOV DOL AND PALILULA

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Municipality of Bobov Dol, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** City Municipality of Palilula, Serbia

Budget: 577 562,11 Euro
Project duration: 22 months

Project description:

The goal of the project was to promote the development of cultural tourism in cross-border region through improvement and modernisation of infrastructure related to cultural and historical heritage of Bobov dol and Palilula and to increase cultural exchange between the two municipalities. The following results were achieved during the project implementation:

- Amphitheatre in Bobov dol was constructed;
- A joint folklore festival was organized to celebrate the closing of the event;
- The amphitheatre in Bubanj park, in Palilula, was reconstructed;
- Sustainable region-specific tourist products in both municipalities though the Guide with cultural and tourism landmarks were proposed;
- Increased administrative capacity of the two municipalities to implement IPA funded projects;

The project was successfully completed in April 2013



The two amphitheatres in Bobov dol (upper left) and Nis (upper right) and details from the joint folklore festival (the bottom two photos)



**The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.**



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-92
Project name: DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL SCALE SPORT AND RECREATION
INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MONTANA-PIROT CROSS-BORDER REGION

Project partners:
▪ **Lead partner:** Municipality of Montana, Bulgaria
▪ **Project partner 2:** Municipality of Pirot, Serbia

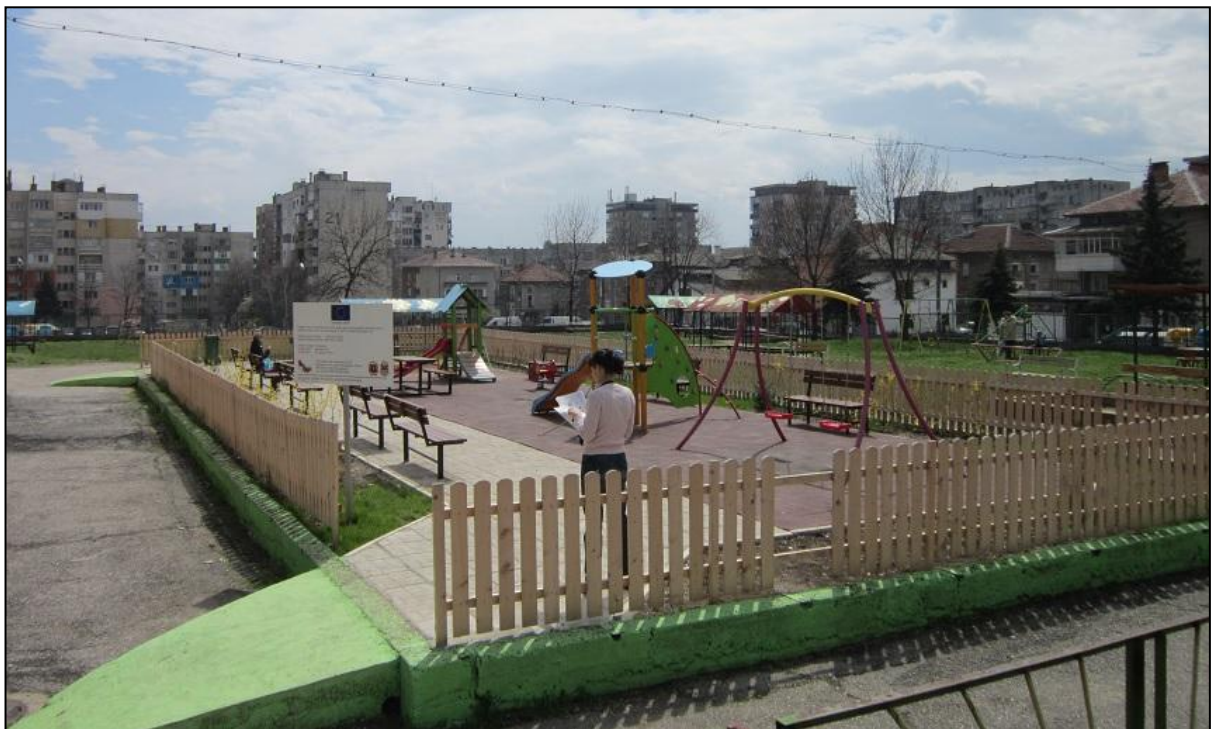
Budget: 424 010,91 Euro
Project duration: 18 months

Project description:

The project has achieved all three of its main objectives:

1. Improvement of the sport infrastructure in the cross-border region and creation of conditions for kids from 3 to 18 year old to live more active and environment friendly life. In order to achieve this goal 6 new facilities for outdoor activities have been constructed: 3 in Montana, Bulgaria and 3 in Pirot, Serbia;
2. Establishment of long-lasting partnership between the sport clubs from the two sides of the border. Several networking events have been organized as a part of the project. Also a web module and a blog have been developed and made available throught the web site of the Municipality of Montana: <http://www.montana.bg/sport-relax>
3. Overcoming the legal obstacles and development of user-friendly guides for organization of cross-border and other international sport tournaments and events. Appropriate handbooks have been developed and distributed to the project target groups.

The project was successfully completed in January 2013.



The outdoor facilities are situated in the residential areas of the two municipalities.



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European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



The outdoor facilities include playgrounds for small children and playing courts for basketball and football



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-104
Project name: NEW TOURIST CHALLENGES IN DUPNITSA-VRANJE REGION – A WAY TO NEW FUTURE

Project partners:
▪ **Lead partner:** Municipality of Dupnitsa, Bulgaria
▪ **Project partner 2:** The city of Vranje, Serbia

Budget: 594 272,92 Euro
Project duration: 18 months

Project description:

The overall objective of the project was to strengthen territorial cohesion of Dupnitsa-Vranje region through measures focused on achieving competitiveness and sustainable development in tourist and environmental areas. The project achieved the following results:

- Establishment of Eco lodge “Samokovishte” – An abandoned mountain lodge at the end of eco path was reconstructed and equipped as an eco-lodge. It is situated at the Dupnitsa access to Rila Mountain through the village of Bistritsa, which is an alternative route to the “Seven Rila Lakes”. In addition, the lodge contain a special “experience room” which provides interactive approach to the presentation of natural beauty and biodiversity of Rila Mountain;
- Creation of an eco-path and construction of small scale infrastructure along the route. The trace of the eco-path is: the village of Bistrica - Orlovi skali – Viatarni skali – Bistrishki vodopad – Eco-lodge Samokovishteto. Also the access to the eco-path was improved through rehabilitation of the existing road and parking lot at the village of Bistrica;
- Establishment of Eco Guards Unit – a specialized Eco guard unit was established in the municipality of Dupnitsa for monitoring the mountain region for eventual accidents and coping with emergency situations;
- Establishment of Tourist Presentation Centre in Vranje – A special hall of the public company “Skijaliste Besna Kobila” was equipped to serve as a tourist presentation center;
- Creation of a model of Besna Kobila Mountain with detailed routes and facilities as a replica of the real mountain. The model is displayed at the tourist presentation centre
- Implementation of a comprehensive promotional campaign including creation of a promotional video, organization of a final press conference, and distribution of promotional materials.

The project was successfully completed in January 2013.



The renovated eco-lodge “Samokovishte” and one of the resting lodges along the eco-path



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



Details from the eco-path including resting places, information boards and even a bridge



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-107
Project name: CONSTRUCTING OF RECREATION PARK, TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER, RENOVATION OF AN EXISTING ECO-TRAIL ROUTE, AN INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WILL SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Municipality of Tran, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Municipality of Dimitrovgrad, Serbia
- **Project partner 3:** Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, Work Unit in Nis, Serbia

Budget: 424 531,34 Euro

Project duration: 22 months

Project description:

The main project objective was to improve the existing tourism infrastructure and increase the existing capacity of the tourism product development in the cross-border region. The neighbouring border municipalities managed through joint effort to create a recreation park with video surveillance, to set two information kiosks and reconstruct an existing eco-trail 13.2 km on the territory of Bulgaria and build a 36 km eco-trail and a tourist information center in the Republic of Serbia. In terms of project visibility, a project website was created, brochures and posters were printed and distributed, and billboards were placed on strategic places. The workshops for developing new tourism products were held in both municipalities. In addition the monograph „Natural and Cultural Values of Special Nature Reserve “Jerma” was published. The project web site address is: <http://cb-ecotrail.com/>

The project was successfully completed in June 2013.

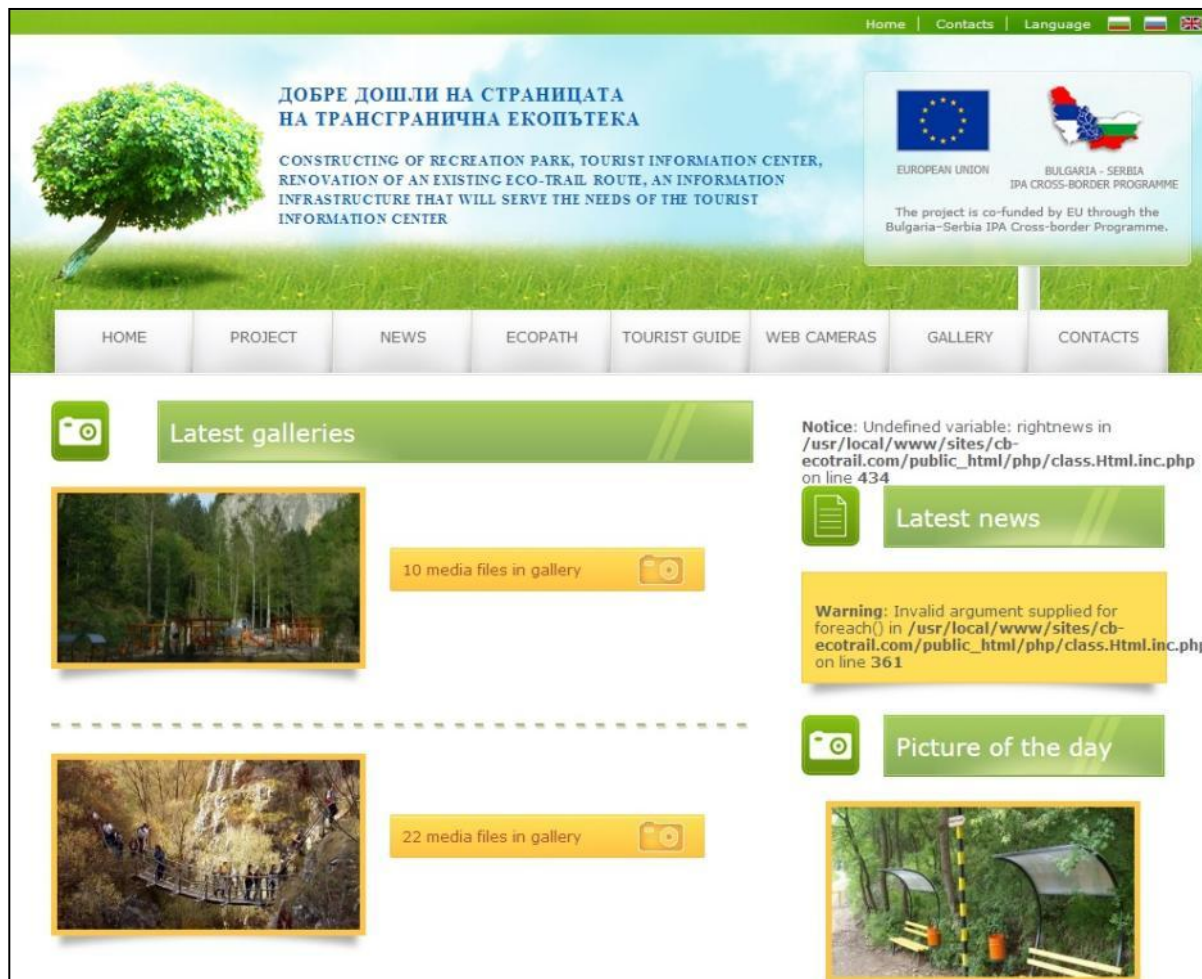


The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

The eco trail (upper left), the tourist information centre (upper right) and the recreation park (bottom)



Screenshot of the project web site: <http://cb-ecotrail.com/>



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-15
Project name: REGIONAL INTEGRATION WITH SOCIAL EFFECT
Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** "Free Youth Centre" Vidin, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Association "Open Club", Serbia

Budget: 86 342,76 Euro
Project duration: 12 months

Project description:

- The main goal of the project was to contribute to the social cohesion in the Bulgarian–Serbian border area by improving the capacity and potential for cooperation in the social sphere (with a focus on child protection). The project goal was achieved through the following activities:
- Creation and publishing of a joint data-base for social services and providers in the target region. A data-base with 152 records of providers and social services in the border area was created and published on the project web-site;
- Establishing a network of social agents, active in the target region. More than 58 institutions and organizations took part of the project activities and had the opportunity to collaborate;
- Production of a report based on research of 145 beneficiaries concerning the current situation in social sphere in the whole border region;
- Promotion and transparency of the achievements in social sphere - an exposition was presented in both countries. A project web site was developed and is available on the following address: www.projectrise.eu
- Secure the sustainability of the Euro-regional cooperation in social field - A methodical centre for CBC in social sphere was created and a joint consortium registered (the RISE association).

The project was successfully completed in July 2012.



Photos from project events



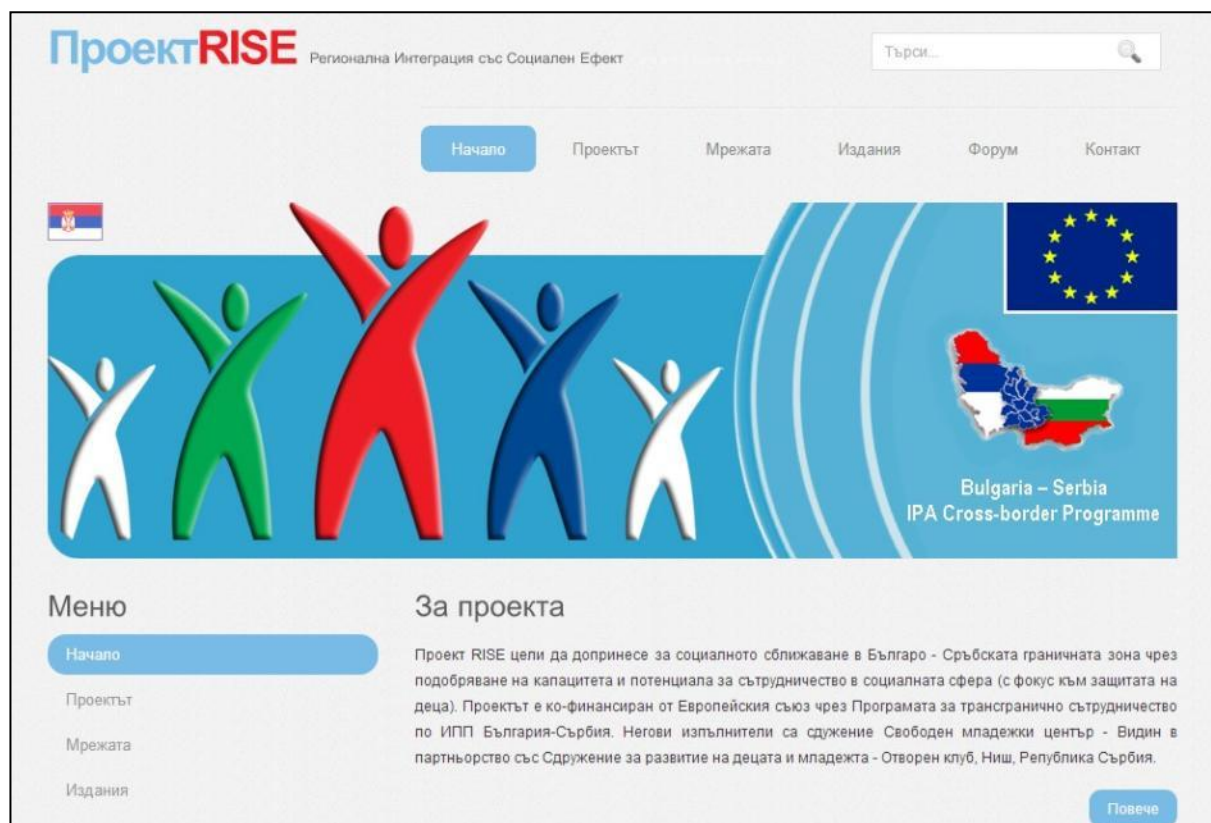
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Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



Photos from project events



Screenshot of the project web site: www.projectrise.eu



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-20
Project name: CROSS-BORDER MUSIC ACADEMY "MUSIC WITHOUT BORDERS"
Project partners:
 ▪ **Lead partner:** "Bratstvo 1869" Community Centre, Bulgaria
 ▪ **Project partner 2:** Music School Nis, Serbia

Budget: 87 340,21 Euro
Project duration: 12 months

Project description:

The goal of the project was to establish sustainable contacts and partnerships between "Bratstvo 1869" Community Centre and Music School Nis and local creative artists by implementation of joint activities in the field of culture. The project goal was achieved through the following activities:

- A 3-day training seminar for culture experts under title "Establishment of Partnerships and Networking; Culture Management; European Programmes in the Sphere of Culture and Cross-Border Cooperation" was carried out in Kyustendil, Bulgaria;
- A 3-day seminar for young talents "The Young and the Cultural Traditions of Bulgaria and Serbia" was carried out in Nis, Serbia;
- Cross-Border Music Academy "Music without Frontiers" was carried out in Kyustendil. Within 5 days a number of musical events with the participation of 30 musicians from the Municipality of Kyustendil and 30 musicians from the Municipality of Nis, united under the motto "Music Unites Us" were organized in the town of Kyustendil;
- Days of the Classical Music in the Town of Nis "Music without Frontiers" were carried out. Six concerts were organized - 3 evening concerts for the large audience and 3 educational in different schools in the town of Nis. Important cultural landmarks in the region were visited. 20 performers from the Municipality of Kyustendil and 20 performers from the Municipality of Nis participated;
- A permanent Information Corners of Bratstvo 1869 Community Centre and Music School Nis were created displaying various promotional and informational materials;
- A collection of music pieces "Melodies from the Balkans" was published, containing pieces and articles, written by distinguished local composers and music teachers from the two cross-border regions as well as pieces by young composers who are in the beginning of their development;
- A DVD "Music from the Balkans" was released and 200 copies were distributed. The DVD consists of a documentary film covering the two musical events, carried out within the project - Days of the Classical Music in the town of Nis and the Cross-Border Music Academy in the town of Kyustendil;
- Website under the Project was created – www.cbma.projectkn.com

The project was successfully completed in July 2012.



Six concerts were organized as a part of the "Music without Frontiers" festival



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



Young musicians also took part in the celebration of the “European Cooperation Day 2012”



Project logo (left) and a screenshot of the project web site: www.cbma.projectkn.com



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-30
Project name: **ORGANIC FARMING” – A CHALLENGE OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR NATURE**

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Regional Agrobusiness Centre - Vidin, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Agro-project Timok, Zajecar, Serbia
- **Project partner 3:** Alliance for Regional and Civil Initiatives, Bulgaria

Budget: 93 801,68 Euro

Project duration: 12 months

Project description:

The goal of the project was to show the producers why and how they could start working as organic farmers by giving them information about the requirements and examples of good practices in the field. During the four outdoor seminars in Municipalities Novo selo, Bregovo, Kula and Belogradchik the project team experts presented the current state of affairs concerning organic farming in Serbia. Participants in the project events were also given leaflets, stickers and T-shirts with slogan "Stay organic" and explain again the advantages of agriculture and how the organic farming protect our nature, animals and plants. A special manual for organic farming was created under the project and it explains how agricultural producers can change their production to organic and why. The final brochure about project results also emphasizes the importance and advantages of organic farming. In the two press-conferences in Zajecar and Vidin the project team experts presented the current state of affairs concerning organic farming in Bulgaria and requirements for agricultural producers and the results of the project. The project partners also created a data base for all agricultural producers in Vidin and Zajecar in order to help farmers from both side of the border to cooperate in their future activities. The new established Euro Agro Club "Good Neighbourhood" each year will collect farmers from both side of the border where they will have opportunities to exchange information and good practices. The project was successfully completed in October 2012.



The events were organized both indoors and on the terrain



The Programme is co-funded by the
European Union.



**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-41
Project name: GREEN AMBASSADORS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE: RAISING THE AWARENESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESPONSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CIVIC BEHAVIOUR

Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** "No Frontiers 21 Century" Association, Kyustendil, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Resource Centre Leskovac, Serbia

Budget: 96 600,45 Euro
Project duration: 12 months

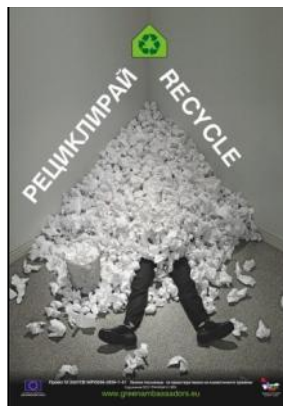
Project description:

The main project objective was to raise the awareness of young people on climate change issues and on responsible environmental and civic behaviour through a cooperative practical approach promoting common problem solving for improving the quality of life in the border region. The project achieved its goal through implementation of the following activities:

- 219 students were trained as "green ambassadors" in the districts of Kyustendil and Jablanica;
- A "Green Camp" was organized in the District of Jablanica for 20 regional green ambassadors and teachers from the Bulgarian and Serbian border regions for 4 days. It included a highly interactive advance level workshop on climate change and environmental issues;
- The total 22 climate change and civic behaviour awareness campaigns were organized at schools in the border region: 16 on school and interschool level and 6 joint Serbian and Bulgarian ones. 10 campaigns were involved a parallel green action (participation in the "Let Us Clean Bulgaria in One Day" and "Clean Serbia" campaigns). Over 2000 students, teachers and educators from the border region participated in them;
- The joint Bulgarian-Serbian Round Table "Climate Change and Responsible Environmental and Civic Behaviour" was held in the town of Kyustendil. The round table was focused on the results of the pilot project of raising the awareness of secondary school students on climate change and related environmental, economic and health issues;
- A web-based e-learning platform was developed and released in 3 languages: English, Bulgarian and Serbian. The platform is available on the project web site: www.greenambassadors.eu
- A documentary about the joint Bulgarian and Serbian activities under the project was created;
- A comprehensive promotional campaign was implemented for promotion of the programme, including organization of four press conferences;

The project was successfully completed in July 2012.

Project posters used in the promotional campaign



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Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006



Photos from the awareness raising campaign



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**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**

Project number: 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-76
Project name: YOUTH BALKAN SYNTHESIS
Project partners:

- **Lead partner:** Kyustendil Association, Bulgaria
- **Project partner 2:** Municipality of Bosilegrad, Serbia

Budget: 86 189,21 Euro
Project duration: 11 months

Project description:

The main objectives of the project were: to popularize the cultural and historical heritage and natural attractions of the border region; to create cross-border collaborations, strengthen cross-border contacts, improve the networking and social cohesion across the border mainly through communication and educational cooperation; to improve and increase skills of young artists; and to increase public awareness about the historical and cultural heritage in the region; and increase cross-cultural awareness of youth.

The main project outputs are:

- Production of a youth dance performance titled “Balkan Synthesis”. The theme of the performance was based on the cultural heritage of both countries and a synthesis between different elements of legends for the good and bad, love, hate and envy, health and illness, war and peace. The performance was played 6 times, three times in Bulgaria and three times in Serbia;
- Total 173 people from both sides of the border were involved in the project activities including children and youth from the cross-border region, teachers, actors, choreographer, costume designer, composer, dramaturge, sound and light experts and many others;
- Total 19 publicity events were realized as a part of the project (including the six performances). One of the most important project events was the “Art School” in which 40 Bulgarian and Serbian youths took part in. A special performance was made for the celebration of the “European Cooperation Day 2012” which took place in Kyustendil on the 21st of September 2012;
- A video recording of the project performance was produced and translated in English language.

The project was successfully completed in June 2012.



A scene from the performance “Balkan Synthesis”



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**Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO006**



Photos from the project performances, including the "European Cooperation Day 2012"



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BULGARIA –
SERBIA IPA CROSS-
BORDER

ANNEX III to the Annual Report 2013

Ongoing Evaluation of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013

Executive Summary of the Final Evaluation Report

July 2013

The project is co-funded by EU
through the Bulgaria–Serbia IPA
Cross-border Programme



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Introduction

This is the executive summary of the Evaluation Report prepared by Ernst & Young for the project “Ongoing Evaluation of the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013”.

After a brief description of the context, objectives, scope and general approach of the evaluation (Chapter 1), the report presents the results of the analyses conducted in order to answer to each of the evaluation themes and questions of the Terms of Reference (Chapter 2). Based on these results the report provides conclusions and recommendations distinguishing between those applicable in the current and in the future programming period (Chapter 3).

Findings

Consistency and appropriate complementarity

The logic of intervention of the Programme has been developed taking into account the IPA Programming Framework, the evidences resulting from a quantitative socio-economic analysis of the region, the qualitative inputs provided by Programme Stakeholders and complementarities with other EU Interventions available in the Programme area. As a result, the general and specific objectives of the Programme are addressing the key opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the Programme area.

The Programme is implemented through a set of Measures and activities that are coherent and adequately captured through a set of output indicators. Minor overlaps have been identified only with a Measure of the Bulgarian OP HRD addressing transnational and interregional cooperation and with the CBC Programmes Romania – Bulgaria and Romania – Serbia, however according to Programme stakeholders the strategy is very broadly designed and in the future programming period financial resources should be better concentrated among a limited number of specific objectives.

The Programme has not set-up a formal framework for measuring its added value for the cross-border region, however implementation arrangements instrumentalize cross-border added value in Programme and project implementation through joint structures and a set of eligibility and selection criteria fostering cooperation between the two sides of the border. The programme appears to have a genuine cross border impact, measureable in terms of number types of partnerships created, issues addressed and perspectives of sustainable cooperation.

As a consequence the results achieved by the Programme to date, provide evidence of the cross-border added value for the eligible region, in terms of strengthening of the institutional and cooperation capacity of the public authorities responsible for the joint management and implementation of the Programme. At project level there is evidence that the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme is selected by beneficiaries even when alternative sources of financing are available; that long term partnerships are created and maintained, that projects have a joint character and that there is a certain degree of institutionalization of project activities in terms of creation of networks and of sustainable activities beyond the completion of IPA assistance. Benefits for Serbia are also tangible in terms of building institutional capacity for the management of Structural Instruments and other forms of EU Assistance in the future.

Horizontal issues are addressed at Programme Level, generally understood by beneficiaries and subject to scoring in the assessment process of applications, however there are some inconsistencies between definitions at Programme level and in implementation tools. The lack of monitoring indicators both at project and Programme level, specifically designed to capture progress in the achievement of horizontal issues, will not allow to measure the overall contribution of the Programme to such aspects.

Effectiveness and efficiency

The effects of the Programme to date are measured in the 35% commitment rate of financial allocations for the period 2007-2013 and a high likelihood of committing the entire financial allocation in 2013, while the performance is weaker in terms of payments which amount to 14% of the Programme budget.

The Programme has decommitted amounts in 2011 and 2012 and in order to avoid the risk of decommitment in 2013, at least EUR 6 mn. of additional expenditure must be generated by the 53 projects contracted under the first call for proposals, ideally until the end of July 2013. Based on the forecasts of expenditure for the following years provided by the Managing Authority, the total amount at risk of decommitment for the Programme amounts to approximately EUR 6,2 mn. The low level of expenditure generated is a consequence of the late start of project implementation. Despite a first call for proposals was promptly launched in August 2009, the assessment process could start only 11 months later when the institutional system was fully put in place and contracts were awarded only in August 2011. A second call was then launched in November 2011 and as of May 2013, 65

projects were contracted. An additional contribution to the achievement of the decommitment targets may be provided by these projects between Q2 and Q3 of 2013, limited however in consideration of their incipient phase and the fact that there will be a single useful reporting period for submitting reimbursement requests.

The current level of financial progress is the outcome of the first of the 2 calls for proposals, which saw a substantial over-application under the two Priority Axes of the Programme with a single measure resulting less popular than expected (1.3 – Assistance in project preparation). The high level of demand has been driven by pre-existing relations among project partners; Bulgarian Lead Partners are more numerous than Serbian ones and there is a geographic concentration of beneficiaries (Vidin and Sofia-City on the Bulgarian side of the border and Nisava on the Serbian side).

When measuring this progress in terms of Programme indicators at the end of December 2012, it results that Output indicators showcase, a good degree of achievement with the exception of 3 out of the total 38 indicators, out of which 2 refer to PA 1 and 1 to PA 2. Result indicators are unlikely to be achieved in 4 out of 10 cases, with 2 indicators being related to PA 1 (“Increased attractiveness of the region based on preservation of natural resources” and “Projects actually applied”) and 2 to PA2 (“Increased cross-border movement of people and exchange of goods and services in the region” and “Increased public awareness regarding sustainable use of regional resources) even taking into account the projects that shall be contracted under the second call for proposals.

The possible non-achievement of some of the result indicators is also partially attributable to the sequence and types of calls launched. Experience from other ETC Programmes shows that calls for proposals are generally customized in the second period of implementation, in order to have a balanced distribution among the PAs/KAs and an even geographical representation, with regard to LPs/PPs.

For both output and result indicators there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of the target values presented in the Programme, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence of the indicators and on the other hand, as a result of gaps in the programming process that resulted in lower target values and absence of clear baseline values.

The implementation system of the Programme is in place and there are procedures covering among others the process of project assessment, selection and contracting, first level control, financial management and verifications and monitoring.

The procedure for project assessment and selection, despite the long duration for the projects submitted under the first call, is positively appreciated by beneficiaries, also in terms of transparency. Overall there appears to be one particular area of improvement, concerning the communication of results of the assessment and selection process, towards unsuccessful applicants which would provide a useful feedback for the improvement of future applications.

Progress in project implementation is monitored by the JTS and Managing Authority, the main tools being Progress Reports and on site visits which are generally appreciated by beneficiaries as a useful instrument for keeping the projects on track.

The financial control process is characterized by the existence of three levels of control, performed respectively by the First Level Control (100% expenditure verification), JTS and MA (administrative verifications and verifications over the work performed by controllers) and it takes approximately 110 days from the submission of a request for FLC verification until the reimbursement of the payment claim, out of which 30-40 days are absorbed by FLC and 60 days by the validation procedures within the MA. The FLC can be considered efficient considering the overall duration of the process.

A common set of Guidelines have been adopted in relation to First level control, however there are differences in the set-up of the FLC on the two sides of the border, the Bulgarian system being decentralized and the Serbian one centralized. In Bulgaria, whose systems is decentralized and most similar to the Greek one, freelance controllers are selected by the Managing Authority and rotate during each reporting period, determining differences in the interpretation of eligibility rules on behalf of different controllers. In Serbia, as for most of the centralized FLC systems adopted in other ETC Programmes, controllers are full-time employees, being responsible for performing verifications during the whole life-cycle of a project.

When assessing the cost-efficiency of the first level control in Bulgaria, the adoption of a centralized system would cut costs by approximately 35% provided that changes are adopted in existing procedures leading to a better calendarization of first level control requests and through possible adjustments to pre-financing mechanisms. The full externalization of first level control through a technical assistance contract would imply higher costs eligible under the technical assistance budget freeing on the other hand human resources within the Managing Authority.

Project implementation rules are consolidated in a Project Implementation Manual for the use of beneficiaries, which provides a clear and broad overview of tendering procedures, reporting provisions, financial management and contract modification

procedures. A guideline for the quantification of project level indicators has also been developed, and given the timing of its publication it is relevant mainly for the applications submitted under the 2nd call for proposals

Overall, the beneficiaries' awareness of project implementation rules is satisfactory, being further enhanced by the set of documents available. In addition, both the JTS (and JTS antenna) and FL Controllers offer on-the-spot assistance to beneficiaries, in dealing with implementation related issues, a fact highlighted by beneficiaries' answers to the on-line survey.

The main difficulty faced by beneficiaries in implementation relates to the application of PRAG public procurement rules, while the lead time for obtaining reimbursements is a critical issue in particular for NGOs. Cooperation among project partners on both sides of the border is strong and does not represent a bottleneck for implementation.

The entire territory of Programme is part of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Despite the fact that there are neither Programming nor implementation arrangements in place aimed at creating synergies between the Programme and the Strategy, the two priority axes of the BG-RS IPA CB Programme are overall aligned with the pillars of the Danube Strategy.

Relevance of the Programme

The analysis of a sample of projects and questionnaire responses prove that the programme adds benefits to the development of the cross-border area. Project beneficiaries understand that the BG-RS IPA CB Programme is the right tool for finding joint solutions to common problems and they choose to implement projects under the programme, even if alternative sources of financing are available.

Most applicants covered the four "joint criteria" in their projects – joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing, also stating that their project ideas addressed problems that were characteristic to both border areas. However the application form templates do not require providing exhaustive explanations on how these criteria are met.

The projects financed under the first and second call for proposals are coherent with 7 thematic objectives defined under the draft regulations for 2014-2020. Assuming that these interventions address issues relevant to the Programme area, these 7 thematic objectives should be taken into account in designing the future Operational Programme.

Recommendations

Current programming period

Generation of expenditure: regularly request updated forecasts of expenditure to beneficiaries in order to assess the actual risk of decommitment for the Programme and identify projects with high potential to generate expenditure and critical projects. Based on the results, adopt a mix of the following actions depending on the severity of the situation:

- ▶ Continue performing communication activities towards beneficiaries aimed at raising awareness regarding the decommitment targets and the importance of the beneficiaries' contribution to the achievement of such targets;
- ▶ ☐ Provide proactive assistance to project beneficiaries by strengthening JTS support focusing on issues where beneficiaries are facing problems, such as application of public procurement;
- ▶ ☐ Verify the legal grounds for possible modifications of subsidy contracts, aimed at introducing rules for decommitment at project level and consider setting thresholds for revocation in the most critical cases (if there is a pipeline of viable projects that could be financed, on the reserve list);

Financial circuit: shorten the overall duration of the financial control process by reducing the period of 60 days available for verifications of the Managing Authority, either by increasing staff headcount or revising the verification activities performed.

First level control: consider a revision of the FLC based on the lessons learned and practices developed on both sides of the border, without changing at this stage the respective systems structure (centralized / decentralized). Revisions should aim at harmonizing the following elements of control systems:

- ▶ *Designation of controllers:* controllers should be appointed for the lifetime of a project and regularly update independence checks in case of external ones;
- ▶ *Skills:* controllers should be specialized by Fund (IPA vs ERDF);
- ▶ *Controls:* to be performed on the spot over a period of 30 days;

- ▶ **Verification of controllers' work:** sample based both for documents and on the spot (taking into account the Bulgarian experience);
- ▶ **Staff headcount:** ensure that a sufficient number of controllers is available on both sides of the border given that projects contracted under the second call will shortly enter in implementation.

Monitoring: continue close monitoring of projects under implementation, to ensure completion according to the approved financial plan and timing and the generation of expenditure necessary to avoid decommitment in 2013. For projects approved under the Second Call, strong support should be provided since the early stage, in order to support beneficiaries in setting-up the project implementation framework correctly.

Implementation at beneficiary level: for addressing the difficulties in the application of secondary procurement under PRAG rules, information campaigns or material could be used to increase the level of understanding of bidders on the Serbian and Bulgarian sides of the border.

Result indicators: target values of indicators could be revised taking into account the existing trends after the contracting of projects submitted under the second call; in case the projects under implementation will generate economies, thematic calls should be considered in order to ensure the achievement of all Programme objectives / indicators.

Horizontal issues: an ad-hoc assessment could be performed by means of an evaluation or survey at beneficiary level in order to quantify the contribution of the financed projects to horizontal issues.

Danube Strategy: synergies could be strengthened through targeted awareness raising activities and a dedicated call for proposals financed through possible economies of projects from the first call.

Cross border added value: information and publicity activities should further disseminate the concept of added value of cross-border cooperation. The implementation of a "best practice section" on the Programme website shall also serve this purpose.

Future programming period

Programming: efforts should be made in order to expand the availability of statistical data concerning the Programme Area. Technical Assistance resources could be used to commission extensive socio-economic research or to set-up a permanent observatory of the cross-border Region. In the preparation for the new Programming period, enhanced and institutionalized coordination with the MAs of other IPA Programmes of the area should be pursued to ensure further effectiveness in the use of IPA financial resources by establishing for example a joint regional working group that should meet during the programming phase. European macro-regional strategies relevant to the cross-border area should also be taken into account from the stage of Programming. When defining the strategy and the 4 thematic objectives that will be addressed by the future programme covering the cross-border area, the findings of the socio-economic analysis and ex-ante evaluation should take into account the 7 thematic objectives listed among the 11 thematic objectives presented in the draft Common Provision Regulation (CPR) - EC document COM (2013) 246/ 22.4.2013 (aligned with 5 out of 8 indicative IPA II thematic objectives/priorities) that have been addressed by the projects financed in the current programming period as an indicator of the relevance assigned by beneficiaries to these topics.

Launching of calls for proposals: schedule sequence and type of calls taking into account the progressive achievement of Programme objectives: a first call should be used in order to "test" the response of applicants and trends in terms of performing and underperforming KAls, geographic participation and type of applicants. Once these are known, corrective actions can be taken in the form of communication campaigns and targeted/thematic calls to increase demand for certain type of Measures that can ensure full achievement of indicators. Consider the following examples:

- ▶ Calls with thematic focus (on specific PAs or KAls) or calls with geographic focus (directed on under-represented target groups, from specific regions);
- ▶ ☐ Bottom-up approach, through which the programme stakeholders give the possibility to local actors to take part in the decision-making process regarding the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local areas.

Furthermore specific information activities could be considered in order to target Measures / types of beneficiaries / geographical areas that have expressed lower demand in order to foster more extended and balanced participation in the Programme.

Assessment and selection: increased transparency could be pursued by providing applicants the details related to the scoring assigned during the technical and financial assessment as this would also increase the quality of future applications.

First level control: revision of the FLC system may be considered. The choice between centralized and decentralized system should be based on cost-efficiency considerations and a thorough assessment of the following elements which are derived from a review of FLC systems in 19 Member States of the EU:

- ▶ **Decentralized systems:** process of administrative decentralization, existence of private firms with expertise on the market, development of internal control function within public authorities, availability of TA resources to contract external controllers;
- ▶ **Centralized systems:** existence of large firms with national coverage and relevant expertise, capacity of central/local public administration or of similar bodies to perform FLC Function, availability of TA funding to train controllers.

Financial circuit: consider introducing rules on decommitment in the initial contracting templates, for projects to be financed in the next programming period, and raise awareness among beneficiaries about the issue already in the start-up phase of the Programme.

Cross-border added value: For the future programming period the Operational Programme could include a framework for defining the concept of added value, taking into account, for example, the following aspects:

- ▶ the BG-RS IPA CB Programme should constitute the most appropriate source of financing for tackling the problems identified compared to national sources of financing;
- ▶ the measurement of the degree of cooperation at project partnership level;
- ▶ the degree of institutionalization of the networks created through the project;
- ▶ the degree of involvement of vulnerable groups;
- ▶ the degree of involvement of institutions and establishment of new regulatory procedures, as a result of the cross-border cooperation.

Selection criteria and indicators should be adopted for the purpose of mainstreaming and monitoring added value. Furthermore, application forms should be developed to encompass individual text fields in which applicants detail the ways in which each of the joint criteria is to be integrated in the project.

Developing the partner search facility existing on the website into a collaborative platform, may contribute not only to the creation of new partnerships, but also to the generation of new and better project ideas

Horizontal issues: further consistency should be ensured on the horizontal issues described in the programming and implementation documents; Programme and Priority Axis indicators could be revised in order to take into account indicators established for the monitoring of horizontal issues, thus allowing also the quantification and monitoring of targets at Programme Level. Further clarifying the description of the indicators and the expected outcomes and results, will facilitate their understanding on behalf of beneficiaries and their implementation at project level.

Danube Strategy: the Danube Strategy could be further integrated in the Programme Intervention Logic (e.g. dedicated measures), or in terms of implementation arrangements (e.g. selection criteria).