

# ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2014



Bulgaria – Serbia  
IPA Cross-border Programme

CCI No. 2007CB16IPO006

**June 2015**



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## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

<b>AIR</b>	Annual Implementation Report
<b>AA</b>	Audit Authority
<b>AEUFEA</b>	Executive Agency of Audit of European Union Funds
<b>CA</b>	Certifying Authority
<b>CBC</b>	Cross-border Cooperation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IPA</b>	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
<b>IPA II</b>	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014-2020
<b>JMC</b>	Joint Monitoring Committee
<b>JTS</b>	Joint Technical Secretariat
<b>JWG</b>	Joint Working Group for preparation of the IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Serbia
<b>MA</b>	Managing Authority
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NA</b>	National Authority
<b>PA</b>	Priority Axis
<b>RI</b>	Result Indicator
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance





## I. IDENTIFICATION

The Annual Implementation Report is drawn up in accordance with the provisions of Article 112 of Commission Regulation № 718/2007 of 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

The current report is the sixth in a row for the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme and it covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014.

The Managing Authority of the Programme is the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria having as counterpart the European Integration Office of the Republic of Serbia designated as the National Authority.

Objective concerned:	IPA Cross-border Cooperation	
Programming period:	2007 – 2013	
Programme:	Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme	CCI No. 2007CB16IPO006
Eligible area concerned:	<b>On the Bulgarian side (NUTS III regions):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Vidin District (11 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Montana District (11 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Sofia District (22 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Pernik District (6 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Kyustendil District (9 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Sofia District (1 municipality)</li> </ul>	<b>On the Serbian side (NUTS III regions):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Bor District (4 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Zaječar District (4 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Nišava District (11 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Pirot District (4 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Jablanica District (6 municipalities)</li> <li>✓ Pčinja District: (7 municipalities)</li> </ul>
Reporting year:	2014	

Date of approval of Head of MA:	22 <sup>nd</sup> of May 2015
Date of approval by the JMC:	9 <sup>th</sup> of June 2015



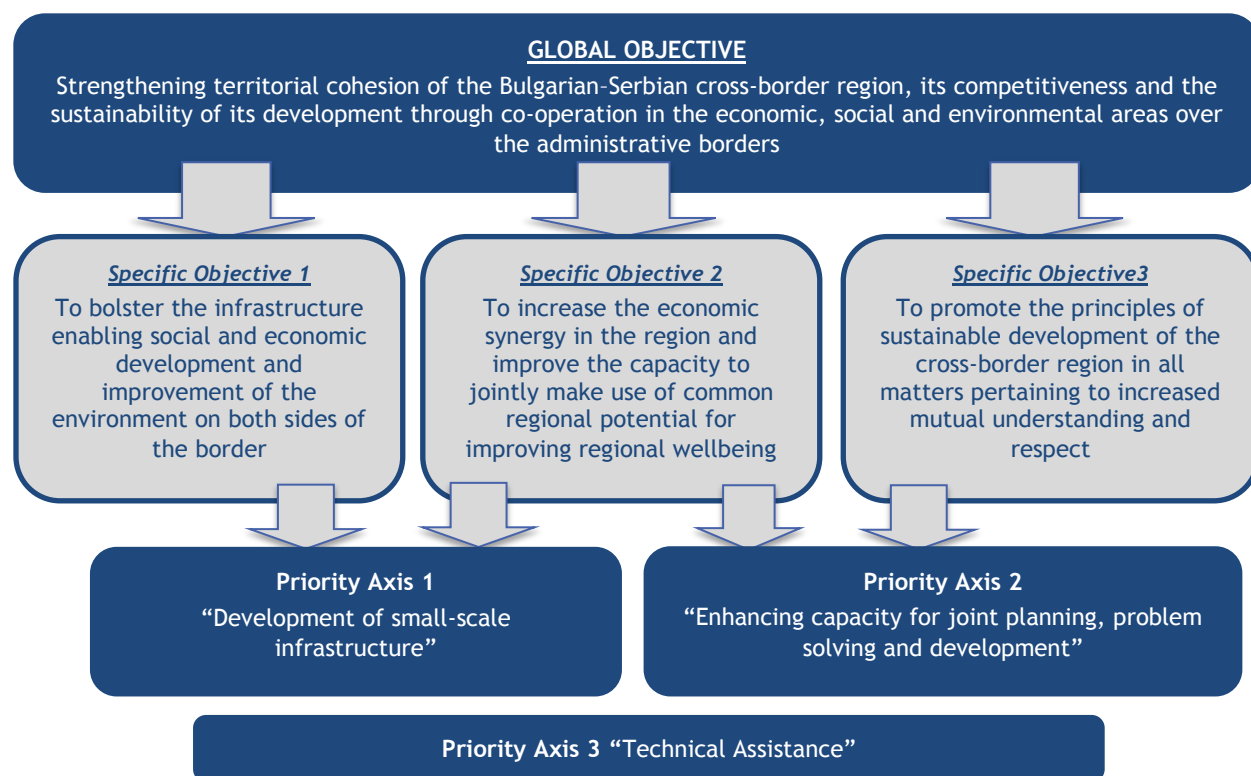


## II. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The Programme was approved by the European Commission on 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2008 (Decision no.1058) and amended by European Commission Decision C(2010) 4142 of 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2010. Following the positive opinion on description of management and control systems, the implementation started in 2011.

Two open Calls for proposals were organised under the Programme and more than 150 projects were financed. The available budget was entirely covered by these Calls for proposals. Additionally, the accumulated savings from projects already completed were used for financing the qualitative worthwhile projects from the reserve list. The Programme has attracted more than 370 applicants which is a positive sign for the intensity of co-operation between organisations of the border region. At the same time, it shows the dynamics and increased interest in launching common cross-border initiatives to contribute for the sustainable development of the region.

IPA projects are often relatively small-scaled but they create valuable cross-border partnership, influence territorial cohesion, and contribute for sharing the European values and facilitating the integration. The projects supported by the Programme contribute to the achievement of IPA objectives and they correlate with the pillars of EU strategy for the Danube Region by targeting on one hand the development of infrastructure that facilitates connection between the two countries and, and on the other, creation of linkages between business, education and research entities that can foster socio-economic activity and development. The objectives and priority axes of the Programme are presented in the figure below:





## 2.1. ACHIEVEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESS

### WHAT WAS THE PROGRAMME INITIALLY MEANT TO ACHIEVE?

The Programme was developed in view of the IPA objectives for promoting good neighbourly relations and encouraging their harmonious, balanced and sustainable development. In this respect, the Programme was meant to strength territorial cohesion of the cross-border region through joint local and regional initiatives in the economic, social and environmental area. It intended to complement the strategies and measures at national level with support to the small-scale projects in benefit to a larger number of applicants and residents of the border region.

The main purpose of the Programme interventions was to support activities for economic development, by investing in small-scale infrastructures, favourable business environment, and human potential and social inclusion. The Programme's strategy was focused on the identified strengths and potentials of the region in conformity with the cross-border needs and possibilities for co-operation in labour market related initiatives, environmental protection measures and people-to-people activities, as well as in preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources in the region.

The Programme pursued the following broad objectives:

- 1) To bolster the infrastructure enabling social and economic development and improvement of the environment on both sides of the border;
- 2) To increase the economic synergy in the region and improve the capacity to jointly use common regional potential for improving regional wellbeing, through collaboration in particular sectors such as culture, tourism, research and development, environmental protection and education, and through active exchange of best practices and know-how.
- 3) To promote the principles of sustainable development of the cross-border region through developing successful models of co-operation, on the business and local stakeholder in key priority areas.

The Programme strategy and its objectives correspond to the relevant EU and national cohesion policy promoting stability, security and prosperity in the mutual interest of both countries. In addition, the IPA Programme intended to provide assistance to Serbia in terms of building institutional capacity for management of Structural Instruments in view of the forthcoming EU membership.

### IS IT STILL ON TRACK FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE OBJECTIVES AND WHERE DO EFFORTS NEED TO BE REFOCUSED?

As per the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation, the Programme remained relevant to the needs of the border region and it was considered as being in line and consistent with the policy context of 2014-2020 in terms of objectives and priorities. The majority of Programme output and result indicators' targets set for 2016 have been overachieved which provides a reasonable assurance that the Programme is on a good track for achieving the objectives initially set and there is no need to refocus them.





## WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE PROGRAMME AREA AND FOR THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMME'S INTERVENTIONS?

The impact assessment is one of the key elements in the implementation process that will clearly outline the changes in the Programme area and for the people living there as a result of the programme's interventions. In 2015 the MA is going to award an external expertise service contract for assessment of the long-term impact by the Programme and the achievement of its objectives. However, at the current stage the main Programme results achieved so far are:

- *Improved physical and information infrastructure* addressing the social and economic development in the region through 89 infrastructural projects for rehabilitation/construction of information, social infrastructure and business, and innovation facilities.
- *Increased joint actions for tackling common challenges and opportunities of the periphery border region in order to overcome its regional disparity* through establishment of partnerships across the border and through implementation of joint cooperation projects – more than 300 institutions reached, 788 people to people initiatives carried out, 52 joint cultural events carried out, 156 awareness-raising campaigns organised and more than 100000 people addressed/reached by projects activities.
- *Enhanced environment for sustainable economic development* of the border area through establishment of links and networking on the institutional, business and educational levels, and through exchange of experience and know-how for research and development and in the field of the entrepreneurship – 392 business linkages created and more than 400 partnership established, 252 management plans/strategies/researches developed; 63 common marketing initiatives carried out and more than 700 institutions participated in knowledge economy activities, more than 30000 SMEs addressed in cross-border projects, 99 management and job-related training courses carried out with more than 3000 people participants, and 137 new jobs created.
- *Strengthened potential for tourism development* through sustainable utilisation of regional resources (natural and cultural assets) of the border region and exchange and transfer of know-how – 84 common cross-border tourist products and services created, 81 tourist destinations developed, 250 tourist business events and seminars, cultural workshops carried out and more than 70 projects implemented for exchange and transfer of know-how in tourism sector.
- *Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and natural preservation* through small-scale infrastructural projects concerning environmental protection, enriched partnerships for prevention of natural disasters and awareness raise of pollution prevention in the region with involvement of 45 institutions in joint environmental friendly projects.

More details on successful projects under the Programme could be found at: [www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu](http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu)







### 2.1.1. Information on the physical progress of the Programme

#### ▪ Status of the projects

The number of subsidy contracts signed till the end of 2014 is 151, involving 255 project partners<sup>1</sup>, respectively, 142 Bulgarian partners and 113 Serbian partners.

The first Call for proposals was opened for all areas of intervention under PA1 and PA2 of the Programme. This Call was initially launched at the amount of EUR 7 239 272, covering the financial allocation for the years 2007 and 2008. However, the re-allocation of the budget appropriation for the year 2009 (at the amount of EUR 4 991 499) was carried out so as to fund the highest number of project proposals having successfully passed the quality assessment thresholds. The JMC approved the proposal for increasing the total budget for that Call up to EUR 12 230 771. As a result, 53 projects were financed of the total amount EUR 11 778 977.

The second Call for proposals was also opened for all areas of intervention under the Programme. The Call attracted more than 260 applications out of which 257 applications were submitted within the deadline. The total value of the submitted project proposals was accounted at EUR 75 486 765. Based on the large number of the proposals submitted and the significant number of projects having successfully passed the threshold of 65 points for quality worthy applications, the JMC made decisions to re-allocate the commitment appropriations for the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and to use the accumulated savings from projects already completed for the purposes of that Call for proposals. As a result, 98 projects at the total value of EUR 23 556 893 were contracted during the year 2014, out of which 24 projects were under PA1 and 74 projects were under PA2.

All financed projects under the first Call for proposals were successfully completed till the end of 2013. As of 31 December 2014, there were 73 projects completed and 25 projects under implementation from the second Call for proposals. Based on the final visits conducted by the JTS, it could be estimated that all planned project activities were 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 amounts, project duration) and results achieved as well as the best available photos illustrating the project results was developed. All the project summaries were uploaded to the Programme web site: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu>

#### Summary of the main parameters of the Calls for proposals under the Programme

1 <sup>st</sup> Call for Proposals	No. 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1
Launched on 30 <sup>th</sup> of November 2009	Budget <sup>2</sup> : EUR 12 230 771
110 project proposals received within the deadline	
Assessment	July 2010 – April 2011
Contracting	May 2011 – August 2011
<b>53 project financed</b>	<b>Total amount: EUR 11 778 977</b>
All projects completed as of 31 December 2013	





<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Proposals</b>		<b>No. 2007CB16IPO007-2011-2</b>
Launched on 22 <sup>nd</sup> of November 2011		Budget <sup>1</sup> : EUR 20 397 606.05
257 project proposals received within the deadline		
Assessment		October 2011 – February 2012
Contracting		January 2013 – November 2013
<b>98 project financed</b>		<b>Total amount: EUR 23 556 893</b>
73 projects completed and 25 projects under implementation as of 31 <sup>st</sup> of December 2014		

### ▪ Modifications to the subsidy contracts

During the project life-cycle and due to the certain reasons, the following types of modifications to the subsidy contracts might be necessary for the smooth projects implementation: partnership changes, project contents changes, budget amendment, extension of implementation period and administrative changes. Depending on the type of the changes and their effect on the project outcomes and results, the contracts' modifications were proceed with notification and / or with written approval or addendum on the part of the relevant administrative structure, the JTS, the MA or the JMC.

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 a common practice and in any case need prior approval on the part of the JMC and signing of addenda.

Since the first Call for proposals brought a significant number of requests for contracts' modifications, the respective procedures were improved in line with the principles of the sound management to ensure administrative burden reduction. Currently the modification procedures are the day's routine and they do not affect to 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.

The table below presents data for all results indicators under the Programme *in a cumulative manner and based on the finalised projects*. The achievements were measured in compliance with the elaborated Methodology of Programme output and result indicators assessment in order to ensure their reliable and plausible interpretation. In addition, a *forecast on the expected indicators values* for the years 2015 and 2016 is provided. The data for the achievement in the following two years are *based on the projects approved but not finalised yet* under the second Calls for Proposals.

<sup>1</sup> Counted as unique partner names (each organisation is counted only once)

<sup>1</sup> According to the JMC decision for re-allocation of budget commitments.





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Programme Result Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Improved small-scale infrastructure	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	29	2	21	6	5	63
	Target 2016	2.5%										
	Baseline	31										
Increase of public transport coverage (% of population)	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,081	3,3	0	0	6,381
	Target 2016	2% (3,55 km)										
	Baseline	3,480 km										
Decreased pollution in the region	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	0	2*	0	0	0	2
	Target 2016	2%										
	Baseline	3										
Increased attractiveness of the region based on preservation of natural resources	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	0*	4	11	0	16
	Target 2016	2%										
	Baseline	8										
Projects actually applied	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	0	0	7
	Target 2016	3%										
	Baseline*	10										
Number of joint information services established	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	33	5	0	68
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	32										
Improved environment for development of relationships across the border	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	95	74	0	202
	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	14 (7373)	0	0	25
	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)	83.5 (761800)	0	0	95.5
	Target 2016	2%										
	Baseline	42										
Number of new partnerships created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	163	187	65	22	0	437
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	49										

\* Source of data: Interim and the Final Project Reports of the successfully finalised projects till the end of 2014.

The values of Programme's result indicators were calculated on the basis of Interim and the Final Project Reports of the successfully finalised projects till the end of 2014. In this respect, calibration of the level of achievement of some indicators values was carried out on the ground of the performed final visit and on the spot check under the finalised projects.

From the data presented above it is apparent that most of the result indicators have reached their target values closely to or considerably above the target for year 2016. The figures provides a reasonable





assurance that the Programme achievements are on good track taking into account the accumulated delay in the start of its implementation and the automatic de-commitment procedures applied for the first few years.

The programme appears to have a genuine cross border impact, measureable in terms of the following indicators:

- Number of new partnerships created (RI10);
- Improved environment for development of relationships across the border (RI7);
- Increased cross-border movement of people and exchange of goods and services in the region (RI9);
- Improved small-scale infrastructure (RI1) and number of joint information services established (RI6).

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 and final reports.

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

The total value of the Programme after the procedure for automatic de-commitment of funding for year 2012 is EUR 34 089 013, out of which EUR 28 975 661 is the EC funding and EUR 5 113 352 is the amount of the national co-financing from state budgets by the partnering countries.

#### Breakdown of priority axes by source of funding:

Priority	Community Funding (EUR)	National Public funding (EUR)	Total funding (EUR)	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 of 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 975 661</b>	<b>5 113 352</b>	<b>34 089 013</b>	<b>85:15</b>

*\*The table above represents data for the period 2007-2013 according to JMC decision as of 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2011 for approving an amendment related to new financial allocations covering the period of 2012 to 2013 of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme which follows the adoption of the Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework 2012-2013 on the part of the EC and Programme amendment approved related to the de-commitment procedure for 2012 (Decision C(2014) 1534 as of 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2014).*

#### ■ Achievement of the Programme payment targets

The financial target for the year 2014 is EUR 4 904 646 (IPA financing). All measures taken by the MA for continuing the good track of the verification process under the Programme resulted in high level of absorption of funds and overachievement of the targets.





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The total amount of IPA funds certified to 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 is EUR 7 037 543.

Programme Payment targets						EC advance payments 2007-2009	EC reimbursements 2007-2013*	Total advance payments and reimbursements	Amounts to be included in application for payment in order to avoid "n+3" risk	
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014				2015	2016
0	0	1 061 448	4 714 194	4 808 474	4 904 646	5 775 642	13 370 636	19 146 278	5 002 738	10 878 436

\* Cumulated amounts 2007-2013

### ▪ Data from quality checks performed by the Certifying Authority

In the year 2014, the MA succeeded to submit four certification reports amounting to EUR 7 223 709 (IPA financing). The regular on-the-spot checks before certification were conducted by the "National Fund" Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, acting as a CA under the Programme. Based on their examinations, expenditures on the total amount of EUR 186 166 were excluded from the proposal for certification to the EC.

### 2.1.4. Information on the breakdown of use of the funds

The table below presents the actual financial data for the year 2014. As it is evident from the information provided, the project beneficiaries have submitted to the MA interim and final payments' requests amounting to EUR 9 066 254.

#### Priority axes by source of funding (EUR)

	Expenditures paid out by the beneficiaries included in payment claims sent to the MA	Corresponding Community and Public contribution (IPA and national co-financing)	Private expenditures	Expenditures paid by the body responsible for making payments to the beneficiaries (IPA and national co-financing)	Total amount certified by CA
Priority Axis 1	4 700 580	4 697 137	3 443	4 418 089	3 870 779
Priority Axis 2	4 365 674	4 365 674	0	3 681 312	4 254 183
Priority Axis 3	154 453	154 453	0	578 455	157 944
Grand total	9 220 707	9 217 264	3 443	8 677 856	8 282 906

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



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The breakdown of use of the funds accumulated by Calls for proposals as of 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 is presented in the table below:

Call s for proposals	Contracts	Total contracts amount (IPA and national co-financing*)	Advance payments (IPA and national co-financing*)	Interim and final payments (IPA and national co-financing*)	Total payments (IPA and national co-financing*)	Comparison of total payments to total contracts amount
1 <sup>st</sup> Call for Proposals	53	11 778 977	2 217 763	7 540 182	9 757 945	82.84%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Call for Proposals	98	23 556 893	4 285 326	8 431 205	12 716 531	53.98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>35 335 870</b>	<b>6 503 089</b>	<b>15 971 387</b>	<b>22 474 476</b>	<b>63.60%</b>

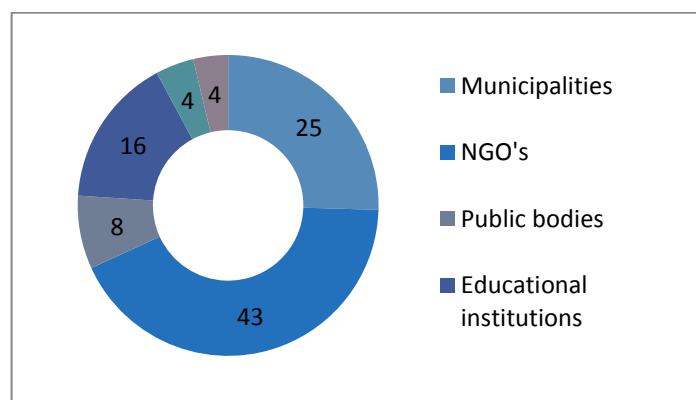
\*National co-financing including state budget co-financing for Bulgaria and obligatory beneficiaries' own co-financing for Serbia.

The data above provide evidence for the good financial rates of the payments under the Programme. The first Call for proposals was closed in 2014 and the payments were accomplished at the total rate of 82.84% in comparison to the contracting level. The payments under the second Call for proposals are going in good track with the total rate of more than 50% at the end of the year 2014. Over-contracting was carried out under the Programme so that the available budget amounts are utilised efficiently.

### 2.1.5. Assistance by target groups

The direct beneficiaries under the Programme are variety of entities (municipalities, district administrations, NGO's, cultural and educational institutions, etc.)

The distribution (in %) of different types of beneficiaries implementing projects under the Programme (state of play as of 2014) is shown in the chart to the right:



### 2.1.6. Assistance repaid or re-used

Not applicable

### 2.1.7. Qualitative analysis

The contracting and financial results gathered in the year 2014 provide evidence for the nature of the implementation rate. The certified amounts of IPA funds exceed the programme's payment targets as of December 2014 and *no automatic de-commitment for 2014 is applied*. Consequently, the total certified



amounts under the Programme (IPA financing) equal EUR 15.339 million or 52.94% of Programme budget for the period 2007-2013.

Programme has attracted more than 370 applications under two open Calls for Proposals. Based on the large number of quality proposals under the second Call, the JMC took a decision for *over-contracting of the accumulated savings under the Programme*. The projects cover a variety of thematic issues including small-scale infrastructure, knowledge-sharing and education, innovation, science, cultural exchange, sustainable development through enhanced ecology, tourism, etc. The contracted rate till the end of 2014 is at the level of EUR 35 335 870 or 121.95% of Programme budget (IPA financing and national co-financing) for the period 2007-2013.

During 2014, *no significant problems are encountered for Programme implementation* and no risk events were identified to Programme performance.

The management and control systems of the Programme were audited in 2014 by the Audit Authority and the assessment result was rated at level 1: „Works well, only minor improvements are needed“.

When measuring the progress in terms of Programme indicators, at the end of December 2014, the output indicators showed a good degree of achievement. For both output and result indicators there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of target values, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants on the essence of the indicators, and on the other hand, as a result of the programming, marked out lower target values and no clear baseline values in the Programme document. However, the conclusions of the analyses for the output and result indicators are taken into consideration in elaborating the IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Serbia.

The cross-cutting issues are addressed through the implementation of specific actions in the financed projects. The environment-related horizontal priority is integrated within PA1 projects through investments for environmental protection and tourism development and in PA2 for awareness rise in regards to EU environmental policies and sustainable development. The projects also comply with the gender equality and non-discrimination principles although they are not directly targeting through the Programme priorities.

## 2.2. INFORMATION ABOUT COMPLIANCE WITH COMMUNITY LAW

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

The Programme was prepared in accordance with Community Strategic Guidelines 2007 – 2013 and remained 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 the 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 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2009.

### ➤ Memorandum of Understanding

The MoU was signed on 18<sup>th</sup> 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 to sign an addendum to the MoU. The Addendum was signed on 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2012. Formal procedures for entry into force of both the MoU and the Addendum on the Serbian side were completed on 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2013.

## 2.3. SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THEM

No significant problems for Programme implementation were encountered during 2014.

## 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<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. Since its approval, the Programme document was amended with Decision C(2010) 4142 on 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2010; Decision C(2012) 4939 on 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, Decision C(2012) 9424 on 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 and Decision C(2014) 1534 on 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 following the procedures for financial allocations or automatic de-commitment of the Programme's commitment appropriations. .

## 2.5. COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS

The Programme complements the national operational programmes since it support activities variety socio-economic sectors and contributes to achievement of the national priorities. However the focus of the programme is to encourage the sustainable regional development of the border areas with emphasis on the bilateral cross-border cooperation. The complementarity with other financial instruments is ensured through mechanisms foreseen in the programming document and the co-ordination done through the national structures participating in the JMC.

The Programme defines a cross-border strategy for a common future development of the border region and after the adoption of the EUSDR it is become financial sources that can support priorities of the Danube Strategy. The entire territory of the Programme is part of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. *Both priority axes of the Programme correlated directly with the pillars of Danube strategy*, by targeting, on the one hand, the development of infrastructure that facilitates connection between the two countries and, on the other hand, creating 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 is reflected in Measure 1.1 "Physical and Information Infrastructure" of 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 utilisation of regional resources” and 2.3 “People to people actions” of the Programme.

The second pillar of the Danube Strategy aims, among others, at restoring and maintaining the quality of water. This issue is observed in Measure 1.2 “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues” and 1.3 “Assistance for project preparation” of 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 Programme.

The third pillar of the Danube Strategy aims developing the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies, similarly to Measure 2.1 “Links and networking on the institutional, business and education levels” of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border 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 Programme.

The fourth pillar of the Danube Strategy, related to improvement of institutional capacity and co-operation and to tackling organised and serious crime, is partially reflected in the 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 co-operation.

A sample of projects implemented under the Programme, which results contribute to the Danube Strategy values are presented below:

Thematic scope	Selected projects as of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme (2007-2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ environment;</li> <li>○ education and skills;</li> <li>○ investing in people;</li> <li>○ research activities;</li> <li>○ networking, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Zones of growth. Investment promotion of brown and green zones in Vidin, Zajechar and Bor regions;</li> <li>✓ Assessment of flood risk – a base for sustainable development in upper part of Nishava catchment;</li> <li>✓ Green Ambassadors for Climate Change Prevention: Raising the awareness of young people on climate change and responsible environmental and civil behaviour;</li> <li>✓ Creation of a database of pollutants from industrial waste in a trans-boundary aspect and a logical framework for problem solving;</li> <li>✓ 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 Sofia and Nishava districts;</li> <li>✓ Linking innovation with SME performance in Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria;</li> <li>✓ Renovation and creation of small scale infrastructure and sports</li> </ul>





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 a 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 ensures reliable accounting, monitoring and financial reporting system. A 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) was issued by the Commission in May 2011.

### ■ Implementation manuals and Management Information System

#### ➤ Programme Implementation Manual

The Programme manual including annexes and appendixes describes in detail the specific rules and procedures for implementation of the Programme. Since August 2011 a common manual for the three IPA CBC Programmes managed by Bulgaria (Bulgaria – Serbia, Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria – Turkey) has been applied. During the reporting period an annual review and modification of the manual was carried out.

#### ➤ Project Implementation Manual

The Project manual is a guiding tool prepared by the MA, NA and JTS to support the beneficiaries in the process of project management and implementation. It is regularly updated in order to reflect legislative amendments in the applicable rules and regulations. During the reporting period the manual was revised in order to reflect the amendments in Practical Guide for external actions.

#### ➤ Management Information System

The MIS is fully operational and it collects Programme related data (priority structure, budget, indicators etc.); projects data on the application and assessment phase, contracting and implementation (Subsidy contract and modifications concerns, progress implementation reports and FLC request, etc.); and financial data for ensuring sound management of Community funds. The system is regularly upgraded and accessible via Internet at <https://mis-bgrs.mrrb.government.bg> (the entries are controlled through users' permissions).





### ■ Monitoring measures and risk assessment procedure

#### ➤ Programme level

The MA and the JMC are responsible for monitoring the Programme implementation in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The JMC observes the monitoring of the Programme implementation and ensures the achievement of the Programme objectives through a rational use of the allocated resources.

An attendance *JMC meeting* was carried out on 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014 in Pravets, Bulgaria. The main focus of the meeting was discussion and approval of the proposal for utilization of the available funds Programme and contracting of next quality worthwhile projects from the reserved list of the second Call for proposals. During the meeting was also presented and approved the Annual implementation report of the Programme for 2013.

Additionally, several *JMC written procedures* were conducted for consideration and approval of negotiation reports for contracts under second Call for proposals; subsidy contracts' modifications including changes in partnerships, budgets' relocations, extension of the projects' implementation periods, etc; TA budget for year 2015.

A number of *technical meetings* between MA, NA and JTS were carried out within 2014 for discussion of issues related to the smooth implementation of the Programme and towards the new programming period.

#### ➤ Project level

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

In the period January-October 2014 were held 18 *initial monitoring visits/meetings*. All visits were carried out within 3 months from the start of each project, as per the IPA Manual. The main purpose of the initial monitoring visits is to check the available resources of the beneficiary, to discuss with the project team the project implementation strategy and to perform initial risk assessment.

Based on the Risk assessment analysis and the Risk response plan, the JTS carried out 10 *ad-hoc monitoring visits* in year 2014. The subject of the monitoring visit is to check the compliance of project implementation with the terms and conditions set out in the implementation plan, and to perform physical check of the investment activities and services delivered. In addition to the ad-hoc visits, JTS has organized technical meetings with project beneficiaries from the second Call for proposals, facing delays in implementation. During these meetings were discussed concrete issues/risks and possible solutions/response.

During 2014 were carried out 90 *final monitoring visits* to beneficiaries of all 72 finalized projects under the second Call for proposals. All projects were successfully finalised and delays, and problems encountered





during the implementation was overcome through the active measures, provided by JTS and the respective project teams.

### ➤ Risk assessment

The risk assessment under the Programme is carried out on a quarterly basis 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 of a baseline categorization of potential risks, events and subsequent analysis and assessment. The RMG prioritizes the identified risks and provides risk assessment at project level (for each project in implementation) and elaborates a Summary Project Risk Assessment Report with concrete measures to be taken in order for the identified risk to be avoided or mitigated.

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 project implementations. However, the most common risks identified as a constant in the project implementation cycle are as follows:

- ✓ *Financial risk* – risk for the project partners to face problems to meet current expenditures on the project 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 financial risk is mainly identified for two groups of beneficiaries: municipalities, implementing infrastructure projects and NGO's with limited financial resources. In order to mitigate the risks ascertained and to ensure timely completion of the project activities, MA and JTS took the following measures:

- ✓ *Strict monitoring of the project progress and discussing measures with the LP /PPs to overcome the problems in the implementation process;*
- ✓ *Delivering detailed monthly reports by the PPs for activities in delay.*
- ✓ *Monitoring visits, day-to-day consultations and communications (meetings) related to the problematic issues.*
- ✓ *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 from occurring, the most of the identified project risk events were overcome and the respective projects in risk were smoothly implemented.

### ▪ First Level Control system

In the framework of the Programme the financial control process encompasses two levels of control -



performed respectively by the First Level Controllers (100% expenditure verification) and MA (verifications of payments claims). It took approximately 90 days from the submission of a request for FLC verification until the reimbursement of the payment claim, out of which 30 days are absorbed by FLC and 60 days by the validation and payment procedures by the MA.

The FLC system was developed in accordance with Art. 16 of Regulation (EC) 1080/2006 in order to make possible to verify:

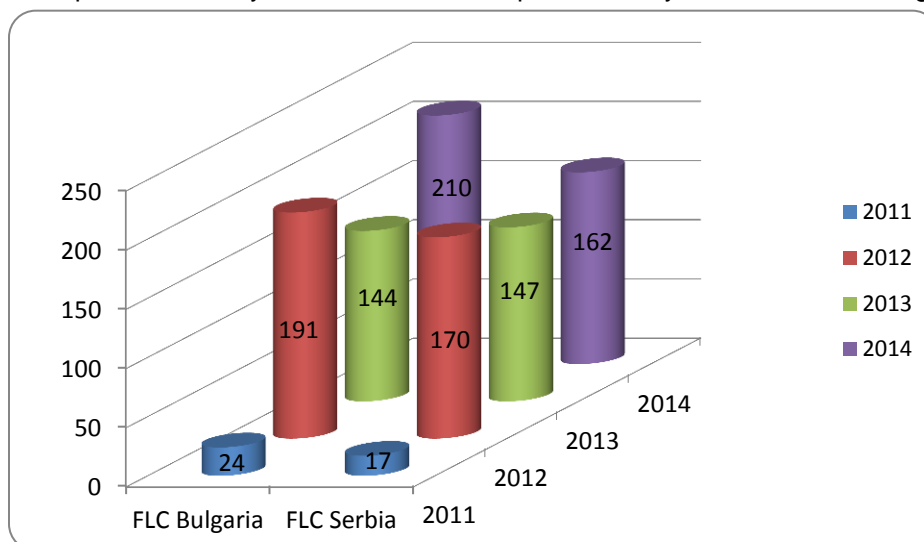
- ✓ *Delivery of the products and services (as described in the approved Application Form which is the reference point for the approval decision regarding the activities and finance; and/or the project subsidy contract – which sets the legal background for the implementation of the project.);*
- ✓ *Soundness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

Bulgaria has adopted a decentralized FLC system with a pool of freelance controllers selected by the MA. The controllers perform verifications on six months periods during the whole life-cycle of the projects. An option for request of verification on three months basis is allowed depending on the spent amounts by the partners. The MA carried out quarterly quality check (on the sample bases) over the work performed by the controllers.

Serbia has adopted a centralized FLC system. The controllers are full-time employees of the CFCU, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia and they are responsible for performing verifications during the whole life-cycle of the projects. Control over the work by the controllers is carried out regularly.

*The financial control process under the Programme is assessed as efficient considering the audit conclusions and the financial results achieved to n+3 rule. For year 2014, the controllers carried out 210 on-the-spot visits at the premises of the project partners in Bulgaria and 162 checks on the expenditures of the project partners in Serbia. The total verified amounted by the controllers in Serbia is EUR 3 242 637.65.*

The chart below represents the dynamic of the checks performed by FLC under the Programme on the yearly base.





### ▪ Audits under the Programme

#### ➤ System audit

In year 2014, the AA performed the fourth system audit under the Programme. Its main objective was to obtain reasonable assurance about the effective functioning of the management and control system under the Programme in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) 718/2007 and Regulation (EC) 1828/2006. The audit was carried out by Executive Agency of Audit of European Union Funds (AEUFEA), Ministry of Finance, Republic of Bulgaria and Audit Authority office of EU Funds to the Government of Republic of Serbia in the period between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014.

The scope of the audit includes the key requirement 7 „Necessary preventive and corrective action where systemic errors are detected by the audit“, as well as follow-up of the corrective measures undertaken on the recommendations given within the third system audit and the second audit of operations. The audit team examined the respective control activities undertaken by the MA and NA during the period from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 to 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2014.

Based on the overall analyses carried out the assessment of the AA regarding the scope of the audit assignment is „Works well, only minor improvements are needed“(grade 1). The audit conclusions of the management and control system established in NA on the territory of Republic of Serbia were submitted on 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2014. According to the preliminary results there are no open findings and the corrective measures undertaken by the NA are effectively implemented.

#### ➤ Audit of operations

The audit of operations assures that the certified expenditures are correct and the underlying transactions are legal and regular. During the audit mission in 2014 the expenditures certified under the Programme in the period 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2013 were checked. The AA underlined four findings with financial impact of EUR 11 414.63 for which the relevant corrective measures were undertaken by the MA.

### ▪ Evaluations under the Programme

Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for Programme was elaborated and approved by JMC on 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2011. The plan defines the overall coordination arrangements for the on-going evaluation process under the programme. Following the adopted 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.

#### ➤ 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 first Call for proposals**

During 2011 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. Detailed information about the findings and recommendation from the internal analysis was presented in the Annual implementation report 2012.

➤ **On-going evaluation of the Programme**

The on-going evaluation of the Programme was carried out by external consultants in year 2013 with aim to assess the current performance (interim results) and review likely impacts of the Programme, to measure the effectiveness of the FLC system, the programme's and project indicators, and to present an independent opinion and recommendations for improvements which could contribute for successful implementation of the Programme and for the new programming period.

The evaluation provided qualitative analysis and overview of the Programme implementation outlining the following general conclusions:

- ✓ *The implementation system of the Programme is operational 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 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.*
- ✓ *As a consequence the results achieved by the Programme, it 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.*

*The recommendations from the on-going evaluation were taken into consideration by MA and put in place. The data for the evaluation covered the period till end of 2012 and the main findings and recommendations were presented in the Annual implementation report 2013.*





### 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 PA1 amounted to EUR 18 748 958.00 (incl. EUR 15 936 614.00 Community funding and EUR 2 812 344.00 National funding).

The projects under PA1 were selected through open Calls for proposals, to which public bodies and non-profit organisations from the border region had applied. PA1 attracted a high number of good quality applications and in total - 39 projects were financed.

15 projects were implemented under the first Call, 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 EUR 6 968 579.

24 projects of the second Call (amounting to EUR 14 457 473) were under implementation in year 2014, out of which 17 projects 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 analyses of the data shows that the majority of contracted projects cover measures 1.1, while under measure 1.2 and 1.3 there are quite a few contracted projects.

Over-contracting was carried out under that PA covering the accumulated savings from projects already completed. The financial progress of the projects under PA1 is presented below.





## Financial progress of projects under PA1, as of 31st of December 2014 (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 <sup>st</sup> Call for proposals	15	6 968 579	1 308 361	4 737 577	6 045 938
2 <sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals	24	14 457 473	2 594 037	4 095 646	6 689 683
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>21 426 052</b>	<b>3 902 398</b>	<b>8 833 223</b>	<b>12 735 621</b>

\*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	16	2	3	44
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	6										
Number of small-scale projects addressing information infrastructure improvement	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	3	9
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										
Number of small-scale projects addressing social infrastructure improvement	Achievement	0	0	0	0	7	1*	1	0	0	1	10
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	3										
Number of small-scale projects addressing business and innovation facilities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	5*	0	0	0	0	5
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	9										
Number of existing facilities upgraded	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	26	1	1	4	1	35
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	6										
Number of institutions/bodies reached by Programme activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	6	106	17	44	0	22	195
	Target 2016	45										
	Baseline	24										
Training places created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	4	3	2	20
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										

\* Calibration of indicator - level of achievement of indicators verified after performed final visit and on the spot check.



### Measure 1.2 Infrastructure concerning environmental issue

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
<b>Number of joint friendly environmental projects</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	5	0	0	13
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline*	2										
<b>Number of small-scale infrastructural projects concerning environmental protection</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	6	0	5	2	0	15
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	0										
<b>Number of projects for pollution prevention and flood reduction</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	2*	0	0	0	0	3
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	3										
<b>Partnerships for cases of natural disasters established</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	4
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	0										
<b>Number of joint eco-itineraries created/developed</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	5*	0	0	0	0	5
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	3										
<b>Number of institutions/bodies reached by Programme activities</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	19	9	14	0	0	45
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	8										

\* Calibration of indicator - level of achievement of indicators verified after performed final visit and on the spot check.

### Measure.1.3. Assistance for project preparation

Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
<b>Feasibility studies</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3*	0	5	0	0	8
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline*	4										
<b>Preliminary and detailed design works</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	11	0	0	18
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	8										
<b>Project environmental assessments</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	1										

\* Calibration of indicator - level of achievement of indicators verified after performed final visit and on the spot check.



### ▪ Qualitative analysis

The measures under PA1 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 39 projects are financed on the total amount EUR 21 426 052.

The output indicators show a good degree of achievements with variations for those related to innovation facilities, pollution prevention and flood reduction activities and feasibility studies.

Majority of projects implemented under PA1 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. 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 36 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/>).

### 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 PA2 amounted to EUR 11 931 154.00 (incl. EUR 10 141 481.00 Community funding and EUR 1 789 673.00 National funding).

The projects under the PA2 are also selected by open Calls for proposals, to which public bodies and non-profit organisations from the border region can apply. In total 112 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 EUR 4 810 398.

Under the second Call for proposals, the projects implemented under PA2 were 74, of which 22 under the Measure 2.1 “Links and networking on the institutional, business and educational levels”, 29 projects under Measure 2.2 “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” and 23 projects under Measure 2.3 “People to people actions”. The value of the contracts amounts to EUR 9 099 420.

The analysis of the data shows a balanced distribution of the projects to the measures without tangibly unattractive spheres of interventions. The over-contracting procedure was carried out under that PA covering the accumulated savings from projects already completed. The financial progress of the projects under PA2 is presented below.

**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	2 802 605	3 712 007
2nd Call for proposals	74	9 099 420	1 691 289	4 335 559	6 026 848
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>13 909 818</b>	<b>2 600 691</b>	<b>7 138 164</b>	<b>9 738 855</b>

\*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
<b>Number of linkages between different institutions created</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	70	0	138	184	4	0	396
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline*	22										
<b>Number of joint databases created</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	7	2	18	20	4	0	51
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	32										
<b>Number of management plans/strategies /researches developed</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	15	77	91	69	10	0	262
	Target 2016	3										
	Baseline	63										
<b>Number of education/business partnerships</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	101	0	196	148	34	0	479
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	90										
<b>Number of common marketing initiatives</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	9	20	31	4	0	67
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	7										
<b>Number of institutions participating in knowledge economy activities</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	47	28	275	372	6	0	728
	Target 2016	5										
	Baseline	81										
<b>SMEs involved/ addressed in CBC projects</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	169	12538	18054	2978	200	0	33939
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	380										
<b>Number of people involved in projects' activities</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	821	18677	19795	5112	348	0	44753
	Target 2016	400										
	Baseline	4858										
<b>Management and job-related training courses</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	12	47	10	30	3	0	102
	Target 2016	15										
	Baseline	14										
<b>Number of people trained</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	230	802	345	1631	54	0	3062
	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
<b>Number of common cross-border tourist products and services</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	32	8	43	1	0	85
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline*	18										
<b>Tourist destinations created/ developed</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	15	5	9	52	4	0	85
	Target 2016	2										
	Baseline	0										
<b>Number of projects concerning common cultural heritage</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	13	3	9	2	0	27
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	6										
<b>Number of cultural events carried out</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	18	4	30	6	0	58
	Target 2016	15										
	Baseline	20										
<b>Number of projects concerning common products and services</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	23	5	38	0	0	66
	Target 2016	10										
	Baseline	7										
<b>New jobs created</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	68	51	15	80	0	217
	Target 2016	50										
	Baseline	2										
<b>Number of projects concerning exchange and transfer of know-how</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	18	3	53	0	0	76
	Target 2016	7										
	Baseline	8										
<b>Number of cross-border business events, seminars, workshops carried out</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	11	43	43	153	5	0	255
	Target 2016	15										
	Baseline	83										
<b>Awareness campaigns carried out</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	20	66	20.5	49.5	1	0	157
	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
<b>Number of people to people collaboration projects</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	148	150	490	26	2	0	790
	Target 2016	<b>50</b>										
	Baseline*	<b>32</b>										
<b>Number of institutions/bodies involved</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	59	120	132	272	11	0	594
	Target 2016	<b>100</b>										
	Baseline	<b>93</b>										
<b>Number of people involved</b>	Achievement	0	0	0	0	777	5596	6263	10629	1140	0	24405
	Target 2016	<b>300</b>										
	Baseline	<b>1624</b>										

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

#### ■ Qualitative analysis

The measures under PA2 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 112 projects are financed on the total amount EUR 13 909 818. The actually contracting amount exceeds the Programme amount for the priority axis, due to procedure for over-contracting.

The output indicators shows a good degree of achievements, however there are numerous cases of substantial overachievement of the target values, attributable on one side to the different approach in measuring and related possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence of the indicators, and on the other hand to the lower target values laid down in the programme.

Majority of projects implemented under PA2 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. Activities were realized with the involvement of all 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/>).

### 3.2.2. Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

No significant problems could be encountered in implementation of 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 PA3 “Technical Assistance” is to ensure an effective and efficient Programme management and information flow, thus improving the quality of cross-border cooperation and management tools. The PA3 finances the preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities of the Programme as well as activities to reinforce the administrative capacity for implementation the programme, its promotion and 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 the amount of EUR 2 897 566 (Community funding) is available for activities under that priority axis.

The indicative budget breakdown for year 2014 was developed on the base of the Annual “Technical Assistance” Plan and approved by JMC on 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2014. Total budget forecast was amounted to EUR 810 397 from which EUR 585 915 allocated for MA and EUR 224 482 for NA.

The main activities carried out under PA3 within 2014 were as follows:

#### ✓ **Training sessions for the Programme staff:**

During 2014, 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. The following main training sessions/workshops attended by JTS experts could be outlined:

- ▶ Project Generation & Development Seminar for ETC programmes;
- ▶ Project reporting and monitoring;
- ▶ Harmonized implementation tools – HIT;
- ▶ European Territorial Cooperation 2014 - 2020: ready, steady, go! How to deal with the final programming phase.

#### ✓ **Organisation of events:**

- ▶ Consultations with the beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in Sofia, Bulgaria. The consultation meeting was attended by 21 participants;
- ▶ 11 Regional Consultations/plenary sessions for preparation of the new Programme 2014-2020 took place on the following dates:
  - On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March in Nis and Pirot, Republic of Serbia;
  - On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March in Leskovac and Vranje, Republic of Serbia;
  - On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March in Zajecar, Republic of Serbia;
  - On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March in Pernik and Kyustendil, Republic of Bulgaria;
  - On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria;
  - On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March in Montana and Vidin, Republic of Bulgaria;
  - On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March in Vraca, Republic of Bulgaria;



The regional meetings were attended by 257 participants.

- ▶ 2 Regional Consultative Forums for preparation of the new Programming period 2014-2020 were organized on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April in Nis, Serbia, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April in Sofia, Bulgaria. Around 75 participants took part in both events;
- ▶ The second meeting of the JWG for preparation of the new Programme 2014-2020 took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May in Nis, Serbia. The meeting was attended by 41 participants;
- ▶ Technical meeting between the representatives of JTS, MA and NA took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May in Pravets, Bulgaria. The meeting was attended by 8 participants;
- ▶ JMC meeting took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May in Pravets, Bulgaria. The meeting was attended by 26 participants;
- ▶ Training for beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals in Serbian language took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August in Nis, Serbia. The training was attended by 36 participants;
- ▶ The final meeting of the JWG for preparation of the new Programme 2014-2020 took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August in Sofia, Bulgaria. The meeting was attended by around 50 participants;
- ▶ Training for beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals in Bulgarian language took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by 25 participants;
- ▶ European Cooperation Day 2014 celebration took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September in Kyustendil, Bulgaria. Around 100 participants took part in the celebration.
- ▶ Technical meeting between the representatives of JTS, MA and NA took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December in Sofia, Bulgaria. The meeting was attended by 20 participants.
- ▶ 4 training sessions for the controllers were organized in 2014:
  - On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January at the Ministry of Regional Development in Sofia, Bulgaria;
  - On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July at the FLC premises in Belgrade, Serbia;
  - On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria;
  - On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria.

#### ✓ *Regarding expenditures for external expertise*

The main part of the technical assistance budget was used for remuneration of controllers appointed to perform checks of expenditures made by the beneficiaries from Bulgaria. However, additional external expertise was used for information and publicity activities under the Programme and for programming process related to the new IPA II CBC Programme.

In year 2014, tender procedure for elaboration and preparation of variety promotional materials for popularization of the Programme was conducted by the MA. The contract was awarded to the Mouse Print advertising agency. The total contract budget was amounted to EUR 10 686.

#### ✓ *Programming for the period 2014-2020*

The main activities for preparation of IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria – Serbia were implemented in 2014. The new Programme was developed in a proactive, consultative process with wide involvement of





stakeholders. The partnership principle was strictly followed during the entire programming process and a broad participation of national, regional and local representatives was ensured.

The Programme's development was supported by the consultants of the Project Planning and Management Consortium. The Consortium was selected through restricted tender procedure under PRAG rules. The service contract was concluded between the MA and the Consortium in 2013 on the total amount EUR 78 500. The main project activities were accomplished in September 2014 with submission of the first draft of the Programme to the EC.

During the preparation process, an ex-ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Programme were carried out by external independent consultants. A service contract was concluded between the MA and Lattanzio e Associati S.p.A., Italy based on the successfully completed competitive negotiation procedure under PRAG rules. The project's main objectives were: to improve the quality of Programme design and to ensure that the draft IPA II CBC Programme clearly articulates the intervention logic and contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy, and the relevant macro-regional strategies; to perform Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft Programme and to ensure that the environmental considerations were taken into account in the final draft of the Programme before its submission to the EC for approval. The total contract amount was EUR 42 980.

In addition, the MA awarded service contract for development of methodological guidelines for baseline and indicative target values establishment of the qualitative result indicators under programme. The contract was concluded between MA and Sigma Hat Ltd., Bulgaria on 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. The project expected outputs are methodological guidelines and questionnaires for measuring the qualitative result indicator's baselines and target values under the IPA II CBC Programmes between Republic of Bulgaria and EU External Borders' Partnering Countries (Serbia/Turkey/the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), as well as comprehensive training sessions for the MA and the respective JSs.

## 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 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 MA, NA and JTS.

During 2014 various tools for information and publicity were used to reach the wide audience:

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



## Programme Website

During 2014 the official web site of the Programme [www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu](http://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 structured and user-friendly manner, allowing the users to find the necessary information more easily.

One of the most important features of the web site is the Projects Funded database, including an interactive map of the cross-border region. The section is very valuable as a tool for increasing Programme transparency and is a prerequisite for raising awareness of positive contributions by the European Union. A special access tools for the JMC members from the web site for sharing documents and information proved very useful in 2014, facilitating as many as 15 separate JMC written procedures. In addition, an entirely new section was added to the Programme web site: "Public Tenders". The section featured as many as 92 tendering publications in 2014.

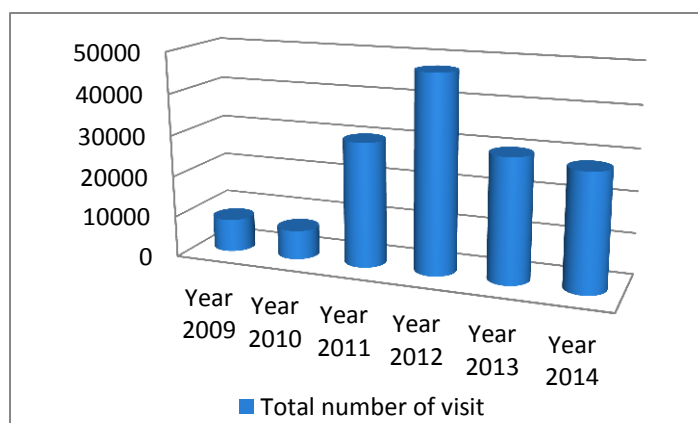
The web site was regularly updated with relevant information on the Programme. The JTS is responsible for the maintaining and updating of the Programmes web site with the relevant information about the Programme. The "News" section was particularly useful to both general public and the potential beneficiaries since it was continuously updated with information on all relevant events, training sessions, info-days, and news in general.

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

- [www.mrrb.government.bg](http://www.mrrb.government.bg) - Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
- [www.eufunds.bg](http://www.eufunds.bg) – EU Structural Funds website in the Republic of Bulgaria
- [www.seio.gov.rs](http://www.seio.gov.rs) – Serbian European Integration Office.

The above described efforts for regular update of the Programme website led to maintaining of high level of the number of website visits – 28 250 visits, or approximately 5% decrease compared to the previous year. This fact can be explained with the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals announced during 2014.

*A comparative chart with overall visits and a table including the unique visits, and impressions 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	29 912	25 497	92 551
2014	28 250	24 667	95 858

### Promotional materials

Tender procedure for elaboration and preparation of a great variety of promotional materials was conducted and a service contract was signed with “Maus Print” advertising agency. The JTS Communication officer actively participated in the process of preparation and design of all the Programme promotional materials. All the promotional materials were properly branded with the Programme visibility elements, incorporated into the overall design, depending on the available branding space. The materials were used for promotion the Programme on various events including: regional consultations, training sessions for beneficiaries and European Cooperation day celebration.

### Information seminars

Due to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2014 there were no “Information days” campaigns either. However, the Programme and the projects were actively promoted during the events related to the preparation for the new programming period, 2014-2020. During 2014 a total of 13 events were organized in the format of information seminars, including 11 Regional consultations/plenary sessions and 2 Regional Consultative forums.

### Mass media campaign

The Programme publicity campaign in 2014 was adjusted to complement the most important Programme goals and activities planned for the year. Thus the publicity campaign was centred on the following activities:

- Regular updating of the Programme web site;
- Preparation of the Programme promotional materials;
- Continuous support by the JTS Communication Officer to the beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals on strategies and rules concerning promotion of the individual projects;
- Organization of the regular Programme events; and
- Organization of the European Cooperation Day 2014.

Proper visibility was secured for each of the events through distribution of available promotional materials (brochures, pens, folders, binders, promotional gifts) and setting of visibility props such as banners and flags. In addition, each public event was preceded and followed by publication of a press release on the Programme web site. Photos illustrating the best project practices were used extensively in all Programme presentations, promo materials and press releases;

EC Day celebration took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 at the central square of Kyustendil, Bulgaria. An exhibition of various art objects, made by students of the local schools, as well as open seminar for demonstration of simple and practical technics for use of recycled materials were organized within the celebration under the motto “How to recycle with creativity”. Numerous awards and incentives were given to the participants in the event. At the end of the celebration, with the joint efforts of all attendees, a mosaic picturing the logo of the Programme from recycled materials was created. More than 100 people took part in the celebration, including numerous representatives of the regional and national media. The visitors could get the latest information about the Programme, the EC Day initiative and were provided with a variety of information materials.

In terms of promoting through the Mass media channels, most of the efforts made and results achieved are

visible on the online media. The promotion on television, radio and newspapers was mostly focused on the regional media targeting local population of the cross-border region. National media are in most cases either too expensive or insufficiently cost-effective for the purpose, having in mind the promotional target groups.

### Active training

The JTS, in cooperation with the MA and the NA, had organized two training sessions for beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals during 2014:

- A training seminar in Serbian language on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August at the Hotel “Tami Residence” in Nis, Serbia. The training was attended by representatives of Serbian partners, who are members of the project management team;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was directed to the members of the management teams of the Bulgarian partners under the subsidy contracts, awarded in July and August 2014.

The aim of the training sessions was to familiarize the participants with the essential moments in the project management, following the main themes, covered in the Project Implementation Manual of the Programme. The most common mistakes and useful tips for solving problems and issues were explained by the Programme representatives. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the implementation of projects, and were provided with advice and consultancy by the Programme representatives.

In addition, the MA and the NA, in cooperation with the JTS, have organized four training sessions for the Controllers. The training sessions were primarily focused on working with the MIS. The MIS system is actively used on a daily basis by most Programme experts, including the controllers, who rely on it for getting comprehensive and up-to-date information about each individual project. The training sessions were organized as follows:

- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **31<sup>st</sup> of January** at the Ministry of Regional Development in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA and the controllers in Bulgaria;
- A training seminar in Serbian language on the **15<sup>th</sup> of July** at the FLC premises in Belgrade, Serbia. The training was attended by the representatives of MA, NA, JTS and the controllers in Serbia;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **12<sup>th</sup> of September** at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA and the controllers in Bulgaria;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **9<sup>th</sup> of December** at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA, NA, and the controllers in Bulgaria.

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



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## 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	28250			
		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%	-5,55			
		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	3			
		Target 2016	20 per Call										
		Baseline	0										
Promotional materials	Leaflets	1) Number of leaflets produced	0	0	1 000	0	3000	6000	0	0			
		Target 2016	500 per Call										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of leaflets distributed			100		95	5600	400	0			
		Target 2016	80% of leaflets produced										
		Baseline	0										
	Brochures	1) Number of brochures produced	0	0	750	0	1000	1300	0	2000			
		Target 2016	500 per year										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of brochures distributed			100		95	1250	50	300			
		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	4850			
		Target 2016	200 per Call										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of materials distributed					4123	3000	950	2037			
		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	0			
		Target 2016	40 per event										
		Baseline	0										
	Thematic seminars/ workshops	Number of organizations/bodies attending	0	0	650	80	97	60	78	28			
		Target 2016	20 per event										
		Baseline	0										
1 a		Number of newspapers publishing	0	0	4	0	4	8	17	4			







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	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	0			
		Target 2016	2 for the duration of the Programme										
		Baseline	0										
	Press releases	Number of press releases published				n/a*	6	3	5	0			
		Target 2016	1 per Call										
		Baseline	0										
	Press Advertisements	Number of press advertisements published	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	0			
		Target 2016	2 per Call										
		Baseline	0										
	Internet media advertisement	Number of advertisements/eBanners				n/a*	2	2	2	2			
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	0										
	eNewsletter	Number of eNewsletters				n/a*	1	17	113	158			
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	0										
	Participation in regional initiatives and forums	Number of events				n/a*	1	1	2	1			
		Target 2016	1										
		Baseline	0										
	TV and Radio campaign	1) Number of TV advertisements aired					0	0	0	0			
		Target 2016	1 for the duration of the Programme										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of radio advertisements aired					2	1	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	0			
		Target 2016	50%										
		Baseline	0										
	Strengthening the capacity of the MA/NA/JTS through attending trainings/seminars	Number of participants					48	83	19	6			
		Target 2016	min 50% of the total staff										
		Baseline	0										







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	Increasing the availability and quality of the information disseminated to the public	1) Increase in the number of project proposals submitted for the last Callfor Proposals in comparison to the number of projects submitted for the preceding Callfor Proposals				n/a*	132	132	0	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	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	61			
		Target 2016	min 20										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					5	4	9	2			
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										
	Controllers performing FLC trainings	1) Number of participants					75	94	27	57			
		Target 2016	min 30										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					3	2	1	4			
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										
	External assessors trainings	1) Number of participants					14	20	0	0			
		Target 2016	min 10										
		Baseline	0										
		2) Number of trainings					1	1	0	0			
		Target 2016	min 1										
		Baseline	0										





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### **Attachments:**

#### **ANNEX I to the Annual Report 2014**

The annex encompasses a comprehensive list on communication and information activities during 2014.

Promotional materials

Programme web site

Programme training sessions

Technical meetings and JMC meeting





### Comprehensive list of Communication and information activities

#### Activity 1: Web site

The official Programme web site was effectively released on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2009. The address of the web site is: [www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu](http://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 was 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 2014** 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 94 times during 2014**, with 32 press releases on Bulgarian language version, 31 press releases on Serbian language version and 31 press releases on English language version of the web site. Press releases with the same content 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. Some particular types of press releases are not published in all three languages, depending on the news relevance and the target audience.

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

- [www.mrrb.government.bg](http://www.mrrb.government.bg) – Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works web site;
- [www.eufunds.bg](http://www.eufunds.bg) – EU Structural Funds web site;
- [www.seio.gov.rs](http://www.seio.gov.rs) – Serbian European Integration Office web site;
- [www.ecday.eu](http://www.ecday.eu) – European Cooperation Day 2014 web site.

As it is visible from the statistical data provided below, the web site activity in 2014 is very close to the level from 2013, equalling approximately 28 000 visits per year. The noticeable difference in the number of visits in 2014 compared to the year 2012 is most likely linked to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2014, and consequently no Information days open to the public and no media campaign promoting the Call as well as the Programme. Nevertheless, a number of projects financed under the second Call were implemented in 2014, and the web site still managed to attract significant number of visitors. Understandably, in 2014 the web site attracted most visits at times when the major Programme events were taking place and when the most important news were being published, such as the regional consultations announcements, the follow-up press releases in February and March, and the news about the submission of the new Programme document to the European Commission in late September, which all boosted the number of visits in October. The data suggests that in the periods when there are





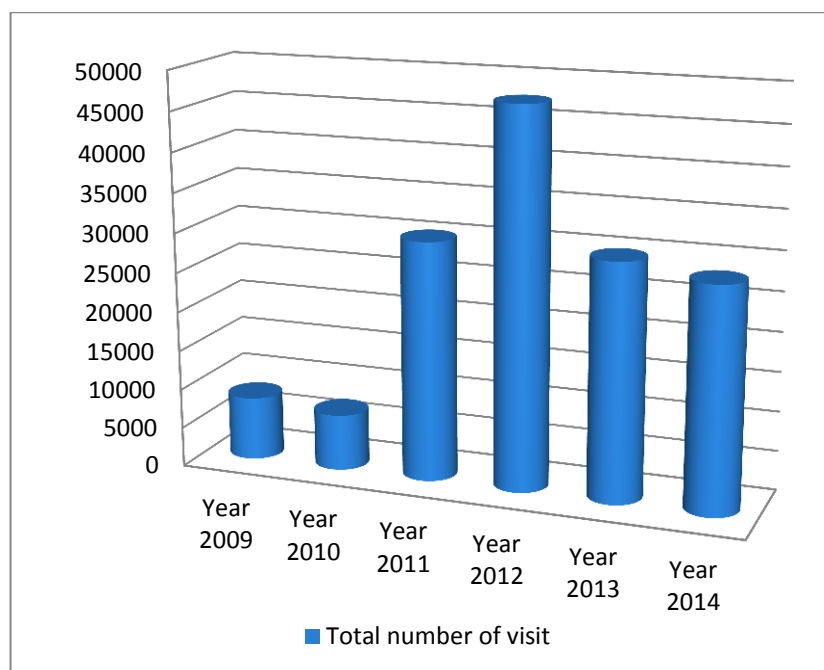
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no new Calls for proposals, the public events such as regional consultations and the EC day celebrations can help improve the Programme visibility. The number of visits to the web site could also be increased by creating the Programme profiles on the Social Media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Programme social media pages can direct the visitors to the Programme web site for full information on particular posts.

Overall, the number of visits in 2014 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 so that it is related to the new Calls for proposals, instead of individual years. In addition, the statistics on the number of web site visits can be used as indicators of effectiveness of specific visibility campaigns, since data on the number of visits are available on a daily, weekly, and monthly as well as yearly basis.

*Number of visits to the Programme web site*

Year/Month	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
January	0	588	683	9835	2929	2,378
February	0	547	867	7818	2831	2,884
March	0	483	942	3429	2807	3,126
April	0	555	844	3015	3109	2,732
May	0	442	1470	3150	2715	2,152
June	0	452	1486	2783	2379	2,319
July	0	480	1741	3226	2209	2,060
August	278	534	2819	2911	2071	1,976
September	1839	521	2460	4292	2134	2,126
October	2613	810	2269	3036	2491	2,542
November	2729	980	7281	2476	2538	2,093
December	575	713	7408	1556	1690	1,862
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8034</b>	<b>7105</b>	<b>30270</b>	<b>47527</b>	<b>29903</b>	<b>28250</b>



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





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In order to secure the conventionally high level of transparency concerning the Programme policies and work in general, the two new sections added to the Programme web site in 2013 were continuously updated in 2014 as well: “Successful projects” and “2014-2020”. In addition, **an entirely new section were added** to the web site main menu in 2014 and updated on a regular basis: **“Public Tenders”**.

The **“Public Tenders”** section aims to help the beneficiaries to ensure widest possible participation in competitive tendering and the requisite transparency according to the *Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions* (PRAG). It features “Summaries of local invitations”, “Contract notices”, “Contract prior information notices”, “Corrigendum” announcements, “Question and Answers” related to the specific tenders, and other relevant public procurement documents. The tender procedures announced by the MA of the Programme have also been featured on the page. In total, the “Public Tenders” page was **updated 92 times in 2014**. The new page allows the regional population and local companies to find the information about numerous public procurement procedures conducted under the Programme and projects in one place, instead of having to rummage through hundreds of specific beneficiary and institutional web sites in search of the latest open tenders. Encouraged by the success from 2014, the new page will be extensively used and updated in 2015 as well.

The **“Successful projects”** section features a comprehensive list of all the projects that were successfully completed under the Programme. The section was updated in 2014, following completion of each new group of projects. 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.

The **“2014-2020”** section is entirely dedicated to the preparation of the new programming period, 2014-2020. The section was updated during 2014 with the relevant news concerning the new programming period such as the two meeting of the JWG and the announcements for the regional consultations. 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. The section was **updated 46 times** in total during 2014.

The image displays three screenshots of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme website. Each screenshot shows the website's header with the European Union flag, the programme title, and a navigation menu. The first screenshot shows the 'Public Tenders' section with a list of tender announcements. The second screenshot shows the 'Successful projects' section with a table of completed projects. The third screenshot shows the '2014-2020' section with news and updates for the upcoming programming period.

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 Pompa Districts, Serbia
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-003	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 "Horizont", Bulgaria
2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-009	EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS	Agency for Economic Development Kustendirov, Bulgaria

From left to right: “Public Tenders” section, “Successful projects” section, and “2014-2020” section





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Three of the web site sections, “Projects funded”, “Joint Monitoring Committee” and the “E-newsletter” have also proven particularly useful in 2014.

**The “Projects funded” section was updated 9 times in 2014.** 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 Callfor 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 secured 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 2014 as many as 15 separate JMC written procedures** were 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.

**The Newsletter 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 Newsletter, the visitor needs only to submit and confirm his/her e-mail address. **In 2014 as many as 158 people have sent a subscription request** for the Newsletter, in comparison to the 113 people that have sent a subscription request in 2013. Total number of people who have **confirmed their subscription in 2014 is 78**, compared to the 61 confirmed subscribers from 2013. **The total number of active subscribers** at the time of preparation of this report is **126**.

**Projects funded**

Select call: 2nd Call

Project status: In implementation

Project priority: 1.1 Physical and information infrastructure

Find

Region:

Project ID	Acronym	Project title	Leading partner
2007CB16IPO006-2011-2-071	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
2007CB16IPO006-2011-2-250	JIS "One Health"	Joint information system for process optimization "One Health" in the CBC area	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency-Pernik Regional Food Safety Directorate
2007CB16IPO006-2011-2-197	"Bridge over the mountain"	"Bridge over the mountain" - development of community cultural centres in the cross border	Municipality of Chuprene
2007CB16IPO006-	SPACES (Sports and Recreation)	Modernization and renewal of the sport infrastructure in the cross	Spacia Center Sport



**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

From left to right: “Projects funded” with an interactive map, thematic icons for the news, and the “Joint Monitoring Committee” section





## Activity 2: Promotional materials

Tender procedure for elaboration and preparation of a great variety of promotional materials was conducted and a service contract was signed with “Maus Print” advertising agency. The JTS Communication officer has actively participated in the process of preparation and design of all the Programme promotional materials. All the promotional materials are properly branded with the Programme visibility elements, incorporated into the overall design depending on the available branding space. The materials were used for promotion the Programme on various events including: regional consultations, training sessions for beneficiaries and European Cooperation day celebration.

Based on the contract the following materials were produced and delivered:

- **1700 brochures in English language titled “The Success Story; Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013”.** The 20-page-long brochure illustrates in a clear and concise manner the purpose of the Programme and the most important steps in its implementation during the current programming period. The brochure is in A5 format and the custom cover design, developed by the JTS communication officer, features three photos: two from projects and one from the EC Day celebration in Vidin. The photos and the Programme logo are highlighted with a special gloss coating while the other visual elements are matt laminated. Each of the photos is paired with a keyword illustrating some of the key Programme values: “Sustainability”, “Networking”, and “Partnership”. The colour pallet and the overall design are incorporated in the other promotional materials as well in order to achieve a matching and memorable design.





- **300 brochures in English language titled “Collection of projects funded under the second Call for proposals”.** The **100-page-long** brochure features basic information and several hundred illustrations concerning all the projects funded under the second Call at the time of brochure production. The brochure is made in a custom 21x20 cm format in order to allow for better display of numerous photos and other illustrations. The custom designed cover, developed by the JTS communication officer, features three photos from projects, which are also included in the brochure. The photos and the Programme logo are highlighted with gloss coating, in contrast to the other visual elements which are matt laminated. Each of the photos is paired with a keyword illustrating some of the key Programme goals: “Promoting Culture”, “Developing Infrastructure”, and “Sharing Expertise”;
- **300 table calendars for 2015**, in a pyramid form, illustrated with photos from projects. The calendar features short descriptions of the photos and displays the national holidays in Bulgaria and Serbia, marked with small national flags on the appropriate dates;
- **500 pocket calendars** for the year 2015;
- **3000 business cards** for JTS and MA representatives (10 batches with 300 business cards for each expert);
- **400 eco notepads** including a biodegradable pen, post-it stickers and a set of colourful bookmarks;
- **300 notebooks** in A5 format, with spiral binding and double-cover design: a cardboard full-colour cover with design matching the brochures and a hard semi-transparent plastic cover for increased durability;
- **100 writing sets** in a box, with two matching metal pens and a branded box;
- **1200 plastic pens** branded with EU flag and Programme name;
- **300 metal pens**, engraved with EU flag and Programme name;
- **300 post-it sticker sets**, in the form of a small branded book with two different sizes of post-it stickers and a set of colourful bookmarks;
- **1000 cardboard bookmarks**, featuring photos from projects and Programme events. The bookmarks are two-sided, with 4 different photos featured on each side. The bookmarks are double-coated with gloss cover for increased durability;
- **200 metal bookmarks**, with laser engraved EU flag and Programme name, and a magnetic clasp for holding the bookmark in place;
- **250 USB drives** (4 GB), with full metal body and laser engraved EU flag and Programme name.

All the materials follow the visual guidelines set in the Communication Plan as well as the “Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions” published by the EC: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication\\_and\\_visibility\\_manual\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication_and_visibility_manual_en.pdf)

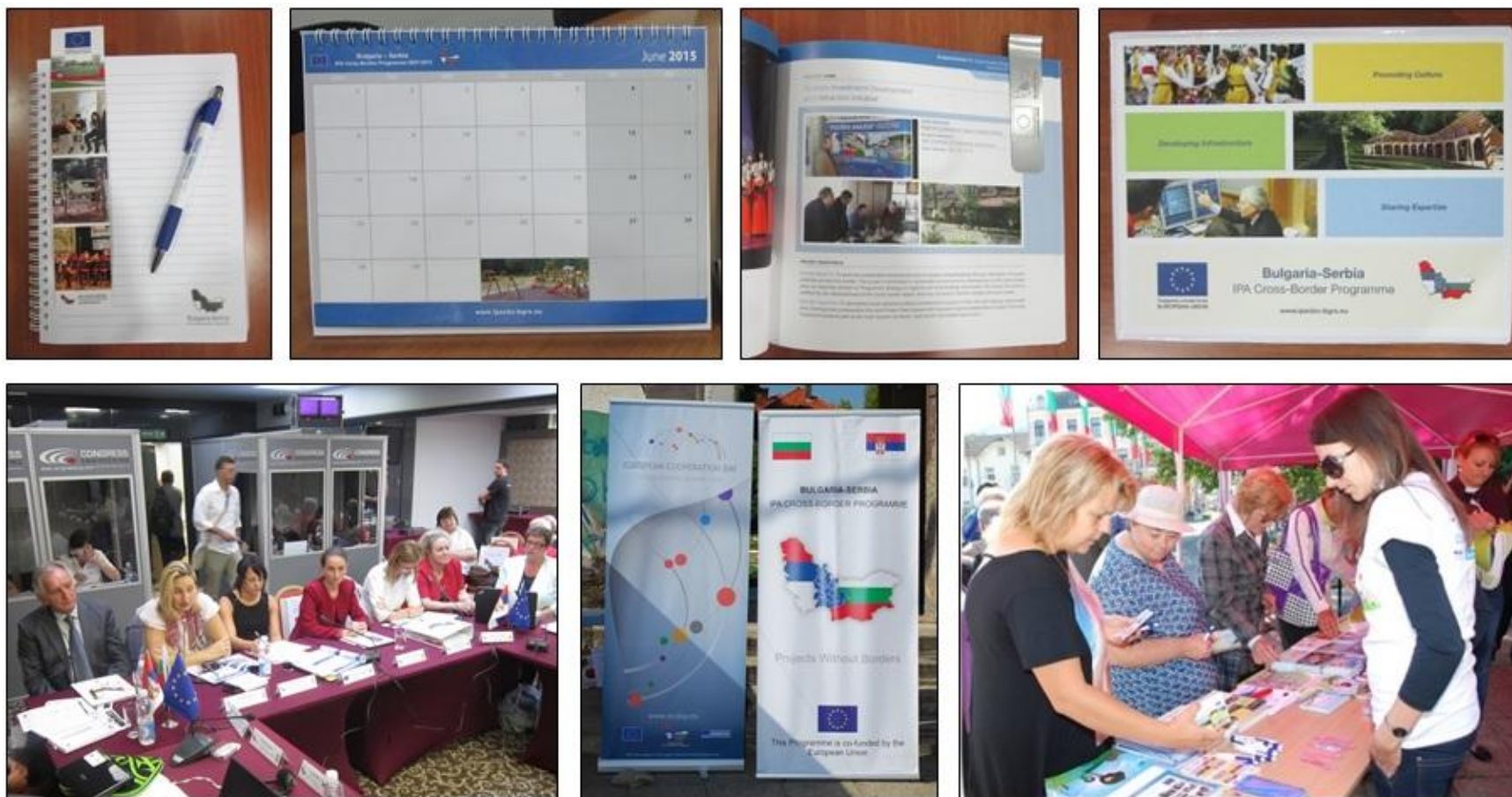






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Additionally, the JTS distributed the materials left from the previous year such as: leaflets in Bulgarian and Serbian language, brochures in English language, folders, binders, conference bags, paper bags and business cards. Some of the previously 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 at all Programme events.



*The promotional materials used for visibility purposes on all Programme events, including JWG meetings and EC day celebration*



### Activity 3: Information seminars

Due to the fact that there were no new Calls for proposals in 2014 there were no “Information days” campaigns either. However, the Programme and the projects were actively promoted during the events related to the preparation for the new programming period, 2014-2020. During 2014 a total of **13 events were organized in the format of information seminars**, including **11 Regional consultations**/plenary sessions and **2 Regional Consultative forums**.

► **Regional Consultations took place:**

- On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March in **Nis** and **Pirot**, Republic of Serbia;
- On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March in **Leskovac** and **Vranje**, Republic of Serbia;
- On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March in **Zajecar**, Republic of Serbia;
- On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March in **Pernik** and **Kyustendil**, Republic of Bulgaria;
- On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March in **Sofia**, Republic of Bulgaria;
- On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March in **Montana** and **Vidin**, Republic of Bulgaria;
- On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March in **Vraca**, Republic of Bulgaria.

The regional consultations were attended by **257 participants** representing municipalities, regional and national administration/public institutions, regional NGOs, educational and other relevant institutions. All consultations were organized in local languages (Bulgarian and Serbian).



*Open dialogue, including a variety of local stakeholders, fostered optimization of the specific Programme priorities and goals*



### The Regional Consultations agenda covered the following major themes:

- Presentation of the most recent monitoring data from implementation of the current (2007-2013) IPA CBC Programme between Bulgaria and Serbia;
- Presentation of the results of the situation and SWOT analysis – a long term vision (2014-2020) for the BG-RS border area;
- Facilitated discussion about the challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia;
- Presentation of the strategic framework of the future cross-border Programme (2014-2020);
- Discussion on the possible prioritisation of thematic priorities for the future IPA CBC Programme, along with potential actions that may be relevant for addressing the identified needs and challenges in the respective thematic priority areas.

The discussions were facilitated by the Consultant's team contracted for drafting the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014 – 2020: Mrs Albena Gavrilova, Mr Vladimir Pandurov, and Mrs Zhechka Kalinova.

The consolidated results from the discussions on the thematic prioritisation of the new Programme show that: investing in youth, education and skills; encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage; enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of SMEs, trade and investment; protection of the environment, risk prevention and management, are the most preferable priorities by both Bulgarian and Serbian stakeholders from the cross-border region. The results from the Regional Consultations together with the situation and SWOT analysis were used as a foundation for elaboration of the Strategy of the IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria – Serbia.



*The meetings were organized in the strategic points of the cross-border region in order to insure optimal participation of the local stakeholders.*

### ► Regional Consultative forums:





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The 2 consultative forum meetings took place in Nis on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April and 1 in Sofia, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. The events were mainly focused on the following topics:

- Strategic framework of the IPA II Cross-border Programme Bulgaria-Serbia;
- Programme's 'thematic concentration' – proposed options for thematic priorities of the new programme;
- Programme's 'intervention logic' – Programme's specific objectives, respective results and future activities.

The meetings were held in Bulgarian or Serbian language (depending on the location) and have attracted around 40 participants in Nis and 35 participants in Sofia. The Regional Consultative Forums brought together wide range of stakeholders who have expressed their opinion on the results of the situation and SWOT analysis in regards to the challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia and on the possible thematic prioritisation of the new bilateral programme.



*Regional Consultative forums in Sofia (left) and Nis (right)*



### Activity 4: Publicity campaign

The Programme publicity campaign in 2014 was adjusted to complement the most important Programme goals and activities planned for the year. Thus the publicity campaign was centred on the following activities:

- Regular updating of the Programme web site;
- Preparation of the Programme promotional materials;
- Continuous support by the JTS Communication Officer to the beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals on strategies and rules concerning promotion of the individual projects;
- Organization of the regular Programme events; and
- Organization of the European Cooperation Day 2014.

The regular Programme events organized in 2014 include: 2 training sessions for beneficiaries, 1 JMC meeting, 2 technical meetings, 2 JWG meetings, and 13 regional consultations/forums. Proper visibility was secured for each of the events through distribution of available promotional materials (brochures, pens, folders, binders, promotional gifts) and setting of visibility props such as banners and flags. In addition, each public event was preceded and followed by publication of a press release on the Programme web site. Photos illustrating the best project practices were used extensively in all Programme presentations, promo materials and press releases;

The events which allowed for the most effective publicity campaigning were the regional consultations/forums, which have already been described, the JWG meetings, and the celebration of the European Cooperation Day 2014. The JWG meeting announcements attracted public attention since the Group is responsible for reviewing and approving of the official Programme document prior to its submission to the European Commission. Although the Group meetings were not open to the public, the subsequent press releases have attracted significant public and media attention. The news of the JWG approval of the Programme document following the final group meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 were frequently quoted and re-posted on the online media.

EC Day celebration took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 at the central square of Kyustendil, Bulgaria. An exhibition of various art objects, made by students of the local schools, as well as open seminar for demonstration of simple and practical technics for use of recycled materials were organized within the celebration under the motto “How to recycle with creativity”. Numerous awards and incentives were given to the participants in the event. At the end of the celebration, with the joint efforts of all attendees, a mosaic picturing the logo of the Programme from recycled materials was created. More than 100 people took part in the celebration, including numerous representatives of the regional and national media. The visitors could get the latest information about the Programme, the EC Day initiative and were provided with a variety of information materials.





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*Final JWG meeting was aimed at finalization and approving of the Programme document, thus attracting media and public attention*



*European Cooperation Day celebrations provide a great opportunity for promotion of the Programme to the general public*







### Media

Since there have been no new Calls for proposals in 2014, most of the media campaigning was focused on the other relevant Programme events: preparation of the new programming period, 2014-2020, project implementation and achievements, and the celebration of the European Cooperation Day 2014. The main media outlet for Programme promotion was the internet, while the individual projects also used the local press, radio and television stations for promotion of the project results. Project managers, in close cooperation with the JTS Communication officer, have managed to successfully promote their respective projects, reaching the intended target groups with cost-effective promotional strategies.

A due attention was given to respecting the European Commission visibility guidelines and the Programme visibility guidelines, in relation to the promotion in the media and essential visibility requirements. Most of the beneficiaries have followed the JTS advice from the trainings and were sending the pre-print design of their promotional materials (brochures, leaflets, posters, banners, folders, information boards, small gifts, and other) as well as press releases in all types of media, to the JTS Communication officer for consultation. The Communication officer provided advices to the beneficiaries in relation to the Programme visibility rules and general design quality of their promotional and media materials. As a result, numerous project implementation mistakes, in terms of respecting the visibility rules and implementing successful project promotional campaigns, were avoided.

Like in the previous years, the JTS representatives have given special attention to providing the local and regional media with up-to-date and most relevant Programme news, including the dates, purpose and location for all public Programme events. For each public event the JTS prepared a specific press-kit, containing the agenda of the event, Programme brochures and leaflets, an event press-release in local language, small promotional gifts (usually a pen and a notepad) and a Programme factsheet. The Programme factsheet contains up-to date Programme information such as number of projects completed and the amount of allocated funds, in a single-page format in order to facilitate the process of news creation and to prevent the technical mistakes in the media press releases.

### Internet

In addition to the promotion through the Programme web site and the web sites 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 2014, **more than 90 separate online publications**, other than on the Programme official and institutional web sites, have featured information about the Programme in general, and the projects implementing the two Call s for proposals.





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The number of online publications increased in comparison to the 80 publications in 2013. The increase in the online visibility is most probably the result of encouragement by the JTS representatives to the beneficiaries to utilize the online media for promotion of the projects, as well as the increased awareness of the local media for the Programme issues and results. The online media have featured primarily positive information about the Programme, mostly focusing on the concrete project results and the news related to the preparation for the next programming period. A list of links, PDF files and screenshot records of these web sites and the articles published are available in annex to this report.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying an article on Novinite.com. The URL is <http://www.novinite.com/articles/163561/Vladimir+Curgus%3A+Serbia+Bulg>. The article is dated March 23, 2015, and is part of the 'DIPLOMATIC CHANNEL'. It features a photo of Vladimir Curgus, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in Sofia. The text discusses the relationship between Serbia and Bulgaria, particularly in the context of infrastructure projects like the Nis-Sofia motorway.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Инфобизнес' (InfoBusiness) website, which is the official portal of the Bulgarian Trade and Industrial Chamber (БТПП). The website is in Bulgarian and features a header with the logo and name of the organization. Below the header, there is a section titled 'Обществени консултации по програмата за трансгранично сътрудничество България-Сърбия 2014-2020' (Public consultations for the cross-border cooperation program Bulgaria-Serbia 2014-2020). This section includes information about the consultation period (March 5-14, 2014) and the locations where consultations will be held. It also mentions that the consultations are organized by the National Partnership Organ (НПО) and the National Secretariat for the program.







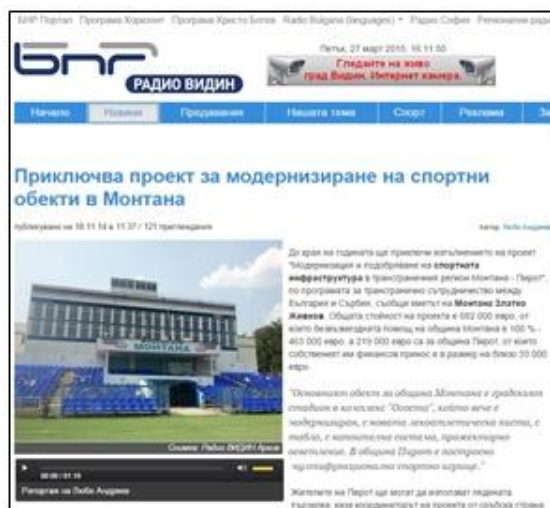
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### Radio

As a part of the media campaign promoting the celebration of the “European Cooperation Day 2014” in Kyustendil, JTS organized production and 10 prime-time airings of an advertisement on the “Darik Radio - Kyustendil” during the week prior to the event. “Darik Radio - Kyustendil” station in Kyustendil is a regional radio station of the “Darik 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 were comparatively low.

Many of the projects have also relied on the local radio stations in the region for promotion of the project events and results. Most of the local and regional radio stations in the cross-border region provide an inexpensive but sufficiently effective advertising opportunity for the beneficiaries. In addition to airing advertisements, news and interviews aired in relation to the projects, many of the radio stations also have web sites where they publish some of the content from the radio broadcasts. The radio web sites often contain open archives which allow for searching and reading the relevant news reports from preceding months, allowing for easier monitoring of the Programme relevant news.

Some of the most popular local radio stations in the cross-border region, used for promotion of the projects in 2014, are: regional stations of “Darik Radio”, “Radio Vidin”, as part of the “Bulgarian National Radio” network, “Belle Amie Radio”, “F-Radio”, “Radio Krakra”, regional stations of “Radio Focus” and many others.





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## Television

Journalists from the local and national TV stations, together with the other media representatives, are invited to public events under the Programme on a regular basis. In case of the beneficiaries, many have promoted their respective projects on the local television stations in the region, such as the “Radio Television Nis”, “Belle Amie TV”, and “Protokol K-1” TV. Promotion on the national television stations is in most cases too expensive for promotion of the individual projects. Therefore, many of the projects use the social networks and platforms, such as YouTube, in order to distribute the project video materials. A problem arises from the fact that the JTS Communication Officer does not have access to the social media at the JTS office at the Ministry, as thus cannot easily monitor the video materials produced and distributed under the projects. In order to resolve this issue, the communication officer requests and reviews the video materials provided with the project progress reports.

## Newspapers

Programme related coverage in the printed media during 2014 is primarily focused on individual projects. The printed media participating in the Programme press conferences resulted in 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. 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. Still, some of the more ambitious projects like “Veni, Vino, Vici” have managed to incorporate 5 national newspapers in their publicity campaigns, since the target audience of the project included broader national population in Serbia.



### Activity 5: Active training

The JTS, in cooperation with the MA and the NA, had organized two training sessions for beneficiaries under the second Call for proposals during 2014:

- A training seminar in Serbian language on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August at the Hotel “Tami Residence” in Nis, Serbia. The training was attended by representatives of Serbian partners, who are members of the project management team;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was directed to the members of the management teams of the Bulgarian partners under the subsidy contracts, awarded in July and August 2014.

The aim of the trainings was to familiarize the participants with the essential moments in the project management, following the main themes, covered in the Project Implementation Manual of the Programme. The most common mistakes and useful tips for solving problems and issues were explained by the Programme representatives. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the implementation of projects, and were provided with advice and consultancy by the Programme representatives. The training sessions were focused on the following topics:

- Monitoring of projects, reporting, completion of projects;
- Eligibility of expenditure and reporting of financial performance;
- Changes of the subsidy contract;
- Tender procedures, according to PRAG;
- Information, publicity and visualization.







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In addition, the MA and the NA, in cooperation with the JTS, have organized four training sessions for the controllers. The trainings were primarily focused on working with the online Management and Information System (MIS). The MIS system is actively used on a daily basis by most Programme experts, including the controllers, who rely on it for getting comprehensive and up-to-date information about each individual project. The four trainings were organized as follows:

- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **31<sup>st</sup> of January** at the Ministry of Regional Development in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA and the controllers in Bulgaria;
- A training seminar in Serbian language on the **15<sup>th</sup> of July** at the FLC premises in Belgrade, Serbia. The training was attended by the representatives of MA, NA, JTS and the controllers in Serbia;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **12<sup>th</sup> of September** at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA and the controllers in Bulgaria;
- A training seminar in Bulgarian language on the **9<sup>th</sup> of December** at the MRD premises in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training was attended by the representatives of MA, NA, and the controllers in Bulgaria.

The training sessions covered the following main topics:

- Consultations concerning the FLC reports and recommendations for improvement;
- Introduction to electronic documents and MIS: types of documents, access and system structure;
- FLC functionality of MIS, practical examples, and relevance to other sections;
- Verification process – general discussion and exchange of good practices with Financial Management and Control Unit, MA

