

**IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme
Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020**

**Recommended model for cross-border cooperation programmes under the
IPA instrument**

OP draft

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Version 1

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the proposal for the Operational Programme of the future IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020 between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

It is the status and outcome of a programming process that started in November 2013. This process was guided by the Joint Task Force, supported by an external programming team and coordinated by the Bulgarian Managing Authority.

The programming process so far consisted of

- the elaboration of a regional analysis of the Bulgarian - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Programme region,
- a survey among regional stakeholders about their views, expectations and concerning on the future cooperation programme,
- a document describing the framework and the various options for thematic concentration for the future IPA CBC Programme,
- a proposal for the core elements of the intervention logic of the Programme,
- the presentation and discussion of the programme proposals on two rounds of Regional Consultative Forums with regional stakeholders,
- two meetings and several written consultations of the Joint Task Force,
- on feedback from the ex-ante evaluators on the intervention logic and the indicator system and
- a series of consultations among the Managing Authority and the programming experts.

Programme Architecture

This draft of the Operational Programme is based on the *“Recommended model for cross-border cooperation programmes under the IPA instrument”* as outlined in the *GUIDANCE Recommended model for IPA II cross-border cooperation programmes following the COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No .../ of XXX on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) XXX/2014 of dd.mm.2014 of the European Parliament and the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II)* that was provided by the Managing Authority to the programming team in April 2014.

The model follows the ambition of the European cohesion policy to be ore performance and result oriented and introduces the new programming framework focusing more on strategy and results.



The overall objective of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014 – 2020 is

“to intensify cross-border cooperation between the people and institutions of the region in order to jointly address common challenges and exploit untapped potentials”

The Programme covers **three Thematic Priorities** according to the IPA II regulation¹:

Thematic Priority 2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Thematic Priority 4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage

Thematic Priority 7: Enhancing competitiveness, business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment

An additional Technical Assistance Priority will support the proper management and the communication of the Programme.

A **cross cutting issue** of the Programme is the support for youth, women and vulnerable groups.

These issues can be especially addressed under the thematic priorities 2 (tourism and cultural and natural heritage) and 3 (competitiveness), are reflected in the eligible activities and will also be reflected in the selection criteria when assessing project proposals under the Calls for Proposals.

This approach should help improving the framework and the labor and social conditions for young people, women and vulnerable / marginalized groups in the region.

¹ REGULATION (EU) No 231/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014, establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) : ANNEX III: Thematic priorities for assistance for territorial cooperation

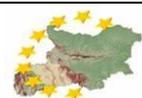
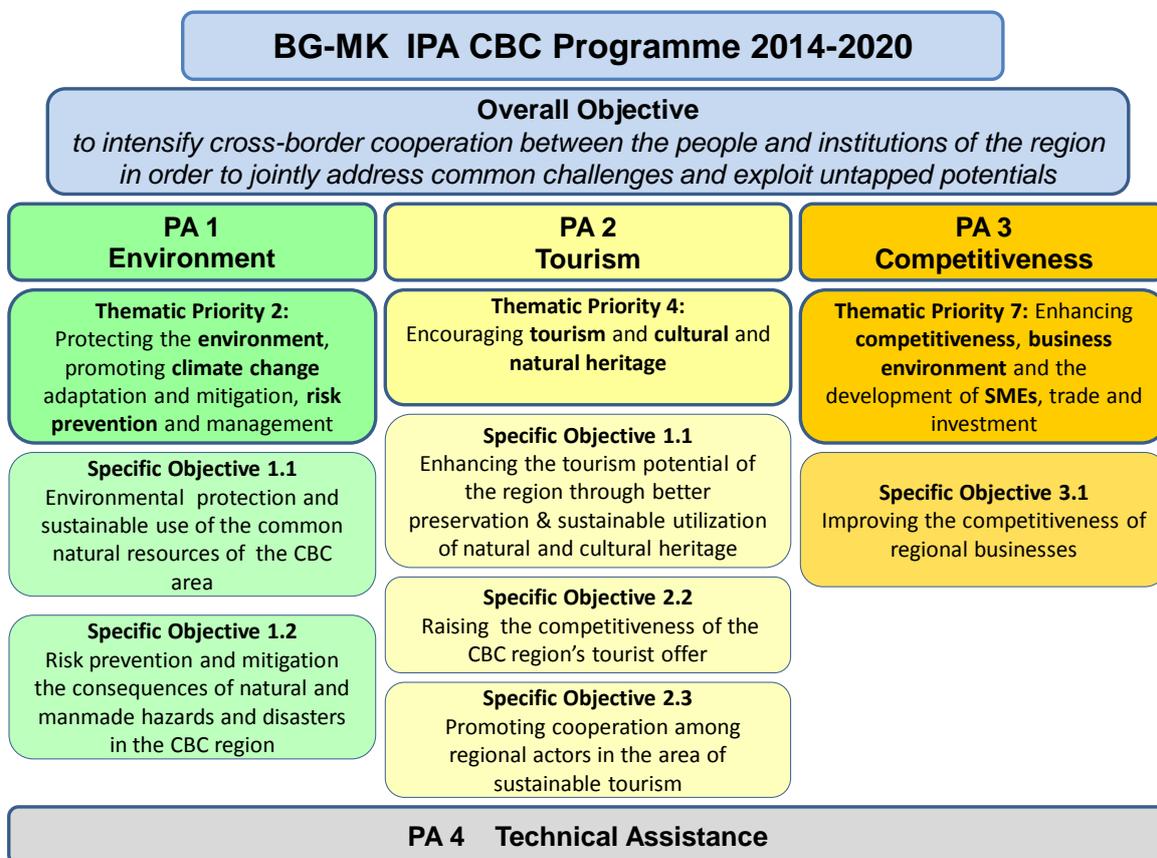


Figure 1: Priority Axes, Thematic Priorities and Specific Objectives of the IPA II CBC Programme BG-MK 2014-2020



SECTION 1 STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SELECTED THEMATIC PRIORITIES AND THE RELEVANT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AND COUNTRY STRATEGIC PAPER(S)

[Reference: Article 32, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No...../...of XXXX on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) XXXX/2014 of dd.mm.2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA II)]

Section 1.1 Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the selected thematic priorities and the relevant Partnership Agreement and Country Strategic Paper(s)

Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the selected thematic priorities and the relevant Partnership Agreement and Country Strategic Paper(s)

The eligible area for the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is located in the South-Central part of the Balkan peninsular. It covers a territory of 18 087 km² and has a population of 980 375 people².

The territory includes on Bulgarian side two NUTS III districts - **Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil** (52,5% of the CBC programme area), comprising of 23 municipalities, 462 settlements and a population of 452 973 people³ (46.2% of the total programme area population, 6,2% of the country population). The municipalities on Bulgarian territory are:

- District of Blagoevgrad: Bansko, Belica, Blagoevgrad, Gotce Delchev, Garmen, Kresna, Petrich, Razlog, Sandanski, Satovcha, Simitli, Strumiani, Hadjidimovo and Yakoruda;
- District of Kyustendil: Bobovdol, Boboshevo, Dupnitsa, Kocherinovo, Kyustendil, Nevestino, Rila, Sapareva Banya and Trekliano.

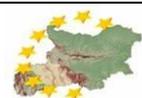
The territory on side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia comprises of the **North-East, the East and the South-East** NUTS III statistical regions (47,5% of the programme area, 33,4% of the country area), consisting 27 municipalities, 597 settlements and population of 527 402⁴ people (53,8% of the total programme area population, 25.6 % of the country population):

- North-East region: Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Rankovce, Kumanovo, Lipkovo and Staro Nagorichane;

² Data for 2012: Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-State Statistical Office; Detail data are provided in Table 1.

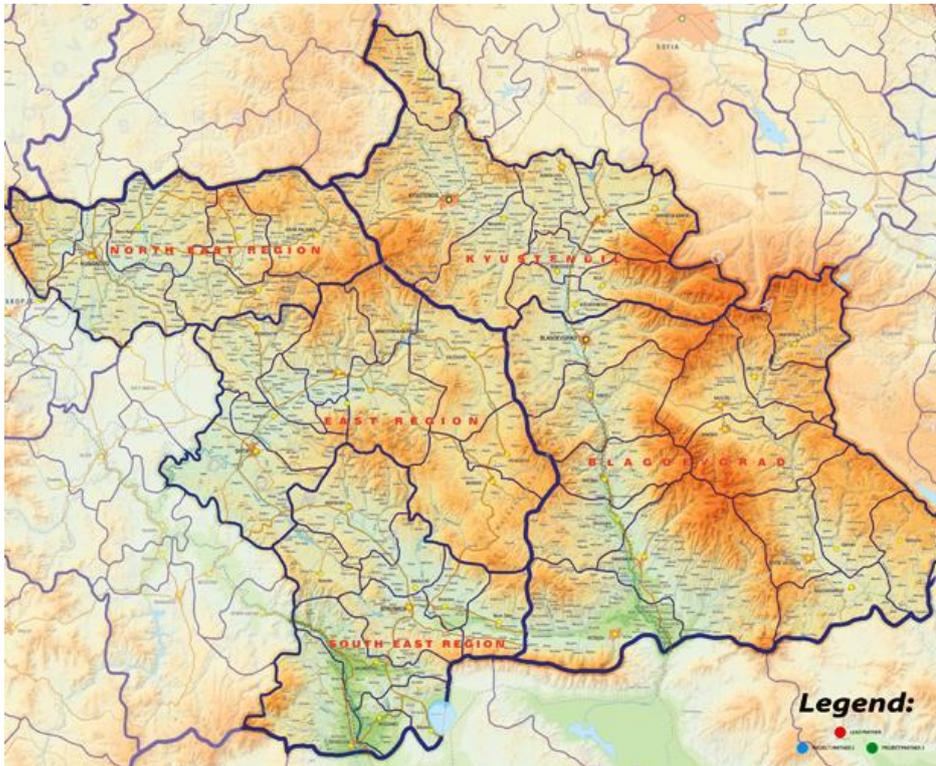
³ Data for 2012: Source: National Statistical Institute

⁴ Data for 2012 (estimations), Source: State Statistical Office



- South-East region: Valandovo, Gevgelija, Bogdanci, Dojran, Radovish, Konche, Strumica, Bosilovo, Vasilevo and Novo Selo;
- East region: Berovo, Pehchevo, Vinica, Kochani, Cheshinovo - Obleshevo, Zrnovci, Probishtip, Shtip, Karbinci, Delchevo and Makedonska Kamenica.

The administrative structure of the Programme area is provided on the Map 1.

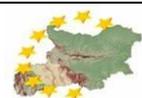


Map 1: the cross-border cooperation region Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

More than half of the Program area is *mountainous* (the entire Rila and Pirin mountains, part of Western Rhodopi, the mountains of Verila, Konyavska, Zemenska, Slavyanka, Plackovica, Belasica, Osogovo, Malesevska, Ograzden and Vlahina), with forests occupying 46.5% of the total area but also numerous valleys with fertile land. The area is rich in water resources: rivers, the biggest of which are Struma, Mesta, Bregalnica, Strumica (Strumeshnica); lakes (part of Dojran Lake, Vodoca, Mantovo; 233 lakes in Rila and 186 in Pirin, of which the most popular are the Seven Rila lakes); *thermal waters*, available across the whole cooperation area.

The climate is diverse, from moderate-continental, transitional-continental and mountainous to Mediterranean along the river valleys.

The settlement structure in the CBC region is characterized by a concentration of population, economic and social activities in several regional centres (Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Sandanski, Goce Delchev and Petrich on Bulgarian side; Kumanovo, Shtip and Strumica on side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – 37% of the region's population) and numerous sparsely populated rural and peripheral areas in the mountains and closer to the border. The orientation of each part of the CBC region is towards its internal centres rather than cross-border which is also due



to the fact that important transport corridors run through them thus providing easier access to outside centres and links to the countries' capitals.

Demography, employment and economic development figures of the CBC region are more unfavourable than the EU and in many aspects are also worse than the national average of both countries.

The *demographic* development is characterized by low population density, decreasing birth rates and aging population. Detail data are provided in Table 2. For the period between 2007-2012 the population of the eligible border area has decreased by 2.5%, with figures being more positive for the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (small growth registered for South-East and North-East regions), opposed to a strong negative tendency for Kyustendil district - Bulgaria (-10.98%), and depopulation extremes registered for the municipalities of Treklyano (-43.74%), Nevestino (-26.80%), Rila (-24.17%), Kocherinovo (-21.10%) and several others⁵.

The *economic structure* of the region is diverse with agriculture being particularly important for the rural areas and manufacturing industry concentrated in a limited number of more urbanized settlements. Detail data are provided in Table 3. In 2011 the share of the agricultural sector in the region's GVA accounted for 15% which was much above the national averages⁶. In the South-East region it is as high as 33%. Manufacturing (36% of the regional GVA) is most important in East region (45%) and in Kyustendil district (40%). The main industrial fields of activity are apparel and shoe-making industries, food-processing, pharmaceutical and mining. Tourism, though having big development potential and being well unfolded in certain locations, still has a modest share.

Similar to the EU and national trends, the economic development of the region has experienced a decline during the years of the world economic crisis, however the GDP per capita for the period 2007 – 2011 as a whole has grown by round 35% (with the strongest growth registered for South-East region (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - 59% and the least one for Kyustendil district (Bulgaria) – 5%. Detail data are provided in Table 4. Still it remains below the national average of both countries. Outside investments to the region are rather limited, as well as the innovations and R&D, which hinders the efficient and sustainable development of local companies.

Like in most EU countries, the *labour market* of the border region is suffering higher unemployment rates, compared to the years before the crisis. Detail data are provided in Table 6. In 2012 unemployment in the cooperation area reached 20.3% on an average basis, but the situation differs strongly across the region: from 10.4% for Blagoevgrad up to 52.8 % for North-East region. Unemployment rates in both Bulgarian districts have followed the negative trends at national and EU level in the years after 2009⁷, while those in the regions on the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia remain comparatively stable (with North East being the region mostly affected by unemployment even illustrating some positive trends, however still remaining much below the national levels and all other CBC regions). Most affected are the rural areas and the remote

⁵ These and all subsequent figures result from calculations based on data for the number of the population for the years 2007 and 2012, provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute and the State Statistical Office of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

⁶ The share of GVA of the agricultural sector out of the total GVA for 2011 for each country are: 5.4% for Bulgaria and 10.9% for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

⁷ Annual Unemployment rate for the Republic of Bulgaria in 2012 was 12.3% compared to 2009 when it was 6.8% and for EU-27 was 10% in 2012, compared to 2008 when it was 7.10%. As at December 2013 the figures are already 13.1% for Bulgaria and 10.7% for EU-27. Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute and EUROSTAT



mountain settlements. In general, the work-force of the border region has narrow specialization and low mobility; it lacks the professional competencies and skills the modern economy would require. About 400.000 people have been employed in the border region in 2012, almost equal number on each side of the border. The average employment rate for the region was 53%, higher than the national averages of both countries, slightly declining compared to previous years⁸. Detail data on employment rates in the Programme area are presented in Table 7.

The employment structure clearly reflects the distinction and the disparities of the regional economic structure and potentials, with South-East region and Blagoevgrad district having a particular positive influence on the employment figures of the whole CBC region, while the North-East region on the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kyustendil on Bulgarian side show low participation in employment, also lower compared to the national levels of both countries.

In terms of gender, the employment structure in both countries (and on CBC regional level) show higher activity rates for male than for female⁹. As to unemployment, the gender structure is not a major issue for the region where unemployment rates are comparatively similar. The problems to be addressed relate to the much higher unemployment rates in the rural areas as opposed to urban centres (due to low economic activity, low educated work force) and the higher youth unemployment rates which is a serious problem also on national level of both countries, with a strong negative trend for the Bulgarian regions¹⁰. Unemployment among young people, especially those with higher educational levels is worrying, as it is a main reason for emigration thus worsening the already unfavourable demographic situation of the region.

Labour mobility is not specific for the region. The main reasons are local (national) mentality and traditions to work where you live, lack of modern skills and competences (e.g. languages, ICT skills, etc.) especially of the elderly population, as well as more objective reasons like insufficient quality of the transport infrastructure, the mountainous relief of the region with a lot of distant settlements, low quality of public transport and inter-city connection systems.

It could be positively noted that the regional labour force can offer to potential employers specific knowledge and skills in traditional sectors (agriculture, fruit-growing, light industry, etc.) as well as more competitive labour costs than those in the country capitals and other larger urban centres. However, there is also a need for additional qualification and requalification for acquiring the key skills required by the more recently developed and emerging industries, like tourism.

Poverty levels are more worrying for the CBC region of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, though the Bulgarian CBC districts also show some negative trend in recent years. In terms of the average annual poverty threshold both Bulgarian districts show worsening tendency when compared

⁸ Data is based on annual employment rates of the population of 15 years and over for the period 2007 – 2012. Secondary data for programme region is weighted by the number of the population of 15 years and over (working power).

⁹ In 2012 gender activity rates for Bulgaria were 58.7% of male versus 47.8% of female (Blagoevgrad: 64.7% male, 54.2% female; Kyustendil 53.3% male, 47.7% female). In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia these figures were 68.7% male and 44.30% female; regional statistic is not available). Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-State Statistical Office

¹⁰ Bulgaria is second in EU in terms of the speed with which youth unemployment is increasing (e.g. youth unemployment was 28.1% in 2012 compared to 12.7% in 2008). In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the percentage for 2012 is much higher (53.90%) than the country average unemployment rate (31%) but is declining (56.4% in 2008, 57.7% in 2007). Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-State Statistical Office



to the levels for Bulgaria, with Blagoevgrad remaining slightly above the national average, while Kyustendil falling below it¹¹.

However, in terms of poverty ratios, Blagoevgrad district is a national leader, with the lowest share of people living below the poverty line (12.4% in 2011, compared to 21.2% for Bulgaria), almost the same for both sexes. Also Kyustendil figures are also more favourable than the national average (19.3% for 2011), but higher for women (21.6%) than for men (16.7%)¹².

The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is more tense. In 2009, the country's poverty rate was 31.1% which was reflected in the poverty gap index (10.1 in 2009). In 2010, the government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adopted a national strategy for poverty alleviation and social inclusion (2010-2020). According to the 2010 National Human Development Report, Macedonian citizens express a feeling of being left out of society (72% of all people surveyed), which indicates a huge gap between citizens and the state. Among those who feel left out, the highest percentages were women (55%), youth (80%) and people with higher levels of education. Youth unemployment is considerably higher than average unemployment. Out of the total number of unemployed young people, 68% are long-term unemployed (more than a year without a job) and 39.6% have been waiting for more than four years to find a job. The downward trend of the poverty rate continued in 2011, when it reached 30.4% with poverty gap of 9.3%. The most vulnerable groups are multi-member households, bearing in mind the fact that 48.5% of the poor people live in households with 5 and more members. The poverty rate for the unemployed is 40.7%, i.e. 46.0% of all poor people are unemployed. The education of the household head also influences the number of poor people, namely 54.6% of the poor live in households where the head of the household has no, or at most primary education.

The groups most vulnerable to poverty exclusion groups in both neighbouring countries are quite similar: multi-member households (61% of such families in Bulgaria and 47.3% of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are poor); unemployed (48.5% of such persons in Bulgaria and 41.8% of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are poor); people living in rural and distant areas, Roma minorities.

The social services in the region are targeted at specific groups vulnerable to social exclusion such as isolated elderly people, neglected children, physically and mentally disabled people, homeless, long-term unemployed, etc.

The region is served mainly by road transport. Three major international routes are passing through it: Sofia-Kulata-Thessaloniki (part of European Corridor No. 4), Sofia-Kyustendil-Gyueshevo-Skopje (part of European corridor No.8) and Kumanovo-Veles-Gevgelija (part of European corridor No.10). Railroads Sofia-Dupnitsa-Kulata-Thessaloniki and Sofia-Kyustendil-Gyueshevo also cross the region. On the Map 2 presented are the main transport routes in the programme area. There are currently 3 operating border crossing points¹³ at Gyueshevo - Deve Bair, Stanke Lisichkovo – Delchevo and Zlatarevo - Novo Selo, but opening more border crossings will facilitate and intense cross-border integration of both sides. From a CBC perspective, the cross-border connectivity is inadequate and the transport networks of the two parts of the region are not well integrated. Furthermore, the roads

¹¹ In 2007 the average annual poverty line per person in Bulgaria was 1303 EUR, while in 2011 it was 1716 EUR (the lowest in all EU). For comparison the same indicator for Kyustendil was 1320 EUR in 2007 and 1473 EUR in 2011, and for Blagoevgrad – 1584 EUR in 2007 and 1729 EUR in 2011. Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute.

¹² Source: Bulgaria-National Statistical Institute

¹³ On a border of 165 km 3 border crossings operate (approx. 55 km between them)



network is unevenly distributed throughout the region thus hampering the access to mountainous and semi-mountainous areas. In the urban parts it is not sufficiently developed (many bottle necks) in order to meet the needs both of the intense local and transit traffic. This limits the social and economic development of these areas. Despite the investments already made, the density of the road network is much below the EU average and the condition of II and III class roads are far from meeting desired standards¹⁴. Non-existence of good quality access roads to many touristic sites is also a problem.

Research and development activities are not among the main strengths of the region. In general, on a national level capacity for innovations and R&D remain very low, compared to EU-27. In 2012 the average R&D expenditure per inhabitant for EU countries has been 529.6 EUR. For Bulgaria this figure is 34.6 EUR and for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia even lower (7.52 EUR.¹⁵) None of the CBC sub-regions is among the national leaders in R&D; they are evidently lagging behind.

In terms of ICT connection and usage the CBC area has a comparatively good position, but again with some regional disparities manifested. The two main statistical indicators: "Internet usage of households" and "Individuals regularly using Internet" place the CBC region a little lower than the national averages of both countries, all of which still far from the same indicators for EU-27¹⁶: Comparing the same indicators, the CBC sub-regions show differences clearly linked with the indicators for economic development: Detail data are presented in the Graph 1.

Cross-border cooperation programmes between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started in 2003 where until 2006 the cross border activities were covered through Phare and CARDS. For the period 2004-2006 Neighbourhood Programme between two countries was in place. IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013 is the last one which is still under operation.

Protecting the ENVIRONMENT and promoting CLIMATE CHANGE adaptation and mitigation, RISK PREVENTION and management

Landscape and biodiversity

The CBC region provides unique features in terms of *landscape* and *biodiversity* predetermined by the moderate climate and favorable geological and hydrological conditions of the area. The territory is a puzzle of numerous mountains (with Musala peak – the Balkan Peninsula highest point (2925 m) - located in the region), valleys, river watersheds and lakes. The region benefits from rich forests with diverse flora and fauna, comparatively clean soil (except local spots in the agricultural and industrial/mine areas where soil pollution was identified) and fertile land, as well as thermal waters (with the hottest mineral water geyser on the Balkans located in the region – in Saparevabanya, 103.5°C).

¹⁴ Road density in Blagoevgrad is as low as 103 km/1000 km²; for comparison the average road density for Bulgaria is 175km/1000 km² and for EU in 2008 it has been 418.5km /1000 km². For the whole CBC area North-East region has the highest road density – 444km/1000 km², Source: National Statistical Office, 2012; EUROSTAT and secondary calculations

¹⁵ Source: for EU and Bulgaria: EUROSTAT, for The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: State Statistical Office and secondary calculations

¹⁶ The share of households using Internet in EU-27 for 2012 has been 76%, as opposed to 58% for the Republic of Macedonia, 51% for Bulgaria and 49% for the CBC region. Source: EUROSTAT



Most of the *natural resources* of the region are protected and well preserved. The share of the protected areas out of the total territory of the two Bulgarian districts of the region is 13.14% for Blagoevgrad and 11.94% for Kyustendil, compared to 5.2% average for Bulgaria which is one of the countries with richest biodiversity in Europe¹⁷. At the regional scale the biodiversity of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia encompasses 70-90% of the entire Balkan biodiversity. Based upon an analysis of biodiversity richness among the countries of Europe, the country holds the top position on the "European Hotspot" list. The richness of biodiversity is illustrated by the outstanding number of over 16,000 floral, faunal and fungal species, out of which more than 850 are endemic and through the large variety of ecosystems host more than 260 plant communities. Two of the three National parks of Bulgaria are located in the region – the National parks Rila and Pirin of which Pirin has been included in the UNESCO Convention on Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage. Several nature reserves and numerous protected areas and natural landmarks¹⁸ are among the assets of the region: on the Bulgarian side: Parangalitsa (the oldest nature reserve in the country), Bayuvi Dupki-Djindjirica (the biggest (2873 ha) biosphere reserve in the country), the seven Rila Lakes, the Stob Pyramids; on side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the natural monuments: Dojran Lake (in Ramsar from 2008) Smolare and Kolesino Waterfalls on Belasica Mountain and Monospitovo Swamp near Strumica with presence of glacial relicts of fern (*Osmundaregalis*). Osogovo Mountain, Belasica Mountain, Malesevo Mountain, and parts of watersheds of Struma River are also recognized in the Strategy of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as areas with a high potential for CBC activities.

Though the majority of the protected territories located on the Bulgarian side of the cross-border region have been formally registered and included in the Natura 2000 network, approved management plans currently exist only for the Rila and Pirin national parks, the Rila Monestary natural park and the Kocherinovo protected area¹⁹, thus work in this direction is still forthcoming.

The protected areas²⁰ in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has increased from 7.4% in 1991 to 9% (of the national territory) in 2013 and covers 229,722.5 ha with 86²¹ locations where in the cross-border region 25 sites are located. The country network of Emerald sites was established in the period 2002-2008 and comprises 35²² sites where 12 are located in the cross-border region. The identification and the setup of the Emerald network is an important enabling mechanism for the Natura 2000 establishment which identification stage will start in mid 2014.

In addition to the measures taken on national and EU level, *preservation* of the region's beautiful nature has also been a theme for joint cross-border actions. During the previous programme 21% of the projects funded under "*Area of intervention 2.1 Utilisation of eco resources*" have been related to

¹⁷Data are from the Regional Development plan of the South-West (NUTSII) region 2014-2020, MRR, 2012

¹⁸ On the side of the Bulgarian Cross-border region Nature 2000 network encompasses the two national parks Rila and Pirin, two natural parks – Belasitsa and Rila Monastery, 14 reserves and dozens of protected areas and natural landmarks, see [Annex II](#).

¹⁹ Source: Register of the Protected territories and protected zones in Bulgaria, Executive Agency for Environment, Bulgaria

²⁰ Detail list of protected areas and Emerald sites is in Annex II

²¹ Source: [European Environment Agency](http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/mk/eea/cdda1/envuqm3yq/sites.xml) EIONET Nationally designated areas (CDDA-1) Report dated 12.12.2013 <http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/mk/eea/cdda1/envuqm3yq/sites.xml>

²² Source: Council of Europe, T-PVS/PA(2013)18, Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, List of candidate Emerald sites, last revised in December 2013 <https://wcd.coe.int>



the protection of biodiversity. A continuous policy and further measures in this field are desirable to prevent possible future destruction of eco systems.

Urban environment and air pollution

The decline of the industrial production had a *positive influence on the environment* of the region where no big industrial polluters are currently operating. The biggest polluter, Bobovdol power station in Kyustendil, has drastically reduced the harmful emissions in 2012 after introducing the sulfur dioxide control installation in 2012. A negative effect on the *air quality* has the intense traffic in the bigger towns and major connection roads as well as the massive use of solid fuel (timber, coal) by the households.

On Bulgarian territory only local spots of polluted soils are in industrial areas and along the main transport infrastructure – the rail line Sofia – Thesaloniki and First class road E-79. Disrupted territories are at the places of raw material extraction (coal, rocks, and inert materials). On side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the Buchim copper mine and Damjan iron mine (Radovish), Sala, Zletovo and Toranica zinc and lead-zinc mines represent "hot spots" indicating a high potential for soil and water contamination. The content of heavy metals does not reveal particularly high values. Re-cultivation of land around the mines is among the specific problems of the region.

Pesticides and fertilisers contents can be identified in spots with agricultural intensive production (Kochansko and Strumichko pole-rice and early vegetable production).

A major concern for the *urban environment* of the CBC area (as well as for both neighboring countries) is the state of the old industrial territories within the towns, largely affected by the transition to market economy during the last decades –with existing crumbled and empty production buildings and brownfield sites requiring significant investments in order to be converted to modern industrial zones.

Resource efficiency, utilization of resources, and environmental protection

The efficient utilization of regional resources is an area where various initiatives (including CBC actions) have already been undertaken, but they are still rather insufficient and require considerable investments.

The area is rich in water resources, but there are still problems with the *supply of drinking water* mainly due to the old supply and distribution systems (leading to up to 55% losses) and to the lack of drinking water treatment facilities.

The biggest environmental problems of the border region are the *pollution of the rivers*. There are highly polluted river sections particularly within the catchment area of the Struma and Bregalnica River resulting mainly from the direct flow of waste waters from industry (and mine sites) and households, mine deposits and the use of pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture. Waste water treatment facilities are insufficient (in Bulgaria WWTP were built only for the bigger towns, for the rest this is still to be done in the coming years). Despite the progress made in previous years, there are still many settlements (especially in the rural and mountainous areas) which are not connected to sewerage system.

Much investment is still required in relation to *solid waste collection and treatment*. A long-lasting problem is the existence of illegal dung-hills; the separate collection, separation and recycling of solid waste are activities which presently have limited scope and low coverage within the region.



Energy efficiency of public and private buildings is also an issue that needs continuous improvement. For the Bulgarian part of the region certain investments in this direction have been made due to the EU and national financial resources during the previous programming period. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia currently few projects and credit lines are supporting energy efficiency measures. However, the needs largely exceed the funding available.

The cross-border region has favourable conditions and strong potential for *power generation from renewable sources* to contribute to the obligation of the EU countries in this particular field. The sources for renewable energy generation in the region include: hydropower, solar, biomass, geothermal waters and wind. In Kyustendil the water energy is traditionally used since the year 1927 when the first hydropower station “Osogovo” has been built. Several more hydropower stations have been subsequently built. In the recent years the EU funding available for Bulgaria has stimulated the construction of solar and windmills. Thus Blagoevgrad district has become second in Bulgaria in terms of the number of RE sites generating electrical energy. The total power generation capacity of the constructed RES in the two Bulgarian regions is almost 200 MWt²³. The studies show that the potential of the region is much above the currently available facilities. On side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia only hydropower plant Kalimanci is functioning covering 3% (13,8 MW) from the total (552 MW) country hydropower installed capacities. RES capacities in this part of the CBC region are represent with 27 plants (from which 10 SHPPs) covering 29% (7,3 MW where 77% is from SHPPs) from the total installed (25 MW) RES capacities in the country. First Wind Park in the country (Bogdanci) will start functioning in June 2014 with installed capacity of 37 MW²⁴.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy are topics where cross-border cooperation and exchange of good practices can further boost developments in the related fields.

Climate change and risk prevention

Climate change is a significant threat for regions, especially for those parts where agriculture, tourism, forestry and hydro energy are well developed like in the Bulgarian - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border region. Climate changes bear risks of drought, fires, land erosion and floods.

Bulgaria as a whole is among the countries in the EU that are expected to be most severely affected by climate changes. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a whole is even higher on the scale for climate change affection than Bulgaria. The border area is part of a region for which 6th degree of vulnerability to climate changes has been established, according to the index that has been applied for the whole of EU. From the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian part of the border area the South-east region is identified as a region which will have seriously affected by the climate changes, drought, floods, temperature extremes, forest fires, increasing the temperatures of waters. Abnormalities are already a fact: Since 1970 heat waves have been observed and snow fall diminished. Data show that lands, exposed to moderate and high risk of erosion are in the districts of Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad. Overflows of rivers are registered each year in both parts of the region (here particularly in the South-East Region).

Furthermore, The Bulgarian Climate changes Analyses part of the National Strategy for agriculture, water, urban planning, energy, biodiversity etc. define several sectors which shall be affected by climate changes: management of river basins (where in the case of the Struma-Strimonas basins not even a Cooperation agreement has been prepared), management the risk of floods (preparation of

²³ Data are from the Bulgarian Agency for Sustainable Energy Development

²⁴ Data are from the Energy Agency of RM



joint maps for the risk of floods; exchange of information; development of joint early warning systems), biodiversity where the major negative effect is on wetlands and shrubs, agriculture, where climate warming will have a negative effect, as the cultivation of some agricultural products under conditions where irrigation is not existent, will be endangered (on the other hand, the increase of temperatures will allow the cultivation of some earlier growing vegetables and fruit). Stock-breeding will also be negatively affected by higher temperature stress and alteration of fodder and pasture resources. The Struma valley is projected to fall within the most vulnerable zone A (according to the programme analyses classification)²⁵. Tourism will also be affected by the climate changes, especially the ski winter tourism and sea summer recreation tourism which have a clear seasonal character. At the same time some alternative forms which are very perspective and underdeveloped (e.g. spa, balneology, cultural, wine, etc,) will not be highly affected.

The Bulgarian National Priority Framework for Action under Natura 2000 (2014 – 2020) envisages four measures relevant for the Programme.²⁶

Though adaptation to climate changes is recognized of highest importance, investments to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and implementing disaster management systems have been scarce in previous cross-border cooperation (only one initiative has been funded, related to fire protection).

Key challenges and needs for cooperation

The area is characterized with a relatively clean environment due to decline of industrial activities and measure to control gas emission. However, air pollution due to transport, and soil and water pollution due to industrial and agriculture activity, remain an environmental challenge to be addressed, along with the problems on solid waste management and recycling, as well as improvements on the sewerage systems. Joint actions to develop integrated policies and concepts of land, improve water and solid waste management are needed.

The unique biodiversity of the region, though comparatively well preserved, still needs structured approaches and coordinated activities for proper management. Additional efforts and financial resources are necessary for the preparation and approval of management operational plans of protected areas. Awareness raising campaigns and implementing measures on biodiversity preservation are also needed.

Efficient utilisation of regional resources, increase energy efficiency measures and proper exploitation of renewable sources of energy remains a challenge towards using the natural potentials of the area on the benefit of population and economy. There is a need to undertake joint action and programme that will ensure integrated approach on the use of renewable energy sources and improve energy efficiency. Increase awareness of public institution as well as business operators on the benefit of adopting energy efficiency measures in the buildings is an important way to improve health, protect environment and increase efficient use of energy resources is also needed.

²⁵ Zone A will comprise North-East Bulgaria by 2020 and other parts amongst which is the Struma valley and Pirin sub region – by 2050. It is projected that in zone A the forests will completely disappear.

²⁶ Measures are as following: (1) Support for partnership in the management of protected areas Natura 2000 (Establishment and functioning of joint cross-border commissions and workgroups for the management of the cross-border protected areas and complexes. Implementation of joint projects and initiatives for the management of protected areas within the Natura 2000 network); (2) Exchange of experiences and best practices related to Natura 2000 within projects funded by different programs operating in 2014 – 2020 (Activities done via organization and delivery of study tours in the cross-border region, round tables, discussions, workshops, as well as preparation and production of materials); (3) Training of fire brigades and volunteers (specified trainings, encouraging the creation of voluntary groups-selection their training and organization) and (4) Organizing and holding campaigns to promote the opportunities for financing projects related to Natura 2000 via the CBC Programmes.



Climate change is a significant threat of the region, providing a great impact on agriculture, tourism, forest and hydro-energy system. Both awareness raising and strong measures are needed to be jointly taken in the area of risk prevention, flood-protection and forest protection from fire and other climate change effects in the regions.

Encouraging TOURISM and CULTURAL and NATURAL HERITAGE

The cross-border region provides over favourable natural resources (mountains, forests, lakes, biodiversity, unique natural forms, caves, geothermal and mineral waters, waterfalls), favourable climate conditions, ecologically clean environment as well as wealth and unique cultural/historical assets (existing cultural manifestations, festivals, carnivals; churches and monasteries; crafts, authentic ethno-ambiences), which provide opportunities for sustainable development of different forms of tourism.

Tourism activities are more intense on the Bulgarian side. The main forms are skiing (Bansko, Semkovo, Dobrinishte), spa (Sandanski²⁷, Sapareva Banya, Kyustendil, Dobrinishte, Kumanovo, Strnovac), cultural tours (Rila Monastery, Rozhen Monastery, Vodoca/Veljusa Monastery, Osogovski Monastery), summer tourism (Dojran), winter/eco-tourism (Berovo, Panichiste), golf tourism (Razlog), wine/rural tourism (Melnik) and festival/carnival tourism (Strumica, Blagoevgrad, Sandanski, Bansko).

The cultural/historical heritage of the cross-border region goes back to the traces left behind by the Thracians, the Romans and the Byzantines, although the historical landmarks from the Middle Ages are the most numerous and preserved (such as the architecture-historical reserves in Melnik, Bansko, Kovachevica, Dolen). Valuable archaeological remains from antiquity could be found in almost all of the municipalities: ruins of castles and sanctuaries across the countryside of Bansko, Belica, Razlog, Satovcha, the ancient town of Nikopolis ad Nestrum, etc. - on the Bulgarian side of the border; the ancient towns of Tiveriopolis (today Strumica), Astibo (nowdays Stip), Bargala (in the area of the river Kozjacka), archaeological sides "Vardarski Rid" near Gevgelija and "Isar" near Valandovo, etc. - in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In relation to the monuments of the Christian culture, the eligible cross-border area is characterised by relatively high density of churches and monasteries (the Rozhen monastery, the churches in Rupite and Brestovo etc. - in the Bulgarian side of the border, as well as the church of the Holy Fifteen saints and the Veljusa monastery on the other side of border. The most famous sites are the Rila monastery (included in UNESCO's list of protected sites) and the St. Joakim Osogovski monastery (near Kriva Palanka). The astronomic observatory Kokino is an incredible specificity located in the North-East region dated 1800 years B.C., i.e. from the early Bronze Age. The megalith observatory in Kokino is included among the most valuable ancient observatories in the world. In 2005, the American space agency NASA ranked Kokino at the fourth position in the list of 15 observatories of such kind. The district of Kokino is one of the three future cultural areas in the country according the European Convention of Districts, brought in Firenze in 2000. Additionally, and bearing no less significance, Kokino has got an open possibility to have the values it possesses included in a portfolio of the participation in the provisional list of the world organization UNESCO, said list being open for applications to other localities having their natural and cultural significance confirmed.

The region is rich in diversified culinary traditions and handcrafts. These traditions could play an important role in the promotion and the tourism offer of the region but, so far, are largely underestimated.

²⁷ Sandanski is one of the best spa resorts of Bulgaria; the whole region is rich in mineral springs (42% of all springs in Bulgaria are to be found in Pirin)



There are several internationally recognised cultural events on both sides of the border, including theatre festivals in Blagoevgrad and Strumica, art festivals in Bansko, Melnik, Kriva Palanka and Strumica, the International Art Colony in Osogovo mountain (near Kriva Palanka), etc..

Main cultural institutions in the border area are 18 museums (BG: 12, MK: 6), 8 theatres (BG: 5, MK: 3), 7 cinemas (BG: 2, MK: 5). There are 2 National centres for conservation of cultural heritage in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Strumica and Stip) and Regional Museums of History in Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil in Bulgaria.

On Bulgarian side of the cross-border region tourism is comparatively developed (better in Blagoevgrad, not so much in Kjustendil district). In 2012 there were 20.868 registered beds (6.93% of the country's capacity). The nights spent in the Bulgarian CBC region were 1.111.391 of which by foreigners 454.943

Ski and spa tourism are most developed, both attracting foreign tourists, with Bansko recently becoming the most popular Bulgarian ski resort and Sandanski still a country leader in the balneology and spa sector. All other forms of tourism are not sufficiently developed with great potentials still unutilised.

Tourism on the cross-border area of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is still in the stage of development. In 2012 there were 8 462 registered beds (12% of the country's capacity). The total number of tourists in the Western part of the cross-border region was 58.087 (19,6 % of country total), of which 6.590 domestic and 48.217 foreign visitors (83% from region total).

Specific for tourism development on Bulgarian side was an increase of tourist nights in the period 2006-2007 (+84%, mainly in the Blagoevgrad district (+99%)). In the period 2007-2012 tourist nights increased 33% in the Bulgarian part of the region, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian part the increase was 47% in the same period (East Region +72%, South-East Region 44%, North-East region +40%), compared with only 7% on national level. Figures also show substantial increase of 89% in nights spent by foreign tourists (South-East Region +93%, Kyustendil +111%).

Detail data on Nights spent by tourists in the Programme area are presented in Table 8.

Key challenges and needs for cooperation

The region is rich in natural and culture heritage resources and has a favorable climate that provides very good conditions for tourism development. Development of tourism activities is more intense on the Bulgarian side. In order for the whole cross border area to develop further regional tourism there is a need to develop a unified strategy for development of regional tourist routes and products, Development of alternative forms of tourism as well as continued improvements in spa, rural/eco, cultural/historical and sport tourism should be supported.

Quality of touristic services and infrastructure is not satisfactory. There is a great need for improving tourism promotion infrastructure (tourist information centers, marking tourist routes) and ensuring adequate touristic services (trainings for human resources for: lake tourism, casino tourism, rural tourism, spa tourism, museum managers and archaeological sites, tourist managers and tourist guides).

Touristic facilities and their management need to be improved substantially. Access to tourist sites need to be extended together with development of the new forms of tourism / new tourism products. There are potentials for exchange of experience and best practices in the sphere of tourism and for promoting joint tourist products.



The region is rich in cultural and natural heritage. However these assets are in many cases not properly managed and valorized. Therefore its (joint) valorization, protection, conservation and further promotion is required. Joint action to discovering, exploring and promotion of archaeological sites; upgrading, promotion and regulation of cultural/historical and natural heritage, promotion and regulation of museums combined with intensified promotion of tourism brands in the region through international tourist exchanges and media advertisements may contribute to further development of tourism and overall social and economic development of the area.

Enhancing COMPETITIVENESS, BUSINESS environment and the development of SMEs, TRADE and INVESTMENT

Economic development and structure

The border region is characterized by diverse economic structure and development as well as with sectoral disparities on different levels: Regions in Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia compared to each other, border regions and districts compared to national levels, urban centres as opposed to rural areas. There are regions with structural problems which have lost their competitiveness over the years, regions where the traditional agricultural sector is dominating and some more advanced centres relying on industries with growth potential.

The economic leader of the programme area is the South-East region (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) with a clear positive development trend for the period 2007-2011, the highest GDP per capita, compared to the other regions and above (115.6%) the national average for 2011.

Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria) is 2nd in terms of GDP development, but with very moderate growth through the years and a GDP per capita of 65% of the national average for 2011.

The region lagging behind is the North East region (MK) with GDP per capita of about 56% of that of the region' leader, followed by Kyustendil (BG). Both regions showing draw backs and fluctuations in their development and remain far below the national levels.

Table 4 and graph below it presents the data for GDP per Capita in the Programme area as well as its development in the period 2007-2011.

The sectoral structure of the CBC regions shows certain differences between the countries, with agriculture being particularly important the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia part.

The **Primary sector** is of key importance to the border area and a main source of income for a large share of the region's population, particularly those living in smaller settlements and rural areas. The reasons are, besides the traditions, also the favourable climate (agriculture), rich and preserved forests (forestry, wood industry), raw materials (coal mining, inert materials from the rivers - sand, gravel, limestone, ballast, marble, ...).

In the CBC region, the primary sector has the largest share in the economy of the South-East Region (33.17% of the GVA for 2011) which is also higher than the national average. On the other end is Kyustendil district, once called the "orchard of Bulgaria" where now the primary sector accounts only for 5.55% of the GVA.

Agriculture, as the main sub-sector, is better developed in the part of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where farming is traditional and intensive on small and fragmented plots and mainly concentrated in the South-East Region in the Strumica micro-region and the Gevgelija region. However, problems exist particularly with uncontrolled use of underground water and polluted



surface water as well as uncontrolled use of fertilizers/pesticides. The agricultural area is composed by the cultivated land covering 211 241²⁸ ha (41% from country total) from which 83% is arable land, and pastures on 259 904 ha (34,4% from country total). Vegetables production, especially early growing vegetables, is one of the most significant potentials for agriculture in the south-east region where high shares from total national production of cucumber (86,4%),tomatoes (68,3%) and peppers (56,5%) were produced in 2012. Tobacco, onion, alfalfa and cereals are other crops with more than 40% of total national production. Rice is a specific culture for the area of Kocani where almost the whole national production is realised. The extensive production may be converted into organic type, which may be regarded a great advantage of the region. The organic field production may be supplemented with organic cattle-breed production, as the large participation of the meadows and the pastures make this region suitable for development of pasture based cattle breeding, especially for small cattle (sheep and goats).

In the Bulgarian districts, similar to the national situation of the sector, land is very fragmented, there are numerous but small farms²⁹; equipment and technologies are still old (with tendency to improve due to the EU funding available in the recent years), irrigation systems are ruined and there is no strategy at state level how to restore them (this issue is particularly important as the sector is much vulnerable to climate change). Other problems relate to quality standards, marketing and realisation of the products, presence of extensive sub-sectors (e.g. tobacco-growing) which bring social tension. Despite all negative features inherited from the past, due to the EU agricultural policy and the flow of funds to the Bulgarian agriculture in recent years, increase of the investments to the sector are already a fact: orchards and vineyards are being restored, improved varieties and growth technologies are being introduced. The trend is positive but the achievements are still far from the development levels desired.

Organic farming presents another potential for the region, with positive tendency in the number of bio-farms registered (e.g. 30% growth in Blagoevgrad for 2012 compared with 2011), though this sector is still in its early stage of development on both sides of the border.

Forestry is also a sub-sector with considerable potential for the region based on the rich natural resources available. However, its contribution to the regional GDP is modest and far beyond the possible returns. Measures and cooperation for efficient and sustainable economic use of the region forests can boost regional performance.

The **secondary sector** is concentrated in the urban areas, with more dynamic industrial development in the largest regional centres and traditional industries located in the smaller towns. The dominance of the industrial sector is much higher in the Bulgarian part. However, there has been a drop of the main important industry branches over the years of economic restructuring and the tendency has been for liquidation of strategic and higher technologically-oriented production systems and return to traditional industries.

The processing industry has remained comparatively stable over the last 5 years with the following main sub-sectors presented in the region:

- Machinery, and electronics (concentrated in Blagoevgrad, Kyuestendil, Dupnitsa, Bobovdol, Yakoruda, Stip)

²⁸ Data for 2012 Source: State Statistical office

²⁹ Blagoevgrad is a typical example – the number of the farms is the highest in the whole country (38 467 which is 10.4% of all farms in Bulgaria). At the same time this is the district with the smallest farms (1,54 ha – average, compared to 10,13 ha national average). Source: District strategy for regional development of Blagoevgrad region, data is for 2012.



- Metal processing (Dupnica)
- Textile, apparel – mainly work done with materials supplied by clients from Germany, Italy, France, Greece; (Blagoevgrad, Kyuestendil, Goce Delchev, Dupnitsa, Stip, Strumica but also in smaller settlements)
- Shoe industry (Kyuestendil, Dupnitsa, Stip, Kumanovo)
- Food processing (Blagoevgrad, Kyuestendil, Kumanovo, Stip, Strumica, Gevgelija Radovis)
- Energy generation – TEPP Bobovdol, hydropower stations (Kyuestendil, Kalimanci, Zrnovci)
- Pharmacy – Kyuestendil

The problems of the sector relate to a loss of competitiveness, resulting from the on-going restructuring processes, loss of traditional markets, lack of modern technologies, old machinery, lack of managerial skills and technical staff and low investments in R&D.

The **tertiary sector** of the region has been expanding faster, compared to the trends on national levels with the exception of the East Region, where a 11.89% decline of the share of the GVA for 2011 compared with 2007 has been registered (mainly due to the higher growth of the manufacturing sector in this region during the same period).

The enterprises operating in the regional trade industry are mostly set up by foreign investors. They not only strongly contribute to economic growth, but also influence positive changes in business approaches, working conditions and income levels.

In addition to trade, tourism is the sub-sector which has shown a steady growth in recent years. However, it is still strongly concentrated in few locations (Bansko, Sandanski, Saparevabanya, Razlog), better developed on the Bulgarian side and still with significant underutilised potential.

Entrepreneurship, competitiveness and SMEs

The dynamics of the economic development are based on the large and growing number of SMEs. In principle the size of the enterprises on both sides of the border is quite similar and they follow the national trends: micro companies (0 to 9 employees) hold the biggest share (between 90% -93%), while the smallest share have the companies with 250 employees and more (between 0.1% – 0.3%).

Table 5 presents the data for number of business entities in the Programme area and its development in the period 2008-2012.

In the recent years the economy of the region has maintained its high specialization in sectors and activities which require comparatively low qualification and technologies (e.g. agriculture, extracting industry, apparel and shoe manufacturing). This also defined the character of regional exports which are mainly low added value products. The competitiveness of the region is formed on the basis of low costs for baseline factors – labour and natural resources, rather than on innovations, education and qualification, technology transfer, research and development.

Collaboration on all levels for raising the competitiveness of regional SMEs will be of specific benefit, both within a particular sector or cross-border. EU programmes and policies in this field have already positively influenced such cooperation structures: the SMEs from the Bulgarian CBC area have



already experience in participating in joint business clusters³⁰, with the potential for these to be further developed to successful future cooperation's also in other industries and/or across the border.

Key challenges and needs for cooperation

Development of SMEs capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets is highly important as this sector provides a great contribution to economy and labour. Joint actions might be taken to enhance the access of local businesses to international markets (achieving internationally recognized quality standards, cross-border trade fairs, ...) and to stimulate the collaboration between SMEs for growth and increased competitiveness based on cluster approaches. Bringing agricultural producers closer to the markets and the development of agribusiness centers for better flow of information for new technologies are needed.

Joint actions for promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation for exchange of new ideas, skills and technology and fostering the creation of new firms, cooperation and exchange of experience in agriculture, in RES, tourism will contribute towards strengthening economic activities and region competitiveness.

Under the condition of a weak rural economy in the region the promoting of bio-farming as a possibility for diversification of agricultural activities, especially in areas with a danger of depopulation but with clean and unique nature will be required. Joint actions might be combined with a particular focus on the development of ecotourism.

Justification for the choice of thematic priorities, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation

The IPA CBC Programme between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 covers three Thematic Priorities:

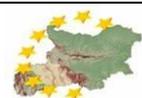
Thematic Priority 2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Thematic Priority 4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage

Thematic Priority 7: Enhancing competitiveness, business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment

An additional Technical Assistance Priority will support the proper management and the communication of the Programme.

³⁰ “Inter fashion trading “cluster has been organised in the municipalities Sofia, Kyuestendil, Dupnitsa, Blagoevgrad, Belica, Kresna, Petrich, Sandanski. A cluster “Furniture and wood-working industry” has been established in Razlog.



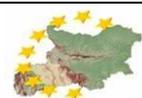
The rationale behind selecting the priorities is based on identification of existing potentials of the Programming area, the main needs and challenges that are impacting sustainable and social economic development of the area. In addition, the selected thematic priorities encompass subject matters and types of interventions of common interest, benefiting a broad spectrum of institutions and organisations located on both sides of the border.

The Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Union sets the frames of the assistance to be received from the EU structural and investment funds in the period 2014-2020. In reference to territorial development it recognizes the need to apply an integrated approach which is determined by the identified disparities in comparison with the EU average level and the advanced process of monocentrism covering Sofia city and the other biggest Bulgarian cities, which leads in long-term to serious territorial imbalances, providing objective impossibility for exploitation of the whole territorial potential for development.

In this context, the territorial cooperation programmes are viewed as instruments strongly contributing to the chosen polycentric development model and as being complementary to the national programmes, with the emphasis put on the specifics of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Bulgaria's experience so far showed that the ETC had the highest impact on the quality of the environment and risk management, the quality of life, building of infrastructure (mainly small scale), improving the capacity for joint planning, provision of services (including cultural) and trainings, tourist promotion and promotion of the comparative advantages of the regions. Based on this experience several priority areas of cooperation have been identified in the PA for the period 2014 – 2020. Furthermore, it is recognized that the territory of each programme is considered as one functional area with unique characteristics, thus the generally formulated priority areas for cooperation should be in compliance with the specific needs of the stakeholders and the relevant regions³¹, including, in compliance with the legal framework and possibly applicable financial instruments, as well as, in line with the strategic documents on European and national level.

The Country Strategy Paper 2014-2020 EU assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia define reforms in the rule of law and fundamental rights sector are crucial for the overall development of the country in providing quality justice to the citizens and a favourable environment for economic growth. As regards competitiveness and growth, concerted efforts are needed to achieve inclusive growth in line with the Europe 2020 priorities, with assistance in the field of competitiveness and innovation targeted notably to improve access to finance to SMEs. Given the country's landlocked position and its dependence on a well-developed transport network for its economic development, assistance will be provided in the field of transport and the development of the main Trans-European Corridors. Assistance will also be provided for reform in education, employment and social policies to increase access to quality education and the labour market, and to agriculture, which is one of the most significant sectors of the country's economy. IPA II assistance will also be granted in the environment sector in order to support a more sustainable growth, an

³¹ “Regarding the programme between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the PA points out that based on the previous analyses of interim programme evaluation and lessons learned, the preferred priority areas for cooperation are in the field of environmental protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage, tourism and education and social infrastructure.”



energy efficient economy, and reduce the high levels of pollution in the country. Furthermore, strengthening of local economic development and local governance is conducive to social cohesion, democratic development and good inter-community relations, and will be addressed throughout all sectors of IPA II assistance. The CBC/territorial cooperation programmes to be developed for the period 2014-2020 will focus on the socio-economic development of the border areas. Continuation of people to people actions, human resource development and information sharing has to remain as an essential part of individual programmes.

Thematic priority 2 will promote joint, integrated and harmonised interventions underpinning the sustainable use of natural resources. Interventions under this thematic priority will improve the environmental and natural framework conditions of the population in the area.

Thematic priority 4 will promote joint initiatives and integrated actions contributing to the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage resources, and fostering tourism development as one of the most important economic sectors furthering economic growth and better living conditions of the community.

Thematic priority 7 will promote joint cross border initiatives and actions aiming to enhance competitiveness and improve regional economy.

Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic priorities

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
Protecting the ENVIRONMENT and promoting CLIMATE CHANGE adaptation and mitigation, RISK PREVENTION and management	<p>This relates directly to a main priority of EU2020 where CSF defines this area as specific relevant for CBC. For the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia improvements in this area are a pre-condition for EU accession. National Strategies for Regional Development in both countries see joint risk management and environmental protection as key topics for CBC and supports joint CBC activities in environment sector. Both countries face similar environmental problems where environmental issues don't stop in front of border and need to be addressed regionally and on CBC level (water, natural protection, fire protection). Climate change is very relevant for both sides and adequate measures are EU and national priorities and there is a need to raise awareness and measures on climate changes as it has impact on economy and life. National parks and nature protection to address things jointly to raise tourism development and region image</p> <p>In CBC context activities under this priority will address issues of the promotion of cleaner and greener economy, more responsible and sustainable use of natural resources, climate resilience small-scale support infrastructure. Environmental issues remain a concern in the programme area, air pollution due to transport and soil and water pollution due to industrial and agriculture activity, along with the</p>



	<p>problems on solid waste management and recycling, as well as improvements on the sewage systems. Raising awareness and implementing measures on preservation of biodiversity is also needed. Efficient utilization of regional resources, increase energy efficiency measures and proper exploitation of renewable sources of energy remains a challenge towards using the natural potentials of the area on the benefit of population and economy. Climate change is a significant threat of the region, providing a great impact on agriculture, tourism, forest and hydro-energy system. Further improvement of the quality of environment and environmental infrastructure is key for the economic development of the region.</p>
<p>Encouraging TOURISM and CULTURAL and NATURAL HERITAGE</p>	<p>Promoting of culture, tourism and people to people contacts is priority area of EUSDR were also the MK Country Strategy Paper recommended tourism as a good area for people-to-people activities. National Strategies for Regional Development in both countries see development of joint tourism and cultural initiatives as key CBC actions and supports joint CBC activities for protection of the natural and cultural heritage. Online survey, and regional consultative forums as well as experience and interest in the past and ongoing CBC Programme show huge interest in the region for activities in tourism and cultural/natural heritage. Activities under this priority have good potential for development and will have positive employment effect and high involvement of young and female population.</p> <p>It builds on identified strategic opportunities related to the increasing importance of tourism as an economic opportunity while fostering cultural exchange and promotion of natural heritage will sustain people-to-people and civil society dialogue between institutions.</p> <p>The area is rich in natural and culture heritage resources, therefore its (joint) valorisation, protection, conservation and further promotion is required. Tourism infrastructure, services, management and human capacities need to be improved. Initiatives for developing common touristic products and offering alternative forms of tourism which could seize new business opportunities and increase the competitiveness of the sector should be supported.</p>
<p>Enhancing COMPETITIVENESS, BUSINESS environment and the development of SMEs, TRADE and INVESTMENT</p>	<p>This relates directly to a main priority of EU2020. National Strategies for Regional Development in both countries support joint CBC activities in the economic field. Analysis and regional stakeholders consider very important to strengthen this sector. There is a need to intensify the CBC business contacts. Strengthening businesses has positive effects on employment and also initiatives for youth and</p>



	<p>professional training could be included.</p> <p>Development of SMEs capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets is highly important as this sector provides a great contribution to economy and labour. Joint actions might be taken to enhance the access of local businesses to international markets and to stimulate the collaboration between SMEs for growth and increased competitiveness based on cluster approaches. Joint actions for promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation for exchange of new ideas, skills and technology and fostering the creation of new firms, cooperation and exchange of experience in agriculture, in RES, tourism will contribute towards strengthening economic activities and region competitiveness. Under the condition of a weak rural economy in the region the promoting of bio-farming as a possibility for diversification of agricultural activities, especially in areas with a danger of depopulation but with clean and unique nature will be required. Joint actions might be combined with a particular focus on the development of ecotourism. There is a discrepancy between the emerging demand for market development and the introduction of new modern technologies and existing labour market skills. Investments on increasing business capacities, innovation and know how transfer, strengthening the capacities of an education system closer oriented to the market demands, will be equally important for the area. Promotion and marketing of cross-border regional branding becomes highly relevant.</p>
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Section 1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

Justification for the financial allocation (i.e. Union support) to each thematic priority in accordance with the thematic concentration requirements (taking into account the ex-ante evaluation).

The overall programme budget is of EUR 19.461.687 with an EU contribution of EUR 16.542.434, as detailed in section 3 (Financing Plan). The financial allocation to the chosen thematic objectives reflects:

- The inputs provided by the relevant partners in the course of consultations
- The experiences of the programming period 2007-2013 in particular relating to preparatory steps for key projects and the continuation of efforts in promising policy areas but also with a close view on the capacity of core actors in certain thematic fields
- The estimated financial size of the actions foreseen in each priority axis



Priority axis 1 (Thematic Priority 2)

The planned EU support to priority axis 2 is of EUR 5.789.852 corresponding to 35% of the programme budget, with an estimated number of 15 investment projects and 20-25 soft measures that will be supported. This financial allocation reflects the expected size of actions facing the needs to better protect the environment and biodiversity in the cross-border region, to support joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources and to improve the preparedness of the region concerning natural and environmental hazards and the consequences of climate change.

Priority axis 2 (Thematic Priority 4)

The planned EU support to priority axis 2 is of EUR 6.616.974 corresponding to 40% of the programme budget, with an estimated number of 15 investments and 30-35 soft measures (including a fund for people to people projects) that will be supported. This financial allocation reflects the expected size of actions facing the needs to improve the valorization of natural and cultural heritage and the tourism attractiveness in the region and to enhance cooperation and networking for sustainable tourism.

Moreover, the financial allocation to this priority is aligned with the high interest shown by the regional stakeholders in the consultation process. All partner regions expressed their interest in this priority, the potential interest expressed in consultation meetings during programming has been significant.

BG-MK stakeholders already have a certain tradition and a growing need of cooperation in the field of natural and cultural heritage development and sustainable tourism development, with around 20 projects approved in this area during the 2007-2013 period. The broad variety of beneficiaries and approaches in the period 2007-2013 clearly documents the interest for cooperation.

Priority axis 3 (Thematic Priority 7)

The planned EU support to priority axis 3 is of EUR 2.481.365 corresponding to 15% of the programme budget, with an estimated number of 25 soft measures that will be supported. This financial allocation reflects the character of the envisaged soft measures and the need to improve the conditions for business development and to create a better awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region.

Priority axis 4 (Technical Assistance)

The planned EU support to priority axis 4 is of EUR 1.654.243 corresponding to 10% of the programme budget. This funds should help to assure a proper functioning of the necessary programme structures and an efficient management and communication of the programme



Table 2: Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

Priority axis	Union support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme	Thematic priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the thematic priority
PA 1	5.789.852	35%	TP 2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	RI1.1 Increased number of supported nature protected sites RI1.2 Increased number of joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources RI2.1 Increased number of supported interventions in the field of risk prevention and management RI2.2 Increased number of joint initiatives related to risk prevention and management
PA 2	6.616.974	40%	TP 4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	RI 1.1a: Increased number of supported cultural, historic and natural sites and touristic attractions RI 1.1b: Increased number of guest nights in the CBC region RI 1.2a: Increased number of created/supported tourism products and services RI 1.2b: Increase in contribution of tourism sector to regional GDP RI 1.3: Increased public awareness regarding sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources
PA 3	2.481.365	15%	TP 7: Enhancing competitiveness, business environment and the development of small and medium-	RI1 Increase of the regional GDP RI 2 Increased awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region



			sized enterprises, trade and investment	
PA 4	1.654.243	10%	Technical Assistance	
Total	16.542.434	100%		

SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

Section 2.1. Description of the priority axes (other than technical assistance)

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.1.1 Priority axis 1 - Environment

2.1.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis choice

to be inserted at a later stage

2.1.3. The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Specific objective(s)

The Programme seeks to achieve two specific objectives under this Priority, namely

SO 1.1 Environmental protection and sustainable use of the common natural resources of the CBC area

SO 1.2 Risk prevention and mitigation the consequences of natural and manmade hazards and disasters in the CBC region

The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support

The CBC region has a large number of protected areas. However, most of these areas do not provide over adequate management plans and they are under increasing environmental pressure of different economic activities. For this reason, negative environmental effects have intensified, and consistently



contributed to the deterioration of local environmental pollution levels. These negative effects need to be tackled by implementing a set of planned measures.

By improving on the one hand the people's capacity for a sustainable interaction with the environment, including also issues like climate protection and raising people's awareness towards high energy consumption as well as the usage of fossil fuels, etc. The major effect of climate change on economy and life needs to be highlighted. Therefore it's the CBC region's aim to foster its capacity and to increase knowledge transfer across borders aiming at reaching the vision of a low-carbon economy and a high level of environmental protection and management. On the other hand the specific objective targets to improve the condition of natural areas and to improve the partly negative environmental development of the last decades, including amongst others urbanisation, intensified agriculture and transport.

Also for this objective a mix of "investment" and "soft" measures could be incorporated and might be established through the guiding principles for selection of operations.

In order to reach the envisaged change a set of different measures – including for example investments in the improvement of green infrastructure as well as training and capacity building activities for authorities of different levels – will be implemented.

Floodings and fire events are classical CBC issues: river basin management and protection of fires are cross-border issues that can hardly be only tackled in the absence of cooperation across borders. There is also the CBC region's especially high vulnerability towards the intensified effects of climate change.

Therefore actions should be taken to reduce the risks of flooding and fires through the establishment of real cooperation across borders (with partners establishing joint initiatives and actions).

By improving of the river basin management the damage from flooding events will be reduced and the river basins across borders can be sustainably managed (river banks restored, zoning and regional/ local planning adapted to the river basin and the flooding areas). Also, risks will be mitigated by implementing comprehensive fire protecting initiatives.

A mix of "investment" measures and "soft" measures could be incorporated and might be established through the guiding principles for selection of operations.

A set of different measures, including amongst other early warning and disaster management systems, the sanitation and reforestation of river banks or rather soft measures, like training and awareness raising of the civil society, will be set in order to reach the envisaged change.

Thus the Programme envisages achieving the following results:

- R1.1 Better protected environment and biodiversity in the cross-border region
- R 1.2 Improved capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area
- R.2.1 Improved preparedness of the region concerning natural and environmental hazards and the consequences of climate change



R 2.2 Improved capacity for joint interaction in case of fires, floods and other emergency situations

2.1.4. Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

(Reference: Article 35(1) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

not applicable

2.1.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority (by thematic priority)

2.1.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Types of actions:

The following two types of actions are envisaged under this Priority Axis to contribute to the Specific Objective:

1) investments

projects that have a predominant investment character with only a minor part of accompanying soft activities

2) soft measures

projects that are mainly oriented at preparing studies, establishing networks, providing trainings, developing concepts, providing services for certain target groups, raising awareness on specific themes, , etc.. These projects may only have a minor investment part for purchasing equipment that are needed for delivering the soft measures in an effective way. Soft measures also include people-to-people type of actions, e.g. small scale initiatives among civil society institutions that aim at increasing direct contacts and cooperation across the border among the people and their associations in the region

Under the Calls for Proposals project applicants may address one of the two types of actions (investments or soft measures) and slightly different evaluation criteria may apply.

Examples of actions:

The following examples of action are a non-exhaustive list that is illustrating the range of possible actions under this Thematic Priority



Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 1st result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A1.1.1 Joint initiatives and investments in small infrastructure, equipment and technologies for pollution control and rehabilitation of rivers, contaminated lands, brown fields, etc.
- A1.1.2 Small scale investments in recycling, waste collection, waste separation, remediation of illegal dumping sites and improving public hygiene
- A1.1.3 Investments for monitoring and combating of air pollution
- A1.1.4 Small scale investments for improving the management of Natura 2000 and nature protected sites
- A1.1.5 Small scale investments in RES and energy efficiency
- A1.1.6 Measures for restoration of natural areas

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 2nd result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A1.2.1 Awareness raising and training initiatives on all levels (individual persons, organizations, businesses, public administration, schools) on issues related to environmental and nature protection
- A1.2.2. Joint initiatives, networks and partnerships for promotion of nature protection, energy efficiency and sustainable use of natural resources among local population, including young people, marginalized communities and other vulnerable groups;
- A1.2.3 Joint approaches, studies, plans, strategies, researches, common databases focused on protecting landscape and biodiversity;
- A1.2.4 Cooperation, exchange of experiences and knowledge between institutions in the field of nature protection and pollution prevention;
- A1.2.5 Cooperation between public authorities and NGOs in the field of safe and sustainable low-carbon economy across borders;
- A1.2.6 Public awareness campaigns on the needs of reducing and recycling waste.

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 3rd result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A1.3.1 Preparation of technical documentation, feasibility studies and detailed designs for consolidation of river beds, construction of dikes, prevention of landslides, etc.
- A1.3.2 Development of early warning and disaster management systems
- A1.3.3 Small scale investments for risk prevention and response to natural and environmental hazards and the consequences of climate change, such as:
 - supply of specialized fire-fighting equipment,



- supply of specialized equipment for control of floods and for search and rescue interventions,
- sanitation and reforestation of river banks, building dikes, canals, etc for prevention of floods.)
- forestation of vulnerable land and prevention of landslides, cuttings for emergency situations,
- etc.

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 4th result of this Priority Axis may include:

A1.4.1 Joint approaches for promoting risk prevention awareness, adaptation and mitigation (e.g. risk mapping of accident risk spots, hazard and risk assessment and evaluation exercises, join databases, joint plans and methodologies)

A1.4.2 Joint activities for improving cooperation, strategies and capacity for disaster management

A1.4.3 Exchange of experience and good practices (study visits, round-tables, conferences, trainings) for public authorities and other concerned target groups on management of environmental emergencies

A1.4.4 Awareness-raising campaigns in the field of risk prevention and management for all population groups (including young people and marginalised groups).

A1.4.5 Conducting joint theoretical-tactical exercises and field trainings for emergency situations management with special focus on young people

A1.4.6 Public awareness campaigns on the negative effects of climate change and possible mitigation measures

Main target groups supported under the investment priority

The actions supported under this Priority Axis are envisaged to bring benefits to the following target groups:

- Population in the region
- Regional and local authorities

Types of beneficiaries supported under the investment priority

The following Types of Beneficiaries may apply for the respective types of projects under this Priority Axis:

Types of Beneficiaries	Investment projects	Soft Measures
Local and regional authorities and organisations established and managed by local and regional authorities (especially those dealing	X	X



with emergency situations and nature / environment protection)		
National authorities and organisations established and managed by national authorities	X	X
Administrations of protected areas	X	X
Regional and sector development agencies		X
Research and academic institutes		X
Civil Society / Non-governmental organisations (including associations and networks)		X

Specific territories targeted under the investment priority

No specific focus areas are defined. The entire programme area is eligible.

2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:

1. CBC character
 - Involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries
 - Clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country
2. Partnership
 - The involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules
 - The involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management
3. Regional relevance
 - The operations are in correspondence to the identified needs and challenges of the CBC area
 - The operations contribute to economic, territorial and social cohesion (following the EU-2020 Strategy)
4. Strategic relevance
 - The operations are in line with the priority axis' specific objectives
 - The operations are coherent with strategies and concept at the regional and the national level
5. Operations' quality



- The operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic)
 - Expenditures of the operations are effective
 - The projects are based on the concept of sustainability
6. Horizontal principles
- The operations take the equality between men and women into account
 - The operations consider non-discrimination principles
 - The operations follow the concept of sustainable development

In addition to these general section criteria applicable the following specific principles will apply when selecting projects under this Priority Axis:

- projects will be given preference that support the involvement of young people

Strategic projects

Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified outside calls for proposals for the achievement of the programme and priority objectives. Strategic projects contribute to achievement of a bigger impact through real and strong cross-border impact and long-term results, in respect of the Programme's objectives.

Strategic Projects must be effective and answer the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme and result in a significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area.

The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following

- to address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border
- to produce lasting effects and catalyse further actions;

The decision of selecting strategic projects is within the competence of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme.

2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable

2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)



2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Base-line value	Base-line year	Target value (2023) ³²	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
RI 1.1.a	Increased number of supported cultural, historic and natural sites and touristic attractions ³³ or Increased number of guest nights in the CBC region	number		2013		AIRs	Annually
RI 1.1.b	Increased number of joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	number		2013		AIRs	Annually
RI 1.2.a	Increased number of supported interventions in the field of risk prevention and management	number		2013		AIRs	Annually
RI 1.2.b	Increased number of joint initiatives related to risk prevention and management	number		2013		AIRs	Annually

2.1.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

³² Please note that the target values for the year 2023 are under establishment.

³³ Manfred: this seems to me to be an output indicator



The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measure- ment unit	Target value (2023) ³²	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
OI 1.1.1	Number of supported investments for improving the environmental conditions in the programme region	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.1.2	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (COI) (in ha)	ha		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.1.3	Population directly benefiting from supported nature protected sites ³⁴	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.2.1	Number of supported joint mechanisms for environmental protection, promotion of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.2.2	Number of institutions/organizations involved in environmental related activities	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.2.3.	Number of participants in environmental related trainings and campaigns	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.3.1	Supported investments for improving disaster management and risk prevention	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.3.2	Supported investments for adaptation and mitigation of climate change consequences	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.3.3	Population benefitting from risk prevention measures	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.3.4	Population benefitting from mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters	number		AIRs	Annually
OI	Supported joint mechanisms for	Number		AIRs	Annually

³⁴ question: how to count population in case that two different projects are implementing projects that benefit the same (part of the) population and in total it would even be more than 100% of the total population in the CBC region?



1.4.1	disaster management and risk prevention and for promotion of climate change awareness				
OI 1.4.2	Number of institutions/organizations involved in initiatives related to risk prevention and management	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 1.4.3	Number of participants in trainings and campaigns in the field of risk prevention, (including marginalized communities and other vulnerable groups)	Number		AIRs	Annually

2.1.7. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

Tables 5-8: Categories of intervention

Table 5: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 1	085 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure 087 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	

Table 6: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 1	01 Non-repayable grant	



Table 7: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 1	05 Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	

Table 8: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 1	07 Not applicable	

2.1.8. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable / not envisaged

2.2.1 Priority axis 2 - Tourism

2.2.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis choice

to be inserted at a later stage

2.2.3. The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Specific objective(s)

The Programme seeks to achieve three specific objectives under this Priority, namely



- SO 2.1 Enhancing the tourism potential of the region through better preservation and sustainable utilization of natural and cultural heritage
- SO 2.2 Raising the competitiveness of the CBC region's tourist offer
- SO 2.3 Promoting cooperation among regional actors in the area of sustainable tourism

The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support

The relationship between tourism and the Programme area's natural and cultural heritage is of critical importance for increasing tourist attractiveness of the border area. The quality of the natural and cultural heritage is, in most areas, fundamentally important to the generation of economic prosperity through tourism, to the quality of life of local communities and to the visitor experience.

In order to untap the tourism potential of the cross-border region the programme seeks supporting conservation of natural and cultural heritage, linked where appropriate to tourism, including the restoration of heritage buildings and the maintenance of traditional landscapes. It also seeks to improve the accessibility to touristic sites in the region, in line with the overall concept for sustainable tourism development.

For sustainable tourism development it is furthermore essential to adopt visitor management plans to ensure that tourism does not damage natural and cultural resources.

The improved possibilities for sustainable touristic services in the CBC-region are another core result that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support. For this it is necessary to have a proper knowledge about the market trends, develop new tourism products and services and to support the upgrading of skills and knowledge of the workforce.

Sustainable tourism also provides an optimal contribution to local/regional economy in interaction with other activities through fostering a multi-sectoral and participative approach to development. Sustainable tourism, interaction with complementary activities, is seen as direct contribution to the rise in employment and growth of the border economy, seriously affected by depopulation and economic crises.

The tourism sector may offer many job opportunities to people of all ages and skills. Particularly for young people, a job in tourism often represents the first contact with working life, supplying them with interpersonal and social competencies highly needed in a customer-minded service industry. Increasingly, there is scope for tourism to add value to cross-border employment in other sectors, through multiple occupations, and to provide new opportunities for employment in fields related to the environment and heritage.

Tourist product quality and innovation are important factors to avoid the decline of destinations. But since a tourist usually takes a decision in favour of the destination that offers to meet a bundle of wishes (accommodation, events, activities) the competitiveness of CBC destinations can only be maintained or improved when the respective stakeholders in the border region are working together.



Thus the Programme envisages achieving the following results:

- R 2.1 Increased tourism attractiveness of the CBC region
- R 2.2a Improved visibility, variety and quality of the tourist offer in the CBC region
or alternatively: R 2.2 b Increased contribution of tourism to the regional economy
- R 2.3 Enhanced cooperation and networking for sustainable tourism development potential

2.2.4. Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

(Reference: Article 35(1) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

not applicable

2.2.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority (by thematic priority)

- 2.2.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Types of actions:

The following two types of actions are envisaged under this Priority Axis to contribute to the Specific Objective:

- 1) investments
projects that have a predominant investment character with only a minor part of accompanying soft activities
- 2) soft measures
projects that are mainly oriented at preparing studies, establishing networks, providing trainings, developing concepts, providing services for certain target groups, raising awareness on specific themes, , etc.. These projects may only have a minor investment part for purchasing equipment that are needed for delivering the soft measures in an effective way. Soft measures also include people-to-people type of actions, e.g. small scale initiatives among civil society institutions that aim at increasing direct contacts and cooperation across the border among the people and their associations in the region



Under the Calls for Proposals project applicants may address one of the two types of actions (investments or soft measures) and slightly different evaluation criteria may apply.

Examples of actions:

The following examples of action are a non-exhaustive list that is illustrating the range of possible actions under this Thematic Priority

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 1st result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A2.1.1 Restoration and maintenance of touristic sites of historical and cultural importance
- A2.1.2 Conservation and protection of tangible and intangible natural, historical and cultural heritage
- A2.1.3. Rehabilitation of access roads to natural, cultural and historical touristic sites
- A2.1.4 Building of new and/or reconstructing or upgrading of existing cycling routes and walking paths
- A2.1.5 Building of new and/or rehabilitation and upgrading of tourist attractions
- A2.1.6 Public utilities upgrade (electricity, water-supply, sewerage, etc.) related to touristic sites
- A2.1.7 Development of cross-border transport schemes to touristic sites
- A2.1.8 Establishment of info-centres and/or kiosks to guide potential visitors
- A2.1.9 Development of facilities for access to or in the tourist sites for disabled people

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 2nd result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A2.2.1 Elaboration and implementation of joint thematic routes and thematic tourism clusters (that are based on the region's unique natural and cultural heritage)
- A2.2.2 Development of new / alternative / sustainable tourism products and services
- A2.2.3 Joint actions, tools and initiatives for the promotion of the cross-border tourist products (e.g. development of joint web-sites and platforms for online reservations and payment, joint participation in tourism trade fairs, exhibitions and other promotional events, joint advertising campaigns, etc.)
- A2.2.4 Promotion and branding initiatives on themes and in areas related to joint cross-border tourism products
- A2.2.5 Joint researches on potential niche tourism activities and/or on the demand for new tourist destinations and experience
- A2.2.6 Joint initiatives to improve the service quality in tourism (exchange of experience and good practices, trainings, study tours, etc.)



A2.2.7 Training schemes and consultancy support services for tourism enterprises/establishments to improve skills and performance

A2.2.8 Support to start-up initiatives for exploiting local assets to create new tourism products and services (incl. for women and marginalized groups)

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 3rd result of this Priority Axis may include:

A2.3.1 Awareness raising campaigns on all levels (individual persons, organizations, businesses, public administration, schools) on issues related to sustainable utilization and promotion of the region's intangible cultural and natural heritage

A2.3.2 Creating / developing /strengthening of joint networks for exchange of good practices in sustainable tourism management

A2.3.3 Developing/implementing joint policies, strategies, training and capacity building events for the valorization of the cultural and natural heritage through its restoration and promotion for sustainable economic uses

A2.3.4 Organization of various joint cultural events for the promotion of the region's cultural identity

A2.3.5 Creating networks for addressing youth initiatives in the border area, incl. the participation of young people in cultural initiatives

A2.3.6 Support for kids and youth initiatives in the area of cultural, social, science and physical activities (music, philosophy, sports, regional exploration)

Main target groups supported under the investment priority

The actions supported under this Priority Axis are envisaged to bring benefits to the following target groups:

- Population in the region
- Public and private cultural institutions
- Education and training institutions
- Regional and local authorities
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in tourism
- Tourist operators
- Tourist information centres (points)

Types of beneficiaries supported under the investment priority

The following Types of Beneficiaries may apply for the respective types of projects under this Priority Axis:

Types of Beneficiaries	Investment	Soft
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This project is co- financed by the European Union through Bulgaria-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO007



	projects	Measures
Local and regional authorities and organisations established and managed by local and regional authorities	X	X
National authorities and organisations established and managed by national authorities	X	X
Regional and sector development agencies		X
Civil Society / Non-governmental organisations (including associations and networks)		X
Regional touristic associations / NGOs in the field of tourism		X
Business support structures - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster		X
Education / Training Centres		X
Cultural institutes (museum, library, art gallery, community centres, etc.)	X	X

Specific territories targeted under the investment priority

No specific focus areas are defined. The entire programme area is eligible.

2.2.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:

1. CBC character
 - Involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries
 - Clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country
2. Partnership
 - The involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules
 - The involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management
3. Regional relevance
 - The operations are in correspondence to the identified needs and challenges of the CBC area



- The operations contribute to economic, territorial and social cohesion (following the EU-2020 Strategy)
4. Strategic relevance
 - The operations are in line with the priority axis' specific objectives
 - The operations are coherent with strategies and concept at the regional and the national level
 5. Operations' quality
 - The operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic)
 - Expenditures of the operations are effective
 - The projects are based on the concept of sustainability
 6. Horizontal principles
 - The operations take the equality between men and women into account
 - The operations consider non-discrimination principles
 - The operations follow the concept of sustainable development

In addition to these general section criteria applicable the following specific principles will apply when selecting projects under this Priority Axis:

- projects will be given preference that support the involvement of young people

Strategic projects

Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified outside calls for proposals for the achievement of the programme and priority objectives. Strategic projects contribute to achievement of a bigger impact through real and strong cross-border impact and long-term results, in respect of the Programme's objectives.

Strategic Projects must be effective and answer the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme and result in a significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area.

The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following

- to address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border
- to produce lasting effects and catalyse further actions;

The decision of selecting strategic projects is within the competence of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme.



2.2.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)*(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)***not applicable****2.2.6 Common and programme specific indicators***(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)***2.2.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)****Table 4: Programme specific result indicators**

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
RI 2.1a or RI 2.1b	Increased number of supported cultural, historic and natural sites and touristic attractions or Increased number of guest nights in the CBC region	Number		2013		AIRs Statistical data	Annually
RI 2.2a or RI 2.2b	Increased number of created/supported tourism products and services or Increase in contribution of tourism sector to regional GDP	Number %		2013 2013		AIRs Statistical data	Annually 2018 2023
R 2.3	Increased public awareness regarding tourism and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources	%		2013		Survey	2018 2020 2023



2.2.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measure- ment unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
OI 2.1.1	Number of cultural and historical touristic sites reconstructed / restored / covered by conservation and protection actions	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.1.2	Length of new or reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites, cycling routes and walking paths	km		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.1.3	Number of newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.1.4	Number of created/reconstructed facilities for disabled people for access to or in the supported touristic sites	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.2.1	Number of joint touristic products, services, brands, thematic routes, clusters	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.2.2	Number of actions, tools and initiatives developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable tourism potential of the eligible border area	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.2.3	Number of training and support initiatives for improving skills and performance in tourism	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.2.4	Number of participants in joint training and qualification initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.2.5	Number of visitors to promotional events, online touristic platforms and web-sites created under the Programme	Number		AIRs	Annually



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OI 2.3.1	Number of cross-border networks established or strengthened in the field of sustainable tourism	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.3.2	Number of common strategies, policies, trainings (including raising awareness) for the sustainable valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.3.3	Number of cultural events held promoting the region's cultural identity	Number		AIRs	Annually
OI 2.3.4	Number of participants in youth initiatives	Number		AIRs	Annually

2.2.7. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

Tables 5-8: Categories of intervention

Table 5: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 2	074 Development and promotion of tourism assets in SMEs	
	075 Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs	
	076 Development and promotion of cultural and creative assets in SMEs	
	077 Development and promotion of cultural and creative services in or for SMEs	
	079 Access to public sector information (including open data e-Tourism)	
	090 Cycle tracks and footpaths	
	092 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets	
	094 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	
	095 Development and promotion of public cultural	



	<p>and heritage services</p> <p>103 Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee</p> <p>104 Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises</p>	
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Table 6: Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 2	01 Non-repayable grant	

Table 7: Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 2	05 Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	

Table 8: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 2	07 Not applicable	



2.2.8. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable / not envisaged

2.3.1 Priority axis 3 - Competitiveness

2.3.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis choice

to be inserted at a later stage

2.3.3. The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Specific objective(s)

Under this Priority the Programme seeks to achieve the specific objectives of

SO 3 Improving the competitiveness of regional businesses

The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support

A competitive local economy that is based on regional assets and that has also strong links to international markets can generate the wealth in the region and provide jobs for the people. For local businesses and especially SMEs it is important to strengthen business links on a cross-border and on international level. Cooperations of businesses should be intensified in order to overcome the limitations of isolated operating units to enhance the access to new and innovative technologies and processes and thus to untap growth potentials.

It is also necessary to create conditions and an atmosphere in the region so that more people are qualified and also motivated to successfully set-up their own businesses. Joint actions should be supported for promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation for exchange of new ideas, skills and



technology and fostering the creation of new firms, cooperation and exchange of experience in agriculture, in RES, tourism will contribute towards strengthening economic activities and region competitiveness.

Under the condition of a weak rural economy in the region the promoting of bio-farming as a possibility for diversification of agricultural activities, especially in areas with a danger of depopulation but with clean and unique nature will be required. Joint actions might be combined with a particular focus on the development of ecotourism. There is a discrepancy between the emerging demand for market development and the introduction of new modern technologies and existing labour market skills. Investments on increasing business capacities, innovation and know how transfer, strengthening the capacities of an education system closer oriented to the market demands, will be equally important for the area.

When strengthening a competitive and innovative regional economy a special focus should also be on providing adequate opportunities for young people and people that are facing more difficulties for finding jobs due to their social status or other obstacles that limit their access to the labour market.

Thus in the end the Programme envisages achieving the results of:

- R 3.1a Improved conditions for business development
or alternatively: R3.1b: Improved performance of regional businesses
- R 3.2 Enhanced capacity of public and private sector for business development

2.3.4. Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

(Reference: Article 35(1) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

not applicable

2.3.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority (by thematic priority)

- 2.3.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Types of actions:

The following two types of actions are envisaged under this Priority Axis to contribute to the Specific Objective:



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1) soft measures

projects that are mainly oriented at preparing studies, establishing networks, providing trainings, developing concepts, providing services for certain target groups, raising awareness on specific themes, , etc.. These projects may only have a minor investment part for purchasing equipment that are needed for delivering the soft measures in an effective way. Soft measures also include people-to-people type of actions, e.g. small scale initiatives among civil society institutions that aim at increasing direct contacts and cooperation across the border among the people and their associations in the region

Examples of actions:

The following examples of action are a non-exhaustive list that is illustrating the range of possible actions under this Thematic Priority

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 1st result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A3.1.1 Support to joint start-up and self-employment initiatives (especially for young people, women)
- A3.1.2 Support for the development of cross-border business clusters
- A3.1.3 Support to (creation of) social enterprises and social entrepreneurship
- A3.1.4 Joint approaches for promoting innovations in businesses
- A3.1.5 Promoting and implementing of joint business development training and capacity building schemes
- A3.1.6 Introduction of programmes for cooperation and exchange of experience in modern managerial practices
- A3.1.7 Joint initiatives for export promotion; organization and participation of cross-border fairs, exhibitions, trade missions; joint participation in fairs in third countries
- A3.1.8 Joint initiatives and exchange of experience for stimulating the growth of innovative/higher added-value industries (e.g. bio-farming, environmental technologies, ICTs, energy saving, pharmaceutical, electronic, etc.)

Actions that are appropriate to contribute to the envisaged 2nd result of this Priority Axis may include:

- A3.2.1 Joint initiatives for investment promotion
- A3.2.2 Exchange of experience and good practices for boosting the economic development of the region
- A3.2.3 Cooperation between business and the educational institutions in the field of technology transfer and the promotion of knowledge-based economy



A3.2.2. Creating networks for enhancing the employment potential of young people, women and vulnerable/marginalized groups

Main target groups supported under the investment priority

The actions supported under this Priority Axis are envisaged to bring benefits to the following target groups:

- SMEs and other businesses in the region
- local and regional workforce
- Education and training institutions
- Regional and local authorities

Types of beneficiaries supported under the investment priority

The following Types of Beneficiaries may apply for the respective types of projects under this Priority Axis:

- Local and regional authorities and organisations established and managed by local and regional authorities
- National authorities and organisations established and managed by national authorities
- Business support structures - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster
- Regional and sector development agencies
- Education and training centres

Specific territories targeted under the investment priority

No specific focus areas are defined. The entire programme area is eligible.

2.3.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:

1. CBC character
 - Involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries
 - Clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country
2. Partnership



- The involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules
 - The involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management
3. Regional relevance
- The operations are in correspondence to the identified needs and challenges of the CBC area
 - The operations contribute to economic, territorial and social cohesion (following the EU-2020 Strategy)
4. Strategic relevance
- The operations are in line with the priority axis' specific objectives
 - The operations are coherent with strategies and concept at the regional and the national level
5. Operations' quality
- The operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic)
 - Expenditures of the operations are effective
 - The projects are based on the concept of sustainability
6. Horizontal principles
- The operations take the equality between men and women into account
 - The operations consider non-discrimination principles
 - The operations follow the concept of sustainable development

In addition to these general section criteria applicable the following specific principles will apply when selecting projects under this Priority Axis:

- projects will be given preference that support the involvement of young people

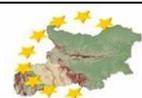
Strategic projects

Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified outside calls for proposals for the achievement of the programme and priority objectives. Strategic projects contribute to achievement of a bigger impact through real and strong cross-border impact and long-term results, in respect of the Programme's objectives.

Strategic Projects must be effective and answer the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme and result in a significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area.

The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following

- to address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border
- to produce lasting effects and catalyse further actions;



The decision of selecting strategic projects is within the competence of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme.

2.3.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable

2.3.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

2.3.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 4: Programme specific result indicators

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

<i>ID</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Measure-ment unit</i>	<i>Baseline value</i>	<i>Baseline year</i>	<i>Target value (2023)</i>	<i>Source of data</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>
RI 3.1	Increase of the regional GDP	%		2013		National statistics	2018 2023
RI 3.2	Increased awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region	%		2013		Survey	2018 2023

2.3.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

<i>ID</i>	<i>Indicator (name of indicator)</i>	<i>Measure-ment unit</i>	<i>Target value (2023)</i>	<i>Source of data</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>
OI 3.1.1	Supported investments for improving the competitiveness of businesses in the programme region	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 3.1.2	Supported joint start-up and self-employment initiatives	number		AIRs	Annually



OI 3.1.3	Number of participants (split into men and women) in supported training and qualification initiatives	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 3.1.4	Number of companies participating in export promotion initiatives	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 3.2.1	Supported initiatives for economic development and investment promotion	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 3.2.2	Number of cooperation networks	number		AIRs	Annually
OI 3.2.3	Number of participants in joint cooperation initiatives	number		AIRs	Annually

2.3.7. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

Tables 5-8: Categories of intervention

Table 5: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 3	<p>IV. Development of endogenous potential:</p> <p>Research and development and innovation</p> <p>060 Research and innovation activities in public research centres and centres of competence including networking</p> <p>061 Research and innovation activities in private research centres including networking</p> <p>062 Technology transfer and university-enterprise cooperation primarily benefiting SMEs</p> <p>063 Cluster support and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs</p> <p>064 Research and innovation processes in SMEs (including voucher schemes, process, design,</p>	



	<p>service and social innovation)</p> <p>Business development</p> <p>066 Advanced support services for SMEs and groups of SMEs (including management, marketing and design services)</p> <p>067 SME business development, support to entrepreneurship and incubation (including support to spin offs and spin outs)</p> <p>073 Support to social enterprises (SMEs)</p> <p>074 Development and promotion of tourism assets in SMEs</p> <p>075 Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs</p> <p>076 Development and promotion of cultural and creative assets in SMEs</p> <p>077 Development and promotion of cultural and creative services in or for SMEs</p> <p>V. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility:</p> <p>103 Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee</p> <p>104 Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises</p> <p>105 Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work</p> <p>VI. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination:</p> <p>109 Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability</p> <p>110 Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma</p>	
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	111 Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities	
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Table 6: Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 3	01 Non-repayable grant	

Table 7: Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 3	05 Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	

Table 8: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 3	07 Not applicable	

2.3.8. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable / not envisaged



Section 2.2 Description of the priority axes for Technical Assistance

(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.2.1 Priority axis 4 Technicl Assistance

2.2.2 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

to be inserted at a later stage!

2.2.3. The specific objectives of the priority axis and the expected results

(Reference: points (c)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Specific objective(s)

Under this Priority the Programme seeks to achieve the specific objective of

SO 4 To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2014-2020)

The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support

not applicable

2.2.4. Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the programme implementation

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Technical Assistance will finance the programme's Joint Secretariat as well as certain activities undertaken by the Managing Authority/National Authority and Certifying Authority.

The Joint Secretariat needs a team of professionals bundling the skills and competences needed for the management, content delivery, financial and communication tasks related to implementing this IPA CBC Programme. Staffing and equipping the Joint Secretariat is a core part of the Technical Assistance budget expenditure.

In addition to sustaining the personnel of the Joint Secretariat, the Technical Assistance priority will support a range of activities and tools that are instrumental to achieving the specific objective of this priority. These include following types of activities:

Project generation and selection:



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- Developing application forms, calls for proposals/terms of reference and guidance documents for potential project applicants.
- Providing assistance and advice to potential applicants in the process of developing their project application, e.g. through seminars, bilateral consultations and contacts.
- Performing quality assessments of applications for projects.

Support to actors involved in implementing IPA CBC projects

- Providing tools and guidance documentation (manuals, supporting project beneficiaries implement their project).
- Providing assistance and advice to lead partners and partners on the implementation of their project e.g. through seminars, first level control seminars and bilateral contacts.
- Participating in project related meetings and events and performing “on-the-spot visits” to projects to address project progress, outputs and results as well as obstacles in the implementation.

Monitoring, control and reporting

- Operating a computerised system for programme management, monitoring, audit and control.
- Providing guidance and support to ensure adequate control of the programme actions at all levels (partners, controllers, Partner State bodies responsible for first level controller approbation) e.g. through seminars, guidance documents and advice.
- Coordinating and organising of programme level audit activities, including the (external) audits on projects and supporting the Group of Auditors.
- Regular reporting to the European Commission on progress of the programme.

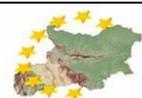
Communication, dissemination and capitalisation

- Continuous development of the programme website.
- Creation and printing of programme information and publications.
- Organisation of events to generate interest for participation in the programme, showcase and disseminate results of the programme supported actions to professional audiences and the wider public and facilitate inter-project interaction and cooperation.

Programme management and steering

- Organisation, preparation and facilitation of meetings of the programme bodies, in particular the Monitoring Committee and Group of Auditors meetings.
- Evaluations, analysis and studies related to the delivery of the programme in support of the continuous improvement of its management and implementation.

In addition to the activities and programme bodies described above, the Programme may decide to use Technical Assistance funding to contribute to activities carried out by Partner States.



2.2.5. Programme specific indicators³⁵

not applicable

2.2.5.1 Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (c)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.2.5.2 Programme specific output indicators expected to contribute to results

(Reference: point (c)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.2.6. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (c)(v) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Corresponding categories of intervention based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and an indicative breakdown of Union support.

Tables 11-13: Categories of intervention

Table 11: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 4	121 Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection 122 Evaluation and studies 123 Information and communication	

Table 12: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 4	01 Non-repayable grant	

Table 13: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
PA 4	05 Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	

³⁵ Required where objectively justified by the given the content of the actions and where the Union support to technical assistance in the cooperation programme exceeds EUR 15 million.



Section 2.3 Overview table of indicators per priority axis and thematic priority

Table 14: Table of common and programme specific output and result indicators

The below indicators are indicative and are subject to clarification between partnering countries and EC

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective(s)	Selected results indicators	Selected output indicators
PA 1	TP 2	SO 1.1 Environmental protection and sustainable use of the common natural resources of the CBC area	RI 1.1a. Increased number of supported cultural, historic and natural sites and touristic attractions ³⁶	OI 1.1.1 Number of supported investments for improving the environmental conditions in the programme region
			or RI 1.1b: Increased number of guest nights in the CBC region	OI 1.1.2 Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (COI) (in ha) OI 1.1.3 Population directly benefiting from supported nature protected sites ³⁷
		SO 1.2 Risk prevention and mitigation the consequences of natural and manmade hazards and disasters in the CBC region	RI 1.2 Increased number of joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	OI 1.2.1 Number of supported joint mechanisms for environmental protection, promotion of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources OI 1.2.2 Number of institutions/organizations involved in environmental related activities OI 1.2.3. Number of participants in environmental related trainings and campaigns
			RI 1.3 Increased number of supported interventions in the field of risk prevention and management	OI 1.3.1 Supported investments for improving disaster management and risk prevention OI 1.3.2 Supported investments for adaptation and mitigation of climate change consequences OI 1.3.3 Population benefitting from risk prevention measures OI 1.3.4 Population benefitting from mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters
			RI 1.4 Increased number of	OI 1.4.1 Supported joint mechanisms

³⁶ Manfred: this seems to me to be an output indicator

³⁷ question: how to count population in case that two different projects are implementing projects that benefit the same (part of the) population and in total it would even be more than 100% of the total population in the CBC region?



			joint initiatives related to risk prevention and management	for disaster management and risk prevention and for promotion of climate change awareness OI 1.4.2 Number of institutions/organizations involved in initiatives related to risk prevention and management OI 1.4.3 Number of participants in trainings and campaigns in the field of risk prevention, (including marginalized communities and other vulnerable groups)
PA 2	TP 4	SO 2.1: Enhancing the tourism potential of the region through better preservation and sustainable utilization of natural and cultural heritage	RI 2.1a. Increased number of supported cultural, historic and natural sites and touristic attractions or RI 2.1b: Increased number of guest nights in the CBC region	OI 2.1.1 Number of cultural and historical touristic sites reconstructed / restored / covered by conservation and protection actions OI 2.1.2 Length of new or reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites, cycling routes and walking paths OI 2.1.3 Number of newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions OI 2.1.4 Number of created/reconstructed facilities for disabled people for access to or in the supported touristic sites
		SO 2.2: Raising the competitiveness of the CBC region's tourist offer	RI 2a: Increased number of created/supported tourism products and services or RI 2 b: Increase in contribution of tourism sector to regional GDP	OI 2.2.1 Number of joint touristic products, services, brands, thematic routes, clusters OI 2.2.2 Number of actions, tools and initiatives developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable tourism potential of the eligible border area OI 2.2.3 Number of training and support initiatives for improving skills and performance in tourism OI 2.2.4 Number of participants in joint training and qualification initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism OI 2.2.5 Number of visitors to promotional events, online touristic platforms and web-sites created under the Programme
		SO 2.3: Promoting cooperation among	RI 3 Increased public awareness regarding	OI 2.3.1 Number of cross-border networks established or strengthened



		regional actors in the area of sustainable tourism	tourism and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources	<p>in the field of sustainable tourism</p> <p>OI 2.3.2 Number of common strategies, policies, trainings (including raising awareness) for the sustainable valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage</p> <p>OI 2.3.3 Number of cultural events held promoting the region's cultural identity</p> <p>OI 2.3.4 Number of participants in youth initiatives</p>
PA 3	TP 7	SO 3.1: Improving the competitiveness of regional businesses	RI 3.1 Increase of the regional GDP	<p>OI 3.1.1 Supported investments for improving the competitiveness of businesses in the programme region</p> <p>OI 3.1.2 Supported joint start-up and self-employment initiatives</p> <p>OI 3.1.3 Number of participants (split into men and women) in supported training and qualification initiatives</p> <p>OI 3.1.4 Number of companies participating in export promotion initiatives</p>
			RI 3.2 Increased awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region	<p>OI 3.2.1 Supported initiatives for economic development and investment promotion</p> <p>OI 3.2.2 Number of cooperation networks</p> <p>OI 3.2.3 Number of participants in joint cooperation initiatives</p>
PA 4	Technical Assistance	N/A	N/A	N/A



SECTION 3 FINANCING PLAN

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Section 3.1 Financial appropriation from the IPA (in EUR)

(Reference: point (d)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 15

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
IPA	825.889	1.195.690	1.713.412	3.106.328	3.167.962	3.229.596	3.303.556	16.542.434
	5,0%	7,2%	10,4%	18,8%	19,2%	19,5%	20,0%	100%

3.2.1 Total financial appropriation from the IPA and national co-financing (in EUR)

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable ??

1. The financial table sets out the financial plan of the cooperation programme by priority axis.
2. The financial table shall show for information purposes, any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme (other than contributions from IPA and ENI)
3. The EIB³⁸ contribution is presented at the level of the priority axis.

³⁸European Investment Bank



Table 16: Financing plan

Priority axis	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) (2)	For information	
				National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
Priority axis 1		5.789.852	1.021.739	1.021.739	0	6.811.590	85%	0	0
Priority axis 2		6.616.974	1.167.701	1.167.701	0	7.784.675	85%	0	0
Priority axis 3		2.481.365	437.888	437.888	0	2.919.253	85%	0	0
Priority axis 4		1.654.243	291.925	291.925	0	1.946.169	85%	0	0
Total		16.542.434	2.919.253	2.919.253	0	19.461.687	85%	0	0

(1) To be completed only when priority axes are expressed in total costs.

(2) This rate may be rounded to the nearest whole number in the table. The precise rate used to reimburse payments is the ratio (f).

3.2.2 Breakdown by priority axis and thematic priority

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 17

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
PA 1	TP 2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	5.789.851,90	1.021.738,57	6.811.590,47
PA 2	TP 4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	6.616.973,60	1.167.701,22	7.784.674,82
PA 3	TP 7: Enhancing competitiveness, business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment	2.481.365,10	437.887,96	2.919.253,06
PA 4	Technical Assistance	1.654.243,40	291.925,31	1.946.168,71
Total		16.542.434,0	2.919.253,06	19.461.687,0



SECTION 4 INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

(Reference: Article 35 (2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Description of the integrated approach to territorial development, taking into account the content and objectives of the cooperation programme and showing how it contributes to the accomplishment of the programme objectives and expected results

not applicable

Section 4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate)

Approach to the use of community-led local development instruments and principles for identifying the areas where they will be implemented

(Reference: Article 35 (2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and point (a) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable

Section 4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)

Approach to the use of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) (as defined in Article 36 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) other than in cases covered by 4.2, and their indicative financial allocation from each priority axis

(Reference: Article 35 (2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and point (c) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable

Section 4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant partner States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)

(Where partner States and regions participate in macro-regional and/or sea basin strategies)

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

not applicable



SECTION 5 IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Section 5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 19: Programme authorities

(Reference: point (a)(i) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Managing authority	Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria, Directorate General "Territorial Cooperation Management" 17 - 19 "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy" Str., 1202 Sofia, Bulgaria	Director General of Directorate General "Territorial Cooperation Management"
Certifying authority, where applicable	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, "National Fund" Directorate 102 "G. S. Rakovski" Str. 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria	Director of the "National Fund" Directorate
Audit authority	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency 4 "Slavyanska" Str. 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria	Executive Director of Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency



The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:*(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

<input type="checkbox"/> the managing authority	DG "Territorial Cooperation Management" Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the certifying authority	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

Table 20: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks*(Reference: points (a)(ii) and (iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	<5.1.9 type='S' maxlength='255' input='M' > Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria	<5.1.10 type='S' maxlength='255' input='M' > Minister of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency 4 "Slavyanska" Str. 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria	Executive Director of Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency

Section 5.2 Joint Monitoring Committee

According to **article 38, Joint monitoring committee**, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) the following provisions shall apply:

1. Within three months of the date of notification to the Member State of the decision approving cross-border cooperation programme, the participating countries shall set up a Joint monitoring committee (hereinafter referred to as 'JMC').

2. The JMC shall be composed of representatives of the Commission, the NIPAC and other relevant national authorities and bodies of the IPA II beneficiary], the participating Member State(s) and, where relevant, international financial institutions and other stakeholders, including civil society and private sector organisations.

3. The JMC shall be chaired by a representative of one of the participating countries or of the managing authority.



4.The Commission shall participate in the work of the JMC in an advisory capacity.

5.If the EIB contributes to a programme, it may participate in the work of the JMC in an advisory capacity.

6.The JMC shall review the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all actions towards meeting the objectives set out in the cross-border programme, the financing agreements and the relevant strategy paper(s). It may make recommendations for corrective actions whenever needed. Articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 concerning its functions shall also apply. The JMC and the managing authority shall carry out monitoring by reference to indicators laid down in the relevant cross-border cooperation programme, in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

7.The JMC shall adopt its rules of procedure.

8.The JMC shall meet at least once a year. Additional meetings may also be convened at the initiative of one of the participating countries or of the Commission, in particular on a thematic basis.

Table 21: Indicative list of Joint Monitoring Committee members

Name of authority/body and department or unit	Role in the programme	Contact details of the authority/body
EU Commission	Advisory	European Commission, Directorate Regional and Urban Policy
NIPAC	Decision	
Managing Authority	Decision	Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
National Authority	Decision	Ministry of Local Self Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
EIB	Consultative	
Audit Authority	Advisory	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency
Certifying Authority	Advisory	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, National Fund Directorate
Regional authorities	Decision	
Local authorities	Decision	
Competent public authorities	Decision	



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(environment, risk prevention, economy, tourism, culture, youth, other as agreed by the partner countries)		
Social and economic partners		
Civil society organisations (environmental, equal opportunities, non-discrimination)		
Academic and scientific society		

Section 5.3 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

(Reference: point (a)(iv) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<5.2 type='S' maxlength='3500' input='M' >

The Managing Authority in cooperation with National Authority establishes a Joint Secretariat. It is placed in Kyustendil, Republic of Bulgaria. JS has a branch office in Strumica, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The JS (including its branch office as part of the same body) consists of both Bulgarian and Macedonian experts contracted by the MA or NA.

JS provides daily help to the Managing Authority, National Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme and assists where appropriate the Certifying Authority and Audit Authority in carrying out their respective duties. The JS also takes part in preparation and implementation of the decisions of Joint Monitoring Committee and carries out usual duties of a secretariat.

The JS is in particular responsible for the following joint tasks:

- Participation in planning and organisation of programme information campaigns and other activities related to raising public awareness on the programme;
- Establishing and managing a joint projects data base and project partners data base;
- Supporting projects generation and development,
- Supporting MA and National Authority for the preparation of all standardised forms for the implementation of Programme such as application package, evaluation, contracting, implementation, monitoring and reporting,
- Preparing the full application package for Calls for Proposals and submit to MA and National Authority for approval,
- Advising beneficiaries on the implementation of operations and financial



administration;

- Receiving and registering of applications submitted;
- Performing a formal check of project applications in terms of administrative compliance and eligibility;
- Presenting a work plan via the Managing Authority to the Joint Monitoring Committee once a year for approval;
- Organising all meetings and events, draft the minutes, prepare, ensures the administrative management of tasks and services;
- Providing secretariat services for Evaluation Committees and submitting the results of the project technical evaluation sessions to the JMC;
- Monitoring of project implementation, collecting of information from the lead beneficiaries and updating data in the Management Information System; Coordinating the work of the controllers;
- Collecting and checking project reports from the lead partners before submitting to the MA;
- Assisting the preparation of the reports on programme implementation;
- Receiving requests from the lead beneficiaries on any modifications as well as preparation of addendums to projects and submitting them to MA or JMC respectively for approval;
- Cooperation with the programme implementing authorities in Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, and with other territorial cooperation programmes;
- Collaboration with central, regional and local stakeholders involved in the CBC Programme.

Section 5.4 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

(Reference: point (a)(v) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<5.3. type='S' maxlength='35000' input='M' >

Managing Authority

According to article 37, **Functions of the programme authorities**, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) in line with article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and article 23(1), (2), (4) and (5) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 concerning the **functions of the managing authority**, the following provisions shall apply:

Art. 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

1. The managing authority shall be responsible for managing the operational programme in



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accordance with the principle of sound financial management.

2. As regards the management of the operational programme, the managing authority shall:

- (a) support the work of the monitoring committee referred to in Article 47 and provide it with the information it requires to carry out its tasks, in particular data relating to the progress of the operational programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones;
- (b) draw up and, after approval by the monitoring committee, submit to the Commission annual and final implementation reports referred to in Article 50;
- (c) make available to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that is relevant to the execution of their tasks and the implementation of operations respectively;
- (d) establish a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable;
- (e) ensure that the data referred to in point (d) is collected, entered and stored in the system referred to in point (d), and that data on indicators is broken down by gender where required by Annexes I and II of the ESF Regulation.

3. As regards the selection of operations, the managing authority shall:

- (a) draw up and, once approved, apply appropriate selection procedures and criteria that:
 - (i) ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority;
 - (ii) are non-discriminatory and transparent;
 - (iii) take into account the general principles set out in Articles 7 and 8;
- (b) ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned and can be attributed to a category of intervention or, in the case of the EMFF, a measure identified in the priority or priorities of the operational programme;
- (c) ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;
- (d) satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to in point (c) before approval of the operation;
- (e) satisfy itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with;
- (f) ensure that operations selected for support from the Funds or the EMFF do not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Article 71 following the relocation of a productive



activity outside the programme area;

(g) determine the categories of intervention or, in the case of the EMFF, the measures to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

4. As regards the financial management and control of the operational programme, the managing authority shall:

(a) verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the operational programme and the conditions for support of the operation;

(b) ensure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;

(c) put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;

(d) set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) of Article 72;

(e) draw up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

By way of derogation from point (a) of the first subparagraph, the ETC Regulation may establish specific rules on verification applicable to cooperation programmes.

5. Verifications pursuant to point (a) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 4 shall include the following procedures:

(a) administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;

(b) on-the-spot verifications of operations.

The frequency and coverage of the on-the-spot verifications shall be proportionate to the amount of public support to an operation and to the level of risk identified by such verifications and audits by the audit authority for the management and control system as a whole.

6. On-the-spot verifications of individual operations pursuant to point (b) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 5 may be carried out on a sample basis.

7. Where the managing authority is also a beneficiary under the operational programme, arrangements for the verifications referred to in point (a) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 4 shall ensure adequate separation of functions.

8. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 149, laying down rules specifying the information in relation to the data to be recorded and stored in computerised form within the monitoring system established under point (d) of paragraph 2 of this Article.



The Commission shall adopt implementing acts laying down the technical specifications of the system established under point (d) of paragraph 2 of this Article. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 150(3).

9. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 149, laying down the detailed minimum requirements for the audit trail referred to in point (d) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 4 of this Article in respect of the accounting records to be maintained and the supporting documents to be held at the level of the certifying authority, managing authority, intermediate bodies and beneficiaries.

10. The Commission shall, in order to ensure uniform conditions on the implementation of this Article, adopt implementing acts concerning the model for the management declaration referred to in point (e) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 4 of this Article. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 150(2).

Article 23(1), (2), (4) and (5) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013

1. Without prejudice to paragraph 4 of this Article, the managing authority of a cooperation programme shall carry out the functions laid down in Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

2. The managing authority, after consultation with the Member States and any third countries participating in a cooperation programme, shall set up a joint secretariat.

The joint secretariat shall assist the managing authority and the monitoring committee in carrying out their respective functions. The joint secretariat shall also provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under cooperation programmes and shall assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations.

3. Where the managing authority is an EGTC, verifications under point (a) of Article 125(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 shall be carried out by or under the responsibility of the managing authority at least for those Member States and third countries or territories from which there are members participating in the EGTC.

4. Where the managing authority does not carry out verifications under point (a) of Article 125(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 throughout the whole programme area, or where the verifications are not carried out by or under the responsibility of the managing authority for those Member States and third countries or territories from which there are members participating in the EGTC in accordance with paragraph 3, each Member State or, where it has accepted the invitation to participate in the cooperation programme, each third country or territory shall designate the body or person responsible for carrying out such verifications in relation to beneficiaries on its territory (the 'controller(s)').

The controllers referred to in the first subparagraph may be the same bodies responsible for carrying out such verifications for the operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal or, in the case of third countries, for carrying out comparable verifications under



external policy instruments of the Union.

The managing authority shall satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by a designated controller.

Each Member State shall ensure that the expenditure of a beneficiary can be verified within a period of three months of the submission of the documents by the beneficiary concerned.

Each Member State or, where it has accepted the invitation to participate in the cooperation programme, each third country shall be responsible for verifications carried out on its territory.

5. Where the delivery of co-financed products or services can be verified only in respect of an entire operation, the verification shall be performed by the managing authority or by the controller of the Member State where the lead beneficiary is located.

National Authority

The Ministry of Local Self-Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (further in the text - National Authority of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) cooperates in joint programming, management and implementation of the programme.

In particular the NA will be responsible for the following tasks:

- participating in joint programming and generation of operations in accordance with the programme objectives and Programme modification;
- ensuring the national co-financing in a timely and proper manner
- nominating representatives of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the Joint Monitoring Committee ;
- preparing job descriptions and selecting the experts in the JS Branch office;
- Organizing a selection procedure for financial controllers and assessors from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- signing Framework Agreement and contracts with the assessors and controllers from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- nominating representative(s) in the group of auditors.
- signing on behalf of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding
- ensuring access to information of Managing Authority, Certifying Authority and Audit Authority in order to fulfil their respective tasks
- ensuring the funds for national co-financing.

Certifying authority

According to article 37, **Functions of the programme authorities**, of Commission Implementing



regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) in line with article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 24 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 concerning the **functions of the certifying authority** the below provisions shall apply. The certifying authority shall receive the payments made by the Commission and shall, as a general rule, make payments to the lead beneficiary in accordance with Article 132 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

The certifying authority of an operational programme shall be responsible in particular for:

- (a) drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority;
- (b) drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- (c) certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable law and has been incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme and complying with applicable law;
- (d) ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for drawing up payment applications and accounts, including records of amounts recoverable, amounts recovered and amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation or operational programme;
- (e) ensuring, for the purposes of drawing up and submitting payment applications, that it has received adequate information from the managing authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure;
- (f) taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the audit authority;
- (g) maintaining, in a computerised form, accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- (h) keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the budget of the Union prior to the closure of the operational programme by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure.

Audit authority

According to article 37, **Functions of the programme authorities**, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) in line with article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 concerning the **functions of the audit authority** the below



provisions shall apply.

Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

1. The audit authority shall ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the operational programme and on an appropriate sample of operations on the basis of the declared expenditure. The declared expenditure shall be audited based on a representative sample and, as a general rule, on statistical sampling methods.

A non- statistical sampling method may be used on the professional judgement of the audit authority, in duly justified cases, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards and in any case where the number of operations for an accounting year is insufficient to allow the use of a statistical method.

In such cases, the size of the sample shall be sufficient to enable the audit authority to draw up a valid audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

The non-statistical sample method shall cover a minimum of 5 % of operations for which expenditure has been declared to the Commission during an accounting year and 10 % of the expenditure which has been declared to the Commission during an accounting year.

2. Where audits are carried out by a body other than the audit authority, the audit authority shall ensure that any such body has the necessary functional independence.

3. The audit authority shall ensure that audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards.

4. The audit authority shall, within eight months of adoption of an operational programme, prepare an audit strategy for performance of audits. The audit strategy shall set out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the planning of audits in relation to the current accounting year and the two subsequent accounting years. The audit strategy shall be updated annually from 2016 until and including 2024. Where a common management and control system applies to more than one operational programme, a single audit strategy may be prepared for the operational programmes concerned. The audit authority shall submit the audit strategy to the Commission upon request.

5. The audit authority shall draw up:

(a) an audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;

(b) a control report setting out the main findings of the audits carried out in accordance with paragraph 1, including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions.

Where a common management and control system applies to more than one operational programme, the information required under point (b) of the first subparagraph may be grouped in a single report.



6. The Commission shall, in order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of this Article, adopt implementing acts laying down models for the audit strategy, the audit opinion and the control report. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 150(2).

7. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 149, to set out the scope and content of audits of operations and audits of the accounts and the methodology for the selection of the sample of operations referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

8. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 149, laying down detailed rules on the use of data collected during audits carried out by Commission officials or authorised Commission representatives.

Article 25, of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013

1. The Member States and third countries participating in a cooperation programme may authorise the audit authority to carry out directly the functions provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 in the whole of the territory covered by a cooperation programme. They shall specify when the audit authority is to be accompanied by an auditor of a Member State or a third country.

2. Where the audit authority does not have the authorisation referred to in paragraph 1, it shall be assisted by a group of auditors composed of a representative from each Member State or third country participating in the cooperation programme and carrying out the functions provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. Each Member State or, where it has accepted the invitation to participate in a cooperation programme, each third country shall be responsible for audits carried out on its territory.

Each representative from each Member State or third country participating in the cooperation programme shall be responsible for providing the factual elements relating to expenditure on its territory that are required by the audit authority in order to perform its assessment.

The group of auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme. It shall draw up its own rules of procedure and be chaired by the audit authority for the cooperation programme.

3. The auditors shall be functionally independent of controllers who carry out verifications under Article 23.

4. The Audit Authority shall be assisted by a Group of Auditors, comprising representatives of the partner states.



Section 5.5 Apportionment of liabilities among partner States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

(Reference: point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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In case a cooperation between Member state and IPA country, according to article 46 (6), Financial management, decommitment, examination and acceptance of accounts, closure and financial corrections, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) the following ESIF rules will apply:

- Articles 85, 122(2) and 143 to 147 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 concerning financial corrections and recoveries
- Article 27(2) and (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

Section 5.6 Use of the Euro (where applicable)

(Reference: Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Method chosen for the conversion of expenditure incurred in another currency than the Euro

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In accordance with the ETC Regulation, Article 28, expenditure incurred by project partners located in countries, which are outside of the Euro zone, shall be converted into euro. The conversion is to be made by the beneficiaries using the accounting exchange rate of the EC applied during the month of the incurring of the expenditure.

To be established by MA if applicable

Section 5.7 Involvement of partners

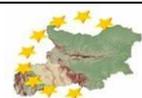
(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)



Actions taken to involve the partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 in the preparation of the cooperation programme, and the role of those partners in the preparation and implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the Joint Monitoring Committee

<5.6 type='S' maxlength='14000' input='M' Decisions=N>

Will be completed.



SECTION 6 HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

(Reference : Article 8(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Section 6.1 Sustainable development

Bulgaria – the former Republic of Macedonia IPA CBC Programme Authorities must ensure that environmental protection requirements, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystem protection, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management are promoted in the preparation and implementation of the programmes. In the case of the Bulgaria – the former Republic of Macedonia IPA CBC Programme the biggest challenges are related to environmental and biodiversity protection and sustainable use of natural resources and the addressing of climate change, environmental risks management and emergency preparedness. These challenges relate to the protection of the environment as a sustainable value of the region and as a prerequisite for sustainable tourism.

Generally, all three dimensions of sustainability, including the ecological, the economic as well as the social one, will be taken into consideration within the IPA BG-MK Programme; therefore the programme contributes directly to the Europe 2020 Strategy's components of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Within all axes of the programme strategy, sustainable development is seen as a cross-cutting issue with all three pillars (economic, social and environmental) equally represented in the two Programme priority axes. Especially the Programme's Priority Axis 1, which targets cooperation on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth, takes into account environmental protection, resource efficiency, climate change (include both mitigation and adaptation) as well as natural hazards, disaster and risk resilience, prevention and management. In these fields, the Programme mainly contributes to the generation and dissemination of knowledge and capacities on the protection and sustainable use of natural resources and addresses issues of resource management. Priority Axis 2, which deals with sustainable tourism, targets cooperation on the creation of sustainable tourist services and tourism attractiveness will capitalise on the existing natural and cultural resources, which shall be managed and preserved in a sustainable way.

Besides actions within the Programme priorities, which may foster sustainable development, a number of activities have been identified which may be implemented in projects submitted under any chosen priority axis.

All projects and interventions of the IPA BG-MK Programme can integrate measures to ease the burden of emissions of their actions, e.g. by:

- actively tackle wider environmental concerns
- actively tackle environmental issues of specific concern, including climate change as well as the maintaining of biodiversity and ecosystems



- carrying out environmental management (structured experience sharing, capacity development, etc.)
- actively tackle sustainability issues, including ecological, economic and social concerns
- adopting measures for the organisation and implementation of conferences and events in a sustainable way

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should:

- contribute to the implementation of the reviewed European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development (2009), which shall be proved by each project applicant in a conclusive and transparent way which shall be assessed as project selection criterion.
- consider the principles of the Community Policy regarding the protection and improvement of natural heritage and biodiversity as well as related amendments, such as the Flora-Fauna-Habitat directive and the Birds directive being the “cornerstone of Europe’s nature conservation policy” (European Commission, 2013: online³⁹).
- consider greater use of renewable energy

Appropriate management arrangements of the IPA BG-MK Programme shall support environmentally sustainable development of the cross-border cooperation area. Besides respecting the legally required standards, the programme seeks to avoid all effects that are unsustainable or unfavourable to the environment at all levels of the programme implementation cycle. Negative impacts shall be avoided to the highest degree possible.

The positive effects and potentials for synergies of the IPA BG-MK Programme for the purpose of optimising its contribution to an environmentally sustainable development shall be exploited at best and, wherever possible, be strengthened. Wherever achievable, preference will be given to the planning and realisation of environmentally friendly solutions and projects.

The Programme is implemented via a number of projects. The assessment of the quality of the eligible project proposals should be based on a set of quality criteria which are common to all Priority Axes and Investment Priorities. The contribution of each project to these principles will be addressed in a qualitative manner in the frame of project selection and programme monitoring and evaluation. The policy aimed at sustainable development will be screened throughout all stages of the programme implementation – both at programme and project level.

Section 6.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

In general, it’s the aim of the European Union to combat “*discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*” (EU COM, common provisions). With the Green Paper on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all, the European

³⁹ Cf. EU COM (2013): The Habitats Directive. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/> (June, 2014)



Commission published a joint strategy for *“the positive and active promotion of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all”* (European Union, 2014: online⁴⁰). This goes in line with the UN’s universal declaration of Human Rights.

It’s the IPA BG-MK Programme strategy’s objective to ensure protection against discrimination through the transposition by the Member States, to contribute to an inclusive cross-border development and to making the border regions better places to live and work. Non-discrimination transcends gender issues and adopts a wider focus. While anti-discrimination legislation is an acquired aspect of EU legal systems, the practical implementation of non-discrimination practices is lagging behind. Equal access to information, and controls on whether equality and non-discrimination requirements are being met, is also an issue. In the course of Programme preparation, the Programme has observed non-discrimination and addressed relevant issues related to the ethnic and religious composition of the area, the age structure and the ensuing socio-demographic developments in the programme area (mainly related to migration and ageing) in the SWOT analysis. The strategy of the programme puts emphasis in the availability of programme benefits to everyone.

The baseline need is manifested in a number of challenges, being based on the diverse developments in the two Programme countries in the last years, ranging from disparities in the field of accessibility, to diverse economic development and social fields. A clear core-periphery pattern is obvious. The economic development took different paths in recent decades, major economic differences exist between urban, rural, more central and more peripheral regions. Disparities are visible in the social field too: especially rural areas are confronted with negative demographic trends and brain-drain occurrences, being based in the out-migration of well-educated employees.

The principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination are ensured by supporting actions in the fields of e.g. awareness raising, sharing of experience, training, dissemination of information, etc., which have also been mentioned by the EU’s Green Paper on equality and non-discrimination (cf. COM(2004)379 final).

For the programming period 2014-2020, the main focus of the Programme has been aligned to improve the living conditions within the border regions. Priority Axis 2 targets cooperation on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth and aims at an increased life quality in functional urban areas and reduced disparities within the programming area through strengthened capacities and the development and implementation of integrated strategies and tools. It is one main objective of Priority Axis 3 to increase the competitiveness of businesses in the cross-border region and thus creating new employment opportunities for all groups of the population. Special focus will also be on generating job opportunities for young people and people in rural areas.

Besides actions within the priorities, which explicitly address the reduction of disparities, a number of activities have been identified which may be implemented in projects submitted under any chosen priority axis.

⁴⁰ Cf. EU COM (2014): A framework strategy for non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. URL: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/human_rights/fundamental_rights_within_european_union/c10313_en.htm (June, 2014).



All interventions, being implemented through the IPA BG-MK Programme can integrate measures to consider the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, e.g. by:

- actively tackle concerns of demographic change
- actively tackle concerns of peripherality

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should ensure that the activities implemented do not generate discrimination of any kind.

The consideration of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be ensured throughout all stages of the programme implementation. Additionally it will be guaranteed during the realisation of the financial support and its impact evaluation. In the elaboration of this programme non-discrimination will be dealt with as a cross cutting issue.

Section 6.3 Equality between men and women

Same as for sustainable development, the promotion of equality between men and women is one of the general principles of the CSF Funds (cf. EU COM, common provisions) and one of the EU's founding principles. In the Union treaty it has been mentioned, that the Union *“shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child”* (EU COM: Lisbon Treaty, Art. 3).

The Union therefore follows the *“Strategy for equality between women and men”* for the period 2010-2015, following thematic priorities, including equal economic independencies, equal pay for work of equal value, equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence, promoting gender equality beyond the Union and horizontal issues (gender roles, legislation, etc.) (cf. European Union, 2010: 4-10⁴¹).

Still the programming area faces challenges in the field of brain-drain, especially in rural, mostly peripheral areas. Due to missing job opportunities, mainly well-educated young women and men leave their rural home and migrate to more urban areas. Additionally, the risk of poverty for different groups, such as women, has been identified as a main weakness of the central Europe area; all these challenges are related to gender inequalities in the programming area.

The IPA BG-MK Programme contributes to the Europe 2020 goals of an inclusive economy and therefore to a higher level of equality between men and women. The Programme therefore contributes to the identified weaknesses in border regions, such as high numbers of out-migration, brain-drain occurrences and the risk of poverty for different groups (e.g. women, migrants). For the

⁴¹ Cf. EU COM (2010): Flexible working time arrangements and gender equality – A comparative review of 30 European countries. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en> (June, 2014)



programming period 2014-2020, the main focus of the Programme has been aligned to improve living conditions in the area.

For the period 2014-2020, the main focus of the Programme has been set up to improve the living conditions within border regions. Especially the Programme's Priority Axis 2 targets the field of sustainable tourism and socio-economic development. Through economic development opportunities for equality between men and women will arise, as sustainable tourism activities foster equal employment chances for men and women.

Besides specific actions within the Programme priority a number of activities have been identified which may be implemented in projects submitted under any chosen priority axis.

All projects and interventions of the Programme can integrate measures such as:

- Actively tackle wider equality concerns
- Integrate equal participation of women and men
- Contribute to a better and more diversified labour market for women

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should contribute to the principles of the *"Strategy for equality between women and men"*

Also the implementation of the measures according to the specific needs of women and men will be based on the national regulations aiming at equal opportunities as well. In the framework of the CBC Programme an equal status of men and women will be observed and persons regarding to sex, race and origin will not be discriminated. The observance of the principle of equality between men and women will be ensured during all stages of the programme implementation as well as the realization of the financial support from the funds. The principle will be also observed in the phase of defining the selection criteria of projects. The policy aimed at promotion of gender equality and prevention of discrimination will be screened throughout all stages of the programme implementation – both at programme and project level.

ANNEXES (UPLOADED TO ELECTRONIC DATA EXCHANGE SYSTEMS AS SEPARATE FILES):

- Draft report of the ex-ante evaluation (including an executive summary of the report)
- Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme (Reference: Article 8(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)
- A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme
- A "citizens summary" of the cooperation programme
- Strategic Environmental Assessment

