Implementation evaluation of Interreg - IPA CBC Programmes 2014-2020, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria

Ref.: Interreg-IPA CBC-TA-2018-2

REVISED FINAL REPORT

Interreg – IPA Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020

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List of acronyms

BG	Bulgaria, Bulgarian
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GfA	Guidelines for applicants
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JS	Joint Secretariat
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MIS	Management Information System
MRDPW	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
NA	National Authority
OI	Output indicator
PA	Priority Axis
RI	Result Indicator
ToR	Terms of Reference
TR	Turkey

Project Identification

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1. Executive Summary

This is an implementation evaluation of Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014 – 2020. The evaluation was carried out by Ecorys in the period August 2018 – March 2019. The cut-off date of the evaluation is end-December 2018.

The Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014 – 2020 (the Programme) is implemented under the European Union (EU) Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), which is established by the Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 and implemented according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007. The overall objective of the Programme is strengthening the Bulgaria - Turkey cross borer cooperation capacity in the field of nature protection and sustainable tourism, leading to enhancement of European territorial cohesion. The Programme covers two thematic priorities according to Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 (the IPA II regulation), namely: 1) Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management and 2) Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.

The Programme is structured along three main priority axes – Environment (Priority axis 1), Sustainable (Priority axis 2) and Technical assistance (Priority axis 3). The total budget of the Programme for the period 20014-2020 is EUR 29 642 896,00, with Union support amounting to EUR 25 196 460.

The Programme is managed under the shared management mode. The Managing Authority (MA) for the Programme is the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, having as counterpart the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Directorate for EU Affairs, Department for Union Programmes and Cross Border Cooperation, acting as National Authority (NA). Joint secretariat (JS) is established with main office in Haskovo and a branch office in Edirne.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to assess the current programme progress and to provide recommendations for further improvement of the overall management and implementation of the Programme, which could contribute towards successful achievement of its objectives, results and outputs. The evaluation focused on four main topics: evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system; evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme; evaluation of relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of the Programme; and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy of the Programme.

The main sources of information of the evaluation included desk research and primary data collection. The desk research included review of European and national strategic documents; Programme management documents; project documents; and monitoring databases. Primary data was collected through various qualitative and quantitative methods, including in-depth interviews, on-the-spot visits to a sample of projects, and a focus group.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system

The approach used for project generation is to a great extent oriented towards the Programme objectives, results and outputs, which need be achieved. The application package under the First Call for Proposals was well elaborated, and the Guidelines for Applicants (GfA) were fairly exhaustive in content. Full coherence with Programme objectives was ensured through listed eligible activities, eligible applicants, eligible expenditures, and the cooperation criteria that project partners need to comply with. The GfA under the Second call addressed some minor deficiencies identified under the First call – the assessment and complaint procedures were streamlined and more details were provided

about the measurement of the output indicators. The selection criteria under the Second call were adapted, so that projects that contribute significantly to achievement of the target values of the output indicators were given priority.

The reporting and monitoring processes are structured in such a way as to ensure timely and realistic follow-up of Programme achievements. A smooth reporting process is underpinned by the detailed structure of progress reports and the relatively short deadlines for submitting them. In this way, the JS has high capability of capturing at an early stage various issues concerning achievement of planned project results. The various supportive measures offered to beneficiaries regarding project implementation have been adequate, timely and complementary. The content of all Programme manuals, guideline documents, and training materials reflect to a significant extent the most frequently asked questions and issues raised by beneficiaries. In addition, interviewed beneficiaries expressed very high satisfaction with the direct, ad-hoc support and assistance provided by the JS at different stages of project implementation.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme

The Programme has a well elaborated indicator system, which allows provision of information for the achievement of results and outputs. Most indicators are measurable and time bound, with achievable target values for year 2023. Identified potential for improvement of the indicator system concerns mainly consistency of measurement units used, clear formulation, and simplification of definitions.

The Programme's progress toward achievement of the targets of the output and result indicators is quite good, based on data as of end-2018. The majority of the OIs under PA1 have good achievement progress and all of them except two are expected to be overachieved with the completion of the projects from the First Call for proposal. The two indicators which are lagging behind will be achieved with projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals.

The OIs in the PA 2 also have satisfactory rates of achievement. Six of the OIs have overachieved their values with the projects from the First call for proposals and two of them reached achievement rate of over 60%. Only 4 of the OIs (namely the ones in SO 1.2 2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure) have low achieved values. But their target values will be achieved with the projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals.

Result indicators under both priority axis are progressing at a good pace. Two of the result indicators are already fully achieved and the other three indicators achieved over 85% of the envisaged target values.

The changed mechanism for selection of project proposals under the Second Call has significant positive impact on the projected achievement of relevant Programme targets. Data shows that all 21 OIs will reach their target values, if the projects proposed for financing under the Second Call are contracted and implemented as planned.

With regard to used resources, approximately 38% of the total funding available for the two PAs was contracted under the First Call. The financial implementation of the Programme is progressing at a very good pace. 29 projects are completed until the end of 2018 and 12 investment projects are in their final stages of implementation and is expected to be finalised in the beginning of 2019 in the period January – April 2019. The total verified amount for the projects is EUR 4 794 793,63 (48% from the contracted budget) until the end of 2018. Having in mind that all investment projects are still under implementation and final payments for some soft projects finalised at the end of 2018 are still pending, the absorption rate is satisfactory.

Identified possibilities for improvement for the remaining implementation period relate to reallocation of funds from PA 1 to PA 2. This reallocation combined with generated savings from financial resources allocated under the First Call, would be the most appropriate solution for achievement of full absorption of envisaged Programme resources.

With regard to the next programming period, there is identified potential for improvement of the indicator system. Main recommendations relate to the elaboration of methodological guidelines for the measurement and calculation of output indicators, the simplification of definitions, consistency in measurement units used, and fine-tuning of the measurement methodology for result indicators. In addition, a mixed approach to project generation, which combines strategic projects and grants schemes in the next programming period is suggested. Such an approach would ensure a closer link between Programme results and national priorities in the regional development sector, while at the same time preserving the people-to-people approach, one of the strongest and most sustainable impacts of the Programme over the years.

Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of the Programme

Although the socio-economic situation on both sides of the border has improved since the start of the Programme implementation, the development of the BG-TR cross-border region is still lagging behind other parts of the two countries, and the core challenges remain the same. Hence, the needs identified through the SWOT and Situation Analysis, as stated in the Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme, are still relevant to the current socio-economic and environmental conditions in the area.

The horizontal principles, as well as examples of specific actions which support them, are duly described in Programme documents. The principles of sustainable development and equal opportunities and non-discrimination are mirrored by a number of output and result indicators. During the stages of application and selection of projects, coherence with horizontal principles is ensured through their integration in the evaluation grid. During the implementation stage, the principles are adhered to and duly reported at both project and programme level.

There is a high level of coherence between the goals of the Programme and the goals set in strategic documents at European, macro-regional, national and regional level. The activities carried out during the implementation of the Programme have significant contribution towards the achievement of the priorities of relevant strategic documents. Most notably, there is strong synergy between the Programme and the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020 for Bulgaria, the Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey and the Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 – 2023.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy

There is a high level of coherence between the envisaged communication activities and the objectives set in the Communication strategy of the Programme. The achievement of each general and specific objective is ensured by several communication measures. Communication activities carried out so far contribute to the achievement of objectives, which is evident from the indicator analysis – all indicators have reached their target values, and more than half are significantly overachieved.

Overall, implemented communication activities were adequately tailored to different target groups. Potential beneficiaries were successfully reached by the info days and partner search forums. With regard to direct beneficiaries, the most effective communication activities were the information days and the training workshops. The most used communication channel was the Programme website. The general public was successfully reached by publications on the Programme website, the websites of the MA and NA, and on social media.

The combination of online communication tools and mainstream media was very successful in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme. The official Programme website was especially effective, as it was the most popular source of information about the Programme, its objectives, financed domains, and eligibility conditions. Info days were extremely effective, which is evident from the high attendance rates, the positive feedback from participants, and the record number of submitted project proposals under the First Call. The social media tools also appear to be quite popular among the target groups of the Programme.

Overall, the methods envisaged for dissemination and capitalization of projects' and Programme results, are very adequate and effective. A very good method, which should be applied for the rest of the implementation period of the Programme, is the presentation of best practices at appropriate events such as European Cooperation Day celebrations, exhibitions, and fairs.

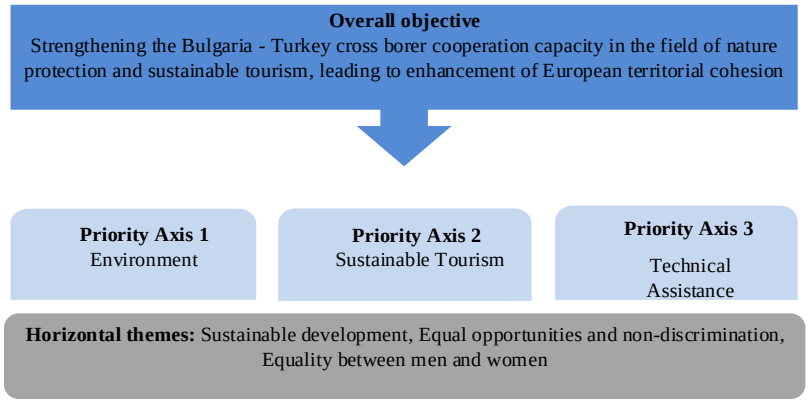
2. Introduction

2.1 Introduction

INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey 2014 – 2020 is implemented under the European Union (EU) Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), which is established by the Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 and implemented according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007. IPA aims to assist candidate countries and potential candidate countries in their progressive alignment with the standards and policies of the EU. The cross-border cooperation (CBC) component of IPA has the objective of promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering stability, security and prosperity in the mutual interest of all countries concerned, and of encouraging their harmonic, balanced and sustainable development.

As shown on Figure 1, the overall objective of the Programme is strengthening the Bulgaria - Turkey cross borer cooperation capacity in the field of nature protection and sustainable tourism, leading to enhancement of European territorial cohesion.

Figure 1. Programme objective and priority axes



Source: Programme

The eligible border area for the Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-border Programme covers a territory of 29 032.9 sq.km. with a population of 1,5 Million inhabitants. There are 3 districts (Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo) and 29 municipalities on the Bulgarian side and 2 (Edirne and Kirklareli) provinces and 17 municipalities on the Turkish side that are covered by the programme.

The Programme covers two thematic priorities according to Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 (the IPA II regulation), namely:

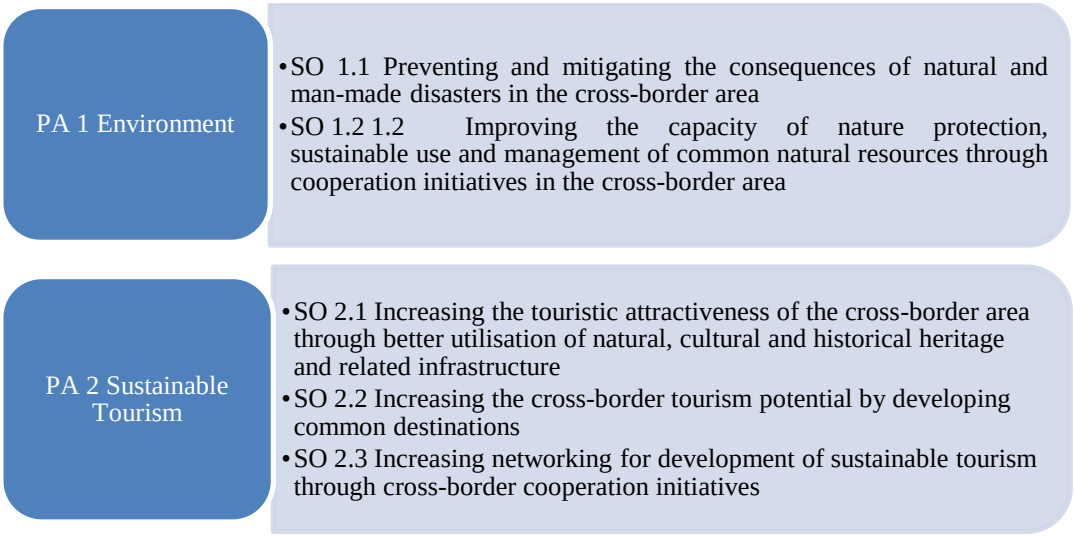
- Thematic priority (b): Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management;
- Thematic priority (d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.

As shown on the graph above, in order to achieve its overall objective, the Programme works on two priority axes, with a third priority dedicated to the management of the programme:

- Priority Axis 1: Environment;
- Priority Axis 2: Sustainable Tourism;
- Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance.

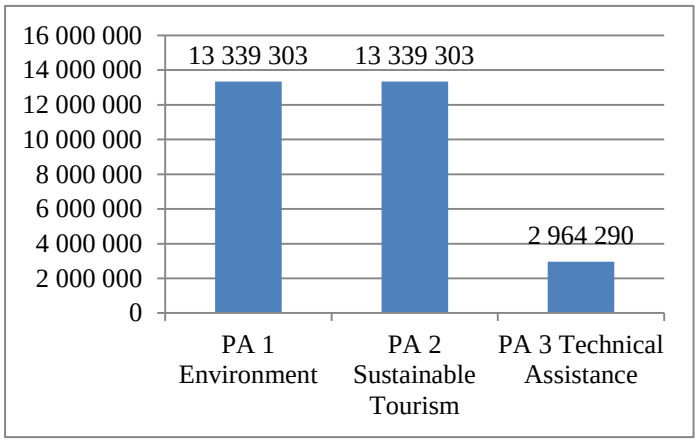
Each Priority Axis under the Programme is broken down into specific objectives (SO) as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Priority Axes and corresponding Specific Objectives of INTERREG – IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria – Turkey 2014 – 2020



Source: Programme

Figure 3. Financial plan of the Interreg IPA- CBC Programme Bulgaria – Turkey by Priority axes, EUR



Source: Programme

The Programme is implemented through open calls for proposals and the main beneficiaries are legal entities established in the eligible cross border region between Bulgaria and Turkey, which are non-profit making organizations (i.e. local/ regional/ national authorities or their subsidiary bodies; national and regional agencies; administrations of protected areas; local /regional forestry administrations; cultural institutions; community centres; NGOs; educational organizations-universities, schools, colleges and libraries; euro regions; associations of two or more of the here mentioned entities).

The total Programme budget is EUR 29 642 896 including IPA funding and national contribution. The distribution of the budget between the priority axes is shown in Figure 3.

According to IPA II regulations the two countries have established the following management bodies. The Managing Authority (MA) of the Programme is the Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria. Its counterpart is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Directorate for EU Affairs, acting as National Authority (NA).

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) monitors Programme implementation and is responsible for approving the calls for proposals documents and for project selection. Representatives of the MA, the NA, the European Commission and relevant national and regional stakeholders attend the meetings of the JMC.

The Joint Secretariat (JS) assists MA, NA and JMC in implementation of their responsibilities. It also provides relevant information on the Programme to potential and current beneficiaries. The main office of the JS is in Haskovo and it has a branch office in Edirne.

Both partner countries established decentralised First level control systems. The verification of expenditures made by project beneficiaries in Bulgaria and Turkey are made by controllers appointed by the MA and the NA, respectively.

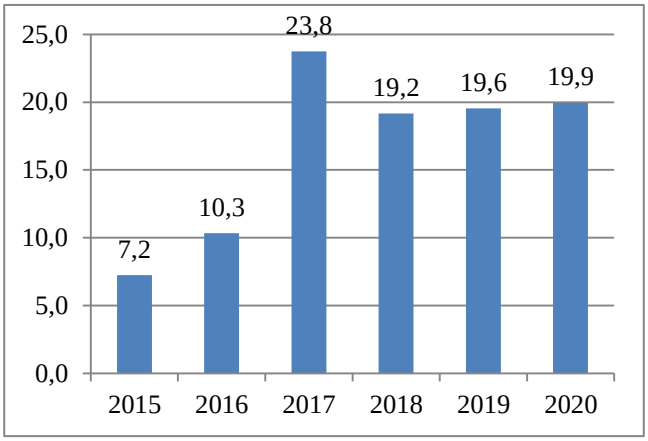
The Certifying Authority (CA) is the National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Bulgaria. It is responsible for regular administrative and on-the-spot check of expenditures before certification. The Audit Authority is the Audit of European Union Funds Implementing Agency of the Republic of Bulgaria and it is supported by a Group of Auditors.

2.2 Programme state of progress

The Programme was approved by the European Commission in July 2015. In October 2015 the first meeting of the JMC took place in Sofia. The JMC approved the JMC Rules of Procedure, the final version of the application package under the First Call for Proposals, the Multiannual Technical Assistance Strategy the Eligibility of Technical Assistance Expenditure, 2015 Annual Technical Assistance Plan, 2015 Technical Assistance budget and the Communication Strategy of the Programme for 2014 – 2020.

The First call for Proposals was launched on 16 November 2015 and the deadline for project applications was set at 16 March 2016. The call was open for projects under all specific objectives of the two main priority axes. The total budget for the call was EUR 11 028 255,00 (it covers the Programme budget allocations for 2015 – 2017).

Figure 4. Financial allocation of the Union support of the Programme, %



Source: Programme

In 2015 a new Management Information System (MIS) and a Beneficiaries Portal were launched and used for implementation of the Programme. The new MIS was based on the electronic system that was used during the previous programing period 2007 – 2013. The new information system provides one-stop online electronic exchange of information between beneficiaries and the Programme authorities. The lead partner could create, modify, save, upload and check documents and information addressed to the respective Programme bodies. MIS became the main tool assisting information exchange in regard to project generation, monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit. The subsequent development and upgrade of the MIS allows for online application of the beneficiaries for the Second Call for Proposals and electronic assessment of submitted project proposals.

195 project proposals were received under the First call for proposals. 116 passed the administrative compliance and administrative check and 63 projects received a score above 65 points (high quality) at the technical assessment. After the approval of the JMC and the pre-contracting procedures, 34 subsidy contracts for the amount of EUR 8 706 522 were signed in the period March – April 2017. As there were substantial savings from the preliminary allocated budget for the First Call for Proposals,

additional project proposals were proposed for funding. So additionally 9 subsidy contracts were signed in the period July – October 2017, leading to total number of 43 subsidy contracts signed and EUR 9 992 284,97 committed funds or 37,45 % of the budget envisaged under PA 1 and PA 2 altogether. Details on the results under the First call for proposals are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of projects and contracting amounts per PA under the First call of the Programme, 2016.

Priority axes	Received proposals	Passed AEC check	Approved for funding	Contracted	Contracted budget in EUR	Share contracted amount in total PA budget, %
PA 1 Environment	87	59	16	16	5 437 524,55	40,76
PA 2 Sustainable Tourism	108	57	23	27	4 554 760,42	33,50
Total	195	116	39	43	9 992 284,97	74,3

Source: Annual report 2016 and 2017

12 projects have Lead Partner from Turkey and 31 are led by Bulgarian organisations. 29 projects are completed until the end of 2018 and 12 investment projects are in their final stages of implementation and is expected to be finalised in the beginning of 2019 in the period January – April 2019. The projects progress reports show that their implementation is going well. Most of them have achieved the envisaged results and output indicators. There is only one terminated project (CB005.1.23.182 (soft). The total verified amount for the projects is EUR 4 794 793,63 (48% from the contracted budget) until the end of 2018. Having in mind that all investment projects are still under implementation and final payments for some soft projects finalised at the end of 2018 are still pending, the absorption rate is satisfactory.

In January 2018 a Second call for proposals was officially opened. The deadline for submission of proposals was set at 10 April 2018. 130 projects applied using the electronic system and 86 of them passed the administrative compliance and eligibility check. The list of the projects that are proposed for contracting was announced in December 2019. The budget of the Second call stood at EUR 15 650 351,00. Details on the number of projects and the proposed budget is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of projects and proposed projects budget per PA under the Second call of the Programme

Priority axes	Received projects	Passed AEC check	Approved for funding	Contracted	Expected contracted budget in €	Share contracted amount in total PA budget, %
PA 1 Environment	44	32	26	expected	6 700 544.29	50,23
PA 2 Sustainable Tourism	86	54	16	expected	6 139 121,49	46,02
Total	130	86	42		12 839 665,78	96,25

Source: Evaluation report for Second Call for Proposals

Following the number of the contracted budget under the First Call for Proposals and the expected contracted amounts under the Second Call for Proposals, there will be some savings from both calls. EUR 1 122 174,83 from the First Call for Proposals and EUR 2 810 685,22 from the Second Call for Proposals. The total amount of EUR 3 932 860,05 in addition with the non-absorbed funds from the subsidy contracts under the First Call for proposals might be used for funding number of projects from the reserve list of the Second Call for proposals.

2.3 Context and objectives of the evaluation

The implementation evaluation of Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria –Turkey Programme 2014 – 2020 is implemented in accordance to Art. 21(1) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 477/2014, where "IPA II assistance shall be subject of evaluations, in accordance with Article 30(4) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) and art. Art. 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013. It is included in the Evaluation Plan of the Programme which envisages two evaluations to be conducted during the programming period – Implementation and Impact evaluations. The current implementation evaluation covers operational aspects and analysis of the achievement of the objectives of the Programme. The overall objective of the evaluation is: assessment of the current programme progress and provision of recommendations for further improvement of the overall management and implementation of the Programme, which could contribute towards successful achievement of its objectives, results and outputs. In addition, the evaluator is expected to potentially provide feedback and important aspects for consideration for the next programming period.

The main purposes of the external independent implementation evaluation have been defined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and confirmed during the project kick-off meeting as follows:

- Evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system of Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria –Turkey Programme 2014-2020, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014-2020, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Evaluation of the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014-2020, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy under Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014-2020, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Identification of potential for improvements and recommendations for the Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme 2014-2020, including key issues and findings, which could potentially contribute for the new programming period post 2020.

The expected result is the Implementation Evaluation Report, which includes:

- analytical part related to effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system;
- evaluation of the Programme/projects progress and performance in comparison with the set targets (based on the contracted projects under the First call and on their implementation as of end-2018);
- evaluation of the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of the Programme (based on data on the contracted projects under the First call);
- evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme communication strategy;
- recommendations for future interventions.

Based on the Terms of reference, thirteen evaluation questions (presented in Section 4) have been defined, which are structured in the following four groups:

- effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system;
- effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme;
- relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of the Programme;
- effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy of the Programme.

At the kick-off meeting it was agreed that the cut-off date of the evaluation will be 31 December 2018.

3. Evaluation Methods and Tools

This chapter presents the sources for information and the way of gathering information for answering the evaluation questions and preparing conclusions and recommendations.

3.1 Evaluation design

The evaluation was carried out in the period August 2018 – February 2019. The evaluation stages are presented in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. Stages and activities of the evaluation

Structuring	Data collection	Analysis and judgment and reporting
• Kick-off meetings and interviews with MA representatives; • Preliminary document review; • Intervention logic analysis; • Elaboration of detailed methodology and drafting of Inception Report.	• Documentary review; • Projects implementation and progress survey using MIS data; • Interviews with JS, including branch office, NA; • On-the spot visits to selected projects. • Focus group with project beneficiaries	• In-depth face-to-face interviews with MA; • Data analysis and answering of the evaluation questions; • Preparation of a draft report; • Revision of the draft report; • Preparation of the final report.
August – September 2018	**October – November 2018**	**December 2018 – February 2019**

3.2 Sources and collection of data

The evaluation of the Interreg – IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey Programme was based on qualitative information and quantitative data collected using various methods – desk research, in-depth interviews, on-site visits and a focus group. The information relates to results achieved both on project and programme level as well as to the major difficulties and bottlenecks in the implementation.

Desk research

The desk research was the main method of gathering information for carrying out the analysis and answering all evaluation questions. It was used to collect secondary data from:

- Strategic documents: the evaluation team reviewed European and national strategic documents, analysis and reports, related to the cross-border cooperation and territorial cooperation activities which supported the evaluation of continuous relevance of the programme;
- Programme management documents: The following main groups of programme management documents were reviewed by the evaluation team:

- Programme document and monitoring and evaluation documents (annual implementation reports, ex-ante evaluation, etc.);
- Documents related to the calls for proposals and implementation of contracts (guidelines for applicants, application forms, implementation manual, etc.);
- Documents related to the Programme management and control system (First level control guidance, Programme manual, Evaluation report of the Second call, etc.);
- Documents related to the Communication strategy of the Programme (the strategy document, reports on communication and information events, etc.).

The list of all reviewed documents is attached as Annex 1.

Data

Monitoring system: Access to the Management Information System (MIS) was granted to the team of evaluation experts. It allowed review and investigation of the applications received under the First call and Second call for proposals, the evaluation results of applicants, the approved projects, and the project progress reports.

Monitoring database: The MA maintains Excel based database on common indicators by project which was disseminated to the evaluation team. The monitoring data on all First call projects was reviewed by the evaluators. In addition, the team was supplied with an Excel file containing information on the requested and verified expenses by the projects from the First call.

Result indicators: The evaluation team was responsible for collecting data for updating the value of the statistical result indicators. There is one statistical result indicator in the Programme, RI 2.1 "Increased nights spent in the cross border area", which is based on data on the nights spent in the cross-border regions. The data is collected from the official websites of the national statistical institutes of Bulgaria and data provided by the regional authorities in Edirne and Kirklareli. The other result indicators of the Programme are based on surveys and reports of project implementation. Those surveys were carried out by the MA and the indicators' values were provided to the evaluation team. The four result indicators that are report-based, RI 1.1. Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area, RI 1.2. Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources, RI 2.2. Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area and RI 2.3. Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area, were calculated by the evaluation team based on the reports provided by the MA.

Interviews

The evaluation team carried out interviews with representatives of the MA, the NA, the Communication officer of the Programme and the JS (main office and branch office) – see Annex 2. All interviews were face-to-face, except that with the representative of the NA that was done via a Skype call. The interviews were semi-structured with a focus on providing information on specific topics related to the evaluation questions while at the same time leaving the possibility to explore sub-themes and to develop new themes. The topics that were covered included monitoring system and monitoring tools, main difficulties for the beneficiaries, specific constraints affecting the active involvement of the beneficiaries/partners, information dissemination and activities, specific constraints affecting the active involvement of the beneficiaries/partners, level of achievements of targets of programme indicators, achievement and relevance of programme specific objectives, application of horizontal principles on

Programme and project level, recommendations for improvement of Programme management and implementation.

On-site visits

The evaluation team carried out on-site visits to seven projects. The on-site visits were used to conduct interviews with the project stakeholders (project managers or other decision makers in the respective organisations) and to get their opinion on the management and implementation of the Programme, including communication and information events, practices implemented during project origination, partner search, application and implementation of the project, main bottlenecks that were faced at each stage, recommendations.

The selection of the projects was based on several criteria, among them effectiveness, impact, efficiency, innovation, transfer of knowledge, partnership, and sustainability. The list with the projects for the on-site visits was agreed with the MA. Details on each of the visited projects could be found in Annex 3 and Annex 4.

Focus group

A focus group was carried out in Edirne on 21st of November 2018. It was attended by 13 representatives of project beneficiaries and by members of the evaluation team. The topics that were discussed during the focus group included the process of projects' generation and selection, implementation and reporting of projects, including indicators, cross-border cooperation, factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of the results, communication activities of the Programme, suggested recommendations.

4. Main findings and answers to the evaluation questions

4.1 Task 1 Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme` management system

EQ 1: Is the approach used for projects generation and selection sufficiently oriented to the Programme objectives, results and outputs? (Programme documents, actors involved)?

Conclusions: *The objectives of the programme are properly reflected by the way projects are generated. The eligible activities under each PA as described in the Programme were incorporated in the eligible activities under the First and Second calls. The programme output indicators were directly used at project level, although no additional guidance on indicators' measurement was provided to applicants. Nevertheless, it shall be noted that during the negotiation procedure, which is part of the projects selection process, each of the output indicators was discussed with the beneficiaries and details were provided on how the beneficiaries shall report the achievement of the respective indicator.*

The Guidelines for Applicants and the Application forms for both calls for proposals are in line with the best practices. The beneficiaries confirmed that they do not experience any significant problems with the preparation of the project proposals. The information events organised by the JS and particularly the partner search forums, enjoyed high interest from the potential applicants and their usefulness is highly assessed by the participants.

The issues that were identified concern mainly some of the criteria in the project evaluation grid and time frame of the assessment process. Some of the questions in the evaluation grid could be altered to avoid ambiguity in interpretation, duplication with other questions in the grid or in the administrative compliance check, and to improve clarity.

Substantial improvements were introduced in the Application Package for the Second Call for proposals. Better explanation for all sections: cross border impact to be achieved horizontal issues; complaint procedures, filling the application form are presented, revisions of the evaluation grid are also made and special attachment for the Programme output indicators is included.

Sufficient number of good quality project proposals are received under both call for proposals but still there is quite high number of projects which do not pass administrative and eligibility check. This means that still Programme applicants capacities have to be strengthened and improved.

The generation of high quality projects with strong contribution to the Programme objectives, results and outputs is based on the following main pillars:

- Well-developed Application package;
- Wide promotion of the funding opportunities under the Programme and capacity building activities for the potential applicants;
- Objective, strict and clear assessment of received project proposals.

This is the second programming period for the Programme and the approach for projects generation and selection are already clear and settled and the lessons learned and best practices from the 2007 – 2013 period are taken into account.

Guidelines for applicants

The key prerequisite for generation of quality and relevant to the Programme objectives, results and outputs projects are the application guidelines. The Guideline for applicants for the Programme for both Calls for proposals has high quality providing detailed explanations of the requirements and eligibility rules of the call and the process for project proposal development and preparation. Highlighted texts are included to draw the attention of the potential applicants to specifics and important elements which they have to take into account when preparing their projects. The Guidelines for applicants include detailed list of eligible applicants, arranged per specific objective. The eligible activities are presented per specific objective and per type of activity (investment and/or soft) and include exhaustive list of indicative actions, all of them envisaged in the Programme document.

During the meetings with the Programme beneficiaries several comments were received in relation to the defined maximum amounts for projects, especially for the investment projects. Some of the beneficiaries mentioned that a larger budget for investment activities could achieve higher impacts over the development of the cross-border region. Given the limited overall Programme budget and the Programme implementation approach through grants schemes, the maximum amount of the supported actions is reasonably defined.

Regarding the eligibility of expenditures defined in the Guidelines, several important points have to be mentioned. The staff costs and office and administrative costs are reimbursed according to the flat rate principle, which is significant decrease of administrative burden both for the beneficiaries and the MA/NA. The defined maximum rates for travel, accommodation and daily allowances for the project participants stimulates the grant contracts' sound financial management and efficient use of funds. Project preparation costs are defined as eligible expenditures which also can be considered as good practice because it ensures elaboration of good quality proposal and facilitates the application process for first-comers to the Programme.

A weakness that is identified is the lack of detailed description of the Programme indicators in the GfA for the First Call for proposals. Especially there is not list of the Programme output indicators with some explanations what is meant under each indicator. In the Guidelines for applicants in the Indicators section is referred only to the Programme document with a link to the Programme website. Nevertheless, it shall be noted that during First call negotiation procedure, each of the Output indicators was discussed with the beneficiaries and details were provided on how the beneficiaries shall report the achievement of the respective indicator.

This weakness is overcome in the Second Call for proposal where a list of output indicators is attached to the GfA, presenting explanations for the proper indicators reporting and the target and achieved values for each indicator.

It can be concluded that the GfA for the Second Call for proposals are extended and improved, with better explanation for all sections: cross border impact to be achieved horizontal issues; complaint procedures, required indicators, filling the application form etc. Revisions of the evaluation grid are also made and special attachment for the Programme output indicators is included

Application Form

The project application form for both calls for proposals is in a very user-friendly format and includes all necessary sections for detailed presentation of the project idea and its assessment. The GfA provides exhaustive information how the application form should be filled in by the beneficiaries with detailed instructions on the preparation of each section, especially for the section related to description of project activities and project budget. The financial templates are also very easy to fill in. There is automatic

calculation of sub-totals and summary tables, and alerts for mistakes. The application form has a checklist which is filled automatically when all parts and sections of the Application form are properly completed which again supports the applicants to prepare good proposals.

It is recommendable in the application form to be added section with contacts of the Project management team on behalf of the Beneficiary so they could be contacted for operational purposes (as meetings, sharing of project outputs and lessons learned, future cooperation etc.).

Supporting documents

The number of required supporting documents is limited encompassing legal status of the candidates, legal representatives of the partners, legalized mandates (if necessary), technical specifications for supplies and technical drawings, designs and permits for investment activities. Although the preparation of the latter makes it difficult for the beneficiaries in the application process, investment permits and designs are a reasonable requirement as they are a guarantee for funding of mature and agreed projects.

Regarding the documents related to legal status and representatives, it is feasible to consider using data from the Bulgarian Trade Register for the Bulgarian participants. Also the evaluation shows that a lot of organisations apply with several applications and in more than one call for proposals. Taking into account that the number of eligible applicants from the border region is not high, it seems feasible to consider for the next programming period in the already established Programme MIS to be included section where the applicants could register, update information about their organisation (i.e. not information relating to a specific call for proposals) and upload their legal supporting documents.

The application process was done on paper for the First Call for proposals and electronically for the Second call for proposals. This significantly facilitates the application process.

Partnership principle

The Programme authorities have ensured high transparency of the process of the application package elaboration and coordination with relevant stakeholders. There is applied coordination mechanism between the MA and the JS during the preparation of the application package including review of the envisaged rules, eligible candidates, activities, expenditures, selection criteria and their agreement with the other departments of the MA and NA. Public consultations with a wider range of stakeholders are also made as the elaborated documents are published on the website of the Programme. Such coordination mechanism as a whole enables both the strategic alignment with the objectives of the Programme, technical compliance with the financial budget, target groups and indicators and meeting the needs of the potential applicants. The final version of the application package is agreed with the Programme JMC.

Selection and Assessment criteria

The assessment and selection of the applications has two main stages – administrative compliance and eligibility check and technical and quality assessment. The first stage is performed by the members of the assessment working group from MA, NA and JS, while the second is executed by external assessors selected through a competitive procedure. Table 4 summarises the comments of the evaluation team on some of the criteria of the grid. The technical and quality evaluation grid encompassed information on the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. The main issues relate to unclear wording in the criteria that allows for dubious meaning, and lack of definition of some terms that were used. At the end of the

evaluation grid the assessors are required to provide comments and recommendations for the overall quality of the project proposal, main strengths and weaknesses.

Table 4. Comments on selection criteria

Criteria as pert GfA	Comment
2. Composition of partnership relevant to the proposed project	No definition of "partnership relevance" is given in the GfA. The administrative compliance grid checks if the partnership follows the required cooperation criteria. If this question is meant to check if the partners have any experience in the field of activities of the project, then it largely coincides with the meaning of Q3. The question should be either re-written so its meaning is more straightforward or it should be combined with Q3 (i.e. reduction of the number of questions in the grid).
4. Staff and financial stability of the project partners	A formal definition of financial stability is needed (formula based on data submitted by the partners and thresholds is preferred). Then any external assessor regardless of their educational background and professional experience, could define the financial position of the project partners.
9. The target groups and beneficiaries are relevant to project activities, clearly defined and quantified	In essence, this question is used for assessing if the target groups and beneficiaries are relevant, clearly defined and realistically quantified. It was included to check if the values set in the project proposal were not exaggerated. However, underestimation of the size of the target groups and number of beneficiaries is harder to be detected although it might lead to overachievement of the defined values. We suggest that the section in the GA related to the target groups to give more detailed advice on how project partners should set the values of target groups and beneficiaries of their project.
18. Estimated expenditures are necessary for the implementation of the project and the prices are realistic and market based	This criterion has very mixed explanations for the different scorings.

Promotion of the funding opportunities under the Programme

Publications on the Programme website, on the official Bulgarian European funds website, Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Work website, Turkish Directorate for EU Affairs website and on the website affiliated with the website of Directorate for EU Affairs established only for CBC Programmes that Turkey participates, social media accounts of the Programme bodies, publications in national and regional electronic media and newspapers and information days/partnership forum are the main tools for promoting the open calls for proposals under the Programme.

For the First Call for proposals preliminary project preparation trainings were organised for potential beneficiaries in Edirne and Kirklareli. This support strengthens the capacities of the future beneficiaries and is a prerequisite for generation of good proposals. It is recommended to keep this practice in the next programming period.

The official information campaigns for both calls started in Haskovo and then information days were carried out in Yambol and Burgas. A Partnership forum is organised in Edirne, usually after the

information days in Bulgaria. The beneficiaries shared that this is a very useful event for finding relevant partners and exchanging of projects ideas. Recommendations were made for this forum to be carried out twice per Call for proposals. In addition to these events, the JS office provides individual consultations for every applicant when requested.

On the website of the Programme dates for the information days and the partnership forum are announced, the information days and forum presentations are published there and Question & Answers sessions regarding the call for proposals are regularly updated.

It can be concluded that the Programme authorities put an effort to make sure that the funding opportunities provided by the Programme will reach the widest possible range of people, to present in clear and understandable way each call rules and requirements and to support the potential applicants in identifying relevant partners and elaboration of quality proposals. There was huge interest from potential applicants for all events during both calls for proposals.

Assessment of project proposals

The assessment of the project proposals is done by experts of the Programme authorities with the support of external experts mainly for the performance of technical/quality assessment. The MA has a database of external assessors from Bulgaria and Turkey with long-term contracts which are invited for the relevant call for proposals. They are selected on the basis of the number and type of received project proposals.

The assessment encompasses 3 main stages. During the first stage GfA, assessment rules, application package and Questions & Answers lists are presented and explained to the assessors. The next two stages are the Administrative compliance and eligibility check and the Technical and quality assessment.

Then the project proposals proposed for financing on the basis of the ranking prepared by the assessment working group and the proposals reserve list are approved by the JMC. Each applicant has the right to handle complaint against the received scores. The MA has a well-established complaint procedure which is strictly followed.

The Programme authorities performed on-the-spot visits for investment projects and budget optimization and projects' content modifications procedure before subsidy contract signature. This is long-term established procedure under the Programme which guarantees that really mature, well defined and relevant to the Programmes specific objectives will be funded.

The timeframe for each stage of the assessment is specified in administrative order for appointment of the assessors.

The whole assessment process is made through the Programme MIS which improves and speeds up the work of the assessors.

The main weakness of the assessment process is the long period for its implementation. It takes approximately one year for a subsidy contract to be signed. This affects the timely and properly implementation of the funded projects as for such a long period substantial changes related to beneficiary needs, priorities and even project management teams may occur.

First Call for proposals and Second Call for proposals

A total of 325 project proposals were received under the two calls for proposals. 38 % of the received proposals did not pass the administrative and eligibility check, which is quite a high number. 81 projects are approved for funding. The numbers show that there is a sufficient number of good quality projects.

Table 5. Number of projects per Call for proposals

Call for proposals	Priority axes	Received projects	Passed AEC check	Approved for funding	Contracted
First Call for proposals	Environment	87	59	16	16
	Tourism	108	57	23	27
Second Call for proposals	Environment	44	32	26	forthcoming
	Tourism	86	54	16	forthcoming
Total		325	202	81	

Source: Programme Annual Reports and Evaluation report for the Second call for proposals

As it was described in section 2.2 "Programme state of progress" of the report, the whole budget for the First Call for proposals is not fully absorbed. In addition according to the evaluation results of the Second call for proposals, there will be unabsorbed funds under PA 1 Environment as there is no reserve list of projects. These results show that still the capacities of the potential applicants have to be further strengthened and improved.

The Programme has some more specific elements in comparison with the other cross-border programmes, managed by Bulgaria as language barrier, very different administrative procedures from both side of the border, more centralised management, visa regime which hampers the projects application process and implementation process. And this also requires additional efforts in training and mentoring the potential applicants.

EQ 2: Are the reporting and monitoring process and tools for project implementation adequate to ensure proper follow-up of Programme achievements? Is the monitoring system sufficiently reliable to report the proper achievement of the Output indicators? (Programme documents and online monitoring tools, JS)?

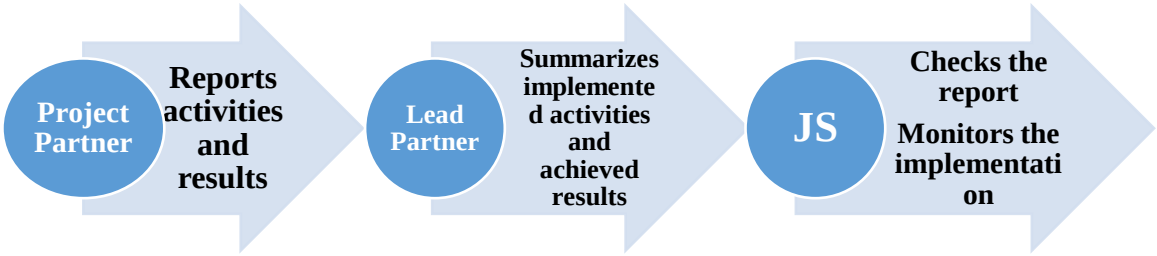
Conclusions: *The tools and processes used for reporting and monitoring of the implementation of the projects under the First call generally allow for proper and timely follow-up of the achievement of the output indicators. The work organization of the JS staff together with the detailed quarterly reporting of project progress using the online Beneficiaries portal supported the timely identification of issues with the implementation of projects. The PIM of the First call do not contain information on the measurement of the output indicators which is a risk for the consistency and the comparability of the values of the indicators.*

The reporting and monitoring process of the projects funded under the Programme is well developed. The procedures are well elaborated and the beneficiaries are fully acquainted with them, which guarantees proper reporting and obtainment of reliable data for the achieved project results.

Reporting process

The reporting goes from the Project partners to Lead Partners, which summarize the information and report to the JS. The requests for payments are related to the projects reporting and thus the partners are stimulated to actively support the approval of the progress report by the JS as it is a necessary condition for receiving payment from the MA

Figure 5. Reporting process



Two types of reports have to be provided by the beneficiaries:

- Project progress reports on quarterly basis describing all the implemented project activities in the reporting period
- Final progress report and Final project Summary which is due when the project is finalised and its focus is on the achieved project results and outcomes and their sustainability

Deadlines for submission and check of the reports are established in the relevant Programme documents. The JS checks the implemented activities according to the signed subsidy contract and the achieved project indicators. The Quarterly progress reports are also basis for request for payments.

The JS maintains and regularly updates database of achieved and expected to be achieved OIs values on the basis of the information from progress reports and on-the-spot checks.

The project format is an excel file and is very user-friendly. At the same time it includes all the relevant information necessary for controlling the project implementation and monitoring the achieved results. Reporting the achievement of the output indicators of the project, its cross-border impact and the sustainability of the results is requested only in the final project progress report (FPPR). The FPPR also contains information on the coherence of the project results with other programmes, the compliance with the horizontal themes and the characteristics of the partner cooperation.

The duration of the projects in the First call could not exceed 15 months for soft projects and 24 months for investment projects. Reporting of implementation progress on a quarterly basis is appropriate for both kind of projects. However, reporting of achievement of output indicators once at the end of the project could be challenging for soft projects with short duration. The forecast of the level of achievement could be unprecise and the time for reaction and corrective measures could be limited. For investment projects, due to their nature and longer duration, reporting of output indicators once at the end of the project is more justified. The MA could consider introducing "mid-term" reporting of output indicators for projects with shorter duration, for example up to 18 months.

The Programme Management Information System has Beneficiary portal section where project beneficiaries upload their scanned progress reports and all supporting documents to the reports. The BP also provides one-stop electronic exchange of information between beneficiaries and Programme management bodies. All the interviewed beneficiaries confirmed that although this type of reporting requires scanning of big amounts of documents, it is easier and more flexible compared to the paper reporting. Further facilitation for both beneficiaries and Programme authorities will be introduction of direct electronic filling of the progress reports by the beneficiaries.

Monitoring process

The JS has the main role in the projects monitoring process. As it was stated above they are responsible for close following of the progress in the project implementation and the achievement of the project

results and indicators. They are doing this through two main tools: check of project reports and on the spot checks.

The on-the-spot checks are made on the basis of risk assessment of all projects updated regularly and they are presented in an Annual Working Plans for monitoring. As good practice is considered the initial meeting and/or visit with the beneficiaries as such visits allow the JS to make some prognosis for the future projects implementation based on the readiness and knowledge of the team, established partnership, vision for the project activities etc. There is also final monitoring visit which is obligatory for all projects.

There are well described procedures, explanations what needs to check, and elaborated checklists for each kind of on the spot checks which guarantee the quality implementation of this process.

The above analysis of the reporting and monitoring processes signals that the monitoring system is well functioning and reliable. It has high capability of capturing at early stages various issues concerning the achievement of the planned results of the projects. Those issues could be addressed by and intensely monitored by the JS which has the right to demand further clarifications and documents from the beneficiaries.

EQ 3: Are the different supportive measures offered to beneficiaries regarding project implementation, monitoring and follow-up adequate to ensure the quality of project results? (qualitative and thematic follow-up, Programme documents and online monitoring tools, JS support)?

Conclusions: *The beneficiaries assessed positively the support they received during the implementation phase of the Programme. The PIM and the trainings were evaluated as very helpful and sufficiently detailed, the work with the newly introduced Beneficiaries portal was facilitated by the timely support from experts on the phone. Additionally, the beneficiaries highlighted the expert verbal support they received from the JS staff on various issues and topics. It can be concluded that the mixture of supportive measures contributed to the achievement of the project results.*

The beneficiaries received support during the implementation of the projects via several complementary measures. Next to the publishing and constantly updating of the PIM, the JS organized training seminars for beneficiaries and regularly published Q&A regarding implementation. Table 6 summarizes the activities of the JS related to explaining and clarifying the procedures and stages of the projects implementation under the First call. The Beneficiaries portal was launched and extensively used for the quarterly and the final reporting of project progress and achievements. The JS provided timely step-by-step written instructions about the interactions with the portal. In fact, such instructions were added to the second version of the PIM as an annex. The Secretariat staff provided on request verbal support on every stage of the project implementation – devising the procurement documentation, specifics of the reporting grid, troubles during interactions with the Beneficiary portal, and preparation of communication and visibility materials and activities. During the onsite visits and the focus group discussion, the support from the JS was highly valued. The same was stated for the on the spot checks which were assessed as very useful for the proper project implementation and timely removal and prevention errors and omissions. The quality of the provided written support materials was assessed as good. The beneficiaries reported some problems while using the Beneficiary portal, especially soon after it was introduced, but those were promptly solved with the assistance of the IT manager.

PIM

A prerequisite for the proper and sound implementation of the projects and therefore for good reporting and monitoring process is knowledgeable beneficiaries acquainted with projects implementation rules and procedures. This is ensured through two main tools – Project Implementation Manual (PIM), trainings of the beneficiaries and support from the JS.

The PIM is elaborated for call for proposals reflecting its specific and requirements. It is a very detailed document which give thorough presentation of the project implementation process encompassing all elements as procurement procedures, validation of expenditures and reimbursement of funds, reporting and monitoring, contract modification and information and publicity. As a good practice the detailed explanation for the sources of verification for each type of activity is identified and the detailed explanations for conditions of eligible expenditure, which are very useful tools to avoid ineligible cots and financial corrections. The PIM is supplemented with templates of all necessary documents.

The interviewed beneficiaries confirmed that the PIM is very useful document and even for the first time Programme beneficiaries is clear and understandable. The only weakness is that no comments on explanation and measurement of the output indicators are published in the PIM.

There was only one amendment of the PIM and summary of the revisions is presented together with the revised PIM so that the beneficiaries could easily follow the changes.

The MA organises trainings for the project beneficiaries after each Call for proposals contracts signature. There are presentations for each stage of the project implementation. They are also uploaded of the website of the Programme, for the beneficiaries who were not able to attend the training.

Table 6. Main events during the implementation of the Programme

Date	Place	Event
29.03.2017	Haskovo (BG)	Training seminar "Project Implementation" for management teams of the Bulgarian partners under the First Call
03.04.2017	website of the Programme	PIM, Version 1
03.04.2017	website of the Programme	Visual elements for visibility activities
25.04.2017	Edirne (TR)	Training seminar "Project Implementation" for management teams of the Turkish partners
20.04 2017 21.04 2017	Haskovo (BG)	Practical Trainings on the Beneficiary Portal - two in Bulgaria
05.05.2017	website of the Programme	Q&A regarding implementation of projects, Part I
11.05.2017	website of the Programme	Additional instructions for the Bulgarian beneficiaries regarding requirements of the Bulgarian legislation
11.05.2017 12.05.2017	Edirne Kirklareli	Practical Trainings on the Beneficiary Portal – two in Turkey
05–06. 2017	website of the Programme	Turkish version of the PIM, Version 1and User Manual for Beneficiary portal
10.08.2017	website of the Programme	Instruction for Single Tender Procedures for Service

Date	Place	Event
11.10.2017	website of the Programme	PIM, Version 2
01.11.2017	website of the Programme	Presentation for the training "Projects' implementation and instructions for Beneficiary Portal"
02.11.2017	Burgas (BG)	Practical Training for Beneficiaries of subsidy contracts from the reserve list
18.06.2018	website of the Programme	Irregularity Management

Source: Website of the Program; Report on the Programme Communication Strategy

4.2 Task 2 Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme

EQ 4: To which extent does the established monitoring system concerning reporting of indicators provide timely and precise review of the implementation of the Programme?

Do the Programme indicators allow for the provision of a complete and accurate picture of the achievements of the Programme?

Conclusions: *The Programme has well elaborated indicator system which allows provision of information for the achievement of the Programme specific objectives. The output indicators aim at encompassing all possible activities and outputs for the respective specific objective but deficiencies in their definitions lead to issues with their usability from management perspective. Most of the result indicators are based on non-compulsory surveys among stakeholders and the samples of the surveys are not unified.*

The Programme has well elaborated indicators system which allows provision of information for the achievement Programme specific objectives. Each specific objective has a number of indicators which clearly present the Programme intervention logic, meaning the relation between the programme objectives, actions and indicators is well established. The output indicators are 21 which is a reasonable number of indicators for a Programme with such size of funding and supported activities, distributed in 5 specific objectives. For each specific objective there is a defined result indicator (5 result indicators).

The result indicators (RI) and the output indicators (OI) are stated in the text of the Programme. Four of the result indicators are based on surveys among stakeholders and one is based on official statistical data. One of the annexes of the Programme contains Concept note on the methodology for result indicator establishment that includes some practical aspects of constructing the indicators. The evaluation team was provided by the contracting authority with a revised version of the annex with details on the survey questionnaires and the calculation methodology. However, documents that are easily accessible for the public and contain methodological data on the construction and calculation of result and output indicators are lacking. As it was mentioned earlier, no guidelines for the output indicators was included in the GA of the First call and in the PIM. In the Second call for proposals, this weakness was overcome with an Annex to the GfA which provides explanation of the Programme output indicators to the applicants.

With minor exceptions, which are further analysed below, the indicators comply with the SMART criteria. Most indicators are designed in such a way as to relate to the respective specific objectives, the results that the partner States seek to achieve, and the indicative actions to be supported under each specific objective.

The indicators of the Programme are both qualitative and quantitative. The correspondence between the specific objectives and the envisaged activities is straightforward. The output indicators generally aim to register and encompass the results and outputs of all eligible activities. Nevertheless, a number of general comments could are provided below:

Result Indicators

- Four result indicators are measured using surveys among stakeholders. However, as participation in these surveys is voluntary, it cannot be guaranteed that the number and the structure of the respondents would remain broadly the same at the different points in time when

the survey is issued. This could lead to biased results that are not strictly comparable. Two approaches could be used to address this issue. One of them is the MA to hire a professional public opinion agency to carry a standardised survey on properly defined sample of stakeholders at the initial phase (to set the base value of the indicator) and at the two reporting years (2018 and 2023). The other approach is to include summarised information on basic characteristic (such as country, type of organization, age, etc.) of the samples of respondents in the reporting documents of the Programme so that the reader of the analysis could be aware of possible discrepancies

- General social and economic factors may strongly influence the value of the result indicators and bias or hide the effect from the Programme. For example RI 2.1 Increased nights spent in the cross-border area is not very proper indicator for the Programme achievements as the cross border area includes Burgas region which is main touristic centre of Bulgaria and the achieved values are not very relevant to the Programme achievements and mirrors the impact of nation-wide policies

Some small remarks could be made only for four of the **output indicators:**

- OI 1.2.4 Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction) is too specific for such type of Programme and in relation with the defined specific objective. Also it is very similar to OI 1.2.5 Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas. Both of them can be counted as initiatives.
- Also OI 2.3.2 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources (Number) and OI 2.3.3 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism (Number) are very similar and it seems they are measuring same results.

EQ 5: What is the programmes progress towards achievement of the relevant programmes targets (output and result indictors)? How is the Interreg-IPA CBC Programme progressing towards its goal and objectives in view of the used means and resources?

Conclusions: *The Programme's progress toward achievement of the targets of the output and result indicators is quite good, based on data as of end-2018.The majority of the OIs under PA1 have good achievement progress and all of them except two are expected to be overachieved with the completion of the projects from the First Call for proposal. The two indicators which are lagging behind will be achieved with projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals.*

The OIs in the PA 2 also have satisfactory rates of achievement. Six of the OIs have overachieved their values with the projects from the First call for proposals and two of them have reached achievement rate of over 60%. Only 4 of the OIs (namely the ones in SO 1.2 2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure) have low achieved values. But their target values will be achieved with the projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals.

There are 2 RIs in PA 1, one is fully achieved and the other is 94% achieved as of end of 2018. One RI under PA2 is significantly overachieved while the targets of the remaining two are achieved over 85%.

The changed mechanism for selection of project proposals under the Second call has significant

positive impact on the projected achievement of the OI of the Programme. All OIs below target will be achieved if the projects proposed for contracting in the Second call are implemented as planned. At the same time, it is expected that the savings from the First and Second Calls for proposals would allow contracting some of the projects in the Reserve list of the Second call for proposals and this will contribute to the OIs values, especially in PA 2.

The total budget of the projects contracted under the First call and the expected budget of the project proposals approved for financing under the Second calls for proposals stood at EUR 22 745 745,95 or approximately 85 % of the total funding under the Programme, EUR 12 138 068,84 go to PA 1 and EUR 10 607 677,11to PA 2.

Although 12 projects from the 1st Call for proposals are still under implementation as of December 2018, following the progress of the implementation of the projects financed under the First Call for proposals, can be made some evaluation of the achieved indicators targets based on the already reported achievements and the expected achievements in accordance with the expected project results. Mainly the investment projects will be finalised in March 2019, but all of them have very good implementation and they will achieve the defined indicators. Detailed information on the degree of achievement of OI per PA and SO could be found in Tables 11 to 15 in Annex 5 that present the achieved results, planned results which are expected to be achieved with the implementation of the projects from the First Call for proposals and projected values which will be achieved with the implementation of the projects from the second Call for proposals.

Below we summarize the achievement of target values per priority axis.

PA 1 Environment

The indicators under SO 1.1 Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border have good achievement rates:

- OI 1.1.1 Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters and OI 1.1.3 Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons) have achievement rate over 60%
- OI 1.1.2 Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters and OI 1.1.4 Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure (Persons) have an achievement rate below 50%.

But the planned results show that all these four indicators target values are expected to be achieved with the 1st Call for proposals projects and even will exceed the set targets, for OI 1.1.1 and OI1.1.2 around 2 and half times and for OI 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 around 1,5 times.

The result indicator related to SO 1.1 is R. 1 1 Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area has already achieved the target value by being exceeded by approximately 6%.

In SO 1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, suitable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area there are 5 indicators. 3 of the indicators OI 1.2.1 Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions, OI 1.2.2 Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources and OI 1.2.3 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection have excellent achievement rate with 200% for the first one and over 60% for the other two indicators. It is envisaged that they will be fully achieved.

The other two indicators are already discussed above as they are not very well defined and the one is too specific, measuring achievements in only very specific places as marine and coastal lines. One of them OI 1.2.4 is not achieved and the other OI 1.2.5 is achieved at 33%.

The value of the result indicator for this specific objectives – RI 1.2 Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources is achieved at 94%.

PA 2 Sustainable Tourism

SO 2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure encompass 4 indicators

OI 2.1.1 Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites (Kilometres)

OI 2.1.2 Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths (Kilometres)

OI 2.1.3 Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites

OI 2.1.4 Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites

Indicators OI 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.14 has very low achievement rates, below 30%. Only OI 2.1.3 is expected to reach 70% of the envisaged target.

The target value of RI 2.1 Increased nights spent in the cross-border area is calculated on the results presented by the Municipalities of Edirne and Kirkaleri for the nights spent on their territory and data from the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute for the nights spent on the territories of Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo districts. The calculations for the nights spent are presented in the table below per territories and per years:

Table 7. Nights spent in the Programme area

Province/District	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Burgas	8 051 983	7 607 144	9 261 486	9 459 147	9 717 859
Yambol	94 441	56 694	50 897	50 615	39 718
Haskovo	107 381	92 595	112 202	123 232	150 249
Edirne	258 537	283 925	267 359	547 942	589 940
Kirkaleri	44 756	47 741	99 281	127 614	184 005
Total	8 557 098	8 088 099	9 791 225	10 308 550	10 681 771

Source: Data from the municipality of Edirne and Kirklareli, National Statistical Instutue of Bulgaria

A comparison is made with the base value of the indicator in the Programme (7 721 074 nights spent) and the value achieved for year 2018 (10 681 771 nights spent). The Programme target is the indicator base value to be increased with minimum 1%. The indicator value is significantly overachieved as there is an increase of 38,3% of the nights spent in the Programme area. . This overachievement of the indicator in the middle stage of the Programme implementation period shows that the target value is not properly defined. Also it has to be noted that this indicator may achieve very distorted values as the area covered by the Programme includes Burgas region. The region is main touristic centre of Bulgaria and the number of nights spent in the region is mainly formed by the tourist flow to Bulgaria, which is a result of nationally supported measures and the realistic contribution of the Programme is difficult to be estimated.

The indicators under SO 2.2. Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations have very good achievement rates.

OI 2.2.1 Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations - 167%

OI 2.2.2 Number of marketing and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services - 146%

OI 2.2.3 Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential - 567%. This is a very overfilled indicator which is an indication that maybe there were some weaknesses I the programming process and setting the targets.

OI 2.2.4 - Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources - 233%.

And only OI 2.2.5 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism will be 90% achieved with the implementation of the projects from the 1st Call for proposals.

RI 2.2 Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development has very good level of achievement reaching 89% of the target value.

The situation is very similar for the SO 2.3. Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives where again one of the indicators OI 2.3.2 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources (Number) is at 85% rate of achievement. The other two indicators OI 2.3.1 Number of networking events (Number) and OI 2.3.3 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism (Number) are expected to have achievement rates of 140% and 180%.

The target value of RI 2.3 Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area also has good achievement rate of approximately 85%.

Second Call

The Programme MA made careful analysis based on the achieved indicator values and the expected results after the completion of the First Call for proposals projects before elaborating the application package for the Second Call for proposals. It was decided the supported objectives and actions of the Second Call for proposals to follow the cross border regions needs and challenges as in the previous call but with special focus on activities contributing the achievement of the values of the Programme indicators which have poorer performance. The MA announce in the GfA that '…majority of the available funds under the Call shall be allocated towards those OIs in need of more contracted projects, whereas projects fulfilling only OIs that have already been achieved shall only be contracted in case some funding still remains available'.

The assessment of the received projects under the Second Call for proposals was made according to above mentioned prescriptions and projects fulfilling the technical and assessment criteria and contributing to the achievement of the indicators were selected. The projected achievement of indicators after implementation of the Second Call for proposals are presented in Table 14 in Annex 5.

The assessment report presents that 32 projects passed the Administrative compliance and Eligibility Check under Priority 1 'Environment'. 26 of them received average score of at least 65 points are proposed for funding. 3 project proposals are proposed for financing based on their contribution to the OI 1.2.4 and OI 1.2.5. Project proposals contributing to the OI 1.2.4 are 16 (13 of them with score 65 points or above), ant those contributing to the OI 1.2.5 are 17 (14 of them with score 65 points or

above). For PA 1 all project proposals with score 65 points or above are proposed for financing and thus project proposals contributing to the OI 1.2.4 are 13 and for OI 1.2.5 are 14.

The number of projects from PA 2 "Tourism" that passed the Administrative compliance and Eligibility check is 54, of them 45 were proposed for financing. The "unachieved indicators" will be implemented through 16 different projects (some of them include more than one of the "unachieved indicators").

Table 15 in Annex 5 shows the projected achievement rate of all OIs with the contribution of projects proposed for financing under the Second Call. Overall, it can be concluded that the changed mechanism for selection of project proposals under the Second Call has significant positive impact on the projected achievement of relevant Programme targets. Data shows that all OIs will reach their target values, if the projects proposed for financing under the Second Call are contracted and implemented as planned

Financial progress

The total budget of the projects contracted under the First call and to be contracted under Second calls for proposals stood at EUR 22 831 950,75 or 85,58% of the total funding under the Programme EUR 12 138 068,84 go to PA 1 and EUR 10 693 881,91 to PA 2. As of end-2018, EUR 4 794 793,63 were verified, almost evenly between PA 1 and PA 2. For details, please see Table 8.

Table 8. Programme financial progress

Calls for proposals	Priority axes	Allocated budget	Contracted budget in EUR	% contracted amount,	Verified amounts	Savings
First Call for proposals	PA 1	5 514 127,5	5 437 524,55	98,6	2 245 096,34	76 602,95
	PA 2	5 514 127,5	4 554 760,42	82,6	2 549 697,29	1 045 571,88
Second Call for proposals	PA 1	7 825 175,5	6 700 544,29[1]	85,6		1 124 631,21
	PA 2	7 825 175,5	6 139 121,49[2]	78,5		1 686 054,01
Total		26 678 606	22 745 745,95	85,58	4 794 793,63	3 932 860,05

Source: Programme Annual Reports and Evaluation report for the Second call for proposals

The figures show that there are savings at the amount of EUR 3 932 860,05from both calls for proposals.

EQ 6: Are there any identified possibilities and potential for improvements for the remaining implementation period of the programmes, as well as potentially identified key issues and findings which could contribute for the new programming period post 2020?

Conclusions: *Overall results of the Second Call for Proposals show that not all allocated funds will be fully absorbed. A transfer of funds from PA 1 to PA 2, combined with generated savings from financial resources allocated under the First Call, would be the most appropriate solution. Therefore, with regard to the remaining implementation period, an amendment of the Programme should be proposed, with reallocation of funds from PA 1 to PA 2.*

With regard to the next programming period, there is identified possibility for changing the Programme implementation methods and use of combination of strategic projects and grants schemes

[1] The amount in the table is the expected amount that will be contracted, based on the list of projects proposed for funding and approved by the JMC.
[2] The amount in the table is the expected amount that will be contracted, based on the list of projects proposed for funding and approved by the JMC.

for its implementation in order to reflect better the new challenges in the regional development sector. Potential for improvements are also recognised for the Programme indicator system. Main recommendations relate to the elaboration of methodological guidelines for the measurement and calculation of output indicators, the simplification of definitions and fine-tuning of the measurement methodology for result indicators

Current Programming period

The main identified possibility for improvement for the remaining implementation period of the Programme concerns the financing of projects selected under the Second Call for Proposals and full absorption of Programme funds. As it is presented in Table 8, the Programme has some savings from both calls for proposals. It represents 14,4 % from the total allocated budget.

The envisaged budget for the Second Call for proposals amount to 15 650 351,00 EUR, divided equally between the two priority axes. According to the Programme financial progress presented in Table 8, the projects approved for funding under PA 1 are at the amount of EUR 6 700 544.29. As there are no reserve projects in this PA is recommendable the non-absorbed amount (1 124 631, 21 EUR) to be transferred to PA 2 "Tourism". In this way, more beneficiaries will be able to implement their projects and envisaged Programme funds will be fully absorbed. The sum presents around 7% of the Second Call for proposals budget and 14% of the PA budget, so it is a small amount which will not disturb preliminary decided financial balance between the priority axes.

PA 2 has 45 project proposals with score 65 points or above. 16 of them are proposed for funding with total budget amounts to 6 139 121, 49 EUR. Here as in the other priority axis, an amount of 1 686 054, 01 EUR still have to be absorbed. In this priority axis, there is a list of 29 reserve projects that can benefit from the left available funding from both Priority axes and from the savings from the First Call for proposals (EUR 1 122 174,83)

Most of the indicators in the "Environment" PA have excellent achievement rate and the two indicators with low achievement rate will be attained with the projects approved for funding under the Second call for proposals. There is clear contribution for the achievement of SO 1.1. Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area and SO 1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area. The achievement of the Programmes' indicators with less than the envisaged funds is a sign of good efficiency rate in the Programme implementation. This means that re-allocation of the unabsorbed funds to PA 2 will not affect the envisaged results in PA 1 but actually will support better absorption of the Programme budget.

Taking into consideration all of the above, it is highly recommended that the Programme managing bodies initiate a procedure for amendment of the Programme. The reallocation of funds from PA 1 to PA 2 would allow the Programme to achieve all its objectives and guarantee overall cross-border impact.

Next Programming Period

Programme implementation approach

Cross border cooperation is substantial part of the regional development policies of beneficiaries countries. The Programmes have dual purposes – provision of support for development of cross border regions lagging behind in economic and social development as well as building cooperation and friendship relations between the citizens in these regions. In the recent years, the importance of these

relations is intensifying due to new developments in the economic and social sphere in all countries which requires mutual and coordinated policies and strategies.

In this regard, it is worth considering some new approaches for the cross border cooperation Programmes management and implementation which will reflect the new challenges on European and national level. A more strategic approach encompassing the combination of larger strategic projects and grant schemes could be applied in the coming programming period.

In this way real integrity in the implementation of the regional development initiatives will be achieved as the strategic projects will ensure closer link of the Programme results with the national priorities in the regional development sector. At the same time the application of strategic projects will support the development of initiatives satisfying the necessities of the bigger part of the cross border regions populations and thus increasing Programmes effectiveness and impact. As more focused approach for the funds absorption will be applied, also Programmes costs optimization will be achieved.

The interviewed beneficiaries were not very positive to the idea of inclusion of strategic projects as part of the CBC Programmes implementation. They believe that this approach will take the initiative from the citizens of the cross border regions and the established people to people network will be lost. The established partnerships under the Programmes are one of the strongest and most sustainable impacts that are achieved through the years. This element cannot be neglected in the future programming process as building partnership is main objective of the cross border cooperation support.

This is the reason the mixed method of the Programmes implementation covering strategic projects and grants schemes is preferred. If cooperation and combination of funding for strategic projects is ensured, the proposed implementation approach could be applied successfully in the period 2021 – 2027.

Programme Indicators

With regard to the next programming period, there is identified potential for improvement of the indicator system of the Programme. Some recommendations that could enhance the timely and precise reporting of Programme achievements are listed below:

- Elaboration of a manual or methodological guidelines for the measurement and calculation of output indicators – such a document would improve the beneficiaries' understanding of output indicators, as well as the accuracy and comparability of reporting. As such methodological guidelines with regard to result indicators already exist, it would be useful to elaborate a similar document for output indicators as well. The inclusion of "Attachment 1 – Fulfilment of Programme indicators and ranking of project proposals" in the Application package under the Second Call for Proposals, is a positive step, which could be further enhanced with more details and examples illustrating what each OI stands for and how it should be measured.
- Simplification of definitions – it is recommended that both result and output indicators, used in the next programming period, are not too broadly formulated, and therefore, broadly interpreted. Complex definitions leave room for interpretation and make indicators difficult to attribute to specific projects.
- Fine-tuning of the measurement methodology for result indicators – it would be useful to adjust the conceptual models used for measurement of result indicators, in order to reduce the influence of external factors affecting target groups in the cross-border area, and to capture the results achieved strictly by the Programme.

4.3 Task 3 Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the objectives of Interreg - IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey Programme 2014-2020

EQ 7: Are the initially identified needs under the Programmes as defined in the Programme` document still relevant?

Conclusions: *The core challenges and needs of the cross border region remain still relevant. Although there are some positive changes in the socio-economic situation on both sides of the border, the Programme objectives and priorities are still aligned to the needs. Hence, the needs identified through the SWOT and Situation Analysis, as stated in the Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme, are still relevant to the current socio-economic and environmental conditions in the area.*

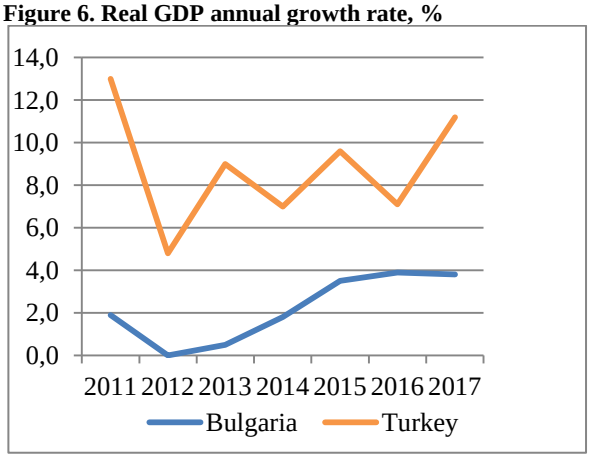
There is enough interest to the Programme funding opportunities, good achievement rates of the Programme indicators and there are no demands for major Programme amendments which proves Programme relevance and consistency.

The Programme possesses well-developed intervention logic and the identified needs during the programming process are reflected in the Programme specific objectives and priority axes. This is confirmed by the Programme ex-ante evaluation. The challenges of the cross border region were identified through analysis of the baseline economic situation combined with lessons learned from the programming period 2007 – 2013, online survey open to the cross-border region population and regional consultations with relevant stakeholders. Finally, the SWOT analysis was used to transform the needs into aggregated potentials, which defined the priorities, objectives and actions necessary for development of the border area.

Changes in the economic context

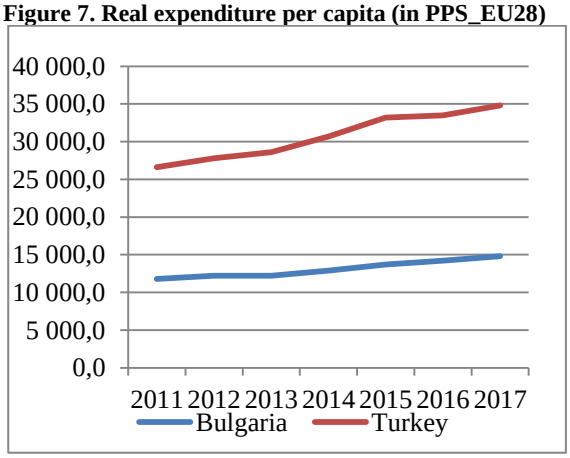
The economic situation in both countries improved after 2012 affected by the revival of the world economic growth. In 2015, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Bulgaria climbed by 3.5% and accelerated slightly in the next two years. The Turkish economy is going through more volatile periods, with economic growth of 8.5% in 2013, a slight decline in 2014 and 2015, followed by a sharp decline to 3,2 of GDP annual growth in 2016 due to the political situation in the country. In 2017, the economic situation significantly improves and GDP annual growth rates reaches 7,4%.

Figure 6. Real GDP annual growth rate, %



Source: Eurostat

Figure 7. Real expenditure per capita (in PPS_EU28)



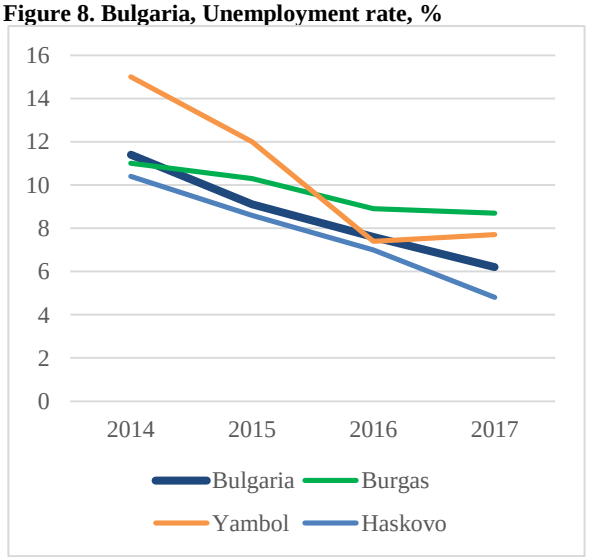
Source: Eurostat

The developments observed for the purchasing power parity of Bulgaria and Turkey show good progress and steady growth in the last years.

The labour market situation improved in both countries in line with the economic revival. The unemployment rate in Bulgaria dropped to 6.2% in 2017 from 12.3% in 2012. The unemployment in the Yambol district declined significantly from 15% in 2014 to 7,7% in 2017. In Haskovo district, the trend of unemployment rate dived below the average for Bulgaria in 2017 and reaches 4,8%.

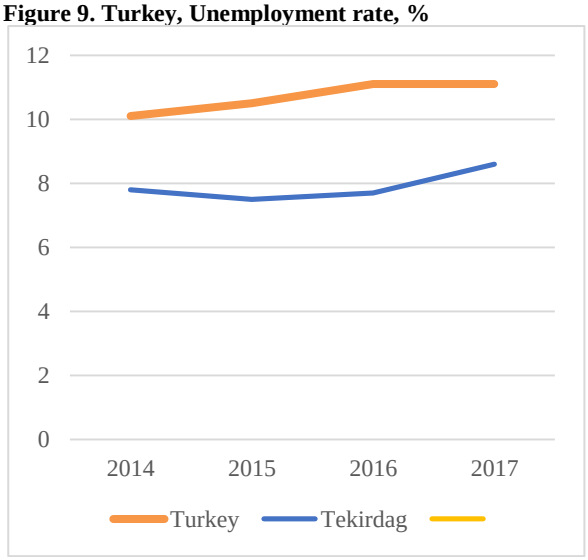
The unemployment in Turkey also remains not very high, keeping a tendency between 10% and 11,1% for the whole country in the period 2004 – 2017 with very slight increase. It has to be noted that, the cross border regions in Turkey have lower unemployment rate than the country average which is positive sign for the social-economic status of the region. The unemployment rate in Tekirdag Subregion [3] is 7,8% in 2014 and is slowly increased to 8,6% in 2017.

Figure 8. Bulgaria, Unemployment rate, %



Source: NSI

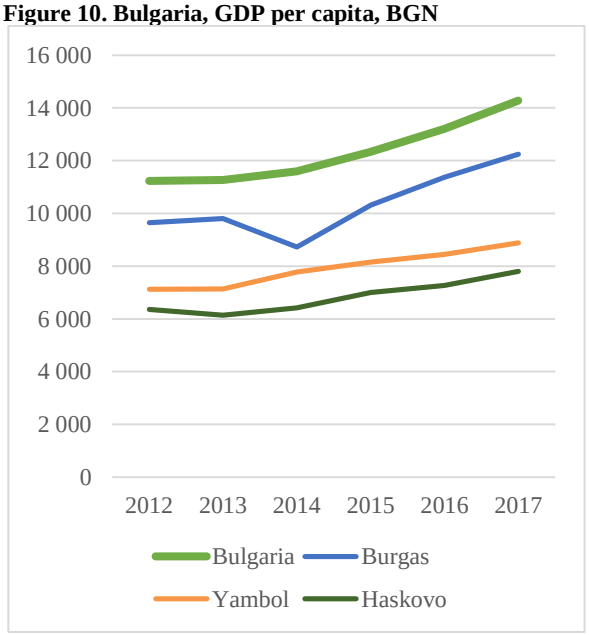
Figure 9. Turkey, Unemployment rate, %



Source: TurkStat

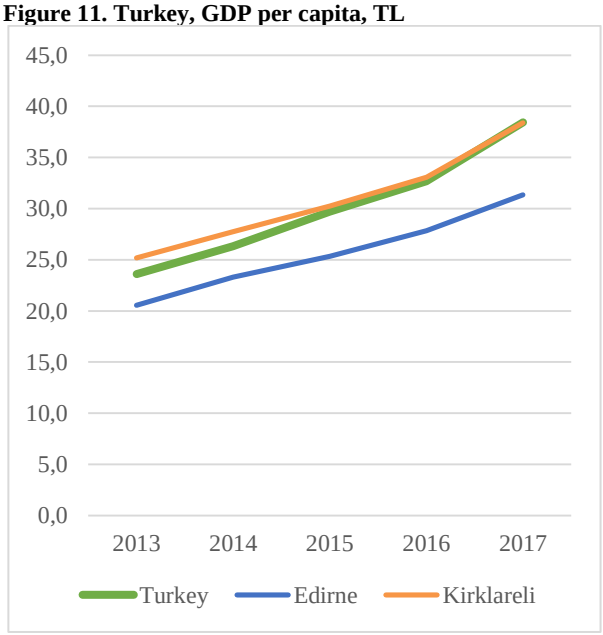
Despite the improvement in the economic situation in both countries, the economic development of the cross-border regions remains below the respective average values for Bulgaria. Only Burgas district reaches values close to the average GDP per capita for the country.

Figure 10. Bulgaria, GDP per capita, BGN



Source: NSI

Figure 11. Turkey, GDP per capita, TL



Source: Turkstat and own calculations

[3] Due to the lack of data, the unemployment rate is presented for NUTS II level, namely Tekirdag Subregion (TR 21) which includes the provinces Tekirdag (TR211), Edirne (TR212) and Kirklareli (TR213).

The situation in Turkey is slightly different as there is no such big difference between the average GDP per capita for the country and the two regions supported by the Programme. Actually the Province of Kirklareli maintains the same and higher values of GDP per capita as country averages.

The interest in the selected priority areas environment and tourism remains high in the cross-border region as reflected by the good number of high-quality project proposals under the two calls of the Programme. Both countries continue to face similar challenges concerning nature protection, efficient use of resources, and mitigation of climate change effects as identified at the programming stage. No new strategic documents or programmes addressing these issues were adopted in the countries since the Programme was launched.

Hence, the SWOT and Situation Analysis, as stated in the Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme, are still relevant to the current socio-economic and environmental conditions in the programme area. Respectively, the needs primarily identified and reflected in the priority axes of the Programme are also still relevant.

Also there are no substantial amendments affecting the internal consistency of the Programme, which proves the relevance of its priorities. The achieved number of the Programme indicators and the generated interest to the Programme opportunities are obvious sign that the Programme reflects the needs of the cross border citizens.

The topic of the relevance of the cross border region was discussed during the focus group meeting, the interviews with the JS staff and the on-site meetings with beneficiaries. The general evaluation of the participants and respondents was positive and the needs of the cross-border region were properly mirrored by the priority axes. There were some comments that it would be relevant to have a third programme priority axis supporting the investment in youth, education and skills. Such opportunity was discussed in the process of the Programme development but it was decided that in order better and stronger effects to be achieved, the Programme funding will be focused in the two main necessities of the cross border region. Increasing the number of priorities of a programme usually weakens the focus and leads to lower impact.

EQ 8: To what extent are the horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women) integrated in the Programme`s management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?

Conclusions: *The observance of the horizontal principles is fully integrated in the management system of the Programme (application and implementation stages) and in the activities of the selected projects.*

The horizontal principles, as well as examples of specific actions which support them, are duly described in Programme documents. During the stages of application and selection of projects, coherence with horizontal principles is ensured through their integration in the evaluation grid. During the implementation stage, the principles are adhered to and duly reported at both project and programme level.

The horizontal principles observed by the Programme are **Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and Equality between men and women**.

In the Programme document, there is a detailed description of each principle and a list of specific of proposed measures for addressing these principles. It is stated that the Programme authorities will ensure the observation of all these principles by applicants in the development and implementation of their projects. The Programme provides direct contribution to all the three horizontal principles.

The Programme applicants have the obligation to explain how their project complies and contributes to the promotion of the three horizontal principles during the development and the implementation phases of the project. This is included as a requirement in the GfA of both call for proposals with explanations what is expected by the beneficiaries. In the 2nd call for proposals the explanations are extended and improved to facilitate the understating of the horizontal principles by the applicants. The observance of the principles is directly included in the evaluation grid of the technical and quality evaluation stage of the project proposals. If the project proposal is not coherent with any of the observed horizontal principles, no points were assigned to the proposal. Maximum points are envisaged to be given to projects that clearly demonstrate coherence with all 3 horizontal principles. Indirectly, the principle of sustainable development is observed in the administrative compliance grid, where for investment projects applicants should present relevant documentation on whether the investment activities would be within territories with special status, and a positive Environmental Impact Assessment, or copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stating that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary.

During the implementation stage, at project level, the reporting of horizontal principles is obligatory in the Final Project Progress Report submitted by beneficiaries. In it, the Lead project partner provides information on how project activities and outputs contribute to the horizontal principles, in accordance with the provisions set in the Project Implementation Manual

The observance of the horizontal principles is part of the monitoring and controlling activities of the JS and controllers and they validate the data provided by the beneficiaries on horizontal themes.

At programme level, the application of the horizontal principles is monitored, assessed, and reported in the Annual Implementation Reports. In the AIR 2016, there are two sections dedicated to the application of horizontal principles

During the on-site visits with beneficiaries and the focus groups carried in Edirne, the evaluation team received the feedback that the beneficiaries fully understand the Programme horizontal principles and their observance is strictly followed during the projects implementation.

The three dimensions of the sustainable development (ecological, economic and social) are taken in consideration within the Programme elaboration and implementation as the two priority axes focus fully on this principle. Environmental authorities and partners from both countries have been involved in every stage of the Programme elaboration and implementation to be ensured that environment protection is strictly imbedded in all Programme activities. Their active role is guaranteed by their participation in the Programme JMC, the body which makes all strategic decisions concerning the overall management and implementation of the Programme. Representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Water of Republic of Bulgaria, Trakya Development Agency from Republic of Turkey and NGOs in the environmental sphere are included in the composition of the JMC, some of them as members with voting rights, and others as members in advisory capacity. These institutions have as their main priority to ensure compliance of the Programme activities with sustainable development and environmental protection principles. As members of the JMC, they are actively involved in the preparation, assessment and implementation of projects, and Programme communication activities. They monitor the sustainable development principle through the review and approval the GfA, then they approve the list of projects proposed for financing and the reserve list and during the projects implementation they follow the achieved results related to sustainable development by the programme beneficiaries.

As it was mentioned above both Programme priority axes have strong contribution to the sustainable development horizontal principle. The table below presents the Programme specific objectives which are strongly relevant to the sustainable development principle.

Table 9. Sustainable development horizontal principle and OIs

PRIORITY AXIS	Specific Objective	No	Output indicator	Horizontal principle
Priority Axis 1 "Environment"	1.1. Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area	OI 1.1.1	Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Sustainable development
		OI 1.1.2	Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Sustainable development
		OI 1.1.3	Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.1.4	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure (Persons)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
	1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area	OI 1.2.1	Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions	Sustainable development
		OI 1.2.2	Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	Sustainable development
		OI 1.2.3	Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.2.4	Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.2.5	Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
Priority Axis 2 "Sustainable Tourism"	2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical	OI 2.1.1	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites (Kilometers)	Sustainable development
		OI 2.1.2	Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths (Kilometers)	Sustainable development
		OI 2.1.3	Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites	Sustainable development
		OI 2.1.4	Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites	Sustainable development
	2.2. Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing	OI 2.2.1	Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations	Sustainable development
		OI 2.2.3	Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential	Sustainable development

The review of the projects from the First call for proposal shows that the project activities supported the sustainable development principles are in three main directions:

- investment activities representing supply of equipment and/or support of small scale interventions which represent actual supportive measures for the sustainable development of the cross border regions.
- joint activities for environment protection as strategies, plans, guidelines which support the common efforts and activities for ensuring the sustainable development of the cross border regions;
- capacity building activities and awareness raising campaigns which support raising the knowledge and experience for the sustainable development among the cross border regions population and changing behaviour for protecting natural areas and habitats.

Usually the funded projects include combination of three or two of the activities described above. This is clearly presented in all projects in Priority Axis 1 Environment , project 115 covers all of the activities listed above, projects 005, 006, 007, 084, 087, 149 and 153 have activities which include investment in sustainable development and capacity and awareness raising activities. Projects 162 and 165 have investment activities and joint activities for environmental protection. The soft projects 024, 047, 125 have activities supporting capacity building activities and joint activities for nature protection. The projects funded under priority axis 2 Sustainable Tourism, specific objective 2.1. „Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure“ 167, 139, 099 and 112 have direct effect over the sustainable development as they include investment activities focused on construction and renovation of

touristic sites. The other projects funded under specific objectives 2.2 „Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations" and 2.3 „Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives" include activities related to the sustainable tourism development and awareness raising promoting sustainable use touristic, historical and cultural resources.

In 2016, in compliance with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, and the respective Bulgarian national legislation, the MA prepared Annual monitoring report (SEA compatibility report) on the environmental effects of the Programme. The SEA compatibility report was coordinated and approved on 18 April 2017 by the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria (MOEW). The main conclusion of the report is that all specific measures and requirements to prevent, reduce and eliminate as much as possible the negative consequences following the Programmes implementation are duly fulfilled during the application phase, as well as during the projects' assessment process[4].

Due to the thematic scope of the Programme's strategy, the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and the principle of equality between men and women, set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, are not considered to be a primary focus of the Programme. However, specific actions were taken to promote these principles at both programme and project level. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women principles are very relevant to the cross-border region struggling with lagging behind economic development, negative demographic trends and brain drain occurrences.

These two horizontal principles are included in all projects implemented under the First call for proposals encompassing the projects management activities and the projects' genuine activities. The project management teams include almost equal number of men and women as well as people with constraints and disabilities. There are quite a few projects managed by women. Same can be stated for the implemented project activities. In all trainings, events, campaigns, joint activities equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women principles were applied. All constructed or renovated buildings have easy access for individuals with disabilities.

As a remark only can be point out that the contribution of the supported projects to gender equality and equal opportunities principles is not possible to measure since projects do not collect disaggregated data. Overall, the interviews conducted with beneficiaries, confirmed that women are actively involved in all project activities and participation is on equal terms.

The table below, presents the the Programme OIs that mirror these two horizontal principles.

Table 10. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination and equality between men and women horizontal principles and OIs

[4] Annual Monitoring Report on the compatibility of the environmental effects of the „INTERREG IPA CBC Bulgaria - Turkey" for the years 2014 – 2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) with the Strategic Environmental (SEA) Report

PRIORITY AXIS	Specific Objective	No	Output indicator	Horizontal principle
Priority Axis 1 "Environment"	1.1. Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border	OI 1.1.3	Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.1.4	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure (Persons)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
	1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the	OI 1.2.3	Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.2.4	Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction)	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 1.2.5	Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas	Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
Priority Axis 2 "Sustainable Tourism"	2.2. Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations	OI 2.2.2	Number of marketing and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 2.2.4	Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 2.2.5	Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
	2.3. Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives	OI 2.3.1	Number of networking events (Number)	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 2.3.2	Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources (Number)	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women
		OI 2.3.3	Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism (Number)	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women

EQ 9: To what extent is the Programme`s implementation contributing to the EU2020 strategy and to relevant macro-regional strategies like the Blue Growth Strategy, national and regional strategies?

Conclusions: *There is a high level of coherence between the goals of the Programme and the goals set in strategic documents at European, macro-regional, national and regional level. The activities carried out during the implementation of the Programme have high contribution towards the achievement of the priorities of the EU2020, Blue Growth Strategy, and a number of national and regional strategic documents. The degree of contribution is directly linked to the achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme. The synergies between the Programme and the strategic documents are potentially high as the areas of intervention often correspond exactly.*

The Programme is designed to enhance and expand the cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Turkey. Although it has relatively limited and people-focused nature it relates to several main EU strategic documents (Europe 2020) and macro-regional strategies (Blue Growth Strategy), and national and regional strategies. The coherence of the Programme with main strategic documents and the contribution of its priority axes to their respective goals could be found summarised in Annex 6.

The **Europe 2020 strategy** is the overarching strategy of the European Union for the 2010-2020 period. The strategy has broad, interrelated and mutually reinforcing goals, which form a reference framework for activities at EU and at national and regional levels. Europe 2020 defines three main priorities: Smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; Sustainable growth – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and Inclusive growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion. The Programme has a high level of coherence with EU 2020. PA1 Environment contributes strongly to the goal of climate change and energy while PA2 Sustainable Tourism relates mainly to the goals of employment and poverty and social exclusion.

The projects under SO 1.1 . Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area have contribution to the Europe 2020 target for Climate change and energy. Their main activities are focused on mitigation the negative effects over of the natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area. Projects 084 and 165 are the best examples for this contribution.

The projects supported under specific objectives 1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area also supporting the EU 2020 Climate change and energy target as they are building capacities and are raising the awareness for the importance of environment protection and the common efforts that have to be done to prevent and avoid the climate change negative consequences. It is expected also the approved for financing projects from the second call for proposals which include activities addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment also to contribute to the climate change objective.

The energy efficiency target is supported by the projects in SO 2.1 Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure where all constructed or renovated buildings and sites follow the energy efficiency principles.

All the projects funded under PA 2 Sustainable development supports indirectly the creation of employment and reduction of poverty in the cross border regions. The projects are focused on increasing the touristic attractiveness and touristic potential of Bulgaria – Turkey cross border regions which is expected to attract visitors, develop new businesses and boost economic development of the regions. Two of the projects selected as best practices are good example for this contribution. In project 107 unemployed people from the labour offices get the chance to be trained as touristic guides which improve their chances for finding a job. The implemented activities in project 103 lead to development of the sea tourism potential in region of Camlica and Ivaylovgrad and opening of restaurant, shops and guest house.

The **Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020** (TA2020) is a strategic document for territorial development aimed towards an inclusive, smart, and sustainable Europe of diverse regions. The agenda, which was agreed upon in May 2011, outlines several main territorial challenges for the European Union:

- Increased exposure to globalisation;
- Challenges of EU integration and the growing interdependences of regions;
- Demographic and social challenges, segregation of vulnerable groups;
- Climate change and environmental risks;
- Energy related challenges;
- Loss of biodiversity, vulnerable natural, landscape and cultural heritage.

Most of these challenges are relevant to the CBC Programme area and are comprehensively addressed in the Programme document. The challenges related to climate change, environmental risks, and loss of biodiversity are addressed by PA 1 Environment. The projects from SO 1.1 Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area have direct contribution to addressing these challenges. All of them include activities for mitigation the climate change negative effects through supply of necessary equipment, construction and/or reconstruction of protective equipment and mobilizing joint efforts of the cross border population for reducing the environmental risks. Projects funded under SO 1.2 Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area address the challenges related to loss of biodiversity and vulnerable natural heritage. They have

initiatives related to protection of the nature, waters and natural habitats, waste separation, cleaning of protected areas, development of systems for monitoring environmental changes. But their key contribution is building the knowledge of the local population and promotion and popularisation of the importance of environmental protection measures and preservation of natural heritage.

The projects under PA 2 Sustainable Tourism address most strongly the challenges related to loss of cultural heritage. The projects under this priority axis have direct contribution for the protection of the cultural and historical heritage in the cross border regions as they encompass activities for renovation of cultural and historical sites, for revealing forgotten traditions and places, for promoting exchange of cultural and artistic techniques, for popularising traditions and cultural events.

All Programme activities face the demographic and social challenges as these are common issues for all cross border areas. The funded Programme activities strive to decrease the regional disparities, to strengthen the economic development, to create employment and to provide support to all vulnerable groups. These challenges are also covered by the horizontal principles of the Programme.

Blue Growth Strategy is a long term strategy adopted by the European Commission in 2012 with main focus to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole. The objective of the Blue Growth strategy is to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and employment opportunities in Europe's maritime economy

The strategy consists of three components:

1. Develop sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth, such as:

- aquaculture (Fisheries website)
- coastal tourism
- marine biotechnology
- ocean energy
- seabed mining

2. Essential components to provide knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy

- marine knowledge to improve access to information about the sea;
- maritime spatial planning to ensure an efficient and sustainable management of activities at sea;
- integrated maritime surveillance to give authorities a better picture of what is happening at sea.

3. Sea basin strategies to ensure tailor-made measures and to foster cooperation between countries

- Adriatic and Ionian Seas
- Arctic Ocean
- Atlantic Ocean
- Baltic Sea
- Black Sea
- Mediterranean Sea
- North Sea

Both PA of the Programme has strong contribution to actions supported by the strategy. The Programme areas covers parts of the Black sea area and supports partnership activities for preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction). PA 2 “Sustainable tourism” supports the

development of coastal and maritime tourism. It is expected that some of the projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals will have direct contribution to the Strategy as the have activities addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment.

The Partnership Agreement between Bulgaria and the EU sets the frames of the assistance to be received from the EU structural and investment funds in the period 2014-2020. The Partnership agreement sets four priorities for the implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy: Education, employment, social inclusion and healthcare for inclusive growth, Scientific research, innovation and investment for smart growth, Connectivity and green economy for sustainable growth, and Good governance and access to quality administrative services. Also it exclusively states that the preferred priority areas for cooperation in the Programme between Bulgaria and the Turkey are in the field of environmental protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage. Consequently, the Programme fully addresses these priority areas and provides support in preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area, improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives and increasing the touristic attractiveness and potential of the cross-border area.

Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020 for Bulgaria. The strategy aims to outline a coherent framework for identification the strategic priorities for action to reduce the risk of disasters and to support the priorities measures implementation at national, district, municipal and field level. The strategy will also help identify and prioritize specific areas for cross - border and regional cooperation and will ensure solving problems in a coordinated way. The strategy has 4 main priorities:

1. Develop a sustainable national policy and secure a robust legal and institutional framework to reduce the risk of disasters.
2. Identifying, assessing and monitoring the risks of disasters. Expand and maintain effective national forecasting systems, monitoring, early warning and disaster reporting.
3. Building a Disaster Response Culture at All Levels management and society through the use of experience, learning, scientific research and innovation
4. Reducing significant risk factors and increasing risk preparedness for effective response to disasters at all levels of management

PA 1 Environment is relevant to the last three priorities of the strategy. Its two specific objectives are focused on preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area and Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area. The most valuable contribution is actually the established partnership and common activities between the borders which is main objective of the Strategy.

The three NUTS III regions in Bulgaria that are covered by the Programme have regional strategic documents: Regional Development Strategy of Burgas district 2014 – 2020, Regional Development Strategy of Yambol district 2014 – 2020 and Regional Development Strategy of Haskovo district 2014 – 2020. In all of them the sustainable tourism development and the adaptation to the climate changes and protection of environment are defined as leading priorities. The CBC Programme supports exactly the same activities and thus contributes for the achievement of the objectives set in the three Strategies. In addition, fact, the three strategies for regional development have explicitly included a goal for international and European territorial cooperation.

The **Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey** (the Strategy Paper) sets out the priorities for EU financial assistance for the period 2014-20 to support Turkey on its path to accession. It uses the political priorities set out in the enlargement policy framework to identify key areas where financial assistance is

most needed and most useful in helping Turkey meet the accession criteria. The Strategy paper sets the two main pillar for the pre-accession assistance in the period 2014 – 2020: "Democracy and rule of law" and "Competitiveness and growth". These two main pillar are further developed in seven priority sectors which will be supported by IPA II and are presented below:

1. Democracy and Governance
2. Rule of Law and Fundamental rights
3. Environment, climate action and energy
4. Transport
5. Competitiveness and innovation, agriculture and rural development
6. Education, Employment and Social Policies
7. Territorial and Regional Cooperation

The cross-border Programme contributes directly to the territorial and regional cooperation priority. In the ISP is stated that the "Interreg IPA CBC programme between Bulgaria and Turkey has turned into a popular funding instrument…..[5]". This means that the Programme succeed to provide real contribution for the positive development of the cross border region and it has achieved one of his main objectives to create relations and partnership between the people from both sides of the border.

The Programme also provides strong contribution to the Environment, and climate action and energy sector. Turkey is located in one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change impacts, with risks to agricultural production, water supply, natural resources, ecosystems, public health, and consequent damage to livelihoods. Therefore the projects funded under PA 1 Environment address these challenges through the supported activities in preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters and improving the capacity for sustainable use and management of common natural resources.

Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 - 2023 presents a vision of "Thrace developing with its high added value production whilst preserving its natural and cultural values; where collaboration and innovation prevails, and where the standard of life and wellbeing is at its highest." To realize this vision, twenty-one priorities and ninety-four policies under these priorities are suggested in terms of "People and Society," "Lifestyle and Environment" and "Production and Economy". PA 1 Environment contributes to the implementation of Initiative 10 related to protection of floods and earthquakes and PA 2 Sustainable Tourism supports Initiative 18 focused on development the tourism in Trakya region.

[5] Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey for the period 2014 - 2020

4.4 Task 4 Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy of the Interreg- IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey Programme

EQ 10: Do the communication activities carried out by the Programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication strategy of the Programme? If not, which changes are needed?

Conclusions: *The Programme communication activities encompass wide range of communication tools ranged from online tools, publications, events, multimedia and media tools. As a whole, the activities are very supportive to the achievement of the Communication strategy objectives. The achieved high values of the Communication Strategy indicators proves that the communication activities are well implemented and expected results are achieved. Each objective is related to number of activities, which have relevant indicator for measuring the achievement of the envisaged results. Although it is recommendable for the next programming period, the objectives of the Communication Strategy to be reduced as number and presented in more consolidated way and the intervention logic to be presented more evidently.*

As a majority of Communication Strategy indicators have significantly overachieved values, more detailed analysis and planning is necessary in setting the indicators target values for the next programming period. They should reflect realistically the interest generated by the Programme activities and opportunities.

Coherence with the communication activities of the NA has to be strengthened and all communication activities to be included in the Programme Communication strategy and reported accordingly.

Communication and promotion activities of Programme have two main purposes to highlight the role of the EU and to ensure that assistance from the Funds is transparent and to create the premises for a high absorption capacity in the eligible area of the Programme by ensuring that all relevant information reaches the beneficiaries. They are structured in Programme Communication Strategy for the period 2014 – 2020, adopted by the JMC in October 2015.

The Communication strategy has 5 general objectives and 11 specific objectives. This is quite high number of objectives and some of the specific objectives are more similar to activities then to objectives. For the next programming period it is recommendable to reduce and consolidate the objectives of the Programme Communication strategy.

Except this small weakness, the Communication strategy is well developed document with defined target groups, clear communication messages and good mix of communication tools. Actions related to each communication tool with responsible bodies for their implementation are described in details. The Communication strategy also has number of indicators allowing to measure the achievements the communication activities and the contribution to the Strategy objectives. There is only target values for the indicators and baseline values are not presented. Relation between the specific objective, communication measures and indicators is established and is presented in Table 25 and 26 in Annex 7. The achievement of each specific objective is ensured by several communication measures.

The implementation of the Communication Strategy is ensured through funds of PA 3 Technical Assistance and the indicative amount envisaged for Programme communication activities is EUR 314 956. There is only one amendment of the Communication Strategy. The implementation of the Programme communication Strategy is going very well and this is shown by the achieved values of the strategy indicators. Table 27 in Annex 7 shows the achieved values of the Strategy indicators. There are 19 indicators and almost all of them (14 indicators) have overachieved values. Only 5 indicators are not

achieved. Two of them are related to communication activities for finalised projects and the activities can be implemented after the closure of all project under the First Call for proposals, the other three have reached over 60% achievement rate.

It can be concluded that the communication activities and the achieved values of the indicators lead to the achievement of the Communication Strategy General and Specific objectives. Small note can be done only for the target value of the indicators. For the next programming period it is advisable to be made more precise planning of the indicators so they to be in accordance with realistic implementation of the Programme activities and the interest generated by the Programme funding opportunities.

The NA has a special website dedicated to the Programme and they also implement additional communication activities on the other side of the border. It is good to include and report these communication activities as part of the Programme Communication Strategy. This approach will ensure more comprehensive promotion and presentation of the Programme.

EQ 11: Are the communication activities adequately tailored to target audience? Have the Programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?

Conclusions: *The communication activities reflect the necessities of the target groups. Specific communication measures are implemented for each target group in accordance with its needs and characteristics. The beneficiaries that were interviewed by the evaluation team assessed positively the communication measures offered by the Programme.*

The Programme Communication Strategy defines 7 main target groups: potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, Programme stakeholders, national, regional and local media, general public, Programme staff, support groups. The relation between the target groups and communication activities is presented in the Communication Strategy. Specific communication measures are envisaged for each target group in accordance with its needs and characteristics.

The main target group of the Communication strategy of the Programme consists of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. Accordingly, most of the communication activities that were carried out during the implementation of the Programme were customized according to their needs. The Programme website is user friendly and contains all necessary information organised in specific sections so it is easers for the applicants and the beneficiaries to find the necessary information. The website is trilingual and the main information can be find in English, Bulgarian and Turkish. Links to main social media (Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin), websites of MA and NA are presented. Only link to the Programme YouTube channel is missing. Also is missing link to the website and communication activities carried out by the NA in Turkey. Information for info days, partnership forums and trainings are regularly published and presentations from these events in Bulgarian and Turkish language are available for applicants and beneficiaries. The events enjoyed high interest from potential beneficiaries. Participants in the focus group and in the meetings from the on-site visits valued the information campaign as very useful and supporting. The local events for the European Cooperation Day, the project Fact Sheets and the Programme promo movies also present best practices as well as attract potential beneficiaries.

The stakeholders and the general public are other important Programme target group. They are benefitting from almost all communication tools. But main information channel for them is the Programme website. Also information in newspapers and on the radio is very strong communication tool for this target groups. The younger audience is reached mainly through the social media as Facebook and YouTube.

Media is another main Programme target group as they are not only users of the information but also they are a channel for further promotion and communication of the Programme opportunities and achieved results. They are mainly contacted by press release and press conferences. National media is

contacted for all important Programme events. Regional and local media report not only main Programme events but also activities and happenings delivered by the different subsidy contracts. The beneficiaries shared during the interviews that the media are the best communication tool for presenting the project results and outputs.

The Programme staff is also a target group of the communication measures. They are main users of the Programme website, social media, trainings for their capacities strengthening and the Management Information System.

EQ 12: Which communication tools were the most effective in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme? Which communication tools have been efficient for attracting potential beneficiaries and supporting beneficiaries? Which communication tools could be changed/ developed?

Conclusions: *The combination of online communication tools and mainstream media was very successful in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme. The official Programme website was especially effective, as it was the most popular source of information about the Programme, its objectives, financed domains, and eligibility conditions.*

In terms of attracting potential beneficiaries, the info days were the most effective communication tool. This is evident from the high attendance rates, the generally positive feedback from participants, and the record number of submitted project proposals under the First Call.

The social media tools also appear to be quite popular among the target groups of the Programme, and it is recommended that these are further developed and enhanced.

Programme main communication tools are presented in the Programme Communication Strategy and are the following:

- Online tools including Programme website, Partners' search facility and social media;
- Info tools including brochures and fact sheets;
- Events covering all types of Programme events as Info days, Partnerships forums, trainings for beneficiaries, trainings for Programme staff and European Cooperation Day events;
- Multimedia tools counting photographs, events and Programme promo movies;
- Mass media tools – press releases, press conferences, press announcements and relations with local, regional and national media;
- Programme promotional materials as banners, flags, folders, binders, maps, stickers, bags, calendars, notebooks, pens, organizers, umbrellas, mugs, shirts etc.

The analysis of the Communication Strategy indicators shows that the most effective communication tools are the online tools followed by the events. During the interviews the beneficiaries shared that they are mainly searching information through the Programme website. For them this is the most effective communication tool followed by the information days, partnership forums and trainings for beneficiaries.

Programme website is the main source of information and main communication tool for the Programme. It was completely redesigned in 2015. It generated average of 27 348 number of visits in the period 2014 – middle of 2018. The numbers of visits is increased during launch of calls for proposals, the average number of visits during 2015 and 2018 when the First and Second calls for proposals are published goes to 29 755. The feedback from the participants in the Information days shows that they mainly receive information for the Programme events and initiative from the Programme website

(average 61 % of the respondents in the Information days for the Second call for proposals) and the Programme social media (25% of the respondents in the Information days for the Second call for proposals).

The other online tools Facebook and Twitter pages were created in August 2015 and the Programme Facebook page very quickly become important source of information for the Programme and the projects. It contains information not only for main Programme events, but also promotes results and achievements of the subsidy contracts and European initiatives related to the territorial cooperation.

The information campaigns (information days and partnership forums) for both calls for proposals attracted total of 1020 participants almost evenly distributed between the two campaigns. Average of 83% of the respondents-participants in the Information days for the Second Call for proposals claimed that the events were well promoted and average of 85% said that the events were excellent. The beneficiaries also repeatedly highlighted the usefulness of the Partnership forum not only as place for meeting potential partner but as very good opportunity for sharing ideas, best practices and common challenges.

The events for the European Cooperation Day also are widely visited by a total of 400 participants in the period 2014 - 2017, each year exceeding the envisage number of participants. Similar situation is observed in the events for training projects beneficiaries which generated high interest. The feedback received from the participants in these trainings is very positive as average 97% of them claimed that they are satisfied with the information that they have received regarding the projects implementation.

It can be concluded that the interest significantly exceeded what was planned showing that the communication tools were properly selected. This was confirmed by the interviewed beneficiaries who stated that all necessary information for the Programme is available and "….if someone is interested in the Programme opportunities, the information is easily accessible".

The big number of projects proposals (325 for both calls for proposals) and the sufficient number of quality projects is another proof for the proper and effective impact of the Programme communication tools.

The Mass media tools are also widely used to promote the Programme opportunities. The launch of the calls for proposals are advertised in national newspapers (12) and electronic media (more than 140). Also each event for the European Cooperation Day is presented to the media.

EQ 13: Are the methods used for dissemination of projects and programme results effective? How efficiently are Programme results capitalized?

Conclusions: *The dissemination of project and programme results employs diverse methods that ensures that the coverage is significant. The effectiveness of the methods could be improved if several small changes are implemented. Those relate to slight re-arrangement of the website of the Programme to put greater emphasis on the contracted projects and more active usage of the websites of the projects to increase the sharing of project publications.*

Several methods are used for dissemination of projects results. On the Programme website there is special sections "Projects funded" where the after the completion of the projects information is presented for the project partners, project main objectives, activities and results. Also all project outputs as analysis, reports, elaborated documents, presentations, photographs, videos are uploaded.

Also the Programme urge the project beneficiaries to participate in the REGIOSTARS awards each year. This is as an initiative of the European Commission which awards those EU-funded projects, which

demonstrate excellence and new approaches in regional development. There were 3 projects finalists in 2017 which is very good opportunity to disseminate the projects results also on wider European level.

The European Cooperation Day is an initiative which promotes the Programme results and the benefits of the cross border cooperation. As it was discussed above it attracts high number of participants and is and effective tool for the capitalization of the Programme results.

Effective methods for dissemination of project are the Programme promo videos with best practices and the events movies. The Programme YouTube channel, created in October 2016 also is very modern and open to the public tool for presentation of the Programme results. It ensures quick and easy channel for connection with the general public and also presents the information in short, attractive and understandable way.

However, there is a great potential for improvement in the effective dissemination of project information and program results. The communication with the beneficiaries could be augmenting by putting a greater focus on the proper and timely presentation of the outcomes of the contracted projects to the general public. Currently, the sites developed under the projects are generally not very popular. They represent a virtually unused opportunity to present the results of the Program's implementation. Sharing of project publications and project activities could be intensified, including on the sites of beneficiary municipalities. This would boost the presence of the Programme in additional platforms.

The effectiveness of the dissemination of the project results could be improved further if the information on the projects contracted under the Programme is moved up on the main page of the website (currently it is at the bottom) or it is transformed in a dedicated section on the main ribbon. Then this information will be among the first thing a visitor would see when on the webpage of the Programme.

Organizing official closing events (for a call and/or the Programme) where all beneficiaries took part and present the main outcomes of their projects would provide additional support for the dissemination of projects and programme results and increase the visibility of the Programme among the general public.

5. Recommendation table

Evaluation Question	Conclusions	Recommendations	Timing
EQ 1: Is the approach used for projects generation and selection sufficiently oriented to the Programme objectives, results and outputs? (Programme documents, actors involved)?	The approach used for project generation is to a great extent oriented towards the Programme objectives, results and outputs. The application package under the First Call for Proposals was well elaborated, and the GA were exhaustive in content. Full coherence with Programme objectives was ensured through the eligibility criteria and the cooperation criteria that project partners need to comply with. In terms of content, some weaknesses identified in the GA, relate to the lack of detailed information on output indicators and their measurement is observed but it should be noted that during First call negotiation procedure, each of the Output indicators was discussed with the beneficiaries and details were provided on how the beneficiaries shall report the achievement of the respective indicator. All these deficiencies were addressed accordingly in the documentation of the Second Call for Proposals. Some issues with the criteria in the project evaluation grid and the complaint procedure under the First call were identified but those were generally resolved in the application package of the Second call. The Programme has some more specifics elements in comparison with the other cross-border programmes, managed by Bulgaria as language barrier, very different administrative procedures from both side of the border, visa regime etc. which hampers the beneficiaries	Some of the questions in the evaluation grid could be altered to avoid ambiguity in interpretation, duplication with other questions in the grid or in the administrative compliance check, and to improve clarity. Further efforts are necessary for strengthening and improving Programme applicants capacities and knowledge for quality projects elaboration.	Next programming period

	the projects application process and the implementation process.		
EQ 2: Are the reporting and monitoring process and tools for project implementation adequate to ensure proper follow-up of Programme achievements? Is the monitoring system sufficiently reliable to report the proper achievement of the Output indicators? (Programme documents and online monitoring tools, JS)?	The reporting and monitoring processes are structured in such a way as to ensure timely and realistic follow-up of Programme achievements. A smooth reporting process is underpinned by the detailed structure of progress reports and the relatively short deadlines for submitting them. In this way, the JS has high capability of capturing at an early stage various issues concerning achievement of planned project results. However, there are some weaknesses identified with regard to reporting the achievement of Output indicators, which is done just once, after completion of the project. If the achievement of an indicator is at risk, especially with regard to soft measures projects with shorter duration, timely corrective actions could be challenging. Regarding the online monitoring tools (Beneficiary Portal), beneficiaries, expressed high satisfaction.	It is recommended that the Programme bodies consider the introduction of "mid-term" reporting of OIs for projects with shorter duration. In the Monitoring section of PPRs, the values of OIs could be reported, when some progress towards the target is made, and not only in the FPPR. It is recommended that the Programme bodies explore some possibilities of direct electronic reporting in the Beneficiary Portal.	Next programming period
EQ 3: Are the different supportive measures offered to beneficiaries regarding project implementation, monitoring and follow-up adequate to ensure the quality of project results? (qualitative and thematic follow-up, Programme documents and online monitoring tools, JS support)?	Overall, it can be concluded that the different supportive measures offered to beneficiaries regarding project implementation have been adequate, timely and complementary. The content of all Programme manuals, guideline documents, and training materials reflect to a significant extent the most frequently asked questions and issues raised by beneficiaries. In addition, interviewed beneficiaries expressed very high satisfaction with the direct, ad-hoc support and assistance provided by the JS at different stages of project implementation.	No recommendation is issued	
EQ 4: To which extent does the established monitoring system concerning reporting of indicators provide timely and precise review	The Programme has a well elaborated indicator system, which allows provision of information for the achievement of results and outputs. Most indicators are measurable and time bound, with achievable target values for year 2023. Identified potential for	Methodological guidelines on the measurement and calculation of the output indicators should be devised and included in the application package and	Next programming period

of the implementation of the Programme? Do the Programme indicators allow for the provision of a complete and accurate picture of the achievements of the Programme?	improvement of the indicator system concerns mainly consistency of measurement units used, clear formulation, and simplification of definitions. In addition, the lack of a manual or methodological guidelines for measurement and calculation of output indicators puts at risk beneficiaries' understanding of indicators, as well as the accuracy and comparability of reporting. Most of the result indicators are based on non-compulsory surveys among stakeholders and the samples of the surveys are not unified. The measurement unit, base and target value could be streamlined. The value of the result indicators could be influenced by general economic and social factors and not only by activities and outputs financed by the Programme.	the Project implementation manual. This will support the consistent and comparable reporting of the values of the indicators among projects and in time. With regard to result indicators, it is recommended that the conceptual models used for their measurement are fine-tuned, and that measurement units are streamlined, to ensure consistency in reporting.	
EQ 5: What is the programmes progress towards achievement of the relevant programmes targets (output and result indictors)? How is the Interreg-IPA CBC Programme progressing towards its goal and objectives in view of the used means and resources?	The Programme's progress toward achievement of the targets of the output and result indicators is quite good, based on data as of end-2018.The majority of the OIs under PA1 have good achievement progress and all of them except two are expected to be overachieved with the completion of the projects from the First Call for proposal. The two indicators which are lagging behind will be achieved with projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals. The OIs in the PA 2 also have satisfactory rates of achievement. Six of the OIs overachieved their values with the projects from the First call for proposals and two of them have reached achievement rates of over 60%. Only 4 of the OIs (namely the ones in SO 2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure) have low achieved values. But their target values will be achieved with the projects proposed for financing under the Second call for proposals.	No recommendation is issued	

	There are 2 RIs in PA 1, one is fully achieved and the other is 94% achieved as of end of 2018. One RI under PA2 is significantly overachieved while the targets of the remaining two are achieved over 85%. The changed mechanism for selection of project proposals under the Second call has significant positive impact on the projected achievement of the OI of the Programme. All OIs below target will be achieved if the projects proposed for contracting in the Second call are implemented as planned. At the same time, the savings from the First and Second Calls for proposals would allow contracting some of the projects in the Reserve list of the Second call for proposals and this will contribute to the OIs values, especially in PA 2. The total budget of the projects contracted under the First call and the expected budget of the project proposals approved for financing under the Second calls for proposals stood at EUR 22 745 745,95 or approximately 85 %,58% of the total funding under the Programme, EUR 12 138 068,84 go to PA 1 and EUR 10 607 677,11 to PA 2.		
EQ 6: Are there any identified possibilities and potential for improvements for the remaining implementation period of the programmes, as well as potentially identified key issues and findings which could contribute for the new programming period post 2020?	Overall results of the Second Call for Proposals show that not all allocated funds will be fully absorbed.	A transfer of funds from PA 1 to PA 2, combined with generated savings from financial resources allocated under the First Call, would be the most appropriate solution.	This programming period
	With regard to the next programming period, there is identified possibility for changing the Programme implementation methods and use of combination of strategic projects and grants schemes for its implementation in order to reflect better the new challenges in the	Regarding the next programming period, there is identified potential for improvement of the indicator system. The main recommendations are	Next programming period

	regional development sector. Potential for improvements are also recognised for the Programme indicator system. Main recommendations relate to the elaboration of methodological guidelines for the measurement and calculation of output indicators, the simplification of definitions and fine-tuning of the measurement methodology for result indicators	outlined above, under EQ 4. Regarding project generation in the upcoming programming period, a mixed approach, combining larger strategic projects and grant schemes, could be considered.	
EQ 7: Are the initially identified needs under the Programmes as defined in the Programme` document still relevant?	Although the socio-economic situation on both sides of the border has improved since the start of the programme implementation, the development of the BG-TR cross-border region is still lagging behind other parts of the two countries, and the core challenges remain the same. Hence, the needs identified through the SWOT and Situation Analysis, as stated in the Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme, are still relevant to the current socio-economic and environmental conditions in the area.	No recommendation is issued	
EQ 8: To what extent are the horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women) integrated in the Programmes` management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?	The observance of the horizontal principles is fully integrated in the management system of the Programme (application and implementation stages) and in the activities of the selected projects. Project proposals explicitly describe how the principles would be observed and the final project progress reports outline the practical implementation of the principles. Programme beneficiaries fully understand the Programme horizontal principles.	No recommendation is issued	
EQ 9: To what extent is the Programmes` implementation contributing to the EU2020 strategy and to relevant macro-regional strategies like the Blue Growth Strategy, national and	There is a high level of coherence between the goals of the Programme and the goals set in strategic documents at European, macro-regional, national and regional level. The activities carried out during the implementation of the Programme have high contribution towards the achievement of the priorities of the EU2020, Blue Growth Strategy, and a number of national and regional strategic	No recommendation is issued	

regional strategies?	documents. The degree of contribution is directly linked to the achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme. The synergies between the Programme and the strategic documents are potentially high as the areas of intervention often correspond exactly.		
EQ 10: Do the communication activities carried out by the Programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication strategy of the Programme? If not, which changes are needed?	The communication activities carried out by the Programme authorities ranged from regular publications on the website of the Programme, the social media accounts, information days, partner search forums, training seminars for beneficiaries and staff, up-to-date instructions, guidelines, manuals, adherence to requirements for visibility and dissemination of results for contracted projects, and annual implementation reports and the corresponding Citizens Summaries. The relevance of the activities to the general and specific objectives of the Communication strategy is generally good.	It is recommendable for the next programming period, the objectives of the Communication Strategy to be reduced as number and presented in more consolidated way and the intervention logic to be presented more evidently. As a big number of Communication Strategy indicators have significantly overachieved values, more detailed analysis and planning is necessary in setting the indicators target values. They should reflect realistically the interest generated by the Programme activities and opportunities. Coherence with the communication activities of the NA has to be strengthened and all communication activities to be included in the Programme Communication strategy and reported accordingly.	Next programming period
EQ 11: Are the communication activities adequately tailored to target audience? Have the Programme communication measures reached the relevant	The communication activities under the two calls were sufficiently tailored to the needs of the target groups of potential and actual beneficiaries and the general public. The information they provided to the groups and the means that information was delivered was adequately customized. The beneficiaries that were interviewed by	No recommendation is issued	

target groups efficiently?	the evaluation team assessed positively the communication measures offered by the Programme.		
EQ 12: Which communication tools were the most effective in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme? Which communication tools have been efficient for attracting potential beneficiaries and supporting beneficiaries? Which communication tools could be changed/ developed?	The combination of online communication tools and mainstream media was very successful in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme. The official Programme website was especially effective, as it was the most popular source of information about the Programme. In terms of attracting potential beneficiaries, the info days were the most effective communication tool. This is evident from the high attendance rates, the generally positive feedback from participants, and the record number of submitted project proposals under the First Call. The social media tools also appear to be quite popular among the target groups of the Programme.	It is recommended that the good practices established so far regarding the use of social media are further developed and enhanced. In this way, the online presence and visibility of the Programme on Youtube, Facebook and Twitter will be optimized.	This and Next programming period
EQ 13: Are the methods used for dissemination of projects and programme results effective? How efficiently are Programme results capitalized?	Overall, the methods envisaged for dissemination and capitalization of projects' and Programme results, are very adequate and effective. A very good, currently applied dissemination method, is the presentation of best practices at appropriate events such as European Cooperation Day celebrations, exhibitions, and fairs.	The website of the Programme could be re-arranged to put greater emphasis on the contracted projects. The websites of the projects could be used more actively to increase the sharing of project publications.	This and Next programming period

Annex 1: List of Reviewed documents

1 Territorial Agenda of the European Union – 2020

2 Partnership agreements on the European structural and investment funds with Bulgaria 2014 – 2020

3 National Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2012-2022, Sofia, 2012

4 Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014-2020 of Bulgaria

5 Regional Development Strategies 2014 – 2020 for the cross border regions Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo

6 Indicative strategy paper for Turkey (2014-2020)

7 Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 – 2023

8 INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

9 Communication Strategy of the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

10 Ex-ante evaluation report of the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

11 Description of the functions and procedures in place for the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority for the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

12 1INTERREG-IPA CBC Programmes Manual

13 Annual Implementation Reports 2014-2015, 2016 and 2017 of the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

14 First Call for Proposals packages for INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

15 Second Call for Proposals packages for INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

16 Audit Authority reports for INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Turkey

17 Project implementation Manual under the First Call for proposals, including annexes

18 Guidelines for First Level Control

19 Instructions for using the Beneficiaries portal

20 Detailed description of uploading of Project Progress Report with the use of Beneficiary portal

21 Subsidy contracts under the First Call for Proposals

22 Progress reports of grant contracts under the 1st Call for Proposals

23 Evaluation report of the Second Call for Proposals

Annex 2: List of carried out meetings

Person	Organisation	Date
Vania Hristova	Communication expert, Interreg- IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey (Telephone interview)	05 Oct 2018
Ivan Delchev	Joint Secretariat - JS main office, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey	19 Nov 2018
Arzu Çetinkaya	Joint Secretariat - JS branch office, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey	21 Nov 2018
Ceyda Peközer	Joint Secretariat - JS branch office, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey	21 Nov 2018
Funda Sevda Uyar	Joint Secretariat - JS branch office, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey	21 Nov 2018
Sebnem Sözer	National Authority, Ministry for EU Affairs, Financial Cooperation Directorate, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey (Skype call)	28 Nov 2018
Semiha Öztürk	National Authority, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Directorate for EU Affairs, Interreg- IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey (Skype call)	28 Nov 2018
Kubilay Sitrava	National Authority, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Directorate for EU Affairs, Interreg- IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey (Skype call)	28 Nov 2018
Övünç Güneş	National Authority, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Directorate for EU Affairs, Interreg- IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey (Skype call)	28 Nov 2018
Evdokia Dimitrova	Managing Authority, Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works	05 Feb 2019
Maya Lashova	Managing Authority, Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works	05 Feb 2019
Milen Obretenov	Managing Authority, Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works	05 Feb 2019
Dimana Sadonkova	Managing Authority, Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works	05 Feb 2019

Annex 3: On–site visits

Project code	Project title	Effectiveness	Impact	Efficiency	Innovative	Transfer of knowledge	Partnership	Sustainability	Project total	Status	Priority axes	Specific objective	Type of project	Lead partner	Partner 2	Duration, months
CB005.1.11.165	Prevention and minimization of the Risks for the Environment and Vision for iNnovative Tools /PREVENT/	■	■	■		■	■	■	581 483	Completed	Environment	1.1 Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area	Investment	Municipality of Dimitrovgrad	Municipality of Uzunkopru	15
CB005.1.12.135	Preparation and promotion of the process of development of European ecological network NATURA2000 in Istranca Mountain	■			■	■		■	84 080	Completed	Environment	1.2 Improving the capacity of nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area	Soft	NATURE PARK SAKAR - (NP SAKAR) NGO	DAYKO Wildlife Conservation Foundation	12
CB005.1.12.024	Protection of sustainable FOREst eCosystems in StrAndja/Yildiz mountain under climate changeS condiTions - FORECAST	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	112689	Completed	Environment	1.2 Improving the capacity of nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area	Soft	Regional Forest Directorate Bourgas	Directorate of Demirkoy Forest Management	15
CB005.1.21.139	Common cultural and historical heritage beyond the borders	■	■	■	■		■	■	486 736	Still ongoing	Tourism	2.1 Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure	Investment	Regional historical museum Burgas	Kirklareli District Directorate of Culture and Tourism	24
CB005.1.23.044	Haskovo and Edirne - cultural and historical destinations	■	■	■		■	■	■	93 461	Completed	Tourism	2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives	Soft	Regional Library "Hristo Smirnenski"- Haskovo	Foundation of Trakya University	15
CB005.1.23.103	The path of the artist	■	■	■		■	■	■	88 006	Completed	Tourism	2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation	Soft	Association Civil Initiative for Social Development	Governance of Village of Camlıca	12
CB005.1.23.107	"Path of legends - establishment of new partnerships for development of sustainable cultural-historical tourism"	■		■	■	■	■	■	81040	Completed	Tourism	2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives	Soft	Jewish-Bulgarian cooperation center "Alef"	Research organization of transfrontier cultures	12

Annex 4: Case studies

Project name: CB005.1.11.165 "Prevention and minimization of the Risks for the Environment and Vision for iNnovative Tools/PREVENT/"

Total budget: EUR 581 483.41

Duration: 15 months

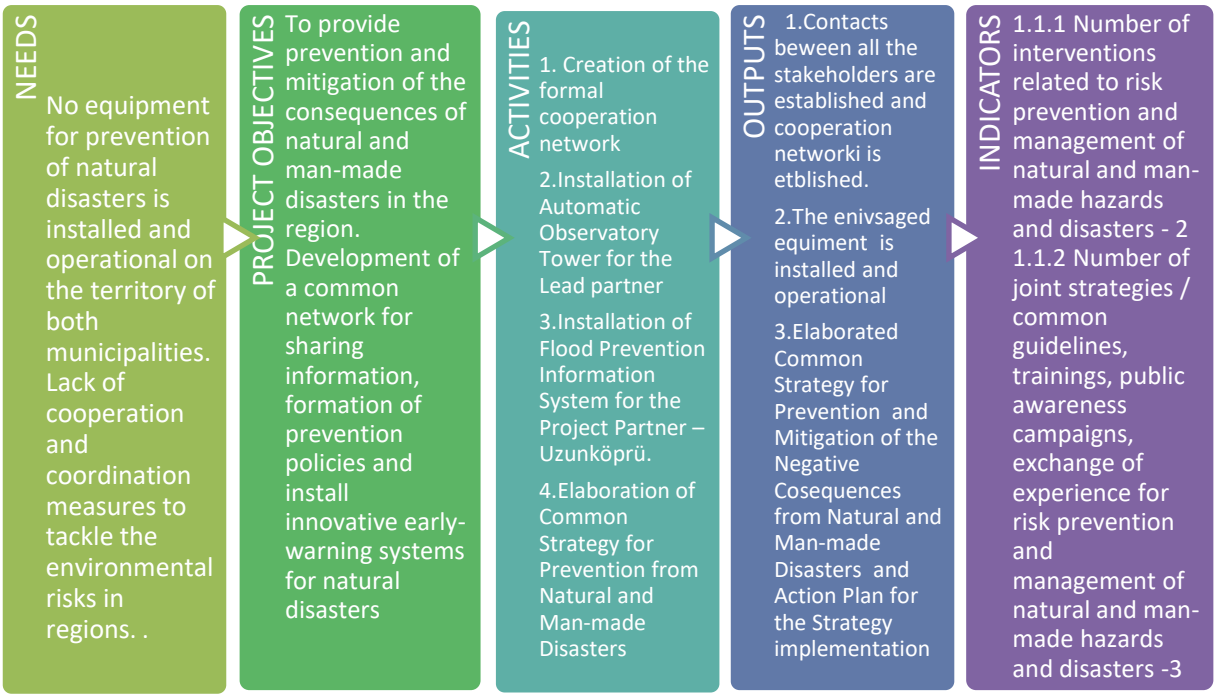
Partners: Municipality of Dimitrovgrad (Lead Partner) and Municipality of Uzunkopru

Priority axis: Environment

Specific Objective: 1.1 Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area

Type of project: Investment

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: CBC region, namely regions of Haskovo and Edirne, had problems with natural and manmade disasters in the past years (mainly floods and fires). In the Haskovo region, there were several situations which constituted a threat to the population of the municipality and required evacuation of citizens. The Municipality of Uzunkopru also has very serious problems with floods and would like to take preventive measures. On both sides of the border a major issue is lack of funding for preventive measures against such natural disasters and the need for those has been identified by both partners. Municipality of Dimitrovgrad decided to focus their efforts for establishment of fire precaution measures, as it is expected the flood

preventive measures to be developed on district level by District Administration of Haskovo and the Municipality of Uzunkopru needed support for flood preventive measures.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All planned results are achieved within project lifetime. Two very modern early prevention systems with highest technical specifications are installed. Target values of all project indicators are also achieved.

Impact

- The project will have a positive impact over the environment protection in tthe region and will ensure better protection for the population.

Efficiency

Although there are some budget corrections, they are very small and the project funds were absorbed quite efficiently.

Transfer of knowledge

- Creation of the formal cooperation network which works towards capacity building, raising awareness of prevention activities, developing joint risk assessment strategies, improved coordination, trainings in the use of ICT technologies, including introduction of new methods, exchange of experience, know-how and good practices (study visits, round-tables, conferences, and others.

Partnership

- Partners already have well established partnership relations. Sustainable partnership is maintained - partners have 2 previous projects together and 2 new projects have been developed and submitted under the second call for proposals CBC BG-TR. Municiplaity of Dimitrovgrad is usually the Lead partner but in the curent call, Municiplaity of Uzunkopru is Lead partner for one of the submited projects.

Sustainability

- The maintenance of the prevention systems is included in the municipality budgets. At the end of the project a Memorandum was signed between the parthers for keeping the sustainability of the achived results and keeping the cooperation between the services and the stakeholders. Also the developed Common Strategy for Prevention from Natural and Man-made contains plan.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: The only obstacles encountered were with technical specification of the equipment due to its very specific features and nature, as the equipment is highly professional. Recommendation: Increase of project budget, especially for investment projects will lead to better projects with larger scale activities providing substantial support for the development of the CBC region.

Project name: CB005.1.12.135 "Preparation and promotion of the process of development of European ecological network NATURA2000 in Istranca Mountain"

Total budget: EUR 84 079.98

Duration: 12 months

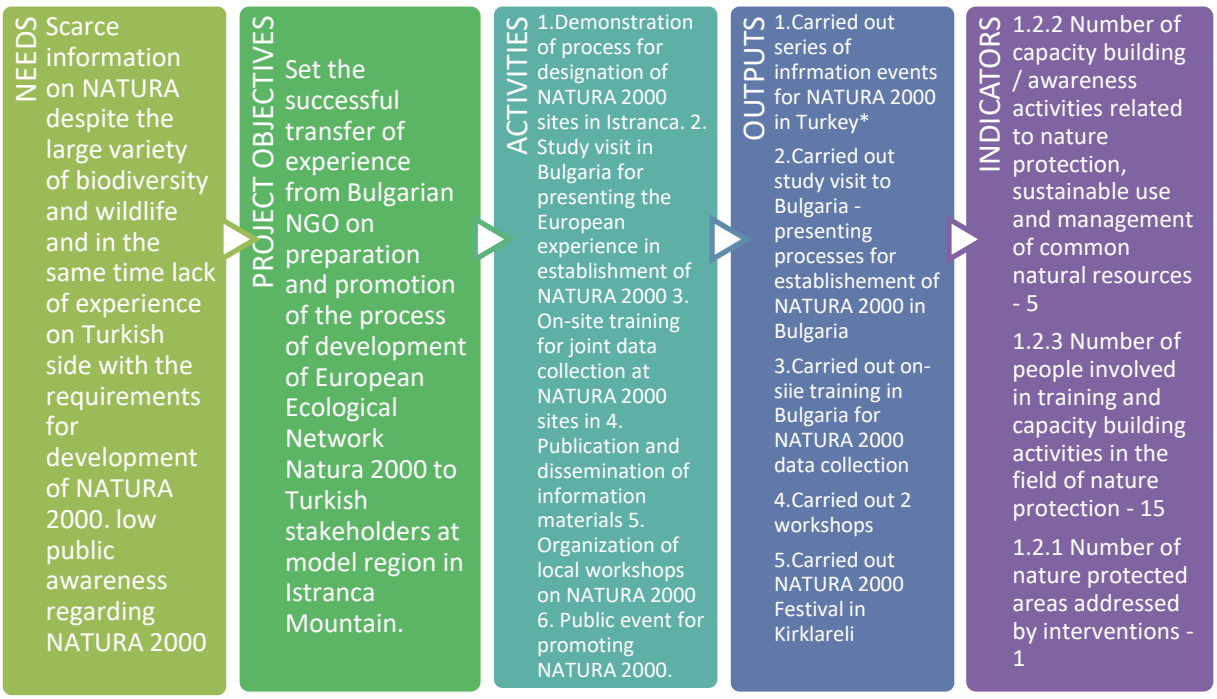
Partners: Nature park Sakar NGO, Bulgaria (Lead Partner) and DAYKO Wildlife Conservation Foundation, Turkey

Priority axis: Environment

Specific Objective: 1.2 Improving the capacity of nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area

Type of project: Soft

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: In both regions information and awareness among society on the importance of NATURA is scarce despite the large variety of biodiversity and wildlife on both sides of the borders. The NGOs from the Turkish side recognised Natura 2000 as a suitable instrument for nature protection and in line with the European policies. Also Turkey covers a different biogeographical belt, part of Asia, which was not part of EU till now and it is an interesting challenge for Natura 2000. The future membership of Turkey will enrich the nature of the EU.

Both partners are NGOs which ensures the necessary flexibility and similar work approaches to the protection and popularisation of biodiversity and wildlife protection. Of course the project does

not aim to introduce Natura 2000 in Turkey; it is only first presentations of the necessary requirements and steps that need to be undertaken for recognition of protected areas.

This is the second CBC project for the Turkish partner, while the Bulgarian counterpart has experience in Life Programme.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All planned results were achieved were achieved within project lifetime despite some problems with purchase of equipment by the Turkish partner. Target values of all project indicators were also achieved.

Innovative

- The approach to knowledge transfer utilised - "learning by doing", could be identified as innovative for the region and also for preparation of establishment of NATURA network.

Transfer of knowledge

- Knowledge transfer from EU member state to Candidate country in specific area as environmental protection (biodiversity protection) and identification and establishment of NATURA network.
- Transfer of knowledge was done in a practical and participatory approach with demonstrations of process for designation of NATURA 2000 sites in the partner country with elaboration of full dossiers for 3 areas.

Sustainability

- Sustainability of results is ensured by the developed documentation for Turkish 3 possible NATURA sites and capacity built within Turkish stakeholders. Furthermore contacts were established with other local NGOs working in the field.

Additional best practices identified by the Beneficiary:

The project managed to reach the population from very small settlements both in Bulgaria and in Turkey and to present the Natura priorities to these people.

Dissemination of project results: Two movies were produced under the project, which are disseminated on DVD, but also via YouTube, which has higher outreach to the public.

NATURA 2000 and the GREEN BELT in the Bulgaria-Turkey Cross-border Region DOCUMENTARY is available on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3b7tDrLr0c&index=15&list=PLwe1R4BMZjDsodEAMWnG6_lawYFnf4qtw&t=0s.

The videofilm "Strandzha - Border Mountain" is available on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQAINPMspuo&list=PLwe1R4BMZjDsodEAMWnG6_lawYFnf4qtw&index=19.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices:

The lack of own and available funding created difficulties in the project implementation, especially for such projects with short implementation period. After utilization of the advance payment, the Turkish partner stopped the implementation of its part of the project activities due to financial difficulties. This led to non-purchase of the equipment envisaged for the partner. It was agreed the equipment bought by the Lead partner to be used also by the Turkish partner. But this situation decreased the effectiveness and the efficiency of the project as some the envisaged results are not properly achieved and the project budget was not fully utilized.

As an NGO, the Bulgarian Lead Partner also experience difficulties for pre-financing the project activities. They used fund from the NGO agricultural activities and this is how they manage to ensure the necessary financing for the project activities.

Some difficulties with the supply of equipment as no one company was able to supply all the equipment and this increase the price of the equipment as part of the equipment was very specific. There were some financial corrections due to these problems.

Recommendation: Maybe to be organised some common meetings where beneficiaries can share good practices and lessons learned.

Project name: CB005.1.12.024 "Protection of sustainable FOREst eCosystems in StrAndja/Yildiz mountain under climate changeS condiTions - FORECAST"

Total budget: EUR 112 688.77

Duration: 15 months

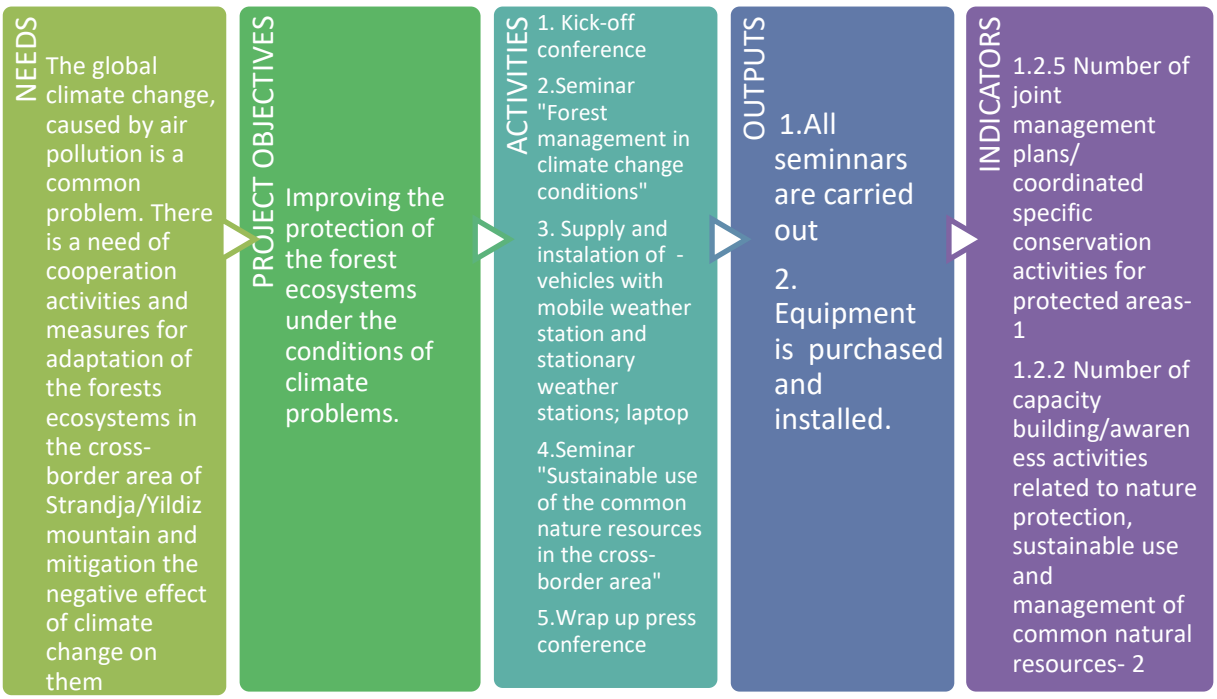
Partners: Regional Forest Directorate Bourgas – Bourgas (Lead Partner) and Directorate of Demirkoy Forest Management

Priority axis: Environment

Specific Objective: 1.2 Improving the capacity of nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area

Type of project: Soft

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: The project is actually a continuation of a previous project covering common measures for mitigation of the negative effects of the climate change, which was led by the Turkish partner, implemented in 2012. The results from this project were very successful and it was decided the cooperation to be sustained. Both partners are experienced with CBC Programme application process, so there were no difficulties in the process of project preparation.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All projects activities are successfully completed and the envisaged indicators are achieved. The weather stations are already installed and are collecting data from both the Bulgariana and the Turkish sides of Strandja mountain.

Impact

- The data which will be collected by the weather stations will allow the creation of reliable and comparable databes for impact of the climate changes over the forest and the forest. The database is available to scientific insitutions (conttacts are signed) which will support the application of the most appropriate measure for forest protection.

Efficiency

- The project has good abosrption rate which shows good finnancial planning and implementaion.

Innovative

- Some of the weather stations are mobile so, they can be sitiuated in different areas in the mountain which will allow elaboration of comparison analysis.

Transfer of knowledge

- The collected data from the weather stations is available to public and scientific institutions.

Partnership

- A very sustainable partnership is established between the partners. The experts from both sides have become close friends which is one the best project's impacts. Currently they are applying agian with a common project under the Second call for proposals under the CBC Programme.

Sustainability

- The weather stations will be sustained by the project beneficiaries. There are signed contracts with Bulgarian Academy of Scince and the University of Forestry for the elaboration and dissemination of regional forestry practices based on the coolected and compared data.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: There were no major difficulties during the project implementation. The main issue was the English language of the tender procedures for the suppliers and their requirement for full amount for the equipment paid before the delivery, which is not allowed according to the PRAG regulations. The Beneficiary is quite satisfied with the supportive measures provided by the JS and the MA. The MIS really simplifies the project management; it gives opportunity any omissions and mistake to be easily corrected. The team only had some troubles with uploading files but this was quickly solved.

Project name: CB005.1.21.139 "Common cultural and historical heritage beyond the borders"

Total budget: EUR 486 735.54

Duration: 24 months

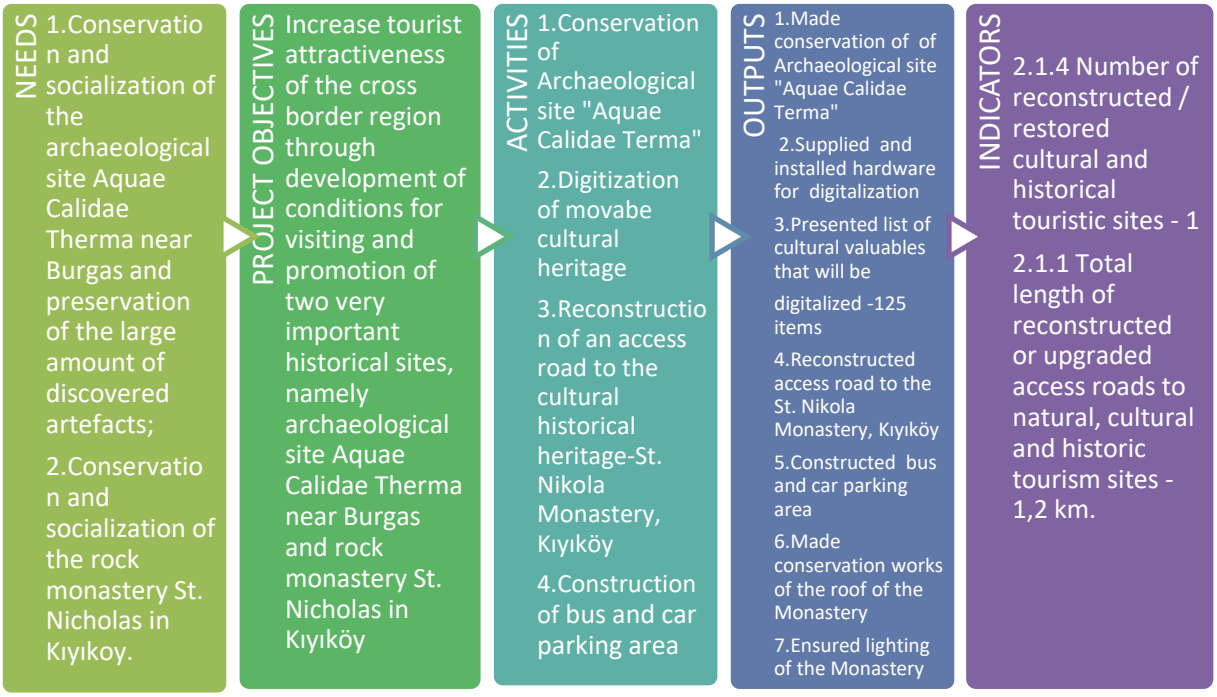
Partners: Regional historical museum Burgas (Lead Partner) and Kirklareli District Directorate of Culture and Tourism

Priority axis: Tourism

Specific Objective: 2.1 Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure

Type of project: Investment

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: The project is related to the Strategy for Tourism Development of the city of Burgas and the Strategy for preservation of cultural and historical sites in Turkey. The activities for the restoration and socialization of both historical sites were mainly funded with municipal or state resources, so the project is a complementary support to these activities.

The biggest difficulty was the preparation of the project and more precisely not the project application but to prepare and receive in time all the technical documentation related to the restoration and conservation activities, including all permissions and approvals. And because of the delays in the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria, this caused pressure for receiving the approval from the following institutions.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All projects activities are successfully completed and the envisaged indicators are already achieved. The site is ready for opening. Approval from National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage and Act 16 is expected.

Impact

- The restoration activities will allow the better preservation of the historical sites. Also the digitalization of the movable cultural heritage will allow more people to see it. Both sites are very popular for tourists and now with the restoration and socializsation activities, it is expected increase of the flow of tourists in the coming season. Also it is expected that interesting historical sighths will atract visitors and will support the extension of the summer season, especially for Burgas region.

Efficiency

- The project is still under implementation, it is expected to be finalised in March 2019, but until now the absorption of the project funds is going efficiently .

Innovative

- The initiative of the digitalisation of the movable cultural heritage and its presentation through kiosks is an interesting activity.

Partnership

- Strong partnership is built between the partners.

Sustainability

- The restoration and the preservation of both archaeological sites will be continued with municipal funds. Until now ii s restored 1/5 of the wholeAquae Calidae Terma and additional financing will be searched through external sources as other EU programmes.

Additional best practices identified by the Beneficiary:

1. The support from the Municipality of Burgas, although it was not an official project partner, had a crucial role for the successful implementation of the project. Their most valuable support was coordinating and receiving the approval of the technical designs and all necessary permission from the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria.

2. The small investment related to the digitalization of the movable cultural heritage is one of the project best practices. It is envisaged screens and kiosks to be installed and visitors will be able to see the movable heritage. The idea is to present the whole museum heritage in this way.

Dissemination of project results: The digitalized movable heritage will be also presented online and everyone will be able to see them. Actually the project became the main base for promotion of both historical sites and provided the opportunity to become tourist destinations.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: The main project difficulties were related to the receiving of the approval and permissions from the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria as this takes quite a long time (2-3 months) and they have to receive it for the sites technical designs and lately for the already made reconstructions.

Also the pre-financing of projects and especially infrastructure projects is a little bit burdensome for the budget of such institutions. Recommendation: To speed up the process for approval of request for payments and reimbursement of the funds in shorter terms. To have the option for electronic signature.

Project name: CB005.1.23.044 "Haskovo and Edirne - cultural and historical destinations"

Total budget: EUR 93 460.80

Duration: 15 months

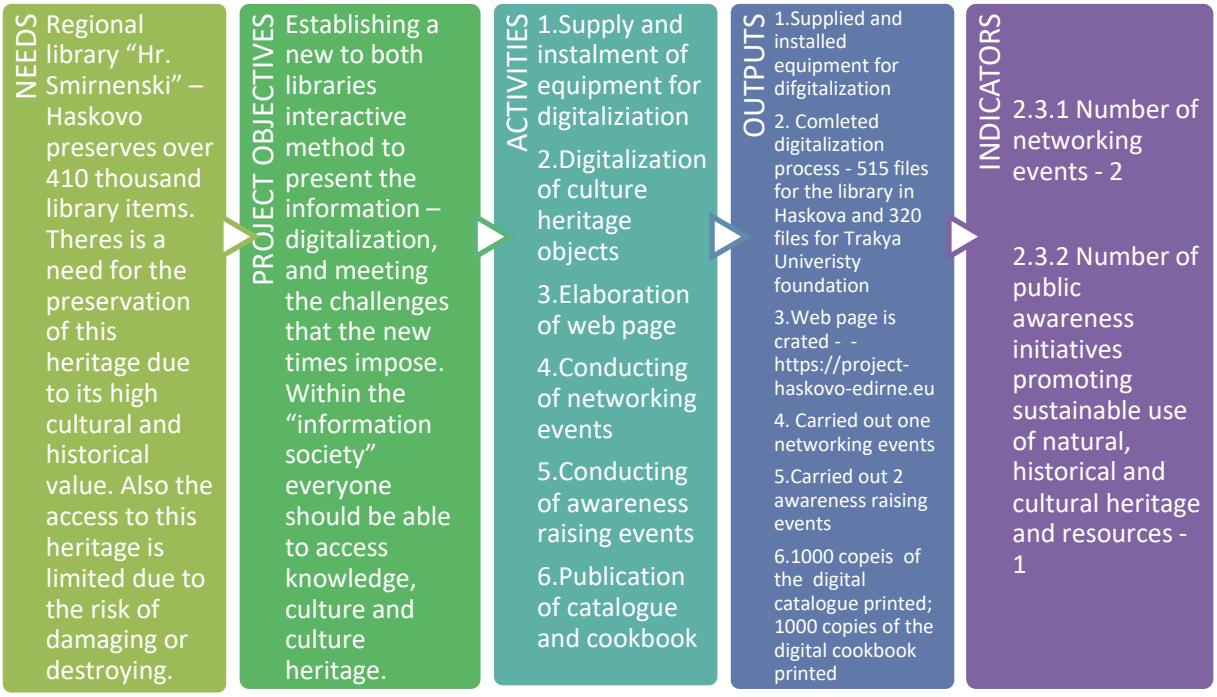
Partners: Regional Library "Hristo Smirnenski"- Haskovo (Lead Partner) and Foundation of Trakya University – Edirne

Priority axis: Tourism

Specific Objective: 2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives

Type of project: Soft

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: The Regional Library "Hristo Smirnenski" - Haskovo was searching for funds preservation of the valuable cultural and historical heritage it possesses. The lack of specialized equipment was the biggest challenge. Due to the small budget of the library, it was difficult to be ensured such equipment necessary for the preservation and the digitalization of the stored documents, photos and postcards. The project idea was ready and mature when the Beneficiary identified the funding opportunity under the CBC Programme. There were no issues in preparation of the application form and the whole project proposal. There was clear understanding of the project objectives, activities, results and indicators, as the Beneficiary exactly knew what they need. The project presents interesting and new approach to present cultural and historical heritage through provision of wide open access by virtual library (web platform) to the public.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All projects activities are successfully completed and the envisaged indicators are achieved. All project results were carefully planned. For example for the interface of the web portal, the Beneficiary made a research for similar e-libraries in France, Spain and Romania in order to create the best looking and user friendly web page.

Impact

- The digitalization of the cultural and historical documents is a guarantee for their preservation. Also the upload of these documenst on the web platform, created by the project and the continuation of the digitalization process allows open access to this cultural and historical heritage. One of the very interestion and positive impacts of the project was that during the inventorys of the documents enviasge for digitalization were found very old and valuable papers.
- Thsi was first project for the Beneficiary under the CBC Programme and acquired capacities and knowledge are crucial for the future project activities of the Regional Library.

Efficiency

- The project is implemented within the envisaged budget. The absorption of the project funds was efficient.

Transfer of knowledge

- The Beneficiary has already contacted several other libraries and cultural institutions (Chitalista) from the Haskovo region to share with them the prurchased equipment and the project idea.

Partnership

- Although there were some challenges with finding the relevant Turkish partner, an organization with similar challenges and needs was found. Close relations and working cooperation was immediately established. The contradictions that arose during the project elaboration and implementation were quickly resolved due to the mutual desire from both sites the projects' results to be achieved.

Sustainability

- The supplied equipment will allow the digitalization process to be continued and the web paltform (vitual library) to be further developed and enriched.

Additional best practices identified by the Beneficiary:

1. Good financial planning - As the project needs and idea dated since 2012, the Beneficiary was not only looking for funding opportunities but also was making savings from its annual budget for 2 years. Thus when the contract was signed, the Beneficiary was able to start the project activities immediately. Also this allows the projects activities to be implemented without interruption or pauses because of waiting for approval of requests for payments and receiving the necessary funds from the Managing Authority.

2. Good capacities planning – The Turkish partner was not very experienced in project management, so the Beneficiary envisaged that the procurement procedures for the equipment will be done by

them which supported building knowledge for the partner and at the same time guaranteed the proper execution of the tendering procedures. This was the first CBC project for the Beneficiary so it has foreseen own resources for consultancy support for the project implementation.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: There were no major difficulties in the project implementation. There was excellent communication with the JS and the expert responsible for the MIS in the Managing Authority which significantly facilitated the implementation of the project.

The main project difficulties were related to the tender procedures as this was first experience for the Beneficiary with such requirements. But they had engaged consultant who support them for development of the tender documentation.

Project name: CB005.1.23.103 "The path of the artist"

Total budget: EUR 88 006.06

Duration: 12 months

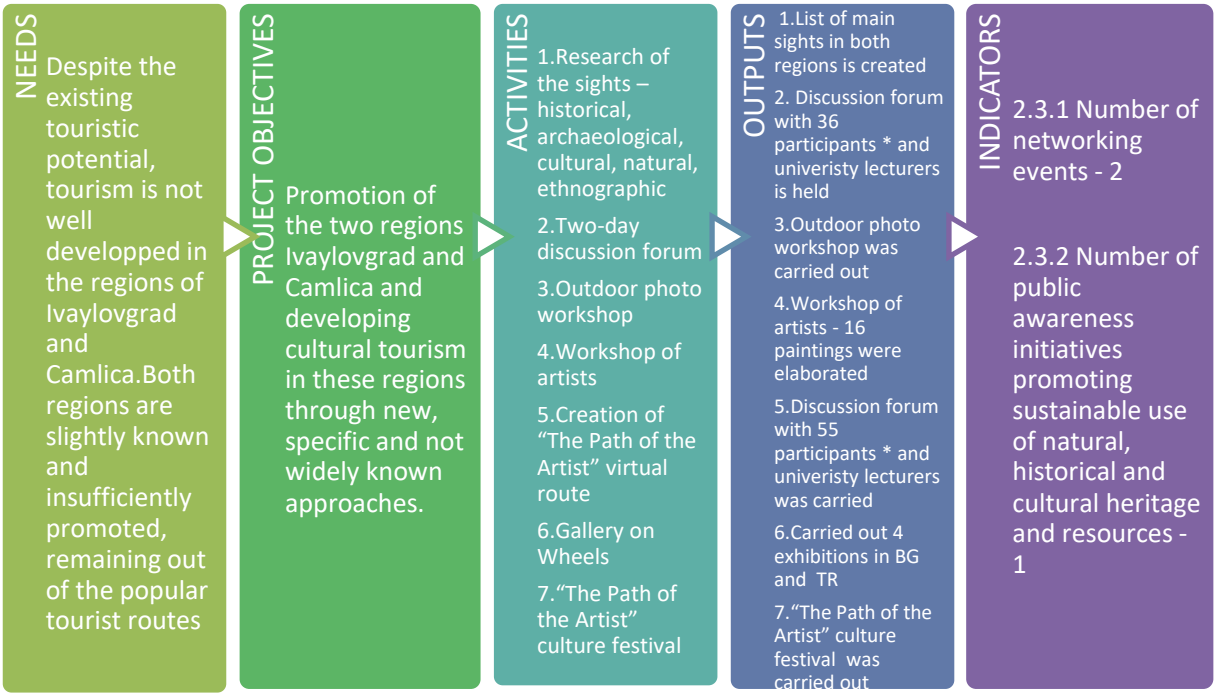
Partners: Association Civil Initiative for Social Development and Integration –Ivaylovgrad (Lead Partner) and Governance of Village of Camlıca

Priority axis: Tourism

Specific Objective: 2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives

Type of project: Soft

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: This is first project for the Beneficiary funded under a CBC Programme. However the Beneficiary was very well acquainted with the needs and the tourism potential development of the Ivaylovgrad region and they had this project idea since long ago. Several times they carried out internal discussion and the project activities were more or less ready, only there was a lack of financial resources to realize them.

During the proposal preparation there were some difficulties for understanding the CBC Programme and the Call for proposal requirements but this was mainly because the Beneficiary did not know well the IPA regulations. Also there was some misinterpretation and miscalculation of the project indicators but this was solved during the pre-contracting process. The Beneficiary concluded that the application process was not hard and they didn't have significant issues with the project preparation.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All projects activities are successfully completed and the envisaged indicators are already achieved.

Impact

- The project provided real contribution to the development of the tourism potential of both regions and the increase of visitors and tourists. There are already opened bus lines for tourists between the two regions, the development of sea toursm started in region of Camlica - restaurant and shops are opened, a guest house opening is expected.

Efficiency

- The project has an absorption rate of 98% which shows good finnancial planning and implementaion.

Transfer of knowledge

- This way of presenting the tourism potental of regions through the work of their own artists could be transfered to other regions and municipalities.

Partnership

- There were some difficulties with finding the right project partner as the Beneficiary is a newcomer and and NGO. But when the partner was identified very strong cooperation was developped which continued throgh the whole project implemenatation period. Currently this cooperation continues with development of new common projects.

Sustainability

- The Gallery on wheel exhibitions and the presentation of the potentials of the cultural tourism will continue in other cities. There are arranged exhibitions in Sofia and Istanbul and in universities in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Additional best practices identified by the Beneficiary:

1. Finding new historical and cultural sights/practices in Bulgaria and in Turkey - the research made of the historical and cultural sights in both regions reveals unknown and unfamiliar places. The meeting between artists from the two sides of the border allows the exchange of new artistic techniques and methods.

Dissemination of project results: The projects results continue to be disseminated after the project closure through the organised exhibitions of the Gallery on wheels in cities outside the area of the cross border region.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: The project was implemented smoothly and there were no major obstacles. The support from for the JS was very valuable. The MIS really simplifies the project management and allows flexibility in project reporting and financial administration. The Programme has better management in comparison with other EU programmes.

The English language barrier was one of the project difficulties, but the Beneficiary used the services of Bulgarian – Turkish interpreters to facilitate the communication with the partners and the project participants. Another challenge was the issue of international passports for artists, photographers as these documents are expensive in Turkey. Also there are some special authorization regimes for travel of university professors and civil servants and they receive visas for very short periods not for the whole project duration.

Project name: CB005.1.23.107 "Path of legends - establishment of new partnerships for development of sustainable cultural-historical tourism"

Total budget: EUR 81 040.04

Duration: 12 months

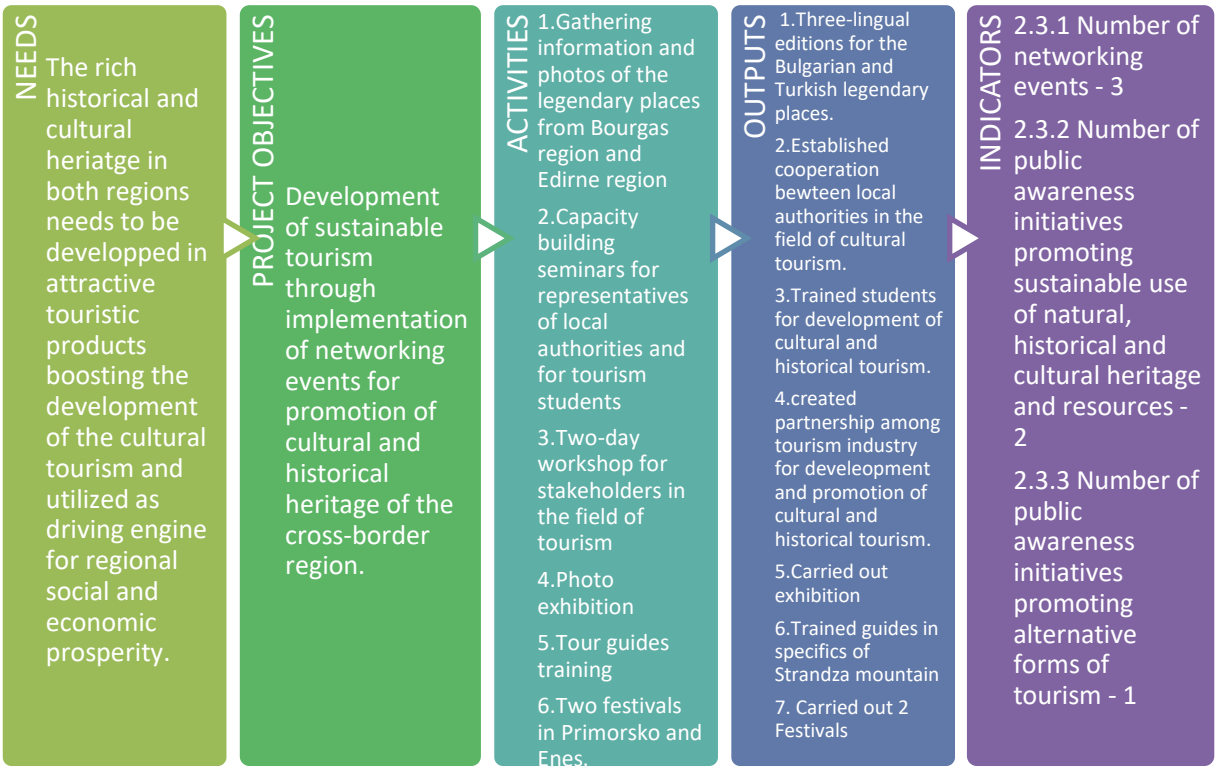
Partners: : Jewish-Bulgarian cooperation center "Alef" – Bourgas (Lead Partner) and Research organization of transfrontier cultures – Edirne

Priority axis: Tourism

Specific Objective: 2.3 Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives

Type of project: Soft

Project intervention logic:



Project generation and preparation: The potential for development of tourism in the region of Strandja Mountain was identified by both partners. This idea fitted within the priorities and aim of the CBC Bulgaria-Turkey programme and the partners took the chance to find suitable counterparts at the partnership forum organised by the JS. Both partners were very interested in the potential of the region and the possibilities of the programme and the partners matching event turned out the suitable opportunity. This is first project for both partners. The Lead partner has been subcontractor in several projects so they have some ideas for project management.

There were some difficulties in the project preparation but they were mainly related to the lack of experience with the requirements of the programme.

Project achieved best practices:

Effectiveness

- All planned results were achieved within project lifetime. Target values of all project indicators were also achieved. There were great interest from all target groups to particiapte in the project activities. For each activity, the partners had to make selection of the participants because of the big number of the people willing to participate.

Efficiency

- The project has an absorption rate of 98% which shows good finnancial planning and implementaion.

Innovative

- The concept of "Legendary tourism" is new to the region of Strandja mountain on both sides of the border. This unexplored area has high potential for diversification of tourism product on both sides of the border, attraction of more tourists and increase of touristic season.

Transfer of knowledge

- Intangible cultural heritage in the region is identified and revealed not only to local communities, but also to local authorities, business and young people from the partner region. This new knowledge, information and partnerships established between local authorities and participants in project events result in creation of opportunities for development of new products of cultural tourism for the region (mainly based on legendary tourism).

Partnership

- Strong partnesrhip is created. The established partnership under the project continues also under the second call of the programme, following agreement between partners at the end of the first project. Cooperation Memorandum between both partners to continue the project activities was signed.

Sustainability

- The new project submitted under the second call of the Programme, is a continuation of the current project. Cooperation Memorandum between tourism business communities from both sides of the border for development of legendary tourism was signed. Both municipalities, which hosted the "Festival of the legends" on both sides of the border declared their interest to turn them into annual events.

Additional best practices identified by the Beneficiary:

1. **Support creation of employment**. The project has the ambition the training of touristic guides to be to be directed to unemployed people in the region. Local employment services in Burgas were contacted to identify unemployed people to participate in the tour guide training activities. The beneficiary is not an official training institution but they provided each participant with a certificate proving the received qualifications in order to increase their chances to find a suitable job.

Dissemination of project results: Project is promoted via the website, press release for events and produced project booklet for mystical places in Burgas region. They think that direct invitation and participation of journalist in the project events, is the best way to promote project results.

Obstacles and problem-solving practices: There were no problems during the project implementation. In the beginning the reporting process seemed to the beneficiary very complicated and unclear. Then they gained knowledge, the JS were very helpful. There were delays (2-3 months) in the reimbursement of the funds which caused problems for both partners in the project implementation. Recommendation: Increase of project budget will lead to better projects with larger scale activities providing substantial support for the development of the CBC region.

Annex 5: Output and result indicators

Table 11. PA 1 Environment, output indicators achievement

Specific objective	Output indicator	Unit	Target value 2023	Value, end-2018, accumulated	Achievement, end-2018, %	Value 2019, planned	Achievement, 2019, %
1.1. Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area	OI 1.1.1 Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Number	3	2	66,67	8	266,67
	OI 1.1.2 Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Number	6	2	33,33	17	283,33
	OI 1.1.3 Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons)	Persons	290 000	200000	68,97	402749	138,88
	OI 1.1.4 Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure (Persons)	Persons	480 000	200000	41,67	861392	179,46
1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area	OI 1.2.1 Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions	Number	5	10	200,00	11	220,00
	OI 1.2.2 Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	Number	28	19	67,86	29	103,57
	OI 1.2.3 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection	Number	300	182	60,67	422	140,67
	OI 1.2.4 Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction)	Number	5	0	0,00	0	0,00
	OI 1.2.5 Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas	Number	3	1	33,33	1	33,33

Table 12. PA 1 Environment, result indicators achievement as of end-2018

Indicator	Unit	Base value	Target value 2023	Achievement 2018
RI 1.1. Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area	scale	2,24	2,5	2,64
RI 1.2. Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	scale	2,66	3	2,82

Table 13. PA 2 Sustainable Tourism, output indicators achievement

Specific objective	Output indicator	Unit	Target value 2023	Value, end-2018, accumulated	Achievement, end-2018, %	Value 2019, planned	Achievement, 2019, %
2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure	OI 2.1.1 Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites (Kilometres)	kilometres	5	0	0,00	1,54	30,80
	OI 2.1.2 Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths (Kilometres)	kilometres	8	0	0,00	0,75	9,38
	OI 2.1.3 Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites	Number	10	0	0,00	7	70,00
	OI 2.1.4 Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites	Number	15	0	0,00	2	13,33
2.2. Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common	OI 2.2.1 Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations	Number	3	5	166,67	5	166,67
	OI 2.2.2 Number of marketing and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services	Number	13	18	138,46	19	146,15

Specific objective	Output indicator	Unit	Target value 2023	Value, end-2018, accumulated	Achievement, end-2018, %	Value 2019, planned	Achievement, 2019, %
destinations	OI 2.2.3 Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential	Number	3	8	266,67	17	566,67
	OI 2.2.4 Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Number	3	4	133,33	7	233,33
	OI 2.2.5 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism	Number	200	120	60,00	180	90,00
2.3. Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives	OI 2.3.1 Number of networking events (Number)	Number	15	16	106,67	21	140,00
	OI 2.3.2 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources (Number)	Number	20	8	40,00	13	65,00
	OI 2.3.3 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism (Number)	Number	5	2	40,00	8	160,00

Table 14. PA 2 Sustainable Tourism, result indicators achievement as of end-2018

Indicator	Unit	Base value	Target value 2023	Achievement 2018
Increased nights spent in the cross-border area	%	7 721 074	Increased with minimum 1 %	Increase with 38,3% (10 681 771)
Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area	scale	2,5	3	2,67
Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area	scale	2,77	3,5	2,99

Table 15. Projected values of OI, First and Second call of the Programme

SO	Indicator	Target value	Planned value, First call	Projected value, Second call[6]	Total projected value	Achievement ratio,%, after the Second call
SO1.1	OI 1.1.1 Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	3	8	10	18	600
	OI 1.1.2 Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	6	17	11	28	466,67
	OI 1.1.3 Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons)	290 000	402 749	127 625	530 374	182,89
	OI 1.1.4 Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure (Persons)	480 000	861 392	112 000	973 392	202,79
SO 1.2	OI 1.2.1 Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions	5	11	44	55	1100
	OI 1.2.2 Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	28	29	67	96	342,86
	OI 1.2.3 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection	300	422	3516	3938	1312,67
	OI 1.2.4 Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction)	5	0	31	31	620
	OI 1.2.5 Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas	3	1	20	21	700
SO 2.1	OI 2.1.1 Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites (Kilometres)	5	1,54	8,91	10,45	209
	OI 2.1.2 Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths (Kilometres)	8	0,75	25,73	26,48	331
	OI 2.1.3 Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites	10	7	11	18	180

[6] The data is collected from the projects approved for funding under the Second Call for proposals. Extreme values are removed.

SO	Indicator	Target value	Planned value, First call	Projected value, Second call[6]	Total projected value	Achievement ratio,%, after the Second call
	OI 2.1.4 Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites	15	2	14	16	106,67
SO 2.2	OI 2.2.1 Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations	3	5	1	6	200
	OI 2.2.2 Number of marketing and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services	13	19	2	21	161,54
	OI 2.2.3 Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential	3	17	0	17	566,67
	OI 2.2.4 Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	3	7	2	9	300
	OI 2.2.5 Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism	200	180	30	210	105
SO 2.3	OI 2.3.1 Number of networking events (Number)	15	21	7	28	186,67
	OI 2.3.2 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources (Number)	20	13	8	21	105
	OI 2.3.3 Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism (Number)	5	8	3	11	220

Source: Programme and Ecorys calculations

Annex 6: Relevance/Coherence table

Table 16. Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the goals of Europe 2020

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Europe 2020	**Employment**	√	√√√
	Research and development	√√	√
	Climate change and energy	√√√	√√
	Education	√	√
	Poverty and social exclusion	√	√√√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: European Commission,, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 17. Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the Blue Growth Strategy

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Blue Growth Strategy	**Develop sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth, such as:** • aquaculture (Fisheries website) • coastal tourism • marine biotechnology • ocean energy • seabed mining	√	√√√
	Essential components to provide knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy • marine knowledge to improve access to information about the sea; • maritime spatial planning to ensure an efficient and sustainable management of activities at sea; • integrated maritime surveillance to give authorities a better picture of what is happening at sea.	√	√
	Sea basin strategies to ensure tailor-made measures and to foster cooperation between countries • Adriatic and Ionian Seas • Arctic Ocean • Atlantic Ocean • Baltic Sea	√√√	√√√

	• Black Sea • Mediterranean Sea • North Sea		

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: European Commission,, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 18 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Partnership Agreement of Bulgaria 2014 – 2020

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Partnership Agreement of Bulgaria 2014-2020	**Education, employment, social inclusion and healthcare for inclusive growth**	√	√√
	Scientific research, innovation and investment for smart growth	√	√
	Connectivity and green economy for sustainable growth	√√√	√√√
	Good governance and access to quality administrative services	√	√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Partnership Agreement of Bulgaria 2014 – 2020, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 19 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020 for Bulgaria

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020 for Bulgaria	5. Develop a sustainable national policy and secure a robust legal and institutional framework to reduce the risk of disasters.	√√√	√
	6. Identifying, assessing and monitoring the risks of disasters. Expand and maintain effective national forecasting systems, monitoring, early warning and disaster reporting.	√√√	√

	7. Building a Disaster Response Culture at All Levels management and society through the use of experience, learning, scientific research and innovation	√√√	√
	8. Reducing significant risk factors and increasing risk preparedness for effective response to disasters at all levels of management	√√√	√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020 for Bulgaria, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 20 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Regional Development Strategy of Burgas district 2014 – 2020

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Regional Development Strategy of Burgas district 2014 – 2020	Priority 1. Creating sustainable economic growth	√√√	√√
	Priority 2. A high level of employment characterized by good quality indicators	√	√
	Priority 3. Achieving demographic growth - positive natural growth in the region, abrupt reduction of emigration - external and internal, lowering the level of early mortality	√	√
	Priority 4. Quality healthcare and a developed network of social services	√	√
	Priority 5. Modern and accessible education, developed culture	√	√
	Priority 6. Improved infrastructure - among the leading in the country	√	√
	Priority 7. Environment - among the most preserved in Bulgaria	√√√	√√
	Priority 8. Institutional capacity - among the leading in the country	√	√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Regional Development Strategy of Burgas district 2014 – 2020, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 21 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Regional Development Strategy of Yambol district 2014 – 2020

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Regional Development Strategy of Yambol district 2014 – 2020	Priority 1. Restoration and enhancement of regional competitiveness economy.	√	√√√
	Priority 2. Sustainable and efficient use of resources, development of modern infrastructure supporting growth and job creation	√√	√√
	Priority 3. Developing the labor market, increasing employment, adapting to the labor market education policies and social inclusio	√	√
	Priority 4. Strengthen administrative and institutional capacity for good management	√	√
	Priority 5. Balanced territorial development and sustainable urban development	√√√	√√√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Regional Development Strategy of Yambol district 2014 – 2020, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 22 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Regional Development Strategy of Haskovo district 2014 – 2020

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Regional Development Strategy of Haskovo district 2014 – 2020	Specific Objective 1. Economic convergence at regional and regional level by using their own potential.	√	√√√
	Specific Objective 2. Social cohesion and reduction of disparities between municipalities and other areas through investment in human capital and social infrastructure	√	√
	Specific Objective. Balanced territorial development by strengthening city-centers, improving connectivity in the area and quality of the environment in settlements	√	√

	Specific Objective 4. Developing cross-border and transnational cooperation in the contribution of economic and social development and cohesion	√√√	√√√
	Specific Objective 5. Maintain and improve the quality of the environment by integrating global environmental objectives and developing environmental infrastructure	√√√	√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Regional Development Strategy of Haskovo district 2014 – 2020, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 23 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey	8. Democracy and Governance	√	√
	9. Rule of Law and Fundamental rights	√	√
	10. Environment and Climate Action	√√√	√√
	11. Transport	√	√
	12. Energy	√	√
	13. Competitiveness and Innovation	√	√
	14. Education, Employment and Social Policies	√	√
	15. Agriculture and Rural Development	√	√
	16. Territorial and Regional Cooperation	√√√	√√√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Table 24 Coherence between the Priority axes of the Programme and the priorities of the Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 - 2023

		IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020	
		PA1 Environment	**PA2 Sustainable Tourism**
Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 - 2023	1. Initiative 10 related to protection of floods and earthquakes	√√√	√
	2. Initiative 18 focused on development the tourism in Trakya region	√	√√√

Legend: √√√ - strong, √√ - medium, √ - low.

Source: Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 - 2023, IPA Interreg CBC Bulgaria-Turkey 2014 – 2020

Annex 7: Communication Strategy and Activities

Table 25. Relation Communication strategy general objectives and communication activities

General Objectives	Measure
To support the successful implementation of the programme by ensuring an effective communication system (measures, channels, targeted messages to all identified stakeholders);	Web site Partners' search facility Social media Info days Partnership forums Trainings for beneficiaries Press release Press conference Press Ads Radio Advertisement
To increase public awareness concerning the programme aims, priorities, financial support provided, estimated economic and social impact on regional development;	Web site Partners' search facility Social media Infor days Partnership forums

	Press release Press conference Press Ads Radio Advertisement
To increase the knowledge of the potential beneficiaries on the financing opportunities offered by the programme, eligibility criteria and selection mechanism for the applications submitted;	Trainings for Programme staff Short Programme promo movie with best project practices
To ensure transparency in the use of the Funds and thus increase the level of trust of the general public in the institutions managing the Bulgaria – Turkey IPA CBC Programme;	Web site Social Media Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials Press releases Press conferences Press Ads / announcements Relations with local, regional, national press Radio advertisement
To increase the visibility of the Bulgaria – Turkey IPA CBC Programme and of the MA, NA and JS, at national and regional level;	Web site Social media Press releases Press conferences Press Ads / announcements Relations with local, regional, national press Radio advertisement Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs

	Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials

Table 26. Relation Communication strategy specific objectives and communication activities

Specific Objectives	Measure
To ensure the good use of the IPA funds, by conveying information on the domains financed and the financing conditions to all target groups;	Web site Partners' search facility Social media Info days Partnership forums Trainings for beneficiaries Press release Press conference Press Ads Radio Advertisement
To clearly explain all the requirements, eligibility conditions and procedures that potential beneficiaries need to follow in order to obtain financing;	Web site Partners' search facility Social media Infor days Partnership forums Press release Press conference Press Ads Radio Advertisement
To inform and train the implementing bodies;	Trainings for Programme staff Short Programme promo movie with best project practices
To ensure the visibility of the programme, at local and national level: • create the visual identity of the Programme and make sure all information and publicity activities of the direct beneficiaries comply to the Visual Identity Manual; • identify and disseminate success projects and good practices examples	Web site Social Media Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs

	Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials
To develop and maintain effective press relations, in order to ensure the dissemination of the programme requirements, estimated impact and transparency;	Web site Social media Press releases Press conferences Press Ads / announcements Relations with local, regional, national press Radio advertisement
To develop cooperation and partnership relations with the implementing authorities and all relevant institutions, at national and European level, in order to realise the objectives included in the strategy;	Web site Social Media Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials
To ensure the visibility of the MA as the managing body of the Programme and the NA as the counterpart for the Managing Authority with the coordination role on the territory of Republic of Turkey;	Web site Social Media Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials
To ensure that all potential beneficiaries know and include the horizontal dimensions in the projects submitted for financing: partnership and multi-level governance, sustainable development, promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination, accessibility, addressing demographic changes, climate change mitigation and adaptation;	Web site Partners' search facility Social media Info days Partnership forums Training for beneficiaries

To report to the general public, and annually to the Joint Monitoring Committee and to the European Commission;	Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials
To ensure exchange of knowledge and good practices in communication	Web site Social Media Brochure/ E-Brochure Fact Sheets European Cooperation Day events Elaboration of photographs Short Programme promo movie with best project practices Short event movie Promotional materials

Table 27. Achievement of Communication strategy indicators

Measure	Indicator	Target value	Achieved value	Achievement rate in %
Website functionality	Number of website visits	min. 5000 per year	2014 - 25 034 visits; 2015 - 29 791 visits; 2016 - 27 320 visits; 2017 - 24 879 visits; Until 31 August 2018 - 29 720 visits	Average 546% overachievement
Partners' search facility	Number of new potential PPs in the database	min. 20 per call	1 Call- 32 organizations 2 Call - 65 organizations (33 new); Partner search group in Facebook with 44 members	Average approximately 60% overachievement
Social media	Number of social media accounts opened (For performance measurement specific indicators to be set withtin the Social Media Concept)	3 accounts (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)	4 accounts open in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Linkedin, https://plus.google.com/u/0/b/106412826278251786921/?pageId=106412826278251786921 Second Call campaign on Facebook	Over 60% overachievement
Brochures/ E-brochure	Number of E-brochures edited and published electronically	min. 1 per call	Citizens Summary 2014-2015 Citizens Summary 2016 Citizens Summary 2017	100% achieved

Fact Sheets	Number of fact sheets edited and published electronically	min. 1 per call	NA	Projects from the First Call are still under implementation
Activities for potential beneficiaries/ Info days for the potential beneficiaries	Number of organizations/bodies attending	min. 40 per event	Seminar in Burgas - 108 representatives of 97 organizations. The second seminar in Edirne - with 75 participants from 64 different organizations. First call: Info day in Haskovo - 107 participants; Info day in Yambol - 44 participants; Burgas - 102 participants; Official Ceremony, Sofia - 53 participants. 2018 second call - in Haskovo - 80 participants, in Yambol - 25 participants; in Burgas - 102 participants	In all events the participants are over 40 persons. Only one event in Yambol has 25 particpants.
Activities for potential beneficiaries/ Partnership Forums	Number of organizations/bodies represented	min. 75 per event	First call: 2016 in Edirne - 280 participants; Second call - in Edirne - 280 participants;	Average 373% overachievement
Training for beneficiaries	Percentage of project representation on all trainings combined	85% of all projects funded	Training seminar in Haskovo, 2017 - 67 participants Training seminar in Edirne, 2017 - Turkish partners management teams 4 practical trainings in Bulgaria and Turkey (participants in Bulgaria 45) Seminar in Burgas - 28 participants	The indicators is not very well set and this reflects on its proper reporting. It is no clear the participants which projects represent, so it is not clear if there were participants of 85% of the funded projects.
Trainings for Programme Staff	Number of the trainings Programme staff have taken	min. 20 for the duration of the Programme	2014 – 2 2015 – 3 2016 – 6 2017 – 5 Total - 16	80% achievement
European Cooperation Day events	Number of participants in local events	Min. 50	ECD 2014 – 90 ECD 2015 – 80 ECD 2016 – 80 ECD 2017 - 150	Average 200% overachievement
Elaboration of photographs	Number of photos elaborated	min. 100 per year	ECday 2016 - 200 good quality photos ECday 2017 - 200 good quality photos	200 % overachievement
Short Programme	Number of movies	min. 1 per Call	N/A	Projects from the

Promo movie with best project practices	elaborated			First Call are still under implementation
Short event movie	Number of movies elaborated	min. 3 for the duration of the Programme	ECday 2016 - short video and long video available at YouTube ECday 2017 short video clip and long version available at YouTube	67% achievement
Press releases	Number of press releases published	min. 1 per Call	2014 -2 2015 – 6 2016 – 12 2017 - 10 at the website; 3 for the press;	The indicator is over achieved. The target value is too low
Press conferences	Number of press conferences held	min. 1 for the duration of the Programme	One Media Event	Achieved The target value is too low
Press Ads/ Announcements	Number of press advertisements published	min. 2 per Call	Publications in newspapers of both countries, as well as on European websites; Ecday 2016 - two advertisements - before and after the event in Bulgarian Newspapers	Achieved The target value is not well defined
Relations with local, regional, national press	Number of articles on the Programme	min. 10 for the duration of the Programme	3 local 3 regional 2 national	80% achievement
Radio advertisement	Number of radio advertisement aired	min. 3 for the duration of the Programme	3 radio campaigns	100% achievement
Promotional materials	Number of materials prepared and distributed for Promotion of the Programme	At least 1 tender procedures	One procedure is carried out	The indicator is over achieved. The target value is not very well defined