

Bulgaria – Turkey IPA Cross-border Programme 2014 – 2020

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

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

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

STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

The Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme (2014-2020) is designed in the framework of the European strategy for a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and the relevant national strategic documents. The main policy framework at European, macro-regional and national level are reflected at the programme are as follow:

- ◆ **The Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth**

The Europe 2020 strategy is shared among the European institutions, the member states and the social partners in order to be taken the necessary action to help reach the Europe 2020 targets. The strategy puts forward three mutually reinforcing 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 social and territorial cohesion.

It sets focus on five overarching headline targets that have to be reached by 2020. These targets require a mixture of national and EU action, utilising the full range of policies and instruments available. At Member State level, full ownership is essential from Heads of States and governments, including regional and local levels. The civil society, including social partners and other stakeholders, also have an important role to play, both in the development of the programmes and in monitoring follow-up on the ground. The same principle applies for the seven underpinning flagship initiatives.

In the context of the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC programme 2014-2020, the synergy with the aforementioned national and EU actions is sought.

- ◆ **The European Territorial Cooperation strategy and the role of the Cross Border Cooperation**

The European Territorial Agenda 2020 identifies some key challenges and potentials for territorial development. These include increased exposure to globalisation, demographic changes, social and economic exclusion, climate change, and loss of biodiversity, all relevant to the Programme area. It describes the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and CBC Programmes, as *"... a key factor in global competition... facilitating better utilisation of development potentials and the protection of natural*

environment". Three categories provide a starting point for the typology of results of cooperation programmes, which reveals some crucial aspects of the ETC approach, namely¹:

- **Integration related results**, i.e. the establishment and implementation of joint territorial governance mechanisms for common assets;
- **Investment related results**, i.e. delivering socio-economic benefits similar to mainstream programmes either by direct investments or by preparing such investments; and
- **Performance related results**, i.e. inducing improvements on organisational and individual performance.

Complementary, the **Commission working document "Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020"** describes a number of other characteristics of cross-border cooperation:

- Support the **joint management** and promotion of the shared major geographic features;
- Achieving **economies of scale** for more efficient investments in services and infrastructure;

The present Programme is fully compliant with the above cooperation programmes' characteristics.

♦ **EU strategic Frameworks: Bulgaria Partnership Agreement**

The Bulgarian Partnership Agreement highlights the central role of the CBC programmes participated by Bulgaria, for the contribution to the EU development strategy.

The Partnership Agreement emphasizes the importance of promoting the EUSDR, since the macro-regional strategies offer a new, more substantial and consistent cooperation platform. The CBC programmes should also emphasize the importance of promoting employment, improving tourism and promoting cultural heritage, while enhancing the connection between the communities of the border areas. Improvement of the environmental system is also to be promoted.

♦ **EU strategic Frameworks: Strategy Paper for Turkey 2014-2020**

The objective of pre-accession assistance will be to promote territorial cooperation with a view to strengthen cross-border, transnational cooperation, foster the socio-economic development of the border regions as well as develop appropriate administrative capacities at local and regional levels through participation of beneficiary countries in cross-border activities:

*"A key objective of the Turkey-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme is to tackle the lack of competitiveness in the socio-economic development in the relevant area as compared to EU development levels. Another aim is to face common challenges in the environment and nature protection, as well as in relation to cross-border emergency situations."*²

THE PROGRAMME AREA

The cross-border area is located in South–Eastern Europe, at the south-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula and includes the districts (equivalent to NUTS-3) Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo in Republic of Bulgaria and the provinces Edirne and Kırklareli in the Republic of Turkey. The territory has an extent of about 29.000 km² and the common border of both countries stretches along 288 km (including three operating border crossings) and has a total population of 1,5 Million inhabitants (784.480 inhabitants on the Bulgarian eligible programming area and 742.000 inhabitants on the

¹ INTERACT, working documents.

² http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/turkey/index_en.htm

Turkish eligible programming area; cf. National Statistical Institute Bulgaria, 2014h: online; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014b: online).

The eligible area in Bulgaria represents 14.99 % of the total territory of the country respectively the eligible area in Turkey represents 1.58 % of total country territory. Main cities of the region are Burgas (211.535 inhabitants), Yambol (72.778) and Haskovo (92.788) in Bulgaria and Edirne (148.474) and Kırklareli (61.880) in Turkey (cf. Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, Census 2011; State Institute of Statistics, Republic of Turkey, 2014: online). Generally, the CBC region shows a very low population density of 54,9 inhabitants/km² in Burgas, 45,3 inhabitants/km² in Haskovo and 39,7 inhabitants/km² in Yambol (cf. EUROSTAT, 2011: online). Edirne has a population density of 64,7 inhabitants/km², Kırklareli of 53 inhabitants/km².

TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION

Geographical characteristics

The *geographical structure* of the co-operation area alternates from altitude 710 m to 1000 m and includes plains, low altitude valleys, plateaus and hilly areas, with some mountain features. In the North-West the area borders to the Eastern Rhodopi Mountains and to the low branches of the Sakar Mountain in Bulgaria, and on the South-west to the Aegean Sea (Saros Gulf) in Turkey. In the North-East the co-operation area borders to the Balkan Range in Bulgaria, and in the South-East to Strandja/Yıldız Mountain and Black Sea littoral presented both in Bulgaria and in Turkey.

The *water reserves* of CBC area comprise both surface and ground waters. Maritsa/Meric River is the biggest river on the Balkan Peninsula. Tundja/Tunca River is another important one in the region. The region of Strandja/Yıldız Mountain is the richest on water resources in the entire Thracian – Strandja/Yıldız area.

Five rivers take their sources from the Strandja/Yıldız Mountain. The largest of them are Ropotamo, Dyavolska and Veleka/Değirmendere. Also the surface waters are presented by several big lakes situated on the Bulgarian side. The ground water resources consist of mineral springs and thermal waters. Joint influence of the Black Sea and Aegean Sea; Strandja, Sakar, Balkan Range and Eastern Rhodopes Mountains as well as Maritza and Tundja/Tunca Rivers set the patterns of *the climate* over the cooperation area.

The climate varies from transitional-continental to continental-Mediterranean (mild winters, hot summers). The *mountains* are generally forested with deciduous trees and some evergreen. Different types of *mineral resources* are presented in the co-operation area. There are non-metal deposits (limestone, marble, gabbro, granite, asbestos and argil), metal deposits (polymetallic ore - mainly lead, zinc, and silver) and brown coal deposits on the Bulgarian side. On the Turkish side there are deposits of coal, chrome, iron, copper, bauxite, marble and sulphur. There are considerable sources of sea-salt in the Black Sea coastal areas of the cooperation area.

Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion

Regarding the transformation of labour markets it is noticeable, that especially Turkish regions belong to the most vulnerable regions in Europe, and also part of the Bulgarian regions are classified as vulnerable ones (Haskovo and Yambol). The situation in the field of unemployment is quite similar. Here the Turkish regions of the cross-border area are identified as very vulnerable regions, Haskovo and Yambol regions from Bulgarian side are also classified as vulnerable ones.

Especially the situation for young employees illustrates a threat for the future development of the area, due to the hindrance of the youth employees entering the labour market. These current developments

contain the risk of young people losing their *“qualifications attained by not participating in further training and furthermore lacking social security rights, since they have not yet contributed to the social system”* (OIR et al., 2011: 102). Generally, *“the highest rates of youth unemployment [...] can be found on the Balkan Peninsula [...]. The main reason for this is a demographic development with very high reproduction rates, that leads to a decoupling of young people trying to enter the labour market and the real economic and labour market growth”* (OIR et al., 2011: 103).

Unemployment is a major issue for the CBC region, in all participating regions the unemployment rate has rising during the last years. The unemployment rate of Burgas District fell from 4,1% in 2007 to 3,9% in 2009 and rose then to 12,4% in the year 2011. In 2012 the unemployment rate was 11,5% (cf. National Statistics Institute, 2014a: online). In Yambol and Haskovo Districts, the unemployment rates are even higher, rising to 14,9% in 2012. Both districts started from a higher level in the year 2007 (7,2% in Yambol, 9,2% in Haskovo) (cf. National Statistics Institute, 2014b,c: online). The unemployment rate of Edirne of 5,9% in 2011 rose to 7,5% in the year 2012. In Kırklareli the rate of 8,4% in 2011 slightly recovered to 7,9% in the year 2012. In comparison, the general unemployment rate for Turkey was 9,8% in 2011 resp. 9,2% in 2012 (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012a). Taking into account the labour force participation rate in the year 2011 shows for Edirne and Kırklareli that the participation rate ranges around 55% (56,2% in Edirne and 54% in Kırklareli, cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012a).

It becomes visible, that both sides of the border depict a similar socio-economic development in the last few years. In relation to the situation of unemployment, generally the rates for youth unemployment are at a very high level, including the threat of brain drain occurrences in the region (cf. above).

Specific focus: Demographic development

Especially in Bulgaria, the total population shrank strongly between 2005 and 2012. For example the total population of the Bulgarian regions of the programming area has decreased from 830.917 inhabitants in 2005 to 784.480 inhabitants in the year 2012 (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 10; Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, District Statistics, 2012: online).

Over the period 2001-2011, the population of Haskovo District has decreased by nearly 11%. The decline in population is due to the persistent processes forming the rate of natural increase that is negative, while net emigration became a problem only in the last few years. The age dependency ratio is higher than the country average, with the population aged over 65 being 50% more than the population aged 14 years or younger. The working age population (15-64 years) was nearly three times the population aged over 65 years that is close to the national average.

Over the period 2001 - 2011, the population of the Yambol District has decreased by over 15%, a significant percentage compared to the country average. The district is characterised by high negative levels of both natural increase and net migration. The age dependency ratio ranks above the national average. The population aged over 65 years is 50% more than the population aged below 14. In 2011, the population of working age (15-64) was nearly three times the population aged over 65 years.

The population of Burgas has decreased only slightly over the past 12 years: 1,8% for the period 2001-2011. It is one of the few districts in the country where the number of people who have relocated from elsewhere is larger than the number of those who left over the last ten years. It could be explained by the economic crisis and the declining employment prospects for the rural population. In 2011, the district had the second lowest age dependency ratio, calculated as the ratio of people over 65 and children under 14 years. Accordingly, the dependency ratio (population over 65 to the working-age population) is well below the country average.

The Turkish part of the CBC programme area shows positive developments in terms of the population growth in comparison the total population in Turkey. In both Turkish provinces participating in the CBC

Programme the population is expected to increase until 2023 as well. (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013a).

Demographically, the population of the eligible Bulgarian regions also display a higher ageing index than the national average (cf. Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, Census 2011). The mean age of the population on the Bulgarian part of the eligible area shows higher values than for the Turkish part of the programme area. Focussing especially on the provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli shows that especially Edirne displays a quite low median age of 31,8 years for females and 29,7 years for males (data from 2012). Until 2023 the mean age is expected to rise to 33,7 years for females and 31,9 years for males (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013a).

The life expectancy at birth for the whole CBC area is quite high and generally corresponds to the respective national average. The life expectancy in the CBC region is up to 76,6 years. Generally, the region can be classified as a prepared region towards the issue of an ageing population. The region therefore performs better than one of the northern Bulgarian regions (vulnerable regions) but on the Turkish side the area around Istanbul performs better and is therefore classified as a low impact region concerning ageing.

Challenges

- The acceleration of demographic change (including ageing and the decrease of population) constitutes a long-term challenge intensifying further and having major economic, social and territorial implications on the CBC region.
- Increasing levels of poverty, low income and social exclusion illustrate major challenges, which may further focus especially on rural and peripheral areas – which already being characterised by negative transformation processes – due to the increasing concentration of economic activities on main cities and urban hubs.
- Negative Migration – constitutes a major challenge for those parts of the CBC region, which are already affected by negative population developments (shrinking of total population, ageing of population).
- The needs of regional labour markets are often not met by the available workforce, i.e. missing qualifications, etc.; labour market supply and labour market demand are therefore not corresponding. This results in an additional increase of the already high level of unemployment.
- The situation of a declining economy and rising unemployment cannot be balanced by growing sectors, like industry and service; on contrary, the situation is further intensified through a limited rate of job creation rate and a partly low labour force participation rate.

Needs

- There exists the regional need to make full use of the existing labour potential and to enhance labour force participation in order to face diverse challenges including ageing, brain drain occurrences and rising global competition.
- The skills of the labour force need to meet the needs of the labour market, including sufficient qualifications such as IT and foreign language skills to improve the general competitiveness of the private sector.
- There exists the urgent need to fight poverty and minimise social exclusion; both challenges are currently further intensified by rising unemployment levels and a generally low adaptability of the labour force to changing conditions, therefore more and better employment opportunities need to be developed and implemented.

Environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation & risk prevention and management

Taking a look at different environmental media, such as air, water and soil shows, that the air conditions in the region are quite good, with the *“main reasons for air pollution are emissions of fuel used in industry and for households heating and exhaust gases of vehicles”* (Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 19).

The same situation is visible in the field of surface water, main reason for polluted water is the lack of sewerage systems in the majority of smaller municipalities. For ground water, there is pollution with phosphates or nitrates (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 19). In Haskovo and Jambol districts nearly 70% of the population live in areas with public sewerage systems, that is close to the national average, whereas in Burgas region almost the total population live in areas with public sewerage systems (cf. Regional Profiles, 2014: online).

In the Turkish provinces Edirne and Kırklareli 100% of the population is served by water supply networks (2010). The rate of population served by drinking water treatment plant amounts 41% in Edirne and 24% in Kırklareli. This is also mirrored in the actual investments in water supply facilities, whereas the province of Kirklarlíe shows a quite higher expenditure (more than 210.000 TL) than the province of Edirne, which resembles the need for improvement in Kırklareli (about 6.000 TL) (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2010).

In the field of soil, erosion is a main issue for the region, where especially larger areas in Kırklareli are affected (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 19).

Both countries have a tradition in the preservation and management of nature. The issue of the maintenance of biodiversity is an important topic in the area and a range of regional best-practice examples is already available (Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013: 20). The region also hosts a number of nature parks and protected areas, such as the Strandja Nature Park in Bulgaria and the Gala Lake National Park in Turkey (Edirne). Additionally, the two areas Kasatura Korfezi Nature Reserve (Kırklareli) and Saka Lake Nature Reserve (Kırklareli) are located in the province of Kırklareli (cf. Strandja, 2014: online; Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2014a/b: online).

Taking into account the environmental situation, some differences between the two neighbouring countries may be identified. Especially for the topics of health and heat waves different results for the area become evident. Northern parts of Bulgaria and the Turkish regions being engaged in CBC, are classified as vulnerable regions whereas the eastern eligible Bulgarian regions are categorised as most vulnerable ones. Generally, the whole cross-border area is rated as region with deficits to adapt to climate change. The cluster to which the cross-border area belongs is *“characterized by general below average performances in adaptive capacities, once again reflecting the lag in their national economies compared to the EU average”* (OIR et al., 2011: 71).

One main environmental issue includes the Black Sea, which is one of the main connection factors of the CBC region (both Burgas and Kırklareli are connected to the Sea). The Black Sea is habitat for 168 fish types, four different marine mammals and thousand of plants.

Generally, the Black Sea faces numerous problems and threats such as the decrease of biological resources, declining diversity of spaces as well as the reduction of aesthetic values of the sea (cf. Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, 2013: online). Reasons for these developments are pollution, irresponsible fishing in the sea as well as eutrophication. Taking into account, for example the total amount of loaded and unloaded goods³ in the NUTS 2 regions Yugoiztochen (BG) and Tekirdag, Edirne, Kırklareli (TR), shows an excessive increase in Turkey

³

“Goods loaded refers to goods placed on a means of transport and dispatched” (EUROSTAT, 2014: online).

between 2010 and 2011 (2010: 4.576 thousand tonnes to 16.093 thousand tonnes). Due to the efforts of the last years, improvements are already visible, although these are *“still in the early stages, [and] are unstable and still far from the strategic target: that is to bring the conditions of the environment back to those that were observed in the 1960s”* (Black Sea Commission, 2013: online). Therefore, the BSEC especially points out, that *“elaborate work needs to be done in this sphere individually and collectively by the Member States and with the support/involvement, when and where needed, of the Third Parties who are also responsible, albeit partly, for the existing pollution. The NGO support and active participation in combating pollution is an effective way and needs to be propagated”* (BSEC, 2014a: online).

Another relevant issue for the CBC region is the issue of natural threats, especially flooding. Maritsa River is the biggest river on the Balkan peninsula with a catchment area more than 53.000 km². Maritsa River basin has been quite densely populated (more than 2 million people on the Bulgarian territory), highly industrialised and with intensive agriculture. The basin area at the upper course of the river has predominantly high-mountain character while the character in the middle and lower river course is plain. The biggest tributaries of Maritsa River are Tunca and Arda Rivers. While Arda River does not belong to the Bulgarian-Turkish border area, the Tunca River crosses the border region and marks the border between the two countries for about 9 km. Tunca River catchments area is about 7884 km² and the length on the Bulgarian territory is 350 km. Arda and Tunca Rivers converge the main stream of Maritsa river on Turkish territory, south of the Bulgarian – Turkish border near the city of Edirne.

The climatic and geographical characteristics of Maritsa and Tunca River Basins lead to specific run-off conditions: flash floods, high inter-annual variability, heavy soil erosion reducing the channel and reservoirs' capacities through sedimentation, etc. The destructive forces of climatic hazards manifesting themselves in the form of rainstorms, severe thunderstorms, intensive snowmelt, floods and droughts. Climate change is a causative element in flood disasters. Despite of the significant number of reservoirs and cascades having total capacity for Maritsa and Tunca about $2.2 \times 10^9 \text{m}^3$ and for Arda about $1 \times 10^9 \text{m}^3$ in the Bulgarian territory, their retention possibilities are not sufficient to reduce (control) the floods downstream.

In February 2005 and March 2006, significant flood hazards occurred in Maritsa River Basin. A lot of losses in agriculture occurred, in 2006, along the lower part of Tunca, 2.500 ha agricultural area were heavily affected and downstream at the city of Edirne flooded area was 37.500 ha.

As part of prevention, four telemetric hydrometry stations have been established in Bulgarian part of the Maritsa catchments, one is on the Arda river, cast after Ivaylovgrad dam (close to Greece border), two stations installed on the main channel of Maritsa river, one in Plovdiv city the other one near to Svilengrad town and the forth one established on Tunca River in Elhovo. These stations are recording continuously and supplying real time river data using satellite and GSM communication systems to the both countries.

Starting from PHARE Cross-Border Co-operation Programme (CBC) between Bulgaria and Turkey as well as continuing with Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, several projects have been implemented so to prevent the floods in the CBC region (cf. Plovdiv, 2014: online).

Another environmental threat for the CBC region are fires that occur as a result of climate change so respective measures need to be tackled. During the programming period 2007-2013 there are good examples for cooperation between respective Bulgarian and Turkish equivalent institutions in terms of population prevention of natural and man-made hazards. This is a good ground for continuous cooperation between the partnering countries.

Challenges

- The region is vulnerable towards natural hazards and coastal threats, which negatively corresponds to the intensified effects of climate change manifesting themselves through an increase of the frequency and intensity of natural hazards (flooding, droughts, etc.).
- The region as a low energy efficient area and its high dependency on fossil fuels faces challenges of energy secure in energy supply.
- The increasing pressure on the environment due to urbanisation, intensified agriculture, and transport worsens the existing negative situation of local environmental pollution in different sectors.
- Despite existing initiatives for the protection of the Black Sea, the region faces a number of major challenges including the decrease of biological resources, declining diversity of spaces and the reduction of aesthetic values.

Needs

- Integrated and coordinated territorial approaches as well as more and better measures, including a higher degree of information sharing, are needed for the effective management of natural hazards and climate change risks which will gain in gravity and frequency.
- Existing (economic) pressure on natural resources needs to be reduced, as e.g. economic growth needs to be decoupled from the use of natural resources; labour intensive pollutant sectors like textile, leather and chemistry therefore need to be modified.
- The good environmental conditions of the region need to be kept and developed; natural parks and ecological zones need to be further improved.
- A sustainable management and the protection of natural resources is a necessity for the CBC region to improve the efficiency of use of natural resources in the area.
- A better integration of the protected areas into spatial development is needed.
- Actions and common approaches are needed to improve the environmental state and the conditions of the Black Sea (incl. coastal zones) and to further promote and encourage already existing initiatives in the area.
- In the field of sustainability, all activities need to take the well-being of the natural environment, the society and the economy – as well as their reciprocal influences – into consideration.

Sustainable transport and public infrastructures

The CBC region is served by a number of transport infrastructures, additionally three border crossings are in operation in the area: Kapitan–Andreevo/Kapikule, Lesovo–Hamzabeyli and Malko Tarnovo–Dereköy. In the field of TEN-T and the core network (aiming at removing bottlenecks, upgrading infrastructure, etc.), the region is part of the Orient/ East-Med corridor (cf. EU COM, 2013b: online). “The Orient/East-Med Corridor connects the maritime interfaces of the North, Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas, allowing optimising the use of the ports concerned and the related Motorways of the Sea. Including Elbe as inland waterway, it will improve the multimodal connections between Northern Germany, the Czech Republic, the Pannonian region and Southeast Europe. It extends, across the sea, from Greece to Cyprus⁴” (EU COM, 2013c: online). Taking into account the

⁴ Cyprus is used as a geographical term to describe the Island of Cyprus.

vulnerability of the regions towards the mobility of persons and goods shows that the region is endowed with less air and sea transport infrastructure. "This relative weakness, however, implies that there is considerable opportunity for the successful implementation of development strategies based on transportation hub functions in this part of Europe" (OIR et al., 2011: 16). The high vulnerability in the field of accessibility, may be expressed in " a twofold challenge, where a capacity which could possibly offset accessibility disadvantages is not yet available" (OIR et al., 2011: 20; cf. p. 16).

This is also underlined by the fact, that "Turkey and the Mediterranean neighbourhood have distinctly lower road densities, they are also sparsely populated. Rail network densities compared to population, on the other hand, are distinctly higher within Europe than in Neighbourhood states" (OIR et al., 2011: 20).

The region is crossed by the A1 Trakia Motoway from Sofia to Burgas on the Bulgarian side of the border. Furthermore a rather new motorway, the A4 Maritsa Motorway, is crossing the Turkish borderregion and connects the provinces of Haskovo and Edirne. The O-3 Motoway in Turkey furthermore connects the province of Edirne with Istanbul. The state roads D100, D110, D550, D555 are connecting both provinces to each other and to the motorway. The main share of roads in Edirne and Kirklareli includes village roads, in Edirne village roads amount around 1.800 kilometres, in Kirklareli around 1.900 km (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012b). Both provinces hold just a small share of motorways (51 kilometres in Edirne and 70 kilometres in Kirklareli) (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012b).

The railway network in the cross-border area is operated by the Bulgarian State Railways (BDZ) on the Bulgarian side and by the Turkish Republic State Railways (TCDD) on the Turkish side of the CBC region. Regarding railway service, there exists only one cross border connection (for railways) which is located at the border of Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece (Kapitan–Andreevo/Kapıkule). The length of railway kilometres amounts 96 kilometres in Edirne, and 110 kilometres in Kirklareli (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012b).

The biggest airport of the region is located in the district of Burgas. The Burgas Airport served 2,4 Mio. passengers in 2012 and is the second biggest airport in Bulgaria.

The harbour of Burgas is the largest harbour in Bulgaria and within the CBC Region. The provinces of Edirne and Kirklareli do not have a significant port.

Generally, public infrastructure in the region is far developed, e.g. *"the public water supply infrastructure serves 99,6% of the population of the Bulgarian side and 92% of the population of the Turkish side of the programme area. It terms of quality of this service there are still some problems with water loss during transport on Bulgarian side of the cooperation area"* (Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 18). Additionally, also energy infrastructure is well developed, whereas especially natural gas has become an alternative for both, households and industries (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 18).

Challenges

- A clear core-periphery pattern in road and rail is still visible in the CBC region.
- The region is characterised by its peripheral situation in a European perspective, which is further intensified by a low level of accessibility, including low densities of transport infrastructure.
- There exists partly inefficiency of public infrastructure in different sectors including waste and wastewater treatment.
- Challenging situation in order to safeguard the natural resource fresh water.

Needs

- Inefficiencies in public infrastructure provision need to be reduced, preferable applying a cross-border approach to lessen redundancies (e.g. in the field of water supply utilities and wastewater treatment plants).
- Harmonising with EU technical legislation on increasing levels of treated waste water and disposed waste is necessary for the treatment of waste waters arising from the industry sector.
- The development of new and better forms of public transport is needed.
- Transportation projects aiming at the integration of the Black Sea harbours and the enhancement of the North-South connection of the region are relevant issues.
- The market share of railways needs to be increased, which will have positive effects on the safety level and the travel time; additionally connections to the TEN-T network need to be established.

Tourism and cultural and natural heritage

The tourism and cultural and natural heritage are important mean for the joint development of the area and illustrates a main asset of the co-operation area. In this direction both countries Bulgaria and Turkey have strong relationships over the years – from the very beginning of the CBC cooperation and of course in the current Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013.

The culture and nature in the area are rich, unique as well as diverse and are possible basis for continuation of traditional actions as well as establishment of new joint touristic development actions.

NATURAL HERITAGE

STRANDZHA / ISTRANCA MOUNTAIN

Strandzha/Istranca is a mountain massif in southeastern Bulgaria and the northwestern part of Turkey, in the southeastern part of the Balkans between the plains of Thrace to the west, the lowlands near Burgas to the north and the Black Sea to the east. Its highest peak is Mahiada (Mahya Dağı) (1,031 m) in Turkey, while the highest point on Bulgarian territory is Golyamo Gradishte (710 m). The total area of the massif is approximately 10,000 km². The climate of the area is considerably influenced by the Black Sea and is predominantly humid continental in the mountains and humid subtropical at the coast. Major rivers in the area are the Veleka (147 km) and the border river Rezovska (12 km). Strandzha Natural Park, established in 1995 in the Bulgarian part of the massif, is the largest protected area in Bulgaria, embracing 1,161 km² (448 sq mi), or about 1% of Bulgaria's total territory. Strandzha/Istranca mountain is a place of extraordinary natural and historical riches. A living museum – it is a bridge between two continents: Europe and Asia. This makes the area unique in Europe for its flora and fauna. The special nature here is a result of its geological past, climate and geographical location. The plant communities in the mountain developed before Europe was separated from Asia by the formation of the Bosphorus Strait that now connects the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Land-ice never reached the mountain during the ice-ages. This lack of glaciations has created a unique window to the past. Plants that were once widespread on the European continent during the Tertiary period are now only preserved in Strandzha/Istranca. That is why the mountain is a living museum. The landscape of Strandzha/Istranca is beautiful. A sea of green, hilly woods is intersected by naturally meandering rivers. The longest of these, the Veleka River, flows out into the Black Sea in an untamed estuary. Strandzha/Istranca mountain is reach with karst terrain, with steep limestone cliffs, many mineral springs and complex cave systems. The mountain is a haven for

wildlife. Steep and stony hillsides, and deep ravines and gorges are the home of spectacular birds and mammals such species as: Wildcat, Golden Jackal, Otter, Black Stork, Golden Eagle, Eagle Owl and Corn Crake. 134 Bird species breed in the park, but many more can be seen. The Via Pontica bird migration route brings many more species in large numbers to this special area, bringing the total recorded number of bird species to 270. During the migration, enormous groups of storks, pelicans and eagles fly over the park and along the coast. The area has a very rich culture and history as well. Inhabited by the Thracians in antiquity, the area is famous with a large concentration of ruins of Thracian sanctuaries and sacrificial altars, dolmens and other archaeological objects.

INEADA / İĞNEADA LAKES AND LONGOZ FORESTS NATIONAL PARK

The Park is located at the Turkish part of the CBC area. It is defined as a National Park on 13.11.2007. The lakes within the borders of İğneada are famous with its multiple species of fishes and oxygen-rich atmosphere. Although İğneada has 7 lakes, the most important ones are Mert Lake, Hamam Lake, Erikli Lake and Saka Lake. The first lake “Mert Lake” is just about 12 Kms far away from the Bulgarian border. It is known that, in the lagoons of İğneada, in the lakes, on the wetlands and on the streams 30 different species of fish live. Mert Lake has the highest diversity of fish between those lakes. Hamam and Pedina Lakes can also be defined as an accommodation point for birds, wild ducks and swans coming from Bulgaria, Russia and from the Danube River. The Longoz forests which are completely covered with water during winter and spring has a floristic composition of mixed forest trees of 8-15 meters tall. The protection of the habitat of these forests has crucial importance. Because, these forests are not only a rare natural value for Turkey but also for Europe.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

The cultural heritage of the region is broadening its importance both at national and international level.

EDIRNE CITY – LIVING MUSEUM

One of the most ancient cities in the region is Edirne. The city is one of the oldest settlements of both Thrace and Anatolia. Dating back to the neolithic age 7.000-6.000 B.C. with last excavations, examples of prehistoric monuments – dolmens, menhirs and tumulus – can be seen from its outskirts, notably in the Çardakaltı prehistoric settlement and in Lalapasa. The various historical names Edirne has had indicate the many historical periods it has been through. From Odrisia – founded by the Thracian civilisation Odryses in the 5th century B.C. – to Hadrianopolis – after Roman Emperor Hadrian who re-founded the city in the 2nd (123-124) century A.C., it was named Edirne by Sultan Murad I in 1361. As an economic and commercial centre, life in Edirne was rich and colourful and bazaars and caravanserais spread around the city. Four ancient bazaars are worth seeing: Bedesten, a covered bazaar where valuable goods and jewellery were sold, Arasta Bazaar, Ali Pasa Bazaar, the centre of commercial life in the 16-17th centuries with 129 shops, and Rüstempasa Caravanserai which was converted into a hotel in 1972. The last two buildings were built by the architect Sinan. Edirne is a city of rivers – the Meriç, Arda and Tunca rivers all meet at Edirne and join the Ergene river in the south. Edirne has become famous for the historical bridges on these many rivers – Gazi Mihal bridge built in 1420 is the oldest and Uzunköprü bridge the longest (1 392 m long) with 174 arches. The Museums preserve and reflect the history and traditions of the city: the health museum (Sultan Bayezid II. Mosque and Complex) is one of the most important health centres of its period 15 century where patients were treated with the sound of water, music, scents, various occupations, as well as medical knowledge and medicine; Edirne archeology and ethnography museum where household goods and furniture, rugs, coins, dresses, wooden goods are exhibited; Kirkpinar house – encasing belongings of Kirkpinar wrestlers, pictures and documents about Kirkpinar; Hafizaga kioskue (the city history museum) is an authentic example of traditional Turkish houses. The Edirne city has a rich

cultural heritage that makes it a living museum. That is why, for example, Edirne City was awarded “2008 European Tourist Destination of Excellence in Intangible Heritage” (cf. EU COM, 2014: online).

SOZOPOL AND NESSEBAR – THE ACIENT BEAUTIES OF THE BULGARIAN SEASIDE

There are also many other acient cities in the CBC region. In Bulgaria Sozopol and Nessebar are the most acient ones. Sozopol is located 34 kilometers south of Burgas, at the most southern point of the wide Burgas bay. Centuries ago, the Thracians were the first settlers on these lands, but it was the Greeks who set up the first settlement in the 7th century BC. Sozopol is one of the oldest seaside towns in Bulgaria, set up as early as 610 BC by the Greeks. They named it Apolonia after their God of Beauty, Apollo. Gradually the settlement grew into a trading centre for honey, grain, wine, olive oil and pottery. In the 6th century BC, the town already had coined its own money. During the reign of the Bulgarian khan Krum, Sozopol became Bulgarian territory. Contemporary Sozopol is a tourist center. Sozopol attracts visitors with its narrow cobbled streets, old stone houses rising on both sides. Nessebar is located 37 km north of Burgas and is one of Europe’s oldest towns, inheritor of the ancient Thracian settlement, Messemvria. Messemvria developed into a big and well-fortified town, benefiting from the natural guard of the sea. It became an important trade center, too. In the 5th century BC, the town started to coin its own money. In the Middle Ages the town remained under Roman and Byzantine domination, up to 812, when it was included under the lands ruled by the Bulgarians, led by khan Krum. Legend has it that throughout its history, Nessebar had a total of 40 churches. Currently there are 26. The town is ranked number one in the world for number of churches per capita. Nessebar is also known as the Bulgarian Ravenna, thanks to its numerous and well-preserved churches, especially those dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. In 1956 UNESCO placed Nessebar on its World Cultural Heritage list. That is why Sozopol, Nesebar and South Bulgarian Black sea Coast (from Sozopol to the Turkish border) are involved in the the famous Michelin Guide “Top 1000 worldwide places to visit” (cf. Travel Michelin, 2014: online).

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Although the major tourist destinations of the CBC region are at the Black Sea coast, in the recent years some new forms of “all seasons tourist destinations/atractions” have occurred, e.g. SPA tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, rural tourism, sport tourism, etc. For the past several years one of the most popular attractions from the “all inclusive tourist packages” of Bulgarian Black sea hotels are short one or two days visits of the natural, cultural and historical places in the CBC region. Based on the assessment of the CBC Programme 2007-13, the touristic potential of the Turkish regions of the CBC region continues to be unexploited (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 13), although over the years 2011 to 2013 some new four and five stars hotels have been build in Edirne so to further develop the tourism sector of the province.

Considering tourism figures trends for the period 2007 - 2012 show that there is a general increase of number of total nights spent in the region from 6,5 million in 2007 to 7,7 million in 2012. On one hand there is a decrease of the general number of accommodation establishments in the region from 1.217 in 2007 to 714 in 2012 mainly due to the closure of establishments in Burgas region during the economic crisis in the years 2008-2009. On the other hand for the same period 2007-2012 Haskovo Region, Edirne Province and Kırklareli Province have increased the accommodation establishments with 31 % on average. (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012c) (cf. National Statistical Institute Bulgaria, 2014i,j,k: online).

In the field of tourism there is an excellent ground for cooperation as it is a leading economic sector in all regional and national strategic documents in the field.

Challenges

- Climate change and its variety of negative territorial impacts illustrate major threats for the region's summer tourism, which is especially for the Black Sea region (summer resorts) a main economic factor.
- The touristic exploitation of the region, including mass tourism, illustrates a major danger for the high valued landscapes, natural habitats and ecological corridors of the area; innovative tourism practises should be implemented in order to regulate and better prevent the exploitation of protected areas.
- Publicizing the natural, cultural and historical values of the region.

Needs

- There exists the need of a common cooperative management of cultural heritage in a sustainable way, taking into account the environmental needs of the protected areas, as well as coastal zones and nature reservoirs.
- New and better diversified tourist products and services are needed.
- Necessity of advertising tourism as well as natural, culture and historical heritage.

Youth, education and skills

As already outlined, youth unemployment has been identified as a major future threat for the cross-border area and especially the Turkish side of the region *“faces out-migration especially of young and educated people and depopulation of the rural areas because of better job opportunities in urban areas”* (Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013, 2011: 9).

The situation of education in the CBC area, shows a quite positive picture: the relative share of the population aged between 25 and 64 years with higher education is constantly on the rise in the Bulgarian districts of the eligible programme area, whereas Yambol District registered with 22,4% of the total population aged between 25 and 64 years the highest share of population with a higher education level. Burgas District registered a value of 18,6% and Haskovo District recorded the value of 18,5% (cf. National Statistics Institute, 2014d,e,f: online). And also in Turkey, the share of the population aged between 25 and 64 years with higher education is constantly on the rise (8,9% in 2008 and 12,9% in 2012 in the district of Kırklareli; 9,7% in 2008 and 13,6% in 2012 in the district of Edirne). In contrary, especially the relative share of the population with primary or lower education is declining mainly in Burgas and Yambol District (36,1% in 2007 decreased to 29% in 2012 in Burgas respectively 22,2% in 2007 decreased to 17,9% in Yambol). For the district of Haskovo, no major improvements are though recognisable (cf. National Statistics Institute, 2014d,e,f: online). In Kırklareli and Edirne the relative share of the population aged between 25 and 64 years with primary or lower education is also decreasing although the share of the population with primary or lower education is on a higher level than in Bulgaria. In the education sector, the Turkish provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli are well equipped with different types of schools, in total there exist around 400 schools in Edirne and 300 schools in Kırklareli. Overall about 48.000 students and 7.600 graduates were involved in vocational training (school) and undergraduate programs of higher education institutions in these regions in 2012 (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2011).

Challenges

- Brain-drain occurrences and increasing out-migration due to missing (employment) possibilities for young employees exist in the region.
- Education and vocational training are not oriented to the demands of the regional labour market.

- There exist partly high levels of early-school leavers and to some extent poor reading competences of the region's population, according to PISA tests results.

Needs

- Joint efforts to reduce brain-drain occurrences and increasing out-migration of young qualified employees are needed.
- The partly low education level needs to be improved - especially poor reading competences and early-school leavers need to be reduced – by improving the general quality of the education at all levels.

Local and regional governance, planning and administrative capacity

For the past decades Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Turkey became partners in many areas. These relations “have made comprehensive progress in every field and contacts at all levels have increased. Framework required for improving bilateral economic and commercial relations has been completed” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2012: online). Today the relations have enhanced, at present Bulgaria and Turkey are two neighbouring and allied countries which have improved “active role in regional cooperation processes and have similar foreign policy orientations” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2012: online).

Nowadays the countries are important trading partners, e.g. increased bilateral trade volume from 2,4 billion Euro in 2010 to 2,83 billion Euro in 2011 (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2012: online).

For spatial planning in *Bulgaria*, the local governments are the basic units, and the municipal council is the deliberative body. Municipal councils also hold the competence of preparing master development plans and local land use regulations as basis for spatial planning in Bulgarian municipalities (cf. Totic et al., 2010: 81f.). Although the districts – which are corresponding to the NUTS-3 units – represent a de-concentrated state administration unit and are responsible “*for implementing the government's policy at regional level. There is no elected district government. The district administrations are part of the State organisation and are financed from the State budget. Its competences are mainly to supervise the legal decisions of the local authorities and to participate in the preparation of regional development plans*” (Totic et al., 2010: 82).

On the national level, the Ministry of Regional Development (MRD) holds the competence for spatial planning. Relevant planning documents include the national integrated spatial development scheme (whole country), the district development schemes (district, region), the master development plans for the territories of municipalities and towns as well as detailed development plans (municipalities, towns) (cf. Totic et al., 2010: 84).

In Turkey's planning system, the plans could be classified as follows according to the level of territorial competence: the development plans, strategic spatial plans and regional plans at national and NUTS II level, the territorial arrangement plans covering the map scale from 1:25,000 to 1:100,000 mainly at provincial level corresponding to NUTS III level, and the land development plans covering the map scale less than 1:5,000 at municipal level.

In terms of development plans, the Ministry of Development (MoD) has the legal mandate in the preparation of national and regional development plans. In this respect, MoD prepares the national development plan (NDP) and the national strategy for regional development (NSRD). MoD makes the development agencies prepare the regional development plans at NUTS II level in line with NSRD and NDP. In terms of spatial plans, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (MoEU) has the authority to prepare the spatial strategic plans both at national and regional levels.

In compliance with national and regional planning decisions, the territorial arrangement plans of non-metropolitan provinces are prepared by the MoEU and territorial arrangement plans of metropolitan

provinces are prepared by Metropolitan Municipalities. At municipal level, the land development plans comprising the master plan and the implementation plan are prepared by the municipalities in line with the territorial plans. Land use, physical planning and zoning processes are included in land development plans.

Besides cross-border cooperation, Bulgaria and Turkey are both members of the BSEC (Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation), in which for the period 1 January - 30 June 2014 Bulgaria had the chairmanship. The Members of the BSEC Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hellenic Republic, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and the Ukraine cooperate among others in the areas of Tourism, Trade & Economic Development Environmental Protection and Transport (cf. BSEC, 2014b: online).

Challenges

- There exist differences between the two participating countries in fiscal discipline and commitment challenging EU integration.
- The administrative capacity and possibility of absorbing EU funds for cooperation is partly limited.
- Common management efforts of institutions across borders are needed to face increasing man-made and natural disasters (both in frequency and scale).

Needs

- Measures needed to improve public services.
- Improvements for a coherent and better integrated assessment and management of risks (e.g. climate change, critical infrastructure) are needed.

Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment

The cross-border region of Bulgaria and Turkey is marked with insufficient economic growth rates, a generally disadvantageous economic situation and a high unemployment rate. Both, Bulgaria as well as Turkey, benefit from the establishment of cooperative networks in cross-border and/or isolated areas.

The industry of the region – except for the harbor area of Burgas – has a mono-structural character and is concentrated in the big cities, whereas in border communes agriculture and forestry (Strandja Mountain) prevail. Just on Black Sea coast marine tourism is developed but beginnings of rural tourism appear in Strandja area (natural and cultural artifacts of Strandja Natural Park). The biggest industrial center in the region is Burgas (shipbuilding, chemical industry, tourism) followed by Yambol and Haskovo.

Agriculture is dominating in border communes with traditional crops as cereals, fruits and vegetables, grapes. Stock breeding is prevailing pasture grounded in the mountain. As a whole agriculture is faced with a number of restrictions: dispersed ownership, reduced irrigated areas, obsolete facilities, shortage of investments and new technologies, deficiencies in the integration with the food industry, etc. Today, both sides of the border show a low level of GDP per capita in purchasing power parities (up to 13.900), additionally the area is very vulnerable towards the distribution of income. Taking a look at the Gini coefficient indicates, that especially in the Bulgarian regions of the CBC area, inequalities of income are visible (coefficient: more than 34). On the Turkish part of the eligible programme area the coefficient ranges between 32,1 and 34.

Generally, the majority of enterprises in the CBC region are small and medium sized (SMEs), the share of SMEs amount 98% on the Bulgarian side and 96% on the Turkish side (cf. Bulgaria-Turkey

IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013: 13; Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, 2014). In the Turkish provinces Edirne and Kirklareli nearly 40.000 companies of different sectors exist.

The largest number of companies is available in the wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles branche as well as in the transport and storage sector (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012d). In 2012, the companies based in Edirne imported \$121 million and exported \$47 million. Companies in Kirklareli imported \$138 million and exported \$141 million (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012e).

Challenges

- SMEs, which form the basis as well as the majority of businesses in the CBC region, show a lack of competitiveness compared to global economic activities.
- The existing business structures and the low level of investment in R&D and research diffusion are responsible for lower average growth rates in comparison to the EU's main economic partners.
- Unsatisfactory situation of the business environment and existing disparities between inland and coastal municipalities (mainly in the Bulgarian part).
- The Black Sea region illustrates an expanding market with major development potential, especially for energy and transport flows.

Needs

- There exists the need to improve the access of SME's to the European single market and to increase the recognition of the region's enterprises beyond the border.
- The reduction of interregional economic disparities – especially in rural areas – is needed.
- The improvement of competitiveness and productivity of SMEs is needed.
- Need to create better conditions for sustainable economic development in the regions.

Research, technological development, innovation and ICT

In terms of R&D the CBC region is under developed and is not ranked among the leading R&D regions of Europe. Nevertheless there are four universities⁵ in the CBC region. The investments in R&D are far from the national levels both for Bulgaria and Turkey, mainly due to the structure of economy.

A look at the Bulgarian districts shows, that in Burgas district, the expenditure on R&D is at comparably higher level than in the other two districts (Burgas: 5.337 thousand BGN, Yambol: 444 thousand BGN, Haskovo: 341 thousand BGN) of the participating area.

For the NUTS-2 region Yuzhentsentralen (district of Haskovo), innovations are mainly visible in the sector of agriculture and food, additional the Commission identified a potential of regional research organisations/universities to become centres of excellence (cf. EU COM, 2012f: online).

In Bulgaria, the relative share of households with internet access is constantly increasing; between 2007 and 2012 the relative share increased strongly up to 50%, whereas especially Burgas region shows a value of 53,5% of the households having access to the internet in 2012 (Haskovo region: 47,5%; Yambol region: 46%) (cf. National Statistical Institute Bulgaria, 2014i,j,k: online).

Regarding ICT Turkey in total shows an increase in the field of households with internet access (starting with 19,7% of the households with internet access in 2007, reaching 47,2% in 2012) and the

⁵ Burgas Technological University; Burgas Free University; Trakya University in Edirne; Kirklareli University;

share of individuals aged 16-74 regularly using the internet (starting with 30,1% in 2007, reaching 47,4% in 2012) (cf. Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014) and has set quite ambitious targets for the year 2023, including:

- *“Reaching 30 million broadband subscribers*
- *Providing internet connection for 14 million houses at a speed of 1,000 Mbps*
- *Increasing the sector's share in GDP from 2.9 percent to 8 percent*
- *Becoming one of the top 10 countries in e-transformation*
- *Having 80 percent of the population computer literate*
- *Increasing the number of companies to 5,500; employees to 65,000; and exports to USD 10 billion in TDZs*
- *Increasing the ICT sector's size to USD 160 billion, with a market growth of around 15 percent each year*
- *Increasing the R&D expenditure to GDP ratio to 3 percent from 0.85 percent” (Republic of Turkey/Prime Ministry, 2014c: online)*

Challenges

- Research and innovation are increasingly internationally interlinked.
- Generally, there exists a low level of investment in R&D and innovation, a low level of employees being active in the sector of science and technology and ICT is just insufficiently used in the area.
- ICT infrastructure is mainly concentrated on major cities and the market for innovative ICT products and services is highly fragmented.

Needs

- It needs to be ensured, that Europe's research and enterprise networks are generally connected to global knowledge networks.
- There exists the need to promote the development of broadband infrastructure and the introduction of online service in different fields (government, business, health, education, research).
- Policies need to be better coordinated and resources need to be better specialised to improve poles of ICT excellence in Europe.
- Framework conditions and access to finance for R&D and innovation need to be improved.

SWOT analysis: Potentials and Barriers for further development

The SWOT analysis is an analytical tool to assess the efficiency of policies and programmes to obtain an overview highlighting positive and negative aspects for different policy and development options. The analysis provides a formal way of identifying strengths and weaknesses of each option and of examining the opportunities and threats that arise from them.

To conduct the analysis both kinds of information for the SWOT analysis – the internal ones as well as the external ones – were identified with the gained information from the desk research.

Additionally, the method shows which potentials may result from combining internal strengths of a region with the possible opportunities, identified from external strategic documents or current trends. Moreover, the analysis reveals, how difficulties (weaknesses) can illustrate a possible regional

potential, if combined with current trends and possible opportunities. The combination of these identified internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats finally led to potentials and barriers identified for the region.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Internal strengths

Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion	
1	Partly positive demographic developments (positive net migration), mainly in the Turkish regions of the area
2	High life expectancy and birth rates corresponding to the respective national average
3	Increased employment and activity rates
4	Culture of social solidarity and assistance
Environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	
1	Moderately good conditions of different environmental media, including air, water and soil, being appreciated by the local residents
2	Strong tradition of preserving and managing nature, esp. maintenance of biodiversity, and respect for the environment
3	Abundance of natural resources
4	The region hosts a dense network of protected areas and a number of protected areas with well-preserved biodiversity and ecosystems: Strandja Nature Park (BG), Gala Lake National Park (TR), Kasatura Korfezi Nature Reserve (TR) Saka Lake Nature Reserve (TR)
5	Progressive modernisation of the productive system and declining of final energy consumption (possibly induced by the crisis, not efficiency)
Transport and public infrastructures	
1	Sufficient rail network densities, mainly in Turkish regions
2	Major improvements in the road sector, connecting the two countries, including new construction and rehabilitation of roads
3	Far developed regional public infrastructure and on-going improvements in some sectors, i.e. water supply infrastructure, energy infrastructure
4	Three, well-functioning border check points
Tourism and cultural and natural heritage	
1	Cultural heritage as important regional and identity building asset - culture, heritage and traditions are rich, unique and diverse
2	Existing natural, historical and cultural assets of good conditions for tourism activities
Youth, education and skills	
1	Good adult education system
2	Access of population to all levels of education
3	Well equipped education system in the Turkish regions and increase of the number of universities

4	Increasing share of population with a higher level of education (tertiary education)
5	Widespread ICT infrastructure in formal education, mainly in Turkish regions
Local and regional governance, planning and administrative capacity	
1	Partnership and existing experience in CBC cooperation and in implementing common programmes and joint projects
2	Good bilateral relations and traditionally good relations among people as basis of continuing CBC of mutual interest
3	Existing framework for improving bilateral economic and commercial relations
4	On-going decentralisation processes, supporting economic autonomy and their budgets
5	On-going administrative and judicial reforms in Bulgaria, aiming at the introduction of specific tools for policy making and implementation
6	Partly high administration capacity of local governments and high rates of disbursement of EU funds
Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	
1	SMEs form the majority of businesses in the area
2	Increased economic activity and increased number of employees, production and services of SMEs
3	Access to existing industrial infrastructure and newly developed industrial sites
4	Workforce with comparatively low wage expectations
5	Positive development regarding the GDP per head
Research, technological development, innovation and ICT	
1	Existing hotspots of R&D activities in the field of chemical industries, ICT, energy and agriculture
2	Partly existing regional R&D plans
3	Increasing R&D expenditures
4	Partly high share of households with internet access

Internal weaknesses

Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion	
1	Partly strong negative demographic development (decrease of population, higher ageing index than national average), mainly in the Bulgarian regions of the area and in rural areas
2	High unemployment rate and high vulnerability concerning the transformation of labour markets
3	High rate of unregistered employment and just limited coverage of the social security system, mainly in the Turkish regions of the area
4	High seasonal unemployment, due to instability in the tourism sector (strong focus on summer tourism)
5	Brain drain occurrences, due to high unemployment rates

6	Low level of adaptability and employability of people disadvantaged at the labour market
7	Discrepancy between existing professional qualifications of the labour force and labour market demands and expectations.
8	High risk of poverty and low income levels
9	Low level of labour force participation and employment, particularly for women
Environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	
1	Local environmental pollution, including groundwater pollution with phosphates or nitrates
2	Lack of sewerage systems in the majority of small municipalities
3	Bad environmental state of the Black Sea including decrease of biological resources, declining diversity of spaces and reduction of aesthetic values
4	Burden of nature hazards, caused by combinations of several hazards such as droughts, extreme temperatures, forest fires and floods, mainly in highly vulnerable Bulgarian regions
5	Larger areas are effected by erosion, mainly in the province of Kırklareli
6	Vulnerability towards the adaptation to climate change and below average performances in adaptive capacities
7	Inefficient cooperation in management of natural resources and inadequate coordination for environment protection purposes; protected areas are not sufficiently integrated into the spatial development of the region
8	Low energy efficiency and high dependency on fossil fuels
9	Missing management of energy problems
Transport and public infrastructures	
1	Low accessibility in a European context (rail, road, air, water)
2	Imbalance among different modes of transport, generally favouring road transport (harmful effects on the environment, low sustainability)
3	Partly poor quality of the road network
4	Mostly old single-track rail network and lack of high-speed railways between larger cities
5	Insufficient hinterland access, part. In terms of railways, and inadequate connection between regional growth poles
6	Lack of regional public infrastructure and inefficient infrastructure systems in some sectors, i.e. ICT, sewage, wastewater, etc.
7	Waste of drinking water
Tourism and cultural and natural heritage	
1	Seasonal character of tourism and low diversification of tourist products and services
2	No major tourist destinations, except the Black Sea summer resorts
3	Touristic potential of mainly Turkish regions continues to be unexploited (lack of promotion, marketing support,, etc.)

4	Lack of protection and commercialisation of natural and historical heritage
5	Inefficient cooperation in the management of historical and cultural heritage resources
6	Low integration of cultural heritage in the tourist product development
7	Restoration of archaeological sites (e.g. in Edirne) is lacking behind
Youth, education and skills	
1	Bulgaria shows a lower quality of secondary education within the EU (OECD-survey for mathematics, reading and science) and a decreasing number of teachers
2	Low enrolment rate in secondary education (esp. for girls), mainly in Turkish regions
3	Limited career services and career information, mainly in Turkish regions
4	High level of early-school leavers mainly in Turkish regions
5	Turkish universities located in the CBC region show performances below average compared to the national average.
6	High level of youth unemployment
7	Out-migration of young and educated people leading to brain drain occurrences
Local and regional governance, planning and administrative capacity	
1	Limited administrative capacity and utilisation capacity at local level
2	Partially lack of cooperation and coordination among public institutions and organisations
3	Smaller municipalities facing difficulties in the sustainability of their investments in infrastructure projects
4	Existing differences in the pace of the quality of governance among the different countries of the Black Sea region
Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	
1	Lack of general SMEs' competitiveness and low level of productivity
2	Low level of local entrepreneurship initiatives, lack of entrepreneurial and innovative culture, and start-ups
3	Insufficient economic growth rates and generally disadvantageous economic situation (low level of GDP in PPP)
4	Declining investment expenditures, foreign investments concentrating on unproductive sectors failing to create permanent jobs
5	Existing inequalities of income, especially in the Bulgarian regions
6	Segmentation of the local economy, mono-sector and marginal nature
7	Lack of mutual recognition of the market beyond the border and limited business information flow
Research, technological development, innovation and ICT	
1	Not sufficient ICT infrastructure in rural areas
2	Low level of ICT usage, mainly in Turkish regions

3	A low share of the employees is employed in science and technology (HRSTC)
4	Very low values of expenditure on R&D

External opportunities

Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion	
1	Migration as mitigating factors of the effects of ageing on the labour market
2	Bulgaria has explicit constitutional references to regional and social inequalities
3	Increasing demand for qualified work force
4	More and better opportunities for social inclusion of disadvantaged and disabled people to create better conditions for involvement of youths at the labour market
Environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	
1	Promotion of sustainable development through fisheries management, research, data collection and stock assessment in the Black Sea region by the EU.
2	Exploration of new ways to ensure sustainable and responsible use of fish resources
3	Richness of renewable and alternative energy resources and high potential for the generation of solar power
4	Cross-border cooperation for sustainable use and management of natural resources of mutual interest
5	Full and effective use of financial instruments of the European Union to address the problems associated with the environment
Transport and public infrastructures	
1	The CBC region is part of the Orient/ East-Med TEN-T corridor thus target area for territorial EU infrastructure support.
2	Opportunities for the successful implementation of development strategies based on transportation hub functions
3	The Black Sea Strategy aims at active supporting of regional transport cooperation with a view to improve the efficiency, safety and security of transport operations
4	Black Sea Synergy cooperation area aims at managing movement and improving security
5	Strategic location within the TEN-T network and between Europe and Asia, as well between Europe and the Middle East (transit transport)
Tourism and cultural and natural heritage	
1	Cultural and historical heritage as important potentials for CBC development from the social, economic and environmental aspect
2	Opportunities for development of economically sustainable cultural products and services based on the demand for new tourist destinations and experience
3	Existing potential for alternative and diversified tourism activities
4	Culture as a potential generator of new products and employment possibilities

5	Abundance of cultural landmarks and natural resources as precondition for the diversification of the currently available tourist products and services
Youth, education and skills	
1	Opportunities for cooperation among the educational institutions, between the educational and training institutions and business companies and cross-border labour market initiatives and exchange of know-how between related institutions
2	EU2020 flagship initiative "Youth on the move" aiming at enhanced performance of the education systems and the facilitation of the entry of young people to the labour market
3	Presence of a relatively well-developed educational system
Local and regional governance, planning and administrative capacity	
1	Regional cooperating enhancing mutual confidence
2	Opportunities for further development of partnerships between the civil society and the public administration
3	Development of mechanisms for cross-border institutional support and sharing of good practices
4	Both countries are members of the BSEC
Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	
1	Several initiatives to develop free trade areas in the Black Sea
2	EU2020 flagship initiative "an industrial policy for the globalisation era" aiming at an improved business environment, notably for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally
3	The Black Sea Regions illustrates an expanding market with a great development potential, especially for energy and transport flows
4	Increasing importance of SMEs in the economy
Research, technological development, innovation and ICT	
1	Promotion of capacity-building and Science & Technology policy dialogue with the Black Sea countries by EU COM
2	EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, aiming at securing Europe's competitiveness
3	Rapid development and increase in the use of ICTs and innovation

External threats

Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion	
1	Demographic change and the main factors of shrinking population and ageing society
2	Risk of young employees losing their qualification by not participating in further training
3	Increasing unemployment ratio
4	Unemployment driving migration to other regions/abroad
5	Negative effects – incl. ageing, active-passive rate, extensity of unregistered employment, etc. – affect the financial

	system's sustainability negatively
6	Poor employment opportunities in rural areas leading to the concentration of business activities and employment opportunities in big towns
7	Educational system not corresponding to dynamically changing economy and labour market.
8	Increasing levels of poverty and social exclusion
Environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	
1	Increasing frequency of natural hazards (incl. flooding, droughts, fires etc.) as one result of climate change
2	Decreasing summer precipitation (water scarcity) and increasing temperatures
3	Gradually changing climatic conditions
4	Partly polluted rivers, aquifering underground water and are lowering continuously
5	Increasing pressure on the environment due to urbanisation, intensification of agriculture, transport, etc.
6	Overconstruction on the Black Sea coast line
7	Inefficient water resource management and flood protection
8	Water and coastal zone pollution from various sources (e.g. Danube, Sea of Marmara, Mediterranean) are out of control of the regional authorities
9	Inefficient use and management of favourable natural conditions and resources to enhance the development potential
Transport and public infrastructures	
1	Increasing rate of isolation due to missing investments in infrastructure
2	Negative effects of climate change and extreme weather effects influencing transport safety of all modes
3	Clear core-periphery patterns in road and rail transport
4	High dependence on imported fuel resources for transport
Tourism and cultural and natural heritage	
1	Low integration of the cultural heritage in the tourist product development
2	Missing diversification of tourism
3	Climate change and its major negative impact on summer tourism
4	Mass tourism as major danger for landscapes, natural habitats and ecological corridors
5	The lack of restoring archaeological sites prevents an efficient usage of the region's cultural and tourism potential
Youth, education and skills	
1	Educational system not corresponding to the dynamically changing economy and labour market (education system unable to prepare the youth for the labour market)
2	Vocational education not being labour market demands oriented

3	Centralist structure of higher education system
Local and regional governance, planning and administrative capacity	
1	Relatively still low level of absorption of EU funds for cooperation between Local authorities
2	Different laws and regulations in the CBC area, including EU as well as non-EU members (consequences in terms of administration and legal framework)
3	Difficulties in coordinating national and regional levels as well as public and private sectors
4	Differences in fiscal discipline
Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	
1	Existing differences in the pace of economic reforms and the quality of governance
2	Still insufficient economy growth rates compared to EU average values
3	Low rate of adaptability and high level of competition to the common European market
4	Interregional economic disparities, primarily between urban and rural areas
5	Lack of alternative financing instruments for SMEs
6	Increasing pressure of the global competition
Research, technological development, innovation and ICT	
1	Raising importance of (existing) connections to global knowledge networks
2	High fragmentation of the market for innovative ICT products and services
3	Low investments and slow development of R&D
4	Low technological level of the economy deepening the structural disparity

POTENTIALS AND BARRIERS OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION

Based on the identified SWOT, potential linkages between internal and external factors of analysis were identified, which were the basis for the definition of future barriers and potentials of development.

These barriers and potentials help to figure out:

- Which potentials are resulting from the combination of the internal strengths and weaknesses of the cross-border area with the possible opportunities, identified from external strategic documents or current trends?
- Which barriers and difficulties the area is facing by combining the internal strengths and weaknesses with current threats?

The combination of the different internal and external factors (strengths x opportunities, strengths x weaknesses, threats x opportunities, threats x weaknesses) were then merged to thematic clusters

and similar links and ties were grouped together. The reason of this clustering within the four quadrants of the SWOT-matrix was the identification of four different groups of potentials and barriers:

- Existing potentials (EP) result from combining the internal strengths of a region with the external opportunities. These potentials can also be termed as “cash cows”. EPs represent positive characteristics of a region with positive trends, which can support the already well performing regional characteristics.
- Possible potentials (PP) result from combining the internal weaknesses of a region with the external opportunities. Possible potentials are also called “rising stars” and illustrate the chance for the cross-border region to overcome the internal weakness by using the existing opportunities.
- Existing barriers (EB) result from combining the internal weaknesses of a region with the external threats. EBs can be termed as so-called “poor dogs”, these barriers are a combination of internal and external factors, which are really tough challenges and hard to overcome.
- Possible barriers (PB) result from combining the internal strengths of a region with the external threats and are also termed “question marks”. These issues show to external trends that can be challenged by using the internal strength of the region. Negative external developments can be turned around by using regional strengths.

The method therefore represents a mixture between clustering of information and a more creative technique of combining issues of certain interest. Additionally it visualises the main output of the analysis and shows possible thematic linkages within different internal and external factors of the cross-border region. This output portrays the possibilities of the SWOT analysis: negative developments in the region can be combined with external opportunities and show therefore an unexpected opportunity for regional development.

The following four sub-chapters describe the findings of the SWOT-analysis which are one of the main elements of the definition of the thematic concentration of the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020.

Existing Potentials (EP) – Strengths x Opportunities

1. **Good basis for regional cooperation:** Generally, the region shows a very good basis for regional cooperation, based on the existing culture of social solidarity and assistance and common strong traditions e.g. of preserving and managing nature. This situation depicts a joint basis for further regional cooperating enhancing mutual confidence as well as the development of mechanisms for cross-border institutional support and sharing of good practices in different fields.
2. **Good foundation for improvements in the environmental sector:** The region generally displays very good environmental conditions, hosts a variety of natural resources and a strong tradition of preservation, including a dense network of protected areas, is visible. These positive factors are combined with an on-going promotion of natural resources and a generally existing richness of renewable and alternative energy resources. This goes in line with the internal strength of local universities partly showing a focus in the field of energy. Additionally, the Black Sea Strategy actively supports regional transport cooperation, in order to improve the efficiency of transport options, which has a positive effect on the region’s environment.
3. **Constantly improving situation of the youth, research and education:** The education system and research sector are improving, which is depicted in the increasing share of population with a higher level of education and an increase of R&D expenditures over the last years. Additionally, SMEs illustrate important businesses in the area, their economic activity has raised and the general equipment with infrastructures has improved over the years. These

positive developments in combination with the increasing demand for qualified work force and the cooperation of educational institutions, education and business companies as well as EU-wide initiatives such as the flagship initiative “Youth on the move” illustrate a major development potential of the cross-border area.

4. **On-going improvements in the fields of transport and economic development:** Positive developments including an increase in the level of employment and activity rates as well as the region's strategic position in the TEN-T network and the existence of well-functioning regional border crossings depict relevant strengths of the area. These strengths are underlined by the Black Sea Strategy actively aiming at cooperation in the field of transport as well as by external improvements in regard to TEN-T and the establishment of transport hub functions. These opportunities provide the potential to improve transport efficiency and safety, based on partnership and existing experiences of former cross-border cooperation.
5. **Further touristic, cultural and environmental developments based on common heritage and traditions:** Cultural and historical heritage have been identified as extremely important potentials for cross-border development from the social, economic and environmental aspect. Based on the existing set of natural resources and protected areas (e.g. Strandja Nature Park (BG), Gala Lake National Park (TR), Kasatura Korfezi Nature Reserve (TR), Saka Lake Nature Reserve (TR)) as well as of cultural heritage as important regional and identity building asset, there exists the opportunity to develop economically sustainable touristic products and services and alternative and diversified tourism activities to enhance the economic situation in the area.
6. **On-going improvements in the field of institutional capacity and cooperation:** Partnerships as well as experiences of cross-border cooperation has well established traditions in the CBC region. The area is characterised by very good bilateral relations and an active framework for improving bilateral economic relations. Additionally, partly on-going reforms and decentralisation processes are constantly strengthening the regional level as such. The continuation of cross-border cooperation and the cooperation in the Black Sea region in general is further strengthening mutual confidence and partnerships.
7. **Further improving research and competitiveness:** The economic situation in the area is improving, which includes increased competitiveness and a raised level of R&D expenditure of regional enterprises. Generally SMEs are forming the majority of businesses in the area, and additional strengths include the progressive modernisation of the productive system, newly developed industrial sites and improved industrial infrastructure as well as existing research hotspots e.g. in the field of energy. Several initiatives and EU flagship initiatives, such as “an industrial policy for the globalisation era” as well as cooperative initiatives comprise the potential to further improve the already enhanced situation in the cross-border region.

Possible Potentials (PP) – Weaknesses x Opportunities

1. **Jointly combating NATURAL hazards and reducing environmental pollution:** Existing initiatives for sustainable development in the Black Sea region by the EU and existing cross-border cooperation initiatives for the sustainable use and management of natural resources of mutual interest bear the potential of improving the current situation of natural hazards. These extreme events, including floods, fires, erosion, have a particularly strong effect on the area, which shows a strong vulnerability towards climate change.
2. **Tourism and regional cultural and natural heritage as opportunities to further improve the employment and tourism situation:** The cultural and natural heritage of the CBC region are important potentials for further development, including economically sustainable cultural products and services and alternative and diversified tourism activities; these potentials are generally based on the abundance of cultural landmarks and natural resources. The heritage

of the region therefore provides the potential to restrict the current situation of high unemployment rates and therewith connected negative effects by generating new touristic products and employment possibilities for the regional population. Simultaneously tourism weaknesses, including e.g. the seasonal character of regional tourism and missing major tourist destination (except the Black Sea summer resorts), may be targeted.

3. **Cooperative action improving the transport situation:** Existing initiatives and strategies, including the Black Sea Strategy, the Black Sea Synergy, as well as the EU infrastructure policy provide potentials to improve the low accessibility of the area. Additionally there exists the potential to further increase security of transport and to improve transport facilities in general (i.e. rail network, etc.).
4. **Cooperative action improving administrative and institutional capacity:** The continuation and improvement of cross-border cooperation in the area, including partnerships, support, and sharing of good practice, will improve the administrative capacity at local level.
5. **Promotion of R&D mitigating brain drain occurrences and the regional research basis:** The on-going promotion of capacity-building and S&T policy dialogue with the Black Sea countries by EU COM as well as the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation – Horizon 2020, aiming at securing Europe's competitiveness – are major opportunities for improving the current regional situation of low investments in R&D and a partly low level of ICT usage. Additionally, the out-migration of well-educated young employees might be stemmed through an improved situation in the field of research and development.
6. **Educational cooperation improving the regional employment and education situation:** There exists a diverse set of opportunities regarding cooperation in the field of education, training and business companies in the cross-border context. A specific development potential includes the combination of the education system and the particular needs of private enterprises and the labour market. The EU2020 flagship initiative “Youth on the move”, illustrates a specific opportunity, enhancing the performance of the education system. These opportunities can target the existing weaknesses of the area of high unemployment rates, brain drain occurrences and of partly low enrolment rates of secondary education, limited career services and career information as well as of partly high levels of early-school leavers.

Possible Barriers (PB) – Strengths x Threats

1. **Increased activity rates and improved education situation, weakened by high unemployment:** Generally, the regional situation is characterised by improvements in the education system, the activity rates of employees and the GDP level. Although these positive developments may be hampered by the increasing unemployment ratio, which might lead migration to other regions and in succession to intensified concentrations of employees in urban areas (i.e. deterioration of rural areas). Additionally, the development barrier of the education system not being capable of reacting sufficiently on the dynamically changing economy and the labour market needs to be faced.
2. **Environmental media threatened by increasing pressures:** The moderately good condition of different environmental media, such as air, water and soil are threatened by increasing pressures of land use, including urbanisation, intensification of agriculture and transport. Additionally, the touristic exploitation of the area bears dangers for the region's environment (i.e. over construction, mass tourism, etc.).
3. **Strong tradition of protected areas threatened by increasing levels of pollution:** The region is characterised by natural assets and a moderately good condition of different environmental media, which are the basis for the dense network of protected areas. These valuable assets are endangered by external factors, including natural hazards, and pollution

from various external sources. Very good cooperation capacity between relevant institutions in the region is already established.

4. **Education system not corresponding to regional needs:** Although the education system has improved (including e.g. vocational training, adult education system, etc.) there exists the danger of the education system not corresponding to the fast and dynamically changing economy and labour market.
5. **Missing infrastructure investments negatively influencing the transport system:** The transport system – which includes e.g. well-functioning border check points and mainly sufficient rail network densities – may be negatively threatened by missing investments in infrastructure and the clear core-periphery pattern which are clearly visible in the area.
6. **Major differences of law as threats for existing partnership:** The existing partnerships, which are based on former cross-border cooperation and good bilateral relations, are threatened by different laws and regulations. This results from the fact of the cooperation of EU- and non-EU-members and therefore difficulties in the coordination of different levels (local, region) and sectors (private, public). These threats depict possible barriers for future cross-border cooperation in the area.
7. **Positive developments limited by global pressure and strong economic disparities:** In the last years the economic activity in the region has improved and the number of employees has increased; SMEs as such form the majority of businesses in the area. Even due to these positive developments, there still exist insufficient economy growth rates compared to the EU average and major interregional economic disparities are visible. Additionally financing instruments for SMEs are missing and the generally low level of R&D expenditure hampers further development.

Existing Barriers (EB) – Weaknesses x Threats

1. **Raising unemployment and negative employment situation leading to out-migration and the loss of qualifications:** The regions is characterised by partly strong negative demographic processes, high levels of unemployment, brain drain occurrences and out-migration of mainly young and well-educated people. These weaknesses are further reinforced by unemployment and especially poor employment opportunities in rural areas, leading to the concentration of business activities in urban areas. Additionally, young people, which cannot participate in the labour market, show the risk of losing their qualifications.
2. **Discrepancies between the needs of the labour market and the education sector:** Generally strong discrepancies between the education system and the needs of the labour market – which are constantly changing – are visible. The educational system cannot correspond to the dynamically changing economy and the labour market, therefore the risk of increasing poverty and low income levels gets further reinforced. Additionally, the quality of education in the cross-border area varies, secondary education shows a partly low quality and just limited information and services in the field of careers exist. This further intensifies the situation of the education system not fitting to the economy; growth rates and productivity are therefore lagging behind.
3. **Partly bad environmental quality asking for common approaches:** The regional environmental state is partly in a bad condition. Reasons therefore are environmental pollution, declining diversity of spaces and the decrease of biological resources. This situation is further intensified by increasing pressures on the environment, resulting from urbanisation, the transport sector and the intensification of agriculture. Additionally, water pollution is often out of the control of the regional authorities, due to its transnational character
4. **Increase of natural hazards in frequency and intensity targeting the economic, social and environmental situation:** Natural hazards, including droughts, extreme temperatures,

forest fires and especially floods are important burdens for the area. Additionally, parts of the region are highly affected by erosion. These existing weaknesses are intensified through the increase of natural hazards in frequency as a result of climate change and gradually changing climatic conditions. These environmental effects have major effects on the economic, social and environmental situation of the cross-border area. Especially the touristic use of the area, which has mainly seasonal character, is endangered, through extreme weather events and the change of climatic conditions.

5. **Increasing isolation of the area due to missing infrastructure investments:** The area generally shows a quite low accessibility in a European context, whereas especially imbalances of the different modes of transport exist; road transport is obviously the favoured mode, the rail network shows partly a quite bad quality. Additionally, major differences between urban and rural areas are visible; the access of the hinterland is mainly insufficient. This situation is intensified by generally missing investments in infrastructure;
6. **Complicated cross-border cooperation based on different laws and regulations:** In some parts of the cross-border region a just insufficient developed level of cooperation is visible. The partly limited administrative capacity hampers cooperation, which is intensified by different laws and regulations in the cross-border area, including EU as well as non-EU members.
7. **Lagging behind in the field of research and productivity:** Low levels of productivity and competitiveness, insufficient economic growth rates and a low level of investments in the field of research and development are further intensified by interregional economic disparities (esp. between urban and rural areas), missing financing instruments for SMEs, and the raising importance of connections to global knowledge networks, which are not a main focus of the area; generally a quite high pressure of global competition on regional enterprises is present.

PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme contributes directly to the EU Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Smart growth – meaning the improvement of the EU's performance in education, research/innovation and digital society – is fostered amongst others through cooperative measure in the field of environment and low-carbon economy, as well as through activities in the field of tourism (measures in the area of natural and cultural heritage); strengthening the region's youth – as backbone for future developments in the area – is regarded as a cross-cutting priority of the Programme. Sustainable growth, aiming at building a more competitive low-carbon economy that makes efficient, sustainable use of resources, is directly tackled by the Programme's priority axis 1 "Environment", covering the preservation of the environment as one of the most important assets of the area as well as disaster management, depicting a typical cross-border issue of major relevance for the area; sustainable development is therefore one of the main principles of the CBC Programme. A strong relation to inclusive growth, targeting the improvement of Europe's employment rate, is visible for priority axis 2 "Sustainable Tourism". This thematic field aims at capitalising the region's natural, cultural and historical heritage. Competitiveness in general is regarded as a cross-cutting basis for regional development in the area. The Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme directly contributes to the flagship initiatives "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", and "Agenda for new skills and jobs" (cf. European Commission, 2010: 5-6).

Logically the **overall aim of the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme (2014-2020) is:**

Strengthening the cross-border relations by implementing joint regional development initiatives, leading to enhancement of territorial cohesion

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

The selection procedure⁶ of thematic priorities takes into account the relevance of the topic regarding CBC as well as budget constraints. The guiding question of the assessment was: “Which ones of the priorities have cross-border relevance and which ones can develop the highest effects in this particular border setting?” Of main relevance are those priorities, aiming at combating climate change and risk management, protection of the environment, development of tourism (including natural and cultural heritage). The programme budget is one of the main factors, defining the frame of interventions and their thematic focus. Therefore budget constraints were taken into account, covering the question of finance ability of certain projects. In spite of the size of the area to be covered and the budget available, the cross-border programme has limited resources. This calls for a very accurate use of the financial resources, focusing on the value added expected to be created by cross-border cooperation (asking for a limited number of selected priorities).

The following table illustrates an in-depth justification for the selection of the set of thematic priorities.

Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic priorities

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
TP (b): protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management [...]	<p>The cross-border area shows a high vulnerability towards climate change. The increase of natural hazards in frequency and intensity asks for a management of natural resources and a common approach to effectively manage natural hazards and climate change risks. Climate change adaptations are mainly an issue of geographically limited initiatives, additionally, the effects, which are spreading across national borders, ask for a common approach for the cross-border region. Integrated and coordinated territorial approaches, including a higher degree of information sharing, are needed for the effective management of natural hazards and climate change risks. Additionally, the area's environment is rich of natural and cultural assets, which bear potentials for further exploitation, sustainable use and alternative and diversified usages. On the contrary some environmental media partly are in a bad condition and sustainable management of resources and common approach to improve the environmental state and the condition of e.g. the Black Sea are needed. Similar to climate change adaptations, environmental protection and preservation is an issue for geographically limited areas, which are often spreading across national borders; therefore a sustainable management and the protection of natural resources is a necessity for the CBC region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + TP relates directly to a main priority of EU2020 + TP relates directly to both relevant national and regional strategic Bulgarian and Turkish documents + Both countries have very good traditions in environmental protection in the CBC area established over the years + CSF defines this area as specific relevant for CBC + The Bulgarian National Strategy for Regional Development 2012 -2022 sees joint risk management and environmental protection as key topics for CBC + There exist similar environmental risks in both countries, such as floods and forest fires in the CBC area + Environmental issues do not stop in front of borders and need to be addressed regionally and on cross-border level + The climate change issue is very relevant for both sides and adequate

⁶ A detailed explanation of the selection process of thematic priorities (thematic concentration) is available in the Annex.

	<p>measures are both, EU as well as national priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + There exists the need to raise awareness and measures on climate changes as it has major impact on economy and life + The existing nature protected areas (parks and others) and the tradition of natural protection is a mean to address joint activities to raise tourism development and the region's better image - Larger interventions (i.e. infrastructure development) require bigger budgets and a long preparatory time because of the need for environmental assessment
<p>TP (d): encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage [...]</p>	<p>The cross-border area shows a high potential of natural and cultural heritage, which is depicted by a large amount of protected areas and widespread natural parks and historical places, etc. The natural and cultural heritage serves as a connecting factor between the both countries and resembles a potential factor, to contribute to future cross-border development in the region.</p> <p>The border area is still characterised by vast rural areas with a comparably high share of agriculture. Agricultural produce and regional/ local specialities (e.g. vegetables, wine) may offer touristic potentials while at the same time represent natural/ cultural heritage to be preserved (note also the complementarity to EAFRD – especially LEADER).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + BG National Strategy for Regional Development 2012 -2022 sees development of joint tourism and cultural initiatives as key CBC actions + Turkish Tourism Strategy 2007 – 2023 gives a special focus of the both provinces Edirne and Kırklareli in terms of potential for cultural tourism + Tourism is thematic part of all regional strategies of the local administrations of the region + There exists a huge interest in the region (on-line survey and RCFs) + There exists a good potential for development (culture, nature, etc.) + There's a big interest and good experiences in the ongoing CBC Programme + Well established pre-conditions for development of joint touristic products/services + At the RCFs it was an important priority for regional stakeholders + According to the results of the on-line survey it was an important priority for regional stakeholders + The TP illustrates a good area for people-to-people activities - In some parts of the region (for example Burgas) there are major imbalances in tourism development (Black Sea region vs. inland municipalities)

1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

The financial allocation proposed in the following table aims at achieving the envisaged programme results effectively with the limited resources available for the funding period 2014-2020.

The thematic priorities selected and the corresponding specific objectives aim at cooperation in the Bulgaria-Turkey CBC area 1) on the improvement and preservation of the environment to foster sustainability (in all dimensions) and the quality of life as well as 2) on strengthening of the tourism sector by capitalising on the cultural and natural heritage in the BG-TR CBC region.

In the selection process of thematic priorities (as outlined above), especially the relevance of the different topics regarding CBC were assessed. Especially climate change and risk management – where especially flooding and fire are cross-border and transnational issues – and the protection of the environment (including natural and cultural heritage and common traditions) are regarded as relevant for the area in a cross-border perspective.

Based on the major relevance of these two topics regarding cross-border cooperation, 45% of the programme budget will be allocated to each of these priorities; 10% of the budget is foreseen for the technical assistance of the programme.

For the environmental priority e.g. an increase in interventions in the field of risk prevention and management and an improved capacity and sustainable use of common natural resources through joint initiatives for nature protection are aimed at. In the field of sustainable tourism especially a higher level of valorisation of natural and cultural heritage in the tourism context and an increased number of cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable are intended.

The given financial weighting is in line with the lessons learned of the current Programme, the needs analysis, as well as the analysis of the expectations and needs of the relevant stakeholders in the CBC-area.

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

Priority axis	Union support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme	Thematic priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the thematic priority
1	11.338.407,00	45%	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased interventions in the field of risk prevention and management → Increased joint initiatives in the field of risk prevention and management → Surface area of land addressed by environmental protection interventions → Improved capacity and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area through joint initiatives for nature protection
2	11.338.407,00	45%	Sustainable Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased tourist attractiveness of the cross-border region by improving natural, cultural and historical sites and related infrastructure → Increased level of touristic valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage → Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism
3	2.519.646,00	10%	Technical Assistance	n/a
Total	25.196.460,00			

II. PRIORITY AXES

2.1 Priority axis 1

ID of the priority axis	1
Title of the priority axis	Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	n/a

The Priority Axis covers the main challenge of the CBC area → i.e. preserving the environment as one of the most important assets for economic activities (tourism, agriculture) and improving the quality of life for the people living in the cross-border area. On the other hand it meets the challenge and threat of the environmental hazards and disasters – especially related to river basin management (flooding), wild fire events, man-made disasters, earthquakes, and others.

According to the decision taken by the JWG in Ankara on May 13th 2014 this PA should also encompass the **horizontal priorities of competitiveness** → as motor and basis for all regional development in structurally weak areas; and **youth** → as backbone of future development and overarching principle to keep the region alive and prevent brain-drain occurrences. Thus the two Thematic Priorities will be anchored in a thematic context, which allows for the necessary thematic concentration and focussing of the PA.

Therefore **two specific objectives** have been chosen in order to depict the core element of disaster resilience, nature protection as well as the two horizontal priorities of competitiveness and youth.

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

Fund	EU (ERDF + IPA II)
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)	11 338 407,00 Euro
Justification of the calculation basis choice	The financial allocation of the current Priority Axis aims at achieving the envisaged results effectively with the limited resources available for the funding period 2014-2020. In the selection process the relevance of the different environmental topics regarding CBC area were assessed.

	<p>Especially climate change and risk management (mainly flooding and fire) and the protection of the environment are regarded as relevant for the cross-border area.</p> <p>Based on the major relevance regarding the cross-border cooperation, 45% of the programme budget will be allocated to this priority axis.</p> <p>This Priority axis aims at an increase in interventions in the field of risk prevention and management and an improved capacity and sustainable use of common natural resources through joint initiatives for nature protection. The given financial weighting is in line with the lessons learned of the current Programme, the needs analysis, as well as the analysis of the expectations and needs of the relevant stakeholders in the CBC-area.</p>
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2.1.2 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

ID	1.1.
Specific objective	<i>To prevent and mitigate the risks and consequences of natural and man-made hazards and disasters in the CBC region</i>
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>Floodings and fire events are classical CBC issues: river basin management and protection of fires are cross-border issues that can hardly be only tackled in the absence of cooperation across borders. But mainly they are for the CBC Bulgaria-Turkey because of the CBC region's high vulnerability towards the intensified effects of climate change.</p> <p>Therefore the intended change is to reduce the risks of floodings and fires through the establishment of real cooperation across borders (with partners establishing joint initiatives and actions).</p> <p>By improving river basin management the damage from flooding events will be reduced and the river basins across borders can be sustainably managed (river banks restored, zoning and regional/ local planning adapted to the river basin and the flooding areas). Also, risks will be mitigated by implementing comprehensive fire protecting initiatives.</p> <p>A mix of "investment" and "soft" measures could be incorporated and might be established through the guiding principles for selection of operations.</p> <p>A set of different measures, including amongst other early warning and disaster management systems, the sanitation and reforestation of river banks or rather soft measures, like training and awareness raising of the civil society, will be set in order to reach the envisaged change.</p>

ID	1.2.
Specific objective	<i>Improvement of the capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area</i>
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>Both countries have good traditions in environmental protection (protected areas, etc.) established over the years, despite the CBC region is increasingly under environmental pressure of different economic activities. For this reason, negative environmental effects have intensified, and consistently contributed to the deterioration of local environmental pollution levels. These negative effects need to be tackled by implementing a set of planned measures.</p> <p>By improving on the one hand the people's capacity for a sustainable interaction with the environment, including also issues like climate protection and raising people's awareness towards high energy consumption as well as the usage of fossil fuels, etc. The major effect of climate change on economy and life needs to be highlighted. This goes in line with the European Union's efforts to make its economy less energy consumptive and more climate-friendly (cf. EU COM, 2014b: online⁷). Therefore it's the CBC region's aim to foster its capacity and to increase knowledge transfer across borders aiming at reaching the vision of a low-carbon economy and a high level of environmental protection and management. On the other hand the specific objective targets are aiming to improve the condition of natural areas and to improve the partly negative environmental development of the last decades, including amongst others urbanisation, intensified agriculture and transport.</p> <p>Also for this objective a mix of "investment" and "soft" measures could be incorporated and might be established through the guiding principles for selection of operations.</p> <p>In order to reach the envisaged change a set of different measures – including for example investments in the improvement of green infrastructure as well as training and capacity building activities for authorities of different levels – will be implemented.</p>

⁷ EU COM (2014b): Roadmap for moving to a low-carbon economy in 2050. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/roadmap/index_en.htm (May, 2014)

2.1.3 Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

ID	
Contribution to the specific objective of the priority axis	
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	

2.1.4 Actions to be supported under the thematic priority (by thematic priority)

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

Thematic Priority	Environment
<p>SO 1.1.:</p> <p>Investment measures:</p> <p>Early warning and disaster management systems, equipment/fixed assets, small-scale interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Development of early warning and disaster management systems → Investments in supply of equipment/ fixed assets related to disaster resilience: up-to-date ICT solutions in pre-fire, fire and post-fire activities; supply of specialized fire-fighting equipment; and for search and rescue interventions; supply of system for air surveillance of the surface and real time transmission of data and others. → Support of small-scale interventions / investments: sanitation and reforestation of river banks; building flood defence (dikes, canals etc.); forestation of non-permanent vulnerable land; cuttings for emergency situations; supply of specialized equipment/ fixed assets for floods' prevention and others.; <p>Soft measures</p> <p>Joint initiatives, strategies, trainings, services, awareness raising campaigns, exchange of experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Developing joint strategies / common guidelines for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made disasters (for disaster protection and prevention policies and mechanisms, prevention and firefighting management, prevention of floodings, and others) → Awareness campaigns in the field of efficient risk prevention and management. → Conducting joint theoretical-tactical exercises and field trainings for emergency situations management → Trainings in the use of ICT technologies, including introduction of new methods → Exchange of experience and good practice (study visits, round-tables, conferences, and others); → Joint trainings, awareness raising campaigns of public service actors, youths, volunteers and other population's groups for disaster resilience. <p>TARGET GROUPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → All levels of Local/Regional authorities; → Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations; → Regional offices and structures of central government institutions/ administrations; → Euroregions and other joint cross border structures and institutions; → Administrations of protected areas → Groups of population of the CBC region → Young people (up to age of 29) 	

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Central and regional offices and structures of relevant national and governmental institutions/administrations
- Regional and sector development agencies

SO 1.2.:

Investment measures

Environmental friendly small-scale investments:

- Environmental friendly small-scale investments for improving accessibility of / to nature protected sites;
- Environmental friendly small-scale investment (green infrastructure, preservation, protection and others)
- Supply of equipment for protecting/preserving/monitoring the ecosystems and for control of pollution of rivers/sea

Soft measures

Joint initiatives and cooperation, exchange of experience and know-how, trainings and capacity building activities:

- Joint initiatives targeting the effective management of protected areas
- Joint initiatives addressing nature protection in the Black Sea and coastal zones
- Capacity building initiatives, trainings, exchange of experience and know-how in the environment-related matters: preservation and improvement of the quality of natural resources (air, soil, water); protection and restoration of ecosystems, endangered /protected flora and fauna species; sustainable use of resources and recycling; waste managements; other related issues
- Cooperation initiatives between local authorities, NGOs and related institutions, education and training institutions, universities and scientific institutions in the field of environment, nature protection, safe and sustainable low-carbon economy
- Development and implementation of joint awareness raising campaigns, in the field of environment & nature protection issues, including eco labelling of local products

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities;
- Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations;
- Regional offices and structures of central government institutions/ administrations;
- Euroregions and other joint cross border structures and institutions;
- Educational and training institutions and organizations;
- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and others
- Administrations of protected areas
- Youth organizations
- Groups of population of the CBC region

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES TO IMPLEMENT INVESTMENT AND SOFT MEASURES:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities;
- Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations;
- Central and regional offices and structures of central government institutions/ administrations;
- Administrations of protected areas
- Euroregions and other joint cross border structures and institutions;
- Universities and scientific institutions

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES TO IMPLEMENT SOFT MEASURES:

- Educational and training institutions and organizations;
- NGOs
- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts; and others
- Youth organizations

2.1.4.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Thematic Priority	Environment
<p>According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC.</p> <p>The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. CBC character <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries • Clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country b. Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules • The involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management c. Regional relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations are in correspondence to the identified needs and challenges of the CBC area • The operations contribute to economic, territorial and social cohesion (following the EU-2020 Strategy) d. Strategic relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations are in line with the priority axis' specific objectives • The operations are coherent with strategies and concept at the regional and the national level e. Operations' quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic) • Expenditures of the operations are effective • The projects are based on the concept of sustainability f. Horizontal principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations take the equality between men and women into account • The operations consider non-discrimination principles • The operations follow the concept of sustainable development 	
<p>Additional specific principles apply for this priority axis:</p>	
<p>Strategic projects</p>	
<p>Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified outside calls for proposals for the achievement of the programme objectives and priority specific objectives. Strategic projects contribute to achievement of a bigger impact through real and strong cross-border impact and long-term results, in respect of the Programme's objectives.</p>	
<p>Strategic Projects must be effective and answer the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme and result in a significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area.</p>	
<p>The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → To address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border → To be based on a larger financial size than ordinary projects, proportionate to the relevance of the objectives and results. → to produce lasting effects and catalyse further actions; 	

2.1.4.3 *Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)*

Thematic Priority	
<p>Planned use of financial instruments</p>	<p>Planned use of financial instruments</p>
<p>Not planned</p>	

2.1.5 Common and programme specific indicators

2.1.5.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁸	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
RI-1.1-1	Increased interventions in the field of risk prevention and management	%	<i>to be established</i>	2014	<i>Increase</i>	Survey Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023
RI-1.1-2	Increased joint initiatives in the field of risk prevention and management	%	<i>to be established</i>	2014	<i>Increase</i>	Survey Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023
RI-1.2-1	Surface area of land addressed by environmental protection interventions	%	<i>to be established</i>	2014	<i>Increase</i>	Survey Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023
RI-1.2-2	Improved capacity and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area through joint initiatives for nature protection	%	<i>to be established</i>	2014	<i>Increase</i>	Survey Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023

⁸ Please note that the target values for the year 2023 are under establishment.

2.1.5.2 Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023) ⁹	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
OI-1.1-1	→ Number of supported interventions / investments related to risk prevention and disaster management of natural and man-made disasters	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.1-2	→ Supplied specialised equipment/ fixed assets; joint tools/services established or improved related to risk prevention and disaster management of natural and man-made disasters	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.1-3	→ Joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made disasters/	Number	6	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.2-1	→ Nature protected areas, addressed by supported interventions	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.2-2	→ Protected areas/sites in the border region with management plans	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.2-3	→ Capacity building initiatives, trainings, exchange of experience and know-how	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-1.2-5	→ Joint awareness raising campaigns	Number	20	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually

⁹ Please note that the target values for the year 2023 are under establishment.

2.1.6 Categories of intervention

Table 5: Categories of intervention - Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Environment	085 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	4 535 362,80
	087 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	6 830 044,20

Table 6: Categories of intervention - Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Environment	01 Non-repayable grant	11 338 407,00

Table 7: Categories of intervention - Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Environment	05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	11 338 407,00

Table 8: Categories of intervention - Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Environment	07 - Not applicable	

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

Priority axis
The overall objective of Priority axis "Technical assistance" is to provide effective and efficient administration and implementation of the CBC Programme. TA Specific Objective 3.1: Improved overall administration and evaluation of the Programme aims at: 1) Support to Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Secretariat (Main and Branch office) for tasks related to preparation of the necessary documents, appraisal and selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation of activities, control and audit of the Programme; 2) Support to Joint Monitoring Committee and any other structures involved in supervision of the Programme; 3) Support to

the Programme evaluation including ad-hoc, mid-term and ex-post evaluations; 4) Elaboration of specific studies and surveys for the Programme; 5) External expertise for development of programme implementation and monitoring procedures, information system for programme administration as well as assessment and first level control of projects; 6) Capacity building initiatives for Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Secretariat (Main and Branch office) for effective and efficient programme administration. **TA Specific Objective 3.2: Improved Publicity and communication provisions aims at:** 1) Information and publicity - preparation, translation and dissemination of the Programme related documents and promotional materials. 2) Information spread and trainings for beneficiaries.

2.2 Priority axis 2

ID of the priority axis	2
Title of the priority axis	Sustainable Tourism
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	n/a
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	n/a

According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) *sustainable tourism* is a tourism envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems¹⁰.

*“Tourism is an important sector of the European Union’s economy. It supports economic growth and employment. One of our biggest challenges, however, is to reinforce and improve sustainable tourism development in order to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the industry. By managing tourism in a sustainable way we aim to ensure that we recognise the limits and capacity of our tourism resources and encourage tourism development that balances optimising the immediate economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits, whilst also ensuring the long-term future for our European tourism industry. Our priority is that Europe maintains its position as the leading tourism destination in the world. Since 1990, the number of international tourist arrivals to the EU has more than doubled. However, in order to retain its market share, the EU’s tourism industry needs to significantly improve its competitiveness and sustainability, taking into account aspects such as product and service quality, social and environmental responsibility, natural resources, and diversity of cultural heritage and local identities”.*¹¹

The Priority Axis covers a main issue for the CBC area: tourism and cultural heritage, as well as the region’s natural heritage, which strongly corresponds to and underlines the main aim of PA 1. Tourism and capitalising the region’s cultural heritage are included in main national development strategies of both countries – the PA therefore follows the overall national objectives of development. The existing regional strengths of cultural heritage are building upon specific strengths of the CBC area; the concentration on the specific sector of tourism takes stock of already well-established strengths and regional areas of focus.

Additionally, the horizontal priorities of competitiveness as basis for regional development and youth, as backbone for future developments in the area, are giving specific emphasis of the priority axis.

¹⁰ The European Tourism indicator System - Study on the Feasibility of a European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Management at Destination Level, ISBN 978-92-79-29339-9, doi:10.2769/47006, February 2013

¹¹ Preamble of the above document, Speech of Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship

Thus the two Thematic Priorities will be anchored in a thematic context, which allows for the necessary thematic concentration and focussing of the PA.

Therefore ***three specific objectives*** have been chosen in order to depict the core element of tourism and regional development and the two horizontal priorities of competitiveness and youth.

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

Fund	EU (ERDF + IPA II)
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)	11 338 407,00 Euro
Justification of the calculation basis choice	<p>The financial allocation of the current Priority Axis aims at achieving the envisaged results effectively with the limited resources available for the funding period 2014-2020.</p> <p>In the selection process the relevance of the different topics in the field of CBC tourism, natural and cultural heritage were assessed. In the field of sustainable tourism especially a higher level of valorisation of natural and cultural heritage in the tourism context and an increased number of cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable are intended.</p> <p>Based on the major relevance regarding the cross-border cooperation, 45% of the programme budget will be allocated to this priority axis.</p> <p>This Priority axis aims at strengthening of the tourism sector by capitalising on the cultural and natural heritage in the BG-TR CBC region. The given financial weighting is in line with the lessons learned of the current Programme, the needs analysis, as well as the analysis of the expectations and needs of the relevant stakeholders in the CBC-area.</p>

2.2.2 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

ID	2.1.
Specific objective	<i>Increasing the tourist attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure</i>
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The development of sustainable cross-border tourism as a tool for socio-economic growth is closely linked with initiatives to improve accessibility, transport and communications at the regional and local level.</p> <p>On the other hand, tourism is a system, which is a function of supply and demand interaction. One of the key focuses in this system is the attractiveness. Tourist attractiveness is</p>

	<p>widely recognized and determined as a key factor of the destination competitiveness. Global tourism market is becoming a fiercely competitive environment and tourism destinations are under extreme pressure to rejuvenate and to enhance their attractiveness in order to remain competitive. On the other hand sustainable tourism is tourism that is open to all and breaks down barriers to access. Polling visitor satisfaction with access provides additional depth of information. Therefore, the Programme will focus on overcoming existing challenges in the eligible area, namely through: 1) Supporting conservation of natural, cultural and historical heritage, linked to tourism; 2) Improving the accessibility to touristic sites in the region, in line with the overall concept for sustainable tourism development; 3) Improving the integration between different types of transport service and ease of use by tourists; 4) Ensuring wide access to public sector tourist information (including open data e-Tourism)</p> <p>With the mix of investment and soft measures the results will be achieved by the partner States.</p>
ID	2.2.
Specific objective	<i>Valorising of the cross-border tourism by developing common destinations</i>
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>As a rule tourism destination should be continuously seek new sources of comparative advantages. Those comparative advantages, in the form of tourism resources and through the adequate destination management and marketing strategies, could be transformed into tourism attractions and become competitive advantages which can provide long term sustainable tourism growth and development for the tourism destination and therefore, improve its market positions.</p> <p>The improved possibilities for sustainable touristic destinations in the CBC-region are core result that the partner states seek to achieve with Union support. Through a variety of soft actions the mentioned result will be achieved: 1) Development of cross-border sustainable tourism strategies/ action plans; 2) Joint researches on potential niche tourism activities and/or on the demand for new tourist destinations and experience; 3) Research activities to identify tourist products with potential for cross-border touristic destinations; 4) Development of local touristic destinations based on natural, historical and cultural heritage of the region; 5) Support for the development of new products and services to be delivered on sites; 6) Training and consultancy support services for tourism enterprises/establishments to improve skills and performance; and others.</p>

	<p>It is important that Programme's work to promote sustainability is based on sound evidence regarding the interface between tourism and sustainability, and visitor and business demand for sustainability. Innovation, therefore, is of crucial importance for the cross-border tourism, for it impacts on tourism demand as well as supply. Innovation by the tourism enterprises in the Programme's eligible territory should be targeted at lowering costs and improving service quality thus increasing competitiveness. The same is true with regard to the uninterruptedly increasing online travel which not only changes consumer habits, but also facilitates new marketing strategies in the tour operator sector.</p>
ID	2.3.
Specific objective	<i>Networking for sustainable development of tourism potential</i>
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The Enhanced cooperation related to sustainable tourism among regional actors is the final core result that the partner states seek to achieve with Union support.</p> <p>The development of a sense of ownership and responsibility regarding sustainable tourism in host communities is a key issue for tourist managers and planners in the border region. Neither of these elements is easily achieved in the short term without a strong focus on awareness building, engagement of community and ultimately, empowerment of the individuals so they can recognise and understand the direct and indirect benefits of a sustainable approach to tourism and how to become involved. The key is a participatory approach which empowers the local community and the tourism industry so they can develop an appreciation and knowledge regarding local and individual issues and costs associated with developing tourism.</p> <p>Through a variety of soft actions such as: 1) Organisation of events, training courses, network possibilities for exchange of good practices in sustainable tourism management, incl. online forums; 2) Organisation of networking events, incl. initiatives for strengthening existing and establishing new partnerships in the area of sustainable tourism; 3) Surveys on domestic and international demand for cross-border tourism experiences; surveys on quality of extant services, projects to monitor sustainable tourism development and related services, etc. 4) Organisation of joint events to promote cross-border natural and cultural heritage, such as one-day festivals, exhibitions, performances, etc.; 5) Promotion and cultivation of the common traditions of the borderland areas; and others the mentioned result will be achieved.</p>

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2.2.3 Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

ID	
Contribution to the specific objective of the priority axis	
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support	

2.2.4 Actions to be supported under the thematic priority (by thematic priority)

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

Thematic Priority	Sustainable Tourism
SO 2.1.:	
Investment measures	
Small-scale investments and ICT facilities establishment:	
→ Small scale investments for improving accessibility to natural, cultural and historic touristic sites including: rehabilitation of access roads, cycling routes, walking paths	
→ Small scale investments for improving conditions of natural, cultural and historical touristic sites including: restoration, maintenance, conservation, protection, as well as providing access to touristic sites for people with disabilities	
→ Upgrade of public utilities (electricity, water-supply, sewerage, etc.) on natural, cultural and historic tourism sites	
→ Small touristic border crossings and related facilities	
→ Establishment/ development/upgrade of ICT touristic facilities including info-centres and/or kiosks to guide potential visitors	
Soft measures	
ICT and GIS platforms, touristic transport schemes:	
→ Development of joint GIS platforms	
→ Development of joint platforms for online reservations, payment, etc.	
→ Development of touristic transport schemes and related activities in Black Sea coastal zones	
TARGET GROUPS:	
→ All levels of Local/Regional authorities	
→ Administrations of protected areas	
→ Touristic organisations and associations	
→ Residents of the cross-border area and the visitors (tourists)	
POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES:	
→ All levels of regional/local authorities	
→ Regional and sector development agencies	
→ Central and regional offices and structures of relevant government institutions/ administrations	
→ Public cultural institutes (museums, libraries, community centres, etc.)	
→ Registered regional touristic associations	
→ Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts;	
→ NGOs	

- Educational and training institutions and organizations
- Universities and scientific institutions

SO 2.2.:

Soft measures

Sustainable tourism strategies/action plans, marketing and tools, trainings and consultancy, knowledge networks:

- Development and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations based on natural, historical and cultural heritage of the cross-border region
- Common tourist destination marketing, organisation and participation of fairs and related public activities (i.e. exhibitions, conferences, seminars, round tables, presentations, exchange of best practices of tourism sector) etc.
- Establishment of multi-lingual on-line touristic platforms and visualisation of local brand/s (3D visualisation, mobile applications, social networks, tailor-made internet platforms) and other innovative tools
- Training, consultancy support and establishment of touristic knowledge networks for tourism organizations to improve their products, services, performance and staff skills
- Development and promotion of alternative forms of tourism, e.g. "gourme", "eco", "SPA", "rural" etc

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Central and regional offices and structures of relevant government institutions/ administrations
- Administrations of protected areas
- Registered NGOs in the field of tourism
- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and others
- Tourist boards and associations;
- Youths organizations
- NGOs

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES:

- All levels of regional / local authorities
- Central and regional offices and structures of relevant government institutions/ administrations
- Administrations of protected areas
- Registered NGOs in the field of tourism
- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and others
- Tourist boards and associations
- Educational and training institutions and organizations
- Universities and scientific institutions
- Public cultural institutes (museums, libraries, community centres, etc.)

SO 2.3.:

Soft measures:

Joint promotional events and marketing, trainings, awareness raising, networking:

- Organisation of and participation in joint events to promote cross-border natural, cultural, historical heritage including: festivals, exhibitions, performances
- Organisation of marketing and networking events, incl. initiatives for strengthening existing and establishing new partnerships in the area of sustainable tourism
- Joint actions for cross-border cooperation and capacity building in the field of tourism – trainings, exchange of best practice, researches on the legal framework in the field of tourism, on-line forums, conferences, seminars, round tables, presentations and others
- Awareness raising campaigns and local development initiatives on the values of cross-border cultural, natural and historical heritage for related target groups

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations;
- Central and regional offices and structures of relevant government institutions/ administrations
- Administrations of protected areas
- Registered NGOs in the field of tourism

- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and others
- Tourist boards and associations;
- Educational and training institutions and organizations;
- Community organisations and institutions involved in development of civil society and/or promotion of education, culture and sports.
- Youths organizations
- Residents of the cross-border area and the visitors (tourists)

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Central and regional offices and structures of relevant government institutions/ administrations
- Administrations of protected areas
- Registered NGOs
- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and others
- Tourist boards and associations;
- Educational and training institutions and organizations;
- Universities and scientific organizations
- Community organisations and institutions involved in development of civil society and/or promotion of education, culture and sports.
- Youths organizations

2.2.4.2 *Guiding principles for the selection of operations*

Thematic Priority	Sustainable Tourism
<p>According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC.</p> <p>The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:</p>	
<p>g. CBC character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries • Clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country 	
<p>h. Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules • The involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management 	
<p>i. Regional relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations are in correspondence to the identified needs and challenges of the CBC area • The operations contribute to economic, territorial and social cohesion (following the EU-2020 Strategy) 	
<p>j. Strategic relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations are in line with the priority axis' specific objectives • The operations are coherent with strategies and concept at the regional and the national level 	
<p>k. Operations' quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic) • Expenditures of the operations are effective • The projects are based on the concept of sustainability 	
<p>l. Horizontal principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations take the equality between men and women into account • The operations consider non-discrimination principles • The operations follow the concept of sustainable development 	
<p>Additional specific principles apply for this priority axis:</p>	
<p>Strategic projects</p> <p>Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified outside calls for proposals for the achievement of the programme objectives and priority specific objectives. Strategic projects contribute to achievement of a bigger impact through real and strong cross-border impact and long-term results, in respect of the Programme's objectives.</p> <p>Strategic Projects must be effective and answer the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme and result in a significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area.</p> <p>The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → To address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border → To be based on a larger financial size than ordinary projects, proportionate to the relevance of the objectives and results. → to produce lasting effects and catalyze further actions; 	

2.2.4.3 *Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)*

Thematic Priority	
Planned use of financial instruments	Planned use of financial instruments
	Not planned

2.2.5 Common and programme specific indicators

2.2.5.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 9: Programme specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value ¹² (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
RI-2.1	Increased visits to cross-border area	%	<i>To be established</i>	2014	Increase	Statistical Data; Survey	2019 2023
RI-2.2	Increased level of touristic valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage	Ordinal scale (From 1 to 10)	<i>To be established</i>	2014	Increase	Survey	2019 2023
RI-2.3	Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism	%	<i>To be established</i>	2014	Increase	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023

¹² Please note that the target values for the year 2023 are under establishment.

2.2.5.2 Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

Table 10: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023) ¹³	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
OI-2.1-1	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites	Kilometres	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-2	Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths	Kilometres	8	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-3	Total number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites in the eligible cross-border area	Number	10	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-4	Total number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites in the eligible cross-border area	Number	15	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-1	Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-2	Number of marketing initiatives, addressing cross-border tourism products & services	Number	10	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-3	Tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential in the cross-border area	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-4	Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism	Number	200	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-1	Joint promotional events for capitalisation of the common touristic product/services	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-2	Marketing and networking events	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-3	Trainings and capacity building implemented on sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-4	Public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Number	20	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually

¹³ Please note that the target values for the year 2023 are under establishment.

2.2.6 Categories of intervention

Table 11: Categories of intervention - Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Sustainable Tourism	075 Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs	2 267 681,40
	079 Access to public sector information (including open data e-Tourism)	1 133 840,70
	090 Cycle tracks and footpaths	1 133 840,70
	092 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets	2 834 601,75
	094 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	2 834 601,75
	095 Development and promotion of public cultural and heritage services	1 133 840,70

Table 12: Categories of intervention - Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Sustainable Tourism	01 Non-repayable grant	11 338 407,00

Table 13: Categories of intervention - Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Sustainable Tourism	05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	11 338 407,00

Table 14: Categories of intervention - Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Sustainable Tourism	07 - Not applicable	

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

Priority axis	
	The overall objective of Priority axis "Technical assistance" is to provide effective and efficient administration and implementation of the CBC Programme. TA Specific Objective 3.1: Improved overall administration and evaluation of the Programmer aims at: 1) Support to Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Secretariat (Main and Branch office) for tasks related to preparation of the necessary documents, appraisal and selection of projects, monitoring and evaluation of activities, control and audit of the Programme; 2) Support to Joint Monitoring Committee and any other structures involved in supervision of the Programme; 3) Support to the

Programme evaluation including ad-hoc, mid-term and ex-post evaluations; 4) Elaboration of specific studies and surveys for the Programme; 5) External expertise for development of programme implementation and monitoring procedures, information system for programme administration as well as assessment and first level control of projects; 6) Capacity building initiatives for Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Secretariat (Main and Branch office) for effective and efficient programme administration. **TA Specific Objective 3.2: Improved Publicity and communication provisions aims at:** 1) Information and publicity - preparation, translation and dissemination of the Programme related documents and promotional materials. 2) Information spread and trainings for beneficiaries.

2.3 Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

2.3.1 Priority axis 3

ID of the priority axis	3
Title of the priority axis	Technical Assistance

2.3.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support

Fund	EU (ERDF + IPA II)
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)	2 519 646,00
Justification of the calculation basis choice (only if total eligible expenditure basis selected)	

2.3.3 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

ID	3.1
Specific objective	PROGRAMME'S ADMINISTRATION To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey (2014-2020)
The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support¹⁴	Not applicable

¹⁴ Required where the Union support to technical assistance in the cooperation programme exceeds EUR 15 million.

2.3.4 Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the programme implementation

Priority axis	Technical Assistance
<p>The Technical assistance will support on one hand actions that enhance the capacity of applicants and beneficiaries to apply for and to use the programme funds and on the other hand, actions to support the Programme management and implementation.</p> <p>The technical assistance costs will mainly be composed of preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities.</p> <p>In accordance with Article 35 of COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No 447/2014 of 2 May 2014, the limit for Technical Assistance is set at 10% of the total amount allocated to the cross-border cooperation programme.</p> <p>Moreover, Technical Assistance funds will be used to support the programme management (implementation, monitoring, evaluation, communication, auditing, control, etc.) and to improve the administrative capacity of programme bodies and stakeholders. Therefore, Technical Assistance funds will finance the programme bodies: the Managing Authority (MA), the National Authority, the Joint Secretariat (JS), Certifying Authority, the First Level Control system and the Audit Authority (AA).</p> <p>Indicative actions supported under this Priority Axis 3 are listed below:</p> <p>Management and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting the Programme bodies for the implementation of the Programme; supporting the Monitoring Committee activities; functioning of the JS, etc. (meetings organisation, travel expenditures, publicity and communication costs, remuneration costs, etc.) ▪ Elaboration of studies, reports and surveys on strategic matters concerning the programme implementation. These documents will contribute to the proper estimation of the Programme progress and sustainability. ▪ Performing quality assessments of applications for projects. ▪ Organisation of seminars, trainings and information events on national and cross border level (details will be set out in the communication strategy) to support projects' development and implementation. <p>Monitoring, control and audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementing proper procedures for the quality and risk assessment, monitoring and control of operations carried out under the Programme, as well as actions contributing to the reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries. ▪ Ensuring proper functioning of the First level control system (remuneration of first level of controllers; travel and accommodation's costs for site visits, etc.) ▪ Developing and maintenance of the Monitoring system for programme management, monitoring, audit and control. ▪ Coordinating and organising of programme level audit activities, including the (external) audits on the programme management and control system and the operations and supporting the Group of Auditors. 	

Communication and information

- Development and maintenance of the programme website.
- Implementing widespread information activities about the programme and the projects, as well as supporting activities related to communication and publicity.
- Support for identifying and strengthening the co-ordination networks and contacts among representatives of other relevant EU co-funded programmes by MA, NA, and JS (neighbouring ETC programmes, national programmes, etc.)

Evaluation

- Evaluation of the programme implementation in achieving its objectives. For this purpose, an evaluation plan may be drafted according to the provision of the regulations and making use of external experts may be necessary.

Technical Assistance actions will be implemented by all authorities involved in the management and implementation of the Programme, listed in Section 5.

2.3.5 Programme specific indicators

2.3.5.1 Programme specific output indicators expected to contribute to results

Table 15: Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting

2.3.6 Categories of intervention

Table 16: Categories of intervention - Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR) EU (ERDF+IPA)
PA3	121 - Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	1 889 734,50
PA3	122 - Evaluation and studies	314 955,75
PA3	123 - Information and communication	314 955,75

Table 17: Categories of intervention - Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR) EU (ERDF+IPA)
PA3	01 - Non-repayable grant	2 519 646,00

Table 18: Categories of intervention - Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR) EU (ERDF+IPA)
PA3	05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	2 519 646,00

2.4 Overview table of indicators per priority axis and thematic priority

Table 19: Table of common and programme specific output and result indicators

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective(s)	Selected results indicators	Selected output indicators
PA-1:	<i>Environment</i>	To prevent and mitigate the risks and consequences of natural and man-made hazards and disasters in the CBC region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased interventions in the field of risk prevention and management Increased joint initiatives in the field of risk prevention and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of supported interventions / investments related to risk prevention and disaster management of natural and man-made disasters. Supplied specialised equipment/ fixed assets; joint tools/services established or improved related to risk prevention and disaster management of natural and man-made disasters Joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made disasters/
		Improvement of the capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface area of land addressed by environmental protection interventions Improved capacity and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area through joint initiatives for nature protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature protected areas, addressed by supported interventions Protected areas/sites in the border region with management plans Capacity building initiatives, trainings, exchange of experience and know-how Joint awareness raising campaigns
PA-2:	<i>Sustainable Tourism</i>	Increasing the tourist attractiveness of the border area through better utilisation of natural and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visits to cross-border area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths Total number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites in the eligible cross-

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective(s)	Selected results indicators	Selected output indicators
				border area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites in the eligible cross-border area
		Valorising of the cross-border tourism by developing common destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased level of touristic valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations • Number of marketing initiatives, addressing cross-border tourism products & services • Tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential in the cross-border area • Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism
		Networking for sustainable development of tourism potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint promotional events for capitalisation of the common touristic product/services • Marketing and networking events • Trainings and capacity building implemented on sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources • Public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources
PA-3:	<i>Technical assistance</i>			

III. FINANCING PLAN

3.1 Financial appropriation from the IPA (in EUR)

Table 20: Financial appropriation

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
IPA	1 257 945,86	1 821 205,17	2 609 768,70	4 731 376,14	4 825 253,11	4 919 130,08	5 031 780,94	25 196 460,00

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

Table 21: Financial Plan

Priority axis	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) (2)	For information	
				National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
PA-1		11 338 407,00	2 000 895,35	2 000 895,35	0	13 339 302,35	85 %	N/A	N/A
PA-2		11 338 407,00	2 000 895,35	2 000 895,35	0	13 339 302,35	85 %	N/A	N/A
PA-TA		2 519 646,00	444 643,41	444 643,41	0	2 964 289,41	85 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL		25 196 460,00	4 446 434,12	4 446 434,12	0	29 642 894,12		N/A	N/A

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

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

3.2 Breakdown by priority axis and thematic priority

Table 22: Breakdown by priority axis

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
PA-1	Environment	11 338 407,00	2 000 895,35	13 339 302,35
PA-2	Sustainable Tourism	11 338 407,00	2 000 895,35	13 339 302,35
PA-TA	Technical assistance	2 519 646,00	444 643,41	2 964 289,41
TOTAL		25 196 460,00	4 446 434,12	29 642 894,12

IV. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate)

Not Applicable

4.2 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)

Not Applicable

Table 23: Indicative financial allocation to ITI (aggregate amount)

Priority axis	Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)
PA-1	
PA-2	
PA-3	
PA-4	
PA-TA	
TOTAL	

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

Macro-regional strategies as integrated frameworks to address joint challenges contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion. The two existing European macro-regional strategies (European Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region and for the Danube Region) do not directly address the cross-border area, although the region is e.g. influenced by the Danube Region due to its spatial proximity and major environmental influences.

Black Sea coastal regions in Bulgaria Turkey (including Burgas and Kırklareli as NUTS level III regions) are covered by the EU Strategy for Blue Growth and by the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (referred to as "Bucharest Convention").

Additionally, the Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea – although not being an EU macro-regional strategy – is of importance for the area. The action

plan focuses especially on issue of eutrophication, marine resources, environmental pollution, biodiversity, etc. The Bucharest Convention is the basic agreement ratified in 1994 by all six legislative assemblies of the Black Sea countries, which encompasses three specific areas, namely: control of land-based sources of pollution; dumping of waste and joint actions in the case of accidents (such as oil spills).

The Blue Growth Strategy was developed within the framework of the European Union's (EU's) Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP). It seeks to provide a more coherent approach to maritime issues by increasing coordination among different policy areas in order to enhance the cooperation between coastal EU Member States and EU candidate and potential candidate countries. In addition, future operations under Priority axis 2 could be considered a specific tool developing the cross-cutting horizontal actions that are necessary to underpin the sustainable and balanced long-term growth of maritime economic activities, and thus to foster the cooperation between the Black Sea Basin countries.

V. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

Table 24: Programme authorities

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Managing authority	DG "Territorial Cooperation Management" Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria	Director General of DG "Territorial Cooperation Management" within the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
Certifying authority, where applicable	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria	Director of National Fund Directorate within the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria
Audit authority	Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria	Executive Director of the Audit of the European Union Funds Executive Agency within the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

<input type="checkbox"/> The Managing Authority	DG "Territorial Cooperation Management" at the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Certifying Authority	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

Table 25: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria	Minister of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria	Executive Director of the Audit of the European Union Funds Executive Agency within the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

5.2 Joint Monitoring Committee

In accordance with Article 38 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the Member States shall set up a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) within 3 months of the notification of the approval by the EU Commission of the Programme.

The JMC shall be composed of representatives of MA, NA, and the Commission and the NIPAC, as well as other relevant national authorities and stakeholders, including civil society and private sector organisations. The composition of the JMC will respect the principles of partnership and multi-level governance.

The Commission, Certifying Authority (CA) and the Audit Authority (AA) shall participate in the work of the JMC in an advisory capacity.

The JMC shall carry out its functions in accordance with the provisions of Article 38 of IPA II Regulation and Articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The main competencies and responsibilities of the JMC are as follow:

- Review the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all actions towards meeting the objectives set out in the cross-border programme, the financing agreements and the relevant strategy paper(s). It may make recommendations for corrective actions whenever needed.
- Monitoring by reference to indicators laid down in the cross-border cooperation programme, in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The JMC shall examine and approve:

- a) any issues that affect the performance of the operational programme;
- b) the methodology and criteria used for selection of operations;
- c) the annual and final implementation reports;
- a) the evaluation plan for the operational programme and any amendment of the evaluation plan, including where either is part of a common evaluation plan pursuant to Article 114(1). The JMC will examine the progress made in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to findings of evaluations;
- d) the communication strategy/plan for the operational programme and any amendment of the strategy/plan;
- e) any proposal by the MA for any amendment to the operational programme.

The JMC shall adopt its rules of procedures on the first JMC meeting. The rules of procedures shall encompass, as one of the other themes, a detail list of the JMC's tasks.

The JMC will be headed by a Chair and a co-Chair. The Chairmanship will be annually alternated between the MA and the NA. Decisions shall be taken by consensus.

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

Table 26: Indicative list of Joint Monitoring Committee members

Name of authority/body and department or unit	Role in the programme	Contact details of the authority/body
EU Commission	Advisory	European Commission, Directorate Regional and Urban Policy
NIPAC	Decision	
Managing Authority	Decision	Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria
National Authority	Decision	Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Financial Cooperation Directorate
Audit Authority	Advisory	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency
Certifying Authority	Advisory	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, National Fund Directorate
Regional authorities	Decision	
Local authorities	Decision	
Competent Public Central administration Authorities	Decision	
Social and economic partners		
Civil society organisations (environmental, equal opportunities, non-discrimination)		
Academic and scientific society		
EIB	Consultative	
Other (as agreed by the partner countries)		

5.3 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

In accordance with Article 23 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Managing Authority in cooperation with National Authority shall set up a Joint Secretariat (JS). The JS main office will remain placed in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria with a branch office located in Edirne, Republic of Turkey.

The JS (including its branch as part of the same body) shall be composed of a balanced number of Bulgarian and Turkish experts contracted by the MA or NA.

The JS shall assist the MA, NA and the JMC in carrying out their respective functions. The JS shall also provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under cooperation programmes and shall assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations.

The JS shall be responsible for the following main tasks:

- participation in planning and organisation of programme information campaigns and other activities related to raising public awareness on the programme;
- establishing and managing a joint projects data base and project partners data base;
- supporting projects generation and development;
- supporting MA and NA for the preparation of all standardised forms for the implementation of Programme such as application package, evaluation, contracting, implementation, monitoring and reporting forms;
- preparing the full application package for CfPs and submitting it to MA and NA for approval;
- advising beneficiaries on the implementation of operations and financial administration;
- receiving and registering of applications submitted;
- performing a formal check of project applications in terms of administrative compliance and eligibility;
- presenting a work plan via the Managing Authority to the Joint Monitoring Committee once a year for approval;
- organising meetings and events, drafting the minutes from meetings, preparing, ensuring the administrative management of tasks and services;
- providing secretariat services for Evaluation Committees and submitting the results of the project technical evaluation sessions to the JMC;
- monitoring of project implementation, collecting of information from the lead beneficiaries and updating data in the Management Information System; Coordinating the work of the controllers;
- collecting, checking and approving project progress reports from the lead partners;
- preparing the reports on programme implementation;
- consulting the lead beneficiaries on any requests for contract modifications. Reviewing and approving requests for contract modifications, which do not affect the objectives, outputs and results of the projects;
- cooperation with the programme implementing authorities in Bulgaria and Turkey, and with other territorial cooperation programmes;
- collaboration with central, regional and local stakeholders involved in the CBC Programme.

The detailed list of the JS responsibilities will be laid down in the Programme Implementation Manual.

5.4 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

Institutional arrangements

Managing Authority

Directorate General “Territorial Cooperation Management” at Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria is designated to perform the functions of single Managing Authority under Bulgaria-Turkey IPA Cross-border programme 2014-2020.

The Managing Authority is responsible for managing and implementing the IPA CBC Programme in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and the provisions of Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and in particular for:

- supporting the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee referred to in Article 47 of the CPR and provide it with the information it requires to carry out its tasks (data relating to the progress of the operational programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones);
- drawing up and, after approval by the monitoring committee, submitting to the Commission annual and final implementation reports;
- providing to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that is relevant to the execution of their tasks and the implementation of operations respectively;
- establishing a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable;
- ensuring that the data referred to in above point is collected, entered and stored in the Management Information System (MIS).

As regards the selection of operations, the managing authority is:

- drawing up and, once approved, applying appropriate selection procedures and criteria that:
 - ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority axis;
 - are non-discriminatory and transparent;
- ensuring that operations are selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the cross-border programme and that they comply with applicable Community and national rules for the whole of their implementation period;
- ensuring that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;
- satisfying itself that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to the above point before approval of the operation;
- satisfying itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with;
- ensuring that operations selected for support from the Funds do not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Article 71 following the relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area;
- determining the categories of intervention the measures to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

As regards the financial management and control of the operational programme, the managing authority is:

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

- ensuring that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;
- putting in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;
- setting up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) of Article 72;
- drawing up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

National Authority

The counterpart for the Managing Authority in charge of the coordination role in Turkey is the Ministry for European Union Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, acting as National Authority.

The National authority will cooperate in the joint programming, management and implementation of the programme and will take all necessary measures to provide assistance to the MA, CA and AA in their respective duties, mainly through:

- participating in joint programming and generation of operations in accordance with the programme objectives;
- nominating Turkish representatives in the Joint Monitoring Committee;
- participating in preparation of job descriptions and in the selection of the experts in the JS (Main and Branch);
- organizing a selection procedure for assessors from Turkish side.
- establishing a First level control system for Turkish beneficiaries, including development of guidelines for specific national control procedures;
- nominating representative(s) in the group of auditors;
- contributing on behalf of the Turkish side to the programme modification if necessary;
- supporting dissemination of information about the programme;
- ensuring national co-financing according to the approved allocation of funds;
- providing regular information and ensuring access to information of Managing Authority, Certifying Authority and Audit Authority on the Programme progress on Turkish territory;

Certifying Authority

“National Fund” Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Bulgaria has been designated as a Certifying Authority. The Certifying Authority shall receive the payments made by the Commission and shall make payments to the lead beneficiary in accordance with Article 132 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. In compliance with Article 126 of the same Regulation, the Certifying Authority is also responsible for:

- drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority;
- drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable law and has been incurred in respect of

operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme and complying with applicable law;

- ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for drawing up payment applications and accounts, including records of amounts recoverable, amounts recovered and amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation or the Programme;
- ensuring, for the purposes of drawing up and submitting payment applications, that it has received adequate information from the managing authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure;
- taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the Audit Authority;
- maintaining, in a computerised form, accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the budget of the Union prior to the closure of the Programme by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure.

Audit Authority

Executive Agency “Audit of European Union Funds” to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria has been designated as an Audit Authority.

According to the Article 127 of the CPR, the AA shall ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the Programme and on an appropriate sample of operations on the basis of the declared expenditure. The declared expenditure shall be audited based on a representative sample and, as a general rule, on statistical sampling methods.

The Audit Authority is also responsible for:

- ensuring that audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards;
- preparation of an audit strategy for performance of audits within eight months of adoption of the operational programme. The audit strategy shall set out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the planning of audits in relation to the current accounting year and the two subsequent accounting years. The audit strategy shall be updated annually from 2016 until and including 2024.

In addition, the Audit Authority shall draw up:

- an audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012;
- draw up an annual control report setting out the main findings of the audits carried out in accordance with Article 127(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions.

At the end of the implementation of the Programme, the Audit Authority shall prepare a final audit activity report and provide an audit opinion on the final statement of expenditure.

In compliance with Article 52 (d) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 of 2 May 2014 the Audit Authority shall be assisted by a **Group of Auditors**, comprising representatives of Bulgaria and Turkey. The Group of Auditors will assist the AA in setting up and implementing the audit strategy. The audit strategy will also indicate which measures have been put in place by the AA and the

Group of Auditors, in order to ensure that the same audit methodology, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards, has been applied by all members of the Group of Auditors.

Programme management, implementation and control arrangements

Selection of operations

The Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme shall support operations, which have direct cross-border impact, understood in terms of respecting at least two of the following conditions: joint development, joint staffing, joint implementation and joint financing.

The financing under the current Programme shall be made available to potential beneficiaries through a competitive process. The selection of the operations shall be made through open Call for proposals and/or decision of the JMC.

Geographical eligibility: In accordance with Article 39 (2) of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014, the selected operations shall involve beneficiaries from both partnering countries, at least one of which shall be from Bulgaria as a Member State. The beneficiaries and operations should be located in at least one of the NUTS level III regions (or equivalent regions in the non-MS) covered by the cross-border programme and specified above. An important exception to this rule is the eligibility of beneficiaries that are located outside the eligible administrative units but that are competent or relevant in their scope of action to all or parts of each national eligible area. Nevertheless, the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme may also finance operations that are implemented outside the programme area, provided that the conditions of the Article 44(2) of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 are satisfied. The total amount allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area shall not exceed 20 % of the support from the Union at programme level.

Beneficiaries: In accordance with Article 40 (1) of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014, one of the potential beneficiaries shall be designated by all the beneficiaries as the lead beneficiary. The lead beneficiary shall carry out the tasks specified in Article 40, namely:

- a) lay down the arrangements with other beneficiaries in an agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- b) assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire operation;
- c) ensure that expenditure presented by all beneficiaries has been incurred in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the beneficiaries, and in accordance with the document provided by the MA;
- d) ensure that the expenditure presented by other beneficiaries has been verified by a controller(s).

The lead beneficiary and its partners have to be legally established organizations (legal persons) on the territory of Bulgaria or Turkey and must be non-profit making organization. Profit generating organizations and political parties are not eligible beneficiaries under Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme.

Project generation/preparation:

Potential beneficiaries will be adequately informed on the programme objectives and priorities for support, the prerequisites for obtaining funds and the individual procedures. Support will be provided by JS for project generation and preparation, including a partner search facility.

Eligibility and selection criteria:

The operations will be assessed according to the criteria previously approved by JMC.

Eligibility criteria will be formulated in order to ensure the administrative and formal compliance of projects to be submitted. These will include: submission before a deadline, completeness of submitted documentation, cross-border character of the composition of the partnership, no double financing from EU financial source of the same operation, etc.

Selection criteria will be applied to those projects that have first fulfilled the eligibility criteria and will assess their compliance with the strategic and operational principles guiding the project selection.

Assessment:

The assessment of the operations (projects proposals) shall be carried out by the following three steps:

- Opening session - shall be carried out by the JS.
- Administrative compliance and eligibility check - shall be carried out by the JS, and
- Technical/quality assessment - shall be carried out by independent assessors from both Bulgaria and Turkey appointed by the MA.

Standard rules and procedures for assignment and scope of the tasks of the external assessors shall be defined in rules of procedures/manual for external assessors and other relevant documents.

The criteria for appointment of the external assessors will be formulated in order to ensure the fair competition, equal opportunities and qualitative selection of the candidates. The selected external assessors shall possess the minimum required knowledge and experience on the issues covered by the Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-border Programme.

For each call for proposals, the certain number of assessors will be assign for the technical evaluation of the received projects proposals. Equal number of assessors from the two countries will be appointed to carry out the technical evaluation for each call for proposals.

The assessment process will be organized and secretarially supported by JS and the relevant information will be recorded in the Management Information System. The results of all assessment steps will be summarized in a report and presented to the JMC for decision.

Projects selection and approval:

The JMC will decide on the approval of projects and the amount of programme's financial contribution to each operation. Detailed rules on decision making will be included in the rules of procedure of the Monitoring Committee.

Operations shall not be selected for IPA II assistance where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for funding under the cross-border cooperation programme is submitted by the beneficiary to the MA, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made by the beneficiary.

Contracting:

Based on mandate given by the JMC, the MA shall proceed with conducting the procedure for concluding subsidy contracts with the lead beneficiaries. The MA shall carried out the pre-contracting visits on the investment sites proposed for financing and shall organize budget negotiations to all projects proposals approved for financing.

Contracts with the lead beneficiaries will be prepared in an approved standard subsidy contract template form and annexes. Implementation of the projects activities may start only after the contracts are signed by both - the MA and the lead beneficiary.

Management and control system

The management and control systems for the programme shall be set up in accordance with Articles 47 of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 and respectively Articles 72, 73 and 74, 122(1) and (3), 128 and 148 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

MA shall ensure that the management and control system for the programme are set up in accordance with the IPA specific rules and that those systems function effectively.

First Level Control system

According to Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 125 (4) (a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 each participating country designates the body or persons responsible for carrying out verification of expenditures of the operations in relation to beneficiaries on its territory ('controller(s)').

The controller(s) shall provide control and verification of:

- delivery of the products and services;
- soundness of the expenditure declared for operations implemented by the respective beneficiary;
- compliance of such expenditure, related operations, as well as tendering procedures with Community rules and when relevant with its national rules; and
- compliance of such expenditure, related operations and part of operations to the eligible costs given in the application.

For Republic of Bulgaria

For Bulgaria, a decentralised FLC system will be established. The Minister of Regional Development or authorised person by him/her will assign the FLC tasks to the controller(s) in accordance with applicable public procurement legislation or under existing labour law.

Standard rules and procedures for carrying out the control activities are defined in FLC Manual and other relevant documents.

The cost for FLC verification shall be covered by the programme budget under PA "Technical assistance".

For Republic of Turkey

Turkey will set up a centralised control system. Standard rules and procedures for carrying out the control activities will be defined in national FLC Manual and other relevant documents.

Financial management

The MA shall be responsible for managing the operational programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management.

The MA shall make payments to the Lead Beneficiaries and/or final beneficiaries (in the case of Priority axis "Technical assistance") of the IPA and the corresponding Bulgarian national co-financing. The lead beneficiaries are responsible for transferring the corresponding funds to the project partners.

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

MA ensures the aggregation of information on expenditures and submits to the CA on a regular basis a report on certification and statement of expenditures.

Monitoring

The MA and the JMC will ensure the quality of the implementation of the programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The JMC will observe the monitoring of the Programme implementation and ensure the achievement of the Programme objectives through a rational use of the allocated resources. Monitoring will be carried out by reference to the indicators herewith specified.

The tools used for the monitoring of the programme are the annual reports (and final report) on implementation, as set up in Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. The annual (final) report(s) will be drafted by the JS, verified by the MA and approved by the JMC before submitting them to the

Commission. The reporting, information and communication tasks will be carried out in accordance with Article 42 of Regulation (EC) No447/2014.

The monitoring of the Programme will be done through the management information system that will provide project-specific technical and financial information. The reporting will be provided by the lead beneficiary on behalf of the entire partnership through periodical or final reporting and presented to the JS. The JS will check the compliance of the reports with the project application. The data of the reports will be stored in the management system that in turn will generate, based on it, the reports submitted to the European Commission.

Programme Evaluation

The Programme is subject to an *ex-ante*, interim and *ex-post* evaluation of independent evaluators with the aim to improve Programme quality and to optimise the allocation of the financial resources. Evaluations shall be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation. All evaluations shall be made public. Provisions of Article 41 of Regulation (EC) No447/2014 are fully applied.

The participating countries jointly carried out an *ex-ante* evaluation in accordance with Article 55 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The *ex-ante* has been carried out by external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme preparation. The recommendations of the *ex-ante* evaluation team are taken into account during the elaboration process of the Programme.

During the programming period, the MA shall ensure evaluation(s) for assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme implementation on the basis of the evaluation plan and consequently the follow-up actions. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the programme funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority axis. All evaluations shall be examined by the JMC and sent to the Commission.

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

Each partnering country shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the beneficiaries located on its territory. In the case of a systematic irregularity, the partnering country shall extend its investigation to cover all operations potentially affected. The partnering country shall make the financial corrections in connection with individual or systemic irregularities detected in operations or operational programme. Financial correction shall consist of cancelling all or part of the public contribution to an operation or to the operational programme. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the managing authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

The Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay the lead beneficiary any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed with the lead beneficiary and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the partners. The Programme shall provide the beneficiaries a template of the Partnership Agreement.

If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the partnering country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the managing authority the amount unduly paid to that beneficiary. The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing

the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating countries as laid down in the cooperation programme.

In accordance with article 85 of Regulation no.1303/2013 (CPR) the Commission has the right of making financial corrections by cancelling all or part of the Union contribution to the programme and effecting recovery from the partnering country in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the management and control systems which have been detected by the Commission or the European Court of Auditors.

In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to systemic irregularities, the two partnering countries commit to dividing the amount between the partnering countries proportionally with the approved project budgets and performed activities by Bulgarian and Turkish beneficiaries, affected by the financial correction. In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to random or anomalous irregularities, the two partnering countries commit to investigate on a case by case basis. The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the partnering countries' obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

5.6 Use of the Euro (where applicable)

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

5.7 Involvement of partners

Participation of partners in the preparation of the Programme

The entire programme cycle, embracing the programme preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation alike, has been designed to ensure the active involvement of the relevant partners. As presented above, partners have been involved in the programming process, primarily through:

- Meetings of the Programme bodies (MA and NA) and Joint Working Group;
- Consultation with the partners;
- Consultations with the stakeholders – local and regional authorities, central and regional offices of national institutions, Chambers of commerce and industry, NGOs, etc;
- Internet based consultations.

The entire IPA CBC Programme promotes the concept of a special form of partnership – crossborder partnership. Thus only joint projects of Bulgarian and Turkish partners can be supported. The application of the Lead partner principle also enhances partnership. In addition, the implementation procedures and the structure and composition of the various institutions and bodies have all been designed to ensure balanced partnership of every relevant partner, from both counties, across the whole programme cycle management process.

The consultations for the Situation analysis and SWOT

The participation to all stages of consultation was active. Programme partners and stakeholders were asked to contribute to the areas of cooperation with their vision through an on-line survey based on questionnaires. The survey was performed in February 2014. The respondents expressed their views and opinions by answering the questionnaire provided, and offering a quantitative ranking for their opinion. The respondents to the survey are partners of projects financed by the current programme,

and among them were included representatives of NGO, educational and university institutions, local administrations and others. Exactly 123 respondents from local public authorities, national public authorities, and civil society (associations, foundations, etc.), private sector gave their feedback during the survey.

The contribution to the Situation analysis and SWOT by the stakeholders and potential beneficiaries were given during the First round of regional consultations that have been performed in Haskovo (Bulgaria) and Edirne (Turkey) on 19th and 20th of March 2014.

The Situation analysis and SWOT were also consulted with the Task force and Joint working group members. The Situation analysis and SWOT were accepted by the Joint working group members during the joint meeting hold in Ankara on May 13th 2014. During the same meeting the two Thematic Priorities as per IPA II Regulation were approved so to be a base for the Priority axes of the OP IPA CBC BG-TR 2014-2020, e.g. environment and sustainable tourism.

A second round of consultations

Over the period June 18th – 19th 2014 in Edirne (Turkey) and Haskovo (Bulgaria) a second round of regional consultations was performed so to present the First draft of the Intervention logic of OP IPA CBC BG-TR 2014-2020. The stakeholders gave their input in terms of specific objectives, results, target groups, beneficiaries, indicative activities.

Consultations on the Draft versions of OP IPA CBC BG-TR 2014-2020

Over the period 20th – 30th of June 2014 the First draft OP IPA CBC BG-TR 2014-2020 was consulted among Programme bodies and with Joint working group members. The given feedback during this process was taken into consideration in drafting the Second draft OP IPA CBC BG-TR 2014-2020. The later was submitted to both Managing and National authorities on July 7th 2014 so to be further proceed for consultations with EC services.

The Final Draft Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 was submitted to Managing and National authorities on July 31st for finalization of the adoption process between programme partners as well as further approval by the respective EC services.

During Programme implementation, the Programme bodies will foster the active participation of stakeholders through both on-line instruments and periodic events aimed at sharing progresses gradually made.

VI. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

6.1 Sustainable development

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

Generally, all three dimensions of sustainability, including the ecological, the economic as well as the social one, will be taken into consideration within the IPA BG-TR Programme; therefore the programme

contributes directly to the Europe 2020 Strategy's components of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

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

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

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

- actively tackle wider environmental concerns
- actively tackle environmental issues of specific concern, including climate change as well as the maintaining of biodiversity and ecosystems
- carrying out environmental management (structured experience sharing, capacity development, etc.)
- actively tackle sustainability issues, including ecological, economic and social concerns
- adopting measures for the organisation and implementation of conferences and events in a sustainable way

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should:

- contribute to the implementation of the reviewed European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development (2009), which shall be proved by each project applicant in a conclusive and transparent way which shall be assessed as project selection criterion.
- consider the principles of the Community Policy regarding the protection and improvement of natural heritage and biodiversity as well as related amendments, such as the Flora-Fauna-Habitat directive and the Birds directive being the "*cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy*" (European Commission, 2013: online¹⁵).
- consider greater use of renewable energy

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

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

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

¹⁵ Cf. EU COM (2013): The Habitats Directive.

URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/> (June, 2014)

6.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

In general, it's the aim of the European Union to combat “*discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*” (EU COM, common provisions). With the Green Paper on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all, the European Commission published a joint strategy for “*the positive and active promotion of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all*” (European Union, 2014: online¹⁶). This goes in line with the UN's universal declaration of Human Rights.

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

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

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

For the programming period 2014-2020, the main focus of the Programme has been aligned to improve the living conditions within the border regions. **Priority Axis 1** targets cooperation on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth and aims at an increased life quality in functional urban areas and reduced disparities within the programming area through strengthened capacities and the development and implementation of integrated strategies and tools. It is one main objective of **Priority Axis 2** to reduce existing disparities in economic development especially in peripheral areas, which are facing a low quality of public infrastructure and therefore to contribute to the creation of equality between peripheral and central areas.

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

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

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

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should contribute to/consider:

- ensure that the activities implemented do not generate discrimination of any kind

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

¹⁶ Cf. EU COM (2014): A framework strategy for non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. URL: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/human_rights/fundamental_rights_within_european_union/c10313_en.htm (June, 2014).

6.3 Equality between men and women

Same as for sustainable development, the promotion of equality between men and women is one of the general principles of the CSF Funds (cf. EU COM, common provisions) and one of the EU's founding principles. In the Union treaty it has been mentioned, that the Union “*shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child*” (EU COM: Lisbon Treaty, Art. 3). The Union therefore follows the “*Strategy for equality between women and men*” for the period 2010-2015, following thematic priorities, including equal economic independencies, equal pay for work of equal value, equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence, promoting gender equality beyond the Union and horizontal issues (gender roles, legislation, etc.) (cf. European Union, 2010: 4-10¹⁷).

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

The IPA BG-TR Programme contributes to the Europe 2020 goals of an inclusive economy and therefore to a higher level of equality between men and women. The Programme therefore contributes to the identified weaknesses in border regions, such as high numbers of out-migration, brain-drain occurrences and the risk of poverty for different groups (e.g. women, migrants). For the programming period 2014-2020, the main focus of the Programme has been aligned to improve living conditions in the area.

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

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

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

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

Additionally, all projects funded by the Programme should contribute to/consider:

- Contribute to the principles of the “*Strategy for equality between women and men*”

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

¹⁷ Cf. EU COM (2010): Flexible working time arrangements and gender equality – A comparative review of 30 European countries. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en> (June, 2014)

VII.ANNEXES

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