

Interreg - IPA CBC



CCI 2014TC16I5CB006

AIR 2014-2015 Citizen's Summary

Environment



Tourism



Competitiveness



www.ipa-cbc-007.eu



Programme co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION



Ms. Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy said: ***"I am pleased to adopt this cooperation programme between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Cross-border programmes depend on the strong will of the participating countries to pool resources together to tackle joint challenges. By cooperating on environment, tourism and SME competitiveness, the region can increase its attractiveness for tourists and investors. I wish both countries success in setting up this cooperation, and supporting projects that will capitalize on the regional strengths."***

ABOUT THE SUMMARY

The Summary aims to describe in a concise and informal language the main achievements of the Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Programme in the years 2014 and 2015. Full report of activities is available at the Programme website: www.ipa-cbc-007.eu

Contents:

- Brief Programme description;
- Programme preparation activities in 2014;
- Regional Consultative Forum s in 2014;
- Preparation and launch of the First Call for project proposals;
- First Call Information Days and the Partner Search Forum;
- Programme media campaign and media coverage;
- New Programme website and social media pages;
- Participation in external information and publicity initiatives.

THE PROGRAMME

The new Interreg – IPA Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cross-border cooperation programme was adopted on **5 August 2015** by the Commission with Decision **№ C(2015) 5653** and focuses on measures aiming at mitigating the effects of climate change and at addressing issues related to conservation of nature and biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, environmental protection and risk management at cross-border level. A key focus of the programme is also put on the protection of natural and cultural heritage sites in the region. Moreover, funding will help enhance the competitiveness of SMEs and facilitate their access to new markets.

Programme goal

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



Programme Budget



The total Programme budget is **EUR 19 461 690**

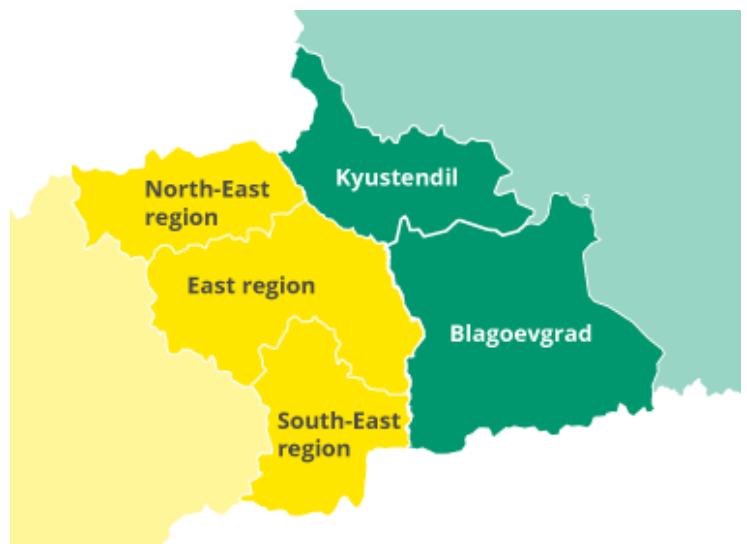
The Programme is co-funded by the European Union, from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (IPA II).

Programme area

The programme area is located in the South-Central part of the Balkan Peninsula. It covers a territory of 18 087 km² and has a population of 980 375 people. The border line is 165 km of land border.

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

The territory on side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia comprises of the North-East, the East and the South-East NUTS III statistical regions (47,5% of the programme area, 33,4% of the country area), consisting of 27 municipalities, 597 settlements and a population of 527 402 people (53,8% of the total programme area population, 25.6 % of the country population).



Priority Axes and specific objectives



Priority Axis 1: Environment

Specific objective:

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

SO 1.2 Prevention and mitigation the consequences of natural and man-caused disasters of cross-border dimension and impact



Priority Axis 2: Tourism

Specific objective:

SO 2.1 Enhancing the tourism potential of the region through cooperation initiatives in better preservation and sustainable of natural and cultural heritage.

SO 2.2 Raising the competitiveness of the CBC region's tourist offer.

SO 2.3 Promoting cooperation among regional actors in the area of sustainable tourism.



Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness

Specific objective:

SO 3.1 Improving the competitiveness of regional businesses.

Management Structures

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit
MANAGING AUTHORITY	DG "Territorial Cooperation Management", Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria
NATIONAL AUTHORITY	the Ministry of Local Self-Government
CERTIFYING AUTHORITY	National Fund Directorate at 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
JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE	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 non-governmental organisations. The composition of the JMC will respect the principles of partnership and multi-level governance.
JOINT SECRETARIAT	The JS will be established in Kyustendil (Bulgaria) with a branch office in Strumica (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). The JS provides daily help to the Managing Authority, National Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme and assists where appropriate the Certifying Authority and Audit Authority in carrying out their respective duties. The JS also provides information and support to the beneficiaries of the Programme.

PROGRAMME PREPARATION ACTIVITIES IN 2014

Joint Working Group for preparation of IPA II Cross-border Programme



SKOPJE, 23 April 2014

Second meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) for preparation of IPA II Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014 – 2020

On 23 April 2014 in Skopje was held second meeting of the **Joint Working Group (JWG)** for preparation of IPA II Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014 – 2020.

Final meeting of the Joint Working Group for preparation of IPA II Cross-border Programme 2014-2020

The final meeting of the Joint Working Group for preparation of IPA II Cross-border Programme 2014-2020 took place on the 21 August 2014 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The JWG session was aimed at finalization and approving of the Programme document.



SOFIA, 21 August 2014

Regional Consultations Fora

In regards of the preparation of the Programme document for the 2014 – 2020 programming period **6 events in total have been organized during 2014** in the form of information seminars, including 5 Regional consultative forums in first and 1 Regional consultative forum in second round. The regional consultative Fora were attended by 240 participants representing municipalities, regional and national administration/public institutions, NGOs, educational and other relevant institutions. All consultations have been organised in the local languages (Bulgarian and Macedonian). The results from the Regional Consultations together with the situation and SWOT analysis were used as a foundation for elaboration of the Strategy of the IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Regional Consultations Fora took place:

- On 26 February in **Strumica**;
- On 27 February in **Stip**;
- On 28 February in **Kumanovo**;
- On 6 March in **Kyustendil**;

Second round of the Regional Consultative Fora

In the final stage of the process of preparing the programming document for cross-border cooperation for the period 2014 –2020 on 4 June 2014 in Strumica was held the **second round of the Regional Consultative Fora** attended by over 60 representatives of both countries.



Regional Consultative Fora - 27 February 2014, Stip



Regional Consultative Fora - 6 March 2014, Kyustendil



Second Round of Regional Consultative Fora - 4 June 2014, Strumica

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES IN 2015

Joint Monitoring Committee meeting



Joint Monitoring Committee meeting - 3 September 2015, Sofia

In order to improve the quality of the Application package within the first Call for Proposals, we have published Guidelines for Applicants on the Programme website for public review. Potential applicants, as well as other interested organisations and persons, have been invited to send their suggestions and comments. As a result, both the Guidelines for Applicants and the Application package have been accordingly revised and presented for approval at the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meeting. The JMC meeting took place on 3 September in Sofia where the complete Application Package was approved.

Lauching of the First Call

- The First Call for project proposals was **launched on the 23th of September 2015**;
- The First Call was open for 4 months, with **deadlines on the 25th of January 2016**;
- The total amount allocated to the First Call for proposals is **€ 7,240,469.00**;
- The Call was open to project proposals under **all 3 priority axes and the 6 specific objectives**;
- In order to help the potential applicants, we have published all **54 relevant questions and answers on the website**;
- The Call was **promoted in the national newspapers** in both countries, **national television**, radio stations, as well as **on numerous websites**, through **social media**, and at **5 public events known as "Info days"** and the very popular **"Partner Search Forum"**.

First Call Information Days and the Partner Search Forum

Promotional campaign under First Call for proposals started with two kick-off events: in Blagoevgrad, on 23 October, and in Kriva Palanka, on 28 October. The subsequent campaign included two info days in Bulgaria, three Info days in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the Partner Search Forum in Sandanski. Events were organized in local languages and the goal was to help the potential beneficiaries prepare good quality project proposals.

Information Days:

- 23 October – Blagoevgrad (kick-off event);
- 27 October - Kyustendil;
- 28 October - Kriva Palanka (kick-off event);
- 29 October - Probistip;
- 30 October - Gevgelija.

Partner Search Forum:

- 12 November – Sandanski



Information day - 23 October 2015, Blagoevgrad



Information day - 27 October 2015, Kyustendil



Information day - 30 October 2015, Gevgelija

Partner Search Forum - Sandanski



Partner Search Forum - 12 November 2015, Sandanski

The campaign concluded with the Partner Search Forum. The Partner Search Forum took place on the 12th November, 2015 in Sandanski, Bulgaria. More than 120 participants from both countries took part in the event. The goal of the forum was to give the opportunity to all organizations, that would like to apply with a project proposal under the Programme, but do not have partners, to establish such relations and to realize future partnerships and joint activities. The Information campaign and the Partner Search Forum in Sandanski, reaching nearly 500 in total from over 270 different organizations.

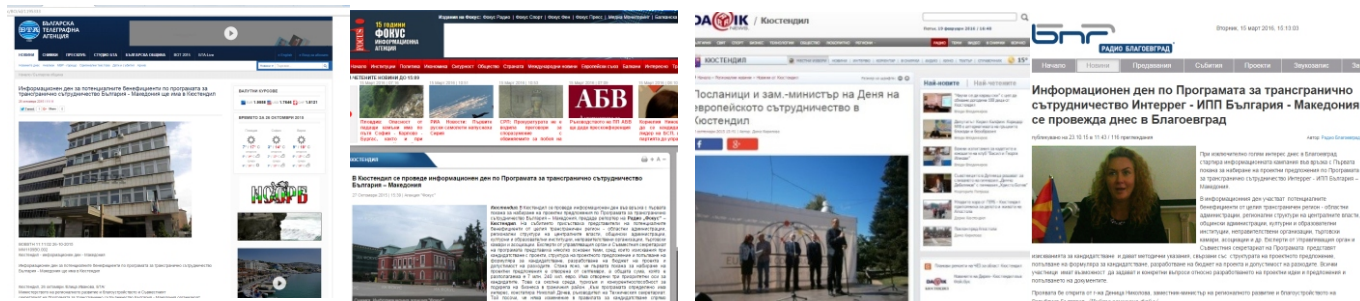
MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Press conferences and interviews



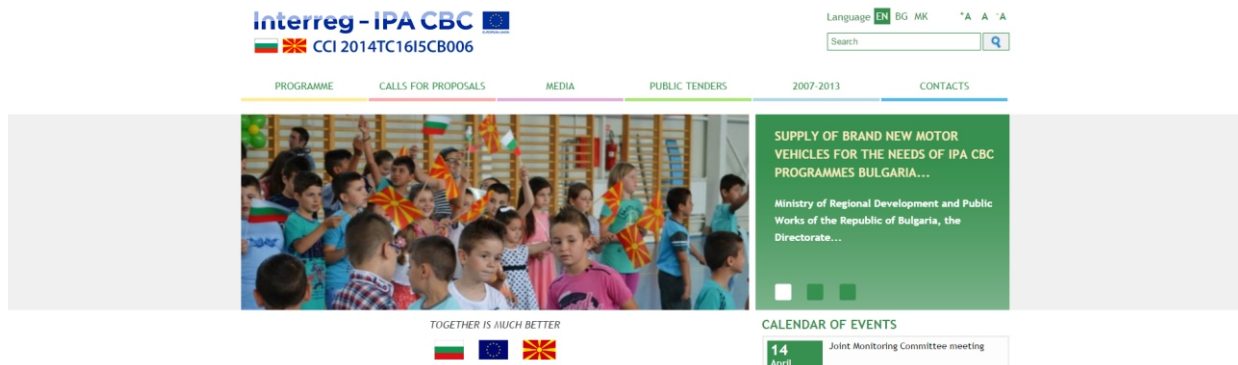
There had been 10 press conferences and 1 media interview in 2014 and 2015. The press conferences took place during the Regional Consultative Fora, Information Days, Partner Search Forum in Sandanski and at the kick-off event in Blagoevgrad and Kriva Palanka. The one interview took place at the EC Day in Kyustendil. These events resulted in excellent media coverage.

Media coverage



During 2014 and 2015, more than **70 external websites** have featured information on the Programme. Additionally, numerous local and some of the **national TV and radio stations** from both countries featured positive information on the Programme. Most of the coverage was related to the first Call for Proposals and the Programme events but part of it was focused on the successful projects as well. The first Call was advertised in **2 national daily newspapers**.

NEW PROGRAMME WEBSITE



www.ipa-cbc-007.eu

The website was completely reworked in 2015, featuring modern interactive design, simplified user-friendly interface, and the new visual identity. New features include: “Responsive Design”, “Featured News”, “Beneficiary Portal” (under development), and a variety of “Share” options. In 2015 there was a significant increase in the number of website visits, totalling 34 162 or approximately 67% increase compared to 2014.

PROGRAMME SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

In order to better and faster provide information to participants, in social networks was based a page of the Programme at social network **Facebook** on 31 March 2014.

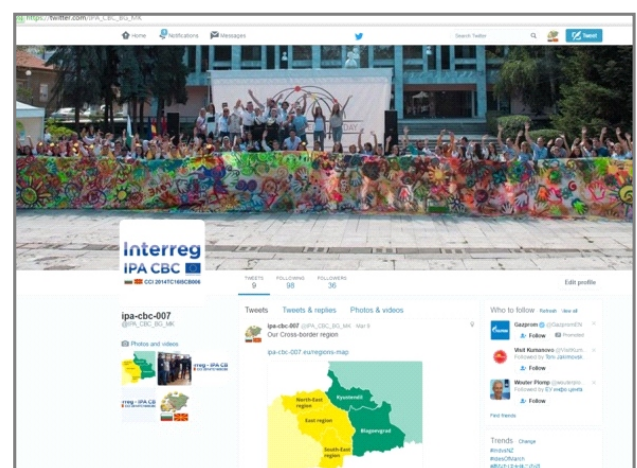
The address is www.facebook.com/ipacbcbgmk

By the end of 2014 Facebook page of the Programme had more than 500 members and at the end of 2015 had more than 2190 members.

The use of social media for promotion of the Programme has proven to be a very efficient and cost-efficient. Some of the **individual Programme Facebook posts have reached as many as 100 000 people.**

Each time there is a new post on the Programme Facebook page, it is automatically posted on the Twitter as well, as programmed by the JS Communication Officer.

The **Programme Twitter page** address is https://twitter.com/IPA_CBC_BG_MK. It is also worth noting that the Programme made use of the option for paid advertisements on Facebook in 2015, for promotion of the major Programme events and for promotion of the Programme page and website. The total amount spent on Facebook promotion in 2015 is EUR 250.



EXTERNAL INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY INITIATIVES

The Programme was promoted in 3 major external events during 2015:

- Meeting of the Regional Development Council of Southwestern Region of Bulgaria took place on 22 April in Bansko, Bulgaria;
- Meeting of the Regional Development Council of Southwestern Region of Bulgaria took place on 3 December in Bansko, Bulgaria;
- The “25 Years of Interreg” conference took place on 15 September in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The high-level international event included an exhibition of large posters, illustrating the stories of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes. JS Communication Officer designed a special poster for the occasion which was printed in A0 format and delivered to the event organisers for the exhibition. Additionally, our Programme participated with its own proposal in the choice of the slogan contest for Interreg and produced a short film for proposals in Project Slam Competition.



The conference was held under the patronage of Ms Corina Crețu, the European Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy and Mr. François Bausch, Minister for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The event offered an opportunity to look back on the history of Interreg, explore some of the themes where Interreg made a difference, take a global view on territorial cooperation, and discuss visions for European regions as well as the role of Interreg itself.

During the conference, the celebration of the European Cooperation Day 2015 was officially launched through awarding ceremony of the slogan contest for Interreg.

The winner was selected among a huge number of contestants – a representative of a Bulgarian non-governmental organisation with a long standing experience in cross-border projects development and implementation.





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