

Annex I

**IPA II Cross-border Cooperation
Programme Bulgaria-Turkey
CCI 2014TC16I5CB005**

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

[Reference: Article 32, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No447/of 02 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) 231/2014 of 11 March 2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA II)]

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 IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey (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, sustainable and inclusive growth. These targets require a mixture of national and EU action, utilising the full range of policies and instruments available.

- ♦ **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, namely: integration, investment and performance related results.

Complementary, the **Commission working document “Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020”** describes a number of other characteristics of cross-border cooperation: 1) Support the joint management and promotion of the shared major geographic features; 2) Achieving economies of scale for more efficient investments in services and infrastructure;

- ♦ **The European Union Civil Protection Legislation¹**

A rising trend in natural and man-made disasters over the past decade has demonstrated that coherent, efficient and effective policies on disaster management are needed now more than ever. The new **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** came into effect at the beginning of 2014. The new legislation places a much greater emphasis on disaster prevention, risk management, and **disaster preparedness**, including the organisation of trainings, simulation exercises and the exchange of experts, but also developing new elements, such as a voluntary pool of pre-committed response capacities by the Member States. The revised legislation creates a **European Emergency Response Capacity**, moving from the current ad hoc arrangement to a more predictable and reliable system that allows for better planning.

- ♦ **Strategic Frameworks for Bulgaria 2014 - 2020: EU Partnership Agreement & Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy & NUTS III Regional Development Strategies**

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

In terms of building a capacity for preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area the cooperation program fully corresponds to the key Bulgarian document - Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014 – 2020.

In addition, in all three NUTS III Regional Development Strategies 2014 – 2020 of Haskovo, Yambol and Burgas regions in Bulgaria tourism and all aspects of nature protection have been selected as a key areas for development during the next programming period, including in the cross-border aspect.

- ♦ **Strategic Frameworks for Turkey: Strategy Paper for Turkey 2014-2020 & Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 - 2023**

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

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/civil_protection_legislation_en.pdf

*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

In terms of building a capacity for preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area the cooperation program will contribute to related policy documents that are under the responsibility of Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD) and all other policy actors in this sector.

In addition, in line with Trakya Region Development Plan 2014 – 2023, part of which are both NUTS III Turkish Provinces Edirne and Kırklareli, tourism as well as all aspects of nature protection have been selected as a key areas for development during the mentioned programming period, including in the cross-border aspect.

TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION

The cross-border area is located in South-Eastern Europe, at the Balkan Peninsula and includes the NUTS-3 equivalent districts: 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 Turkish eligible programming area³. 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. 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. Edirne has a population density of 64,7 inhabitants/km², Kırklareli of 53 inhabitants/km².

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

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

³ All reference documents of both Bulgarian National Statistical Institute and Turkish Statistical Institute are listed in Annex to the Programme

Range in Bulgaria, and in the South-East to Strandja/Yildiz 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/Yildiz Mountain is the richest on water resources in the entire Thracian – Strandja/Yildiz area. Five rivers take their sources from the Strandja/Yildiz 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 - non-metallic mineral deposits (limestone, marble, gabbro, granite, asbestos and argil), metal deposits (polimetallic 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 most of CBC regions (without Burgas) belong to the most vulnerable regions in Europe. 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. 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%. 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). 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. 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). 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.

Demographic development. Especially in Bulgaria, the total population shrank

strongly between 2005 and 2012 from 830.917 inhabitants in 2005 to 784.480 inhabitants in the year 2012. Over the period 2001-2011, the population of Haskovo and Yambol Districts has decreased to 13% on average. 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 demographic situation in Burgas region is better - the population 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 increased for the past decade. It is expected this tendency of increase to be kept until 2023 as well. Demographically, the population of the eligible Bulgarian regions also display a higher ageing index than the national average. 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. 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.

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 minimize 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

According to “Air quality in Europe 2013” report South-Eastern Bulgaria and the bordering part of Turkey have air quality problems. Concerning PM10 concentrations, these regions are in one of the hotspots of Europe⁴. 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. 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. 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 Kırklareli 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). In the field of soil, erosion is a main issue for the region, where especially larger areas in Kırklareli are affected. Both partnering

⁴ See objectives of the Clean Air Package of 18 December 2013

countries have a tradition in the preservation and nature protection management. 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. 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. Taking into account the environmental situation 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. One main environmental issue includes the Black Sea, which is one of the main connection factors of the CBC region (both regions 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. Reasons for these developments are pollution, irresponsible fishing in the sea as well as eutrophication. In addition being part of EU Green Belt Initiative (Initiative) both countries have a solid ground for cooperation in the field of nature protection and sustainable use common natural resources. The Initiative is a backbone of a pan-European ecological network contributing to the Natura 2000-/Emerald-network of protected areas. It is also a significant contribution to the Green Infrastructure (GI) for Europe as well as a model area for conservation and restoration of a functional ecological network respecting the economic, social, and cultural needs of local communities. In addition the Initiative is a framework for cross-border cooperation on regional and municipal level as well as for protected areas. Last but not least the EU Green Belt Initiative is a best practice example for successful cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organizations in a transboundary context.

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. 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. 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. 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. As part of prevention still investments and upgradings are needed in the field of environment protection and risk prevention in the CBC area.

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, increase of marine litter, declining diversity of spaces, etc.

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.

- 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. In this respect meeting the requirements of Water Framework Directive (WFD)⁵ and the Floods Directive⁶ have to be respected. In line with this a strategic approach will be taken to ensure that environmental impacts are duly considered for any flood risk reduction project. Accordingly for any project that modifies the hydromorphological characteristics of water body causing deterioration of the status, an appropriate analysis as required by Art. 4.7 of WFD should be carried out as early as possible in the planning process. This would entail the analysis of alternatives (better environmental options), the set-up of the necessary mitigation measures, and a justification of the importance of the respective project for overriding public interest.
- 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.
- Initiatives involving the direct removal of marine litter from the Black sea, as well as awareness raising of the significance of the problem.
- 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-Kapıkule, 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. 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

⁵ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32000L0060>

⁶ Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/index.htm

motorway. The main share of roads in Edirne and Kırklareli includes village roads, in Edirne village roads amount around 1.800 kilometres, in Kırklareli around 1.900 km. Both provinces hold just a small share of motorways (51 kilometres in Edirne and 70 kilometres in Kırklareli).

Any development and upgrading of transport infrastructure should be embedded in Sustainable Urban and Regional Mobility Plans which are linked to Air Quality Plans under Directive 2008/50/EC. Moreover, cooperation between and coherence at vertical and horizontal levels of administration will be assured in order to prevent contradicting initiatives and contribute to a better achievement of the goals of the programme ("horizontal and vertical integration of air quality"), e.g. new regional transport infrastructure initiatives will support (at least will not interfere with) local or regional Air Quality Plans.

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. The length of railway kilometres amounts 96 kilometres in Edirne, and 110 kilometres in Kırklareli. 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. Other nearest airports to the region are Çorlu (131 km from Edirne and 105 km from Kırklareli), İstanbul (214 km from Kırklareli and 241 km from Edirne) in the Turkish territory and Sofia International Airport (228 km from Haskovo, 298 km from Yambol), Plovdiv (78 km from Haskovo) and Varna (135 km from Burgas) in the Bulgarian territory. This makes the access from other Turkish cities, especially from the capital difficult.

The harbour of Burgas is the largest harbour in Bulgaria and within the CBC Region. The provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli do not have a significant port. The public infrastructure in the region is well 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. Additionally, also energy infrastructure is well developed, whereas especially natural gas has become an alternative for both, households and industries.

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.
- A joint airport is a need for the region, still under a small budget programme such as IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey, it is not possible to be implemented.

Tourism, natural, cultural and historical 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 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. Strandja/ Yıldız mountain. Strandja/ Yıldız 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). Strandja 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. Strandja/ Yıldız 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 Istanbul 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 Strandja/ Yıldız. That is why the mountain is a living museum. Strandja/ Yıldız mountain is reach with karst terrain, with steep limestone cliffs, many mineral springs and complex cave systems. The mountain is a haven for wildlife - spectacular birds and mammals are living there. 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. 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.

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 km 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. Edirne City – Living Museum. One of the most acient 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. 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 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 Ancient Beauties of the Bulgarian seaside.

There are many ancient cities in the Bulgarian part of the CBC region. Towns of Sozopol and Nessebar are the most ancient ones. Sozopol is located 34 kilometers south of Burgas and is one of the oldest seaside towns in Bulgaria, set up as early as 610 BC. 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. 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. It became an important trade center as well. 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 and the town is ranked number one in the world for number of churches per capita. 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 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, 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. 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 practices 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”*. 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%. 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. 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.

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”. Today the relations have enhanced, at present Bulgaria and Turkey are two neighbouring and allied countries which have active role in regional cooperation processes and have similar foreign policy orientations. 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.

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. At the national level, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) 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).

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.

Challenges

- 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).
- The existing legislative differences between two participating countries in regional and local governance and planning challenge local authorities to develop joint strategies and interventions.

Needs

- Measures needed to improve public services.

- Improvements for a coherent and better integrated assessment and management of risks are needed.

Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment⁷. 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. In the Turkish provinces Edirne and Kırklareli 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. In 2012, the companies based in Edirne imported \$121 million and exported \$47 million. Companies in Kırklareli imported \$138 million and exported \$141 million.

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

⁷ In some texts of the section the statistical and/or analytical data for Bulgaria and for Turkey are at different volume due to lack of comparable relevant data between partnering countries at NUTS III level in the CBC area.

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. Although there are four universities (Burgas Technological University; Burgas Free University; Trakya University in Edirne; Kırklareli University) and three branches of Bulgarian universities (Branch office in Haskovo of University of national and world economy, Sofia; Branch office in Haskovo of Trakiya University from Stara Zagora; Yambol Faculty of “Technics and technologies” of Trakiya University from Stara Zagora), in terms of R&D the CBC region is under developed and is not ranked among the leading R&D regions of Europe. 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. 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%). Regarding ICT Turkey⁸ 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 share of individuals aged 16-74 regularly using the internet (starting with 30,1% in 2007, reaching 47,4% in 2012) 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

⁸ In some texts of the section the statistical and/or analytical data for Bulgaria and for Turkey are at different volume due to lack of comparable relevant data between partnering countries at NUTS III level in the CBC area.

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" as per the data from Prime Ministry of Republic of Turkey.

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.

POTENTIALS AND BARRIERS OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION

Based on the identified SWOT (see OP Annex), 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: 1) 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?; 2) 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 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 IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey.

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.
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 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 (Bulgaria), Gala Lake National Park (Turkey), Kasatura Korfezi Nature Reserve (Turkey), Saka Lake Nature Reserve (Turkey) 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 disasters 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 disasters. These extreme events, including floods, fires, erosion, have a particularly strong effect on the area, which shows a strong vulnerability to climate change and below average performances in adaptive capacities. In this respect the natural flood risk management approach (green infrastructure) is considered as preferable to grey infrastructure projects (e.g. canals, dykes) for flood prevention and protection as it is a better environmental option (or as complementary to minimize grey infrastructure and its impacts). Green infrastructure for natural water retention, (e.g. restoration of flood plains and wetlands, afforestation, re-meandering) can be an effective and cost-efficient solution to contribute to the reduction of the adverse consequences of flooding, which at the same time provides additional benefits in terms of water quality, carbon storage and biodiversity. Coordination within river basin districts would be

ensured in order not to support measures that significantly increase flood risks upstream or downstream unless these measures have been coordinated and an agreed solution has been found among the concerned countries. This is important for transboundary basins because grey infrastructure upstream makes water go faster downstream whereas green infrastructure slows the flow.

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, 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.). The following measures could be considered as appropriate for cooperation in the respective areas such as:
 - Implementing the forthcoming Commission Decision concerning the obligation of Bulgaria to renegotiate the Bulgaria-Turkey border crossing agreement on rail between Turkey and Bulgaria. (The Commission will adopt the decision in the 1st half of 2015);
 - The introduction of joint border controls in line with Schengen rules;
 - The introduction of EDI based and NCTS conform exchange of electronic data between Turkish and Bulgarian border authorities;
 - Ensure the full jurisdiction of the Bulgarian rail regulatory body over issues of charges and infrastructure access at the border.
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:** Different environmental media, such as air, water and soil are threatened by increasing pressures of land use, including urbanisation, intensification of agriculture and transport. In this respect, the touristic exploitation of the area bears dangers for the region’s environment (i.e. over construction, mass tourism, etc especially threats to the coastal and maritime environment.
3. **Strong tradition of protected areas threatened by increasing levels of pollution:** The region is characterised by natural assets, which are the basis for the dense network of protected areas. These valuable assets are endangered by external factors, including natural disasters, 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 region 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 (with regard to marine environment, in view of the importance of a healthy Black Sea environment) 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.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2007 - 2013

During the programming of IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey, the lessons learned from the programming period 2007-2013 have been taken into consideration. The positive experiences at all levels achieved by the two neighboring countries are the fundamental towards future successful cross-border cooperation. Experience gathered by all beneficiaries in cross-border co-operation so far shows improved knowledge and experience for preparation and implementation of projects.

This process is in line with the strengthened capacity of the border region for absorption of funds. As a result until 2013 more than 260 project partners from both countries implemented 90 joint projects. The main achievements that add value to cooperation are capacity building, awareness raising, confidence/trust building, better image of the region and commitment to new actions. The main results of the Programme achieved so far, are in line with: establishment of cross-border network structures, linkages, services and training centres; conducted trainings for variety of target groups in order to enhance their skills; elaboration of environmental management plans; institutional involvement in joint activities and know-how exchange; and others.

In addition during the programming process conclusions in line with the “Ongoing evaluation of Bulgaria – Turkey IPA Cross border Programme (2007-2013)” have been taken into consideration. The Programme’s strategy is backed by a sound socio-economic analysis. Cross-border added value along with budget restraints have been taken into account. Soft measures and investments are balanced and are given an appropriate weighting. The Programme’s internal coherence has been ensured through a clear demarcation between Priority axis and Specific Objectives. Horizontal principles have been taken into consideration and respected during the programming process and will be further promoted and monitored during the Programme life-cycle. Result indicators are tailored on Programme’s specific objectives and will be monitored through feasible methods for appraising baseline and target values.

PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey contributes directly to the above mentioned EU and national strategic documents in line with the concept for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Smart growth 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, improving research and competitiveness and promoting R&D to mitigate brain drain – are regarded as cross-cutting issues for synergies with the selected thematic priorities of the

Programme. Sustainable growth, 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 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 IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey directly contributes to the flagship initiatives "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", and "Agenda for new skills and jobs". In line with the programme strategy

The overall aim of the IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey is:

Strengthening the Bulgaria-Turkey cross-border cooperation capacity in the field of nature protection and sustainable tourism, leading to enhancement of European 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

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 [...]	The environmental protection/ preservation are issues for geographically limited areas, which are often spreading across national borders; therefore a sustainable risk management and the protection of natural resources is a necessity for the CBC region. TP relates directly to a main priority of EU2020 as well as to both relevant national and regional strategic documents. Over the years both countries have very good traditions in environmental protection in the CBC area. 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. 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 and the tradition of their protection is a mean to address relevant initiatives. Joint spatial planning (in particular spatial planning of marine space) is a means to better coordinate and manage both

	environmental risk minimization and environmental protection.
TP (d): encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage [...]	The cross-border area shows a very high potential of natural, cultural and historical heritage. This is a connecting factor between both countries and resembles to contribute to future cross-border development in the region. Tourism is a thematic part of relevant national and regional strategies documents of both countries. TP was highly ranked during the programming process by the relevant stakeholders and has well established pre-conditions for development of joint touristic products/services during the period 2007-2013. Through a balanced approach and combination of investment and soft measures the overall capacity for development and implementation of diversified touristic products/services so to valorise the natural, cultural and historical heritage will be obtained. Last but not least, TP illustrates a good area for networking activities.

1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

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

The 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 selected thematic priorities and the corresponding specific objectives are aiming at the cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Turkey in the following strands: 1)improving and preservation of the environment to foster sustainability and the quality of life; 2) strengthening of the tourism sector by capitalising the cultural and natural heritage in the 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 tourism 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
PA 1 “Environment”	11.338.407	45%	(b): Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	- Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area - Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources
PA 2 “Sustainable tourism”	11.338.407	45%	(d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	- Increased nights spent in the cross-border area - Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area - Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area
PA 3 “Technical assistance”	2.519.646	10%	Technical Assistance	n/a
Total	25.196.460			

NB. Methods for establishment of RIs baseline and target values - summary:

(Detailed information is given in Annex 11 - Methodological Guidelines and timeframe for result indicators (RIs) establishment)

Quantitative result indicator RI 2.1 “Increased nights spent in the cross-border area”:

- Baseline for the quantitative result indicator concerning general achievements (influenced by various EU and national financial instruments/programmes) is established on the basis of relevant regional statistical data (NUTS III level or equivalent).
- Target value for the above indicator was identified based on an assessment of the available budget under the specific objective 2.1, as the achieved results will measure the added value of the Programme to the development of the tourism sector in the cross-border region.

Qualitative result indicators: RI 1.1, RI 1.2, RI 2.2 and RI 2.3:

- Baselines for the qualitative result indicators will be established through data collection using surveys among relevant organisations/institutions and general public,

based on the methodological guidelines (Annex 11).

Research instruments/toolkit to be used for data collection will be online questionnaires addressing sample of relevant for the specific objective organisations/institutions. The online questionnaires will be open to the general public as well (focusing on the civil society in the cross-border region). The results from the online surveys will be presented through an ordinal scale (1-5) and will determine the baseline value of the respective result indicator for the year 2014.

- *Target values for the qualitative result indicators will be established taking into consideration the available budget under the respective specific objective as well as the sought change in the indicators value presented through ordinal scale (1-5).*

The monitoring of the achieved results will be carried out twice during the programme implementation period, namely years 2018 and 2023. Changes in the value of result indicators will be reported in the respective Annual Implementation Reports as follows:

For the Quantitative result indicator – the relevant regional statistical data for years 2017 and 2022 will be presented, respectively in 2018 and 2023;

For the Qualitative result indicators – similar to the initial surveys will be carried out in years 2018 and 2023 and presented through an ordinal scale (1-5).

SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

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

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

Each of the points under Section 2.1, from 1 to 8, shall be repeated for each priority axis as follows: PA 1 (2.1.1-2.1.8), as exemplified below, and then continue with PA 2 (2.2.1-2.2.8), PA 3 (2.3.1-2.3.8) etc.

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

2.1.1 Priority axis 1

<i>ID of the priority axis</i>	1
<i>Title of the priority axis</i>	Environment

☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<i>n/a</i>
☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<i>n/a</i>
☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<i>n/a</i>

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

<i>Fund</i>	EU (ERDF + IPA II)
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)</i>	11 338 407,00 Euro <i>total eligible expenditure</i>
<i>Justification of the calculation basis</i>	The financial allocation of the current Priority Axis

<i>choice</i>	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. 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. Based on the major relevance regarding the cross-border cooperation, 45% of the programme budget will be allocated to this priority axis. In addition the financial allocation between the specific objectives is based on the in-depth analysis of the expected indicative actions to be implemented. 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.
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2.1.3. The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

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

<i>ID</i>	1.1
<i>Specific objective</i>	<i>Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area</i>
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	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. Therefore the intended change is to enhance capacity for environmental emergency preparedness in the cross-border area. 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). Another environmental emergency that occurs in the CBC region is forest fires, so the issue will also be mitigated by implementing comprehensive fire protecting initiatives. A mix of "investment" and "soft" measures could be incorporated and might be established through the guiding principles for selection of operations. A set of different measures, including amongst other early warning and disaster management systems, the sanitation and reforestation of river banks, the setting up of spatial plans across borders (incorporating no-go areas for housing and commercial land use) or rather soft measures, like training and awareness raising of the civil society, will be set in order to reach the envisaged change.
<i>ID</i>	1.2.
<i>Specific objective</i>	<i>Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area</i>
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	By implementing this specific objective the partnering countries will strengthen the capacity of the relevant stakeholders in the cross-border area for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources. 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. 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. In this respect special attention should be paid to air quality and influence of air pollutants such as PM, SO₂ and NO₂, related mainly to transport and combustion for domestic heating. In contrast to CO₂, the above pollutants are directly harmful to the health of citizens, ecosystems, crops and buildings. In addition 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: online⁹). 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. This includes explicitly the environmental protection of the coastal and maritime environment. 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 target groups will be implemented. Moreover spatial planning initiatives
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⁹ 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)

	across borders will be supported (especially related to spatial planning of maritime space) in order to harmonize land and sea use across borders. Thus 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.
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2.1.4. Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

(Reference: Article 34(2) of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014)

<i>ID</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Contribution to the specific objective of the priority axis</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	<i>n/a</i>

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

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

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

<i>Thematic Priority</i>	(b): Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management
Specific Objective 1.1.: Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area <u>Indicative actions to be supported:</u> Early warning and disaster management systems, equipment/fixed assets, small-scale interventions: → 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: restoration of flood plains and wetlands, afforestation, re-meandering, sanitation 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.

The natural flood risk management approach (green infrastructure) will be considered as preferable to grey infrastructure projects (e.g. canals, dykes) for flood prevention and protection as it is a better environmental option (or as complementary to minimize grey infrastructure and its impacts).

In addition, the nature based solutions would contribute to the restoration of the natural processes and characteristics of river habitats in the designated Natura 2000 sites. In this regard coordinated actions between the two countries should be envisaged as well.

Joint initiatives, strategies, trainings, services, awareness raising campaigns, exchange of experience and know-how, other capacity building activities:

- Developing joint risk assessment 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)
- Setting up spatial plans across borders (incorporating specific types of land use within river basins);
- Coordination activities within river basin districts supporting the flood prevention and risk mitigation measures
- Awareness campaigns and information sharing in the field of efficient risk prevention and management;
- Analytical and decision making capacity building activities targeting relevant institutions (e.g. needs assessments, risk assessment strategies, case studies analyses and simulation activities, etc.) Conducting joint theoretical-tactical exercises and field trainings for emergency situations preparedness and management
- Trainings in the use of ICT technologies, including introduction of new methods
- Exchange of experience, know-how and good practices (study visits, round-tables, conferences, and others);
- Enhancement of cooperation in the field of water management and in particular on the issue of flood prevention
- Capacity building activities for disaster resilience, such as joint trainings, seminars, awareness raising campaigns and others, targeted to public service actors, youths, volunteers and other relevant population's groups.
- Joint actions in the field of education, information-sharing, drills and training for local population

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities;
- Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations;
- Regional/local offices and structures of central government institutions/administrations;
- Euro regions and other joint cross border structures and institutions;
- Administrations of protected areas

- Universities and scientific institutions
- 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

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

Indicative actions to be supported:

Environmental friendly small-scale investments:

- Environmental friendly small-scale investments for improving accessibility of / to nature protected sites (e.g. walking paths, cycling routes, small road sections leading to protected areas, etc)
- Environmental friendly small-scale investment in: green infrastructure for coastal engineering, green spaces, green roofs and walls, fresh air corridors, birdwatching facilities, etc.
- Small scale investments in waste recycling, waste collection, waste separation, remediation of illegal dumping sites, etc.;
- Environmental friendly small-scale investment in restoration of habitats for biodiversity and improvement of the delivery of ecosystem services;
- Supply of equipment for protecting/preserving/monitoring the ecosystems and for control of pollution of rivers/sea
- Restoration activities targeting the achievement of favourable conservation status of the species and natural habitats, subject of conservation in the established protected areas in the CBC region.

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

- Development and implementation of joint management plans/coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas based on innovative concepts
- Joint initiatives targeting the effective management of protected areas, including marine protected areas;
- Joint initiatives addressing nature protection in the Black Sea and coastal zones, including joint monitoring surveys and identification of joint marine protected areas
- Spatial planning initiatives across borders (especially related to spatial planning of maritime space and protected areas) in order to harmonise the use of the maritime resources and align it with the overall nature protection goals of the Black Sea Strategy.

- **Joint initiatives addressing water quality and management:** Capacity building initiatives, trainings, assessment and monitoring, 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
- Awareness raising initiatives related to the possibilities to mainstream air quality in agriculture (e.g. in livestock keeping, handling of manure, using fertiliser, burning of biomass and agricultural waste).
- 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
- Cooperation initiatives in the field of marine litter reduction: assessment and monitoring, removal (e.g. beach cleaning or fishing for litter), awareness raising, making available adequate port reception facilities, etc.
- Joint initiatives addressing the sustainable use of common renewable energy sources and integration of renewable electricity in the context of interconnections between Bulgaria and Turkey
- Creating knowledge networks for innovations in the field of sustainable use of common natural resources.
- 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/local offices and structures of central government institutions/administrations;
- Euro regions and other joint cross border structures and institutions;
- Universities and scientific 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:

- 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
- Euro regions and other joint cross border structures and institutions;
- Universities and scientific institutions
- Educational and training institutions and organizations;

- Business support institutions and organisations - Chambers of commerce, industry and crafts; and others
- NGOs (incl. Local Action Groups – LAGs)
- Youth organizations

2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

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

Thematic priority	(b): Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management
The selection of operations is to be made <i>at level of 'specific objectives'</i>, e.g. potential beneficiaries should apply with project application focusing on only one specific objective (SO) under this Priority Axis. The operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC¹⁰. <u>The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:</u> <i>1) CBC character:</i> involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries; clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country; <i>2) Partnership:</i> the involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme's rules; the involved project partners have the capacity for the project's management; <i>3) Regional relevance:</i> 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); <i>4) Strategic relevance:</i> 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; <i>5) Operations' quality:</i> the operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic); expenditures of the operations are effective; the projects are based on the concept of sustainability; <i>6) Horizontal principles: (see Section 6)</i> For the implementation of the envisaged measures on flood and fire protection a strategic approach will be applied. All environmental assessments (and in particular appropriate assessment pursuant to Art 6.3 of the Habitats Directive) will be carried out as early as possible and the results of these assessments will be properly taken into account in the decision-making process. Analysis of alternatives (better environmental options) would be involved, such as setting-up of the necessary mitigation measures and justification of the importance of the project for overriding public interest. Any project that modifies the hydromorphological characteristics of water body causing deterioration of the status, an appropriate analysis as required by Art. 4.7 of Water Framework Directive should be carried out as early as possible in the planning process. In addition, the construction of all infrastructure projects envisaged under this priority	

¹⁰ According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II),

axis needs to be accompanied by the necessary risk assessments (project's vulnerability to disaster risks including longer-term expected effects from climate change). In general risk-sensitive infrastructure will be promoted.

This Priority axis will be implemented through Calls for proposals and/or strategic projects. *Calls for proposals:* They refer to the mechanism whereby a selection process is launched to choose candidates on a competitive basis. The potential beneficiaries will be invited to submit project proposals. Calls for proposals are publicly announced. In the Guidelines for Applicants and annexes the information will be provided on the type of projects that will be considered for funding and on specific conditions to be met in each Call for Proposals. Only projects that are fully compliant with the selection and award criteria will be financed upon decision of the JMC. *Strategic projects:* Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified 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. (see also Section 5.4).

A clear demarcation and complementarity of the BG-TR CBC OP 2014-2020 with other programmes is to be ensured. This concerns the articulation with: 1) other ETC strands, (in particular ETC Programme Greece-Bulgaria, Balkan-Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020, Black Sea Basin ENI CBC 2014-2020 Programme); 2) other EU programmes or funds (for Bulgaria: ESIF OP Environment 2014 – 2020, OP Rural development 2014 – 2020; for Turkey: OP Environment 2014-2020) and 3) other programmes/projects with national/regional and other funding of each of the partnering countries. In this respect functional collaboration across above mentioned programmes should be made possible and largely maintained during each stage of Programme Cycle Management (PCM). A coordination mechanism will be set up in order to detect and avoid possible overlapping and duplication as well as to foster synergies between complementary programmes being implemented in 2014-2020 (see Section 5.4).

2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

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

<i>Thematic priority</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Planned use of financial instruments</i>	<i>n/a</i>

2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b) (ii) and (b) (iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of the Regulation (EU) 231/2014)

2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ¹¹	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.1	Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area (qualitative target)	Scale	<i>To be defined</i>	2014	<i>To be defined</i>	<u>Baseline value and achieved results</u> Survey	2018 2023
1.2	Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources (qualitative target)	Scale	<i>To be defined</i>	2014	<i>To be defined</i>	<u>Baseline value and achieved results</u> Survey	2018 2023

¹¹ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.1.6.2. 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)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
OI 1.1.1	Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.1.2	Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	Number	6	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.1.3	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Persons	290 000	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.1.4	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure	Persons	480 000	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.2.1	Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.2.2	Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	Number	28	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.2.3	Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection	Number	300	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.2.4	Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction)	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI 1.2.5	Number of joint management plans/ coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually

2.1.7. Categories of intervention

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

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

Tables 5-8: Categories of intervention

Table 5: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
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	6 803 044,20

Table 6: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Environment	01 Non-repayable grant	11 338 407,00

Table 7: 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: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

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

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

<i>Priority axis</i>	<i>Environment</i>
The overall objective of Priority axis “Technical assistance” is to provide effective and efficient administration and implementation of the CBC Programme. <u>TA Specific Objective 3.1: Improved overall administration and evaluation of the Programme aims at:</u> 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. <u>TA Specific Objective 3.2: Improved Publicity and communication provisions aims at:</u> 1) Information and publicity - preparation, translation and dissemination of the Programme related documents and promotional materials. 2) Information spread and trainings for beneficiaries.	

2.2.1 Priority axis 2

<i>ID of the priority axis</i>	2
<i>Title of the priority axis</i>	<i>Sustainable tourism</i>

☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<i>n/a</i>
☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<i>n/a</i>
☐ The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<i>n/a</i>

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

<i>Fund</i>	EU (ERDF + IPA II)
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)</i>	EUR 11 338 407,00 <i>total eligible expenditure</i>
<i>Justification of the calculation basis choice</i>	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 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. Based on the major relevance regarding the cross-border cooperation, 45% of the programme budget will be allocated to this priority axis. In addition the financial allocation between the specific objectives is based on the in-depth analysis of the expected indicative actions to be implemented. This Priority axis aims at strengthening of the tourism sector by capitalising on the cultural and natural heritage in the 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.
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2.2.3. The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

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

<i>ID</i>	2.1
<i>Specific objective</i>	Increasing the touristic 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</i>	By implementing this specific objective, the partnering countries will achieve improved touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilization of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure. 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. 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 widely recognized and determined as a key factor of the destination competitiveness. Global tourism market is becoming 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 (with a specific emphasis of coastal and maritime environment), 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) With the mix of investment and soft measures the results will be achieved by the partnering countries.
<i>ID</i>	2.2.
<i>Specific objective</i>	Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	By implementing this specific objective, the partnering countries will improve capacity for development of tourism potential through common destinations establishment in the cross-border area. 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. 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. 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.
<i>ID</i>	2.3
<i>Specific objective</i>	Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	By implementing this specific objective, the partnering countries will strengthen networking capabilities related to the development of sustainable tourism potential of

	the cross-border area. 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. 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 recognize 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. 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.
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2.2.4. Elements of other thematic priorities added to the priority axis

(Reference: Article 34 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014)

<i>ID</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Contribution to the specific objective of the priority axis</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>The results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	<i>n/a</i>

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

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

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

<i>Thematic Priority</i>	(d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
Specific Objective 2.1.: Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure <u>Indicative actions to be supported:</u> 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 In case of support actions related to ICT possible synergies with ICT Innovation vouchers, in line with the Commission's guidance on ICT Innovation Voucher Schemes¹² could be foreseen.	

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/ict-innovation-vouchers-scheme>

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/local 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

Specific Objective 2.2.: Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations**Indicative actions to be supported:Sustainable tourism strategies/action plans, marketing and promotional initiatives and tools, training and consultancy:**

- Development and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations based on innovative service concepts concerning natural, historical and cultural heritage of the cross-border region
- Common touristic destinations marketing and promotion, organisation and participation of fairs and related public activities (i.e. exhibitions, conferences, seminars, round tables, presentations, exchange of best practices) 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 and consultancy support for touristic organizations to improve their products, services, performance and staff skills
- Development and promotion of alternative forms of tourism, e.g. “gourmet”, “eco”, “SPA”, “rural” etc.
- Creating knowledge networks for tourism innovations in the border area.

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Central and regional/local 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/local 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.)

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

Indicative actions to be supported: Joint networking and awareness raising events:

- Organisation of networking events, incl. initiatives for strengthening existing and establishing new partnerships in the area of sustainable tourism - trainings, exchange of best practice, researches on the legal framework in the field of tourism, on-line forums, conferences, seminars, round tables, presentations, festivals, exhibitions, performances and others
- Awareness raising campaigns and local development initiatives on the values of cross-border cultural, natural and historical heritage for related target groups
- Joint initiatives for promoting alternative forms of tourism related to marine litter reduction (e.g. beach cleaning or fishing for litter) as well as awareness raising.

TARGET GROUPS:

- All levels of Local/Regional authorities
- Associations of Local/Regional authorities and of other organisations;
- Central and regional/local 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/local 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

2.2.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

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

Thematic priority	(d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
The selection of operations is to be made <i>at level of ‘specific objectives’</i>, e.g. potential beneficiaries should apply with project application focusing on only one specific objective (SO) under this Priority Axis. The operations under cross-border cooperation programmes shall be selected by the JMC¹³. <u>The following general principles will guide the selection of operations:</u> <i>1) CBC character:</i> involvement of beneficiaries of the two participating countries; clear identification of cross-border benefit/impact if operation is implemented in a single country; <i>2) Partnership:</i> the involved project partners are eligible corresponding to the programme’s rules; the involved project partners have the capacity for the project’s management; <i>3) Regional relevance:</i> 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); <i>4) Strategic relevance:</i> 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; <i>5) Operations’ quality:</i> the operations/projects are clear and structured (intervention logic); expenditures of the operations are effective; the projects are based on the concept of sustainability; <i>6) Horizontal principles: (see Section 6)</i> The construction of all infrastructure projects envisaged under this priority axis needs to be accompanied by the necessary risk assessments (project’s vulnerability to disaster risks including longer-term expected effects from climate change). In general risk-sensitive infrastructure will be promoted. <u>This Priority axis will be implemented through Calls for proposals and/or strategic projects.</u> <u>Calls for proposals:</u> Calls for Proposals refer to the mechanism whereby a selection process is launched to choose candidates on a competitive basis. The potential beneficiaries will be invited to submit project proposals. Calls for proposals are publicly announced. In the Guidelines for Applicants and annexes the information will be provided on the type of projects that will be considered for funding and on specific conditions to be met in each Call	

¹³ According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II),

for Proposals. Only projects that are fully compliant with the selection and award criteria will be financed upon decision of the JMC. Strategic projects: Under this Priority axis strategic projects could be identified 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. (see also Section 5.4).

A clear demarcation between and complementarity of the BG-TR CBC OP 2014-2020 with other programmes is to be ensured. This concerns the articulation with: 1) other ETC strands, (in particular ETC Programme Greece-Bulgaria); 2) other EU programmes or funds (for Bulgaria: ESIF OP Regions in Growth 2014-2020, OP Rural development 2014 – 2020; for Turkey: OP Regional Development 2014-2020) and 3) other programmes/projects with national/regional funding of each of the partnering countries. In this respect functional collaboration across above mentioned programmes should be made possible and largely maintained during each stage of Programme Cycle Management (PCM). A coordination mechanism will be set up in order to detect and avoid possible overlapping and duplication as well as to foster synergies between complementary programmes being implemented in 2014-2020 (see Section 5.4).

2.2.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

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

<i>Thematic priority</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Planned use of financial instruments</i>	<i>n/a</i>

2.2.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b) (ii) and (b) (iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of the Regulation (EU) 231/2014)

1.1.2.1. 2.2.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ¹⁴	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
RI 2.1	Increased nights spent in the cross-border area (<i>quantitative target</i>)	%	7 721 074	2012	Increased with minimum 1 %	<u>Baseline value and achieved results:</u> Statistical Data	2018 2023
RI 2.2	Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area (<i>qualitative target</i>)	Scale	to be determined	2014	to be determined	Survey	2018 2023
RI 2.3	Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area (<i>qualitative target</i>)	Scale	to be determined	2014	to be determined	Survey	2018 2023

¹⁴ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.2.6.2. 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)	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	Kilometers	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-2	Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths	Kilometers	8	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-3	Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites	Number	10	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.1-4	Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites	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 and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services	Number	13	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-3	Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-4	Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Number	3	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.2-5	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	Number of networking events	Number	15	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-2	Number of public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources	Number	20	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually
OI-2.3-3	Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative forms of tourism	Number	5	Progress and Annual Implementation Reports	Annually

2.2.7. Categories of intervention

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

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

Tables 5-8: Categories of intervention

Table 5: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
	075 Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs	2 267 681,40

Sustainable tourism	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 6: Dimension 2 Form of finance

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

Table 7: 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 8: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

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

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

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

<i>Priority axis</i>	<i>Sustainable tourism</i>
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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.

Section 2.3 Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

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

2.3.1 Priority axis

<i>ID</i>	3
<i>Title</i>	Technical assistance

2.3.2 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

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

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

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

Specific objective (repeated for each specific objective)

<i>ID</i>	3.1
<i>Specific objective</i>	PROGRAMME'S ADMINISTRATION To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey (2014-2020)
<i>Results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support</i> ¹⁵	<i>n/a</i>

¹⁵ Required where the Union support to technical assistance in the Programme exceeds EUR 15 million.

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

<i>Priority axis</i>	Technical Assistance
	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. The technical assistance costs will mainly be composed of preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities. In accordance with Article 35 of Regulation(EU) No 447/2014, the limit for Technical Assistance is set at 10% of the total amount allocated to the cross-border cooperation programme. 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, the national authority, the joint secretariat, certifying authority, the first level control system and the audit authority. Indicative actions supported under this Priority Axis 3 are listed below: Management and implementation • Supporting the Programme bodies for the programming and 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. Monitoring, control and audit • 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 indicators¹⁶

2.3.5.1 Programme specific result indicators

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

Table 9: Programme-specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value ¹⁷ (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting

¹⁶ Required where objectively justified by the given the content of the actions and where the Union support to technical assistance in the Programme exceeds EUR 15 million.

¹⁷ The target values can be qualitative or quantitative.

2.3.5.2 Programme specific output indicators expected to contribute to results

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

Table 10: Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023) (optional)	Source of data
TA3.1	No of performed evaluations of the programme	Number		Evaluation plan, evaluation reports, observations, etc.
TA3.2	Updated MIS system	Number		Generated reports
TA3.3	No of Monitoring Committee meetings	Number		Invitations submitted to the MC, minutes of the meetings, etc.
TA3.4	No of publicity events for beneficiaries	Number		Minutes of the meetings, lists of participants, pictures, etc.
TA3.5	Number of employees (full time) whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance	Number		Labour contracts, Administrative orders, etc.

2.3.6. Categories of intervention

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

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

Tables 11-13: Categories of intervention

Table 11: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR) 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 12: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR) EU (ERDF+IPA)
PA3	01 - Non-repayable grant	2 519 646,00

Table 13: 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

Section 2.4 Overview table of indicators per priority axis and thematic priority

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

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective(s)	Selected results indicators	Selected output indicators
PA1 ENVIRONMENT	TP (b): Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	1.1. Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters in the cross-border area	RI 1.1 Increased level of preparedness to manage emergency situations in the cross-border area •	• Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters • Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters • Population benefiting from flood protection measures • Population benefiting from forest fire protection measure
		1.2. Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area	• RI 1.2 Increased capacity level for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources in the cross-border area	• Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions • Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources • Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of nature protection • Number of joint initiatives addressing preservation of marine and coastal environment (incl. litter reduction) • Number of joint management plans / coordinated specific conservation activities for protected areas

PA2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM	TP (d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	2.1. Increasing the touristic attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure	• RI 2.1 Increased nights spent in the cross-border area	• Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic sites • Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths • Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites
		2.2. Increasing the cross-border tourism potential by developing common destinations	• RI 2.2 Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area	• Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations • Number of marketing and promotional initiatives/events, addressing cross-border tourism products & services Number of tools developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable touristic potential • Number of trainings and consultancy services in sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources • Number of people involved in training and capacity building activities in the field of sustainable tourism
		2.3. Increasing networking for development of sustainable tourism through cross-border cooperation initiatives	Increased level of awareness about sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area	• Number of networking events • Number of public awareness initiatives, promoting sustainable use of natural, historical and cultural heritage and resources • Number of public awareness initiatives promoting alternative

				forms of tourism
PA3 Technical Assistance		3.1. To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey (2014-2020)	• n/a	• No of performed evaluations of the programme • Updated MIS system • No of Monitoring Committee meetings • No of publicity events for beneficiaries • Number of employees (full time) whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance

SECTION 3 FINANCING PLAN

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

3.1 Financial appropriation from the IPA (in EUR)

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

Table 15

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
IPA	-	1 824 824	2 605 964	5 984 786	4 829 724	4 926 318	5 024 844	25 196 460

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

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

1. The financial table sets out the financial plan of the cooperation programme by priority axis.
2. The financial table shall show for information purposes, any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme (other than contributions from IPA and ENI)
3. The EIB¹⁸ contribution is presented at the level of the priority axis.

Table 16: Financing plan

Priority axis	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) (2)	For information	
				National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
PA-1		11 338 407	2 000 896	2 000 896	0	13 339 303	84,999996 %	N/A	N/A
PA-2		11 338 407	2 000 896	2 000 896	0	13 339 303	84,999996 %	N/A	N/A
PA-TA		2 519 646	444 644	444 644	0	2 964 290	84,999983 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL		25 196 460	4 446 436	4 446 436	0	29 642 896		N/A	N/A

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

¹⁸ European Investment Bank

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

3.2.2 Breakdown by priority axis and thematic priority

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

Table 17

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
PA-1	Environment	11 338 407	2 000 896	13 339 303
PA-2	Sustainable Tourism	11 338 407	2 000 896	13 339 303
PA-TA	Technical assistance	2 519 646	444 644	2 964 290
TOTAL		25 196 460	4 446 436	29 642 896

SECTION 4 INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

(Reference: Article 34 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 and Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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

n/a

4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate)

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

(Reference: Article 35(2) of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 and point (a) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

n/a

4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)

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

(Reference: Article 34 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 and point (c) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<i>n/a</i>

Table 18: Indicative financial allocation to ITI (aggregate amount)

Priority axis	Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)
	<i>n/a</i>

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

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

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

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 as well as European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian 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 and 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"). 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).

Additionally, the Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and

Rehabilitation of the Black Sea¹⁹ – 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.

Blue Growth²⁰ is the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole. Seas and oceans are drivers for the European economy and have great potential for innovation and growth. It is the maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. 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. The strategy consists of three components:

- Develop sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth
- Essential components to provide knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy
- Sea basin strategies to ensure tailor-made measures and to foster cooperation between countries

A key element under the first component is coastal tourism²¹. The extraordinary beauty, cultural wealth and great diversity of EU's coastal areas have made them the preferred destination for many holidaymakers in Europe and abroad, making coastal and maritime tourism an important tourism sector. Employing over 3.2 million people, this sector generates a total of € 183 billion in gross value added and representing over one third of the maritime economy. As much as 51% of bed capacity in hotels across Europe is concentrated in regions with a sea border. The EU Commission adopted a Communication on "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" on 20 February 2014, presenting a new strategy to enhance coastal and maritime tourism in Europe in order to unlock the potential of this promising sector. The Commission has identified 14 actions which can help the sector grow sustainably and provide added impetus to Europe's coastal regions. For example, the Commission recommends to develop an online guide to the main funding opportunities available for the sector and to support the development of trans-national and interregional partnerships, networks, clusters and smart specialisation strategies in coastal and maritime tourism. The Commission will work with Member States, regional and local authorities and the industry to implement these actions. 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

¹⁹ http://www.blacksea-commission.org/_bssap2009.asp

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue_growth/index_en.htm

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/coastal_tourism/index_en.htm

SECTION 5 IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

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

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

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

Table 19: Programme authorities

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

The managing authority, the certifying authority and the audit authority are Bulgarian national public bodies, assigned by Decision No 156/21 March 2014 of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers.

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 and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria	. Director General of DG “Territorial Cooperation Management” within the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria
Certifying authority	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 to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria	Executive Director of the Audit of the European Union Funds Executive Agency to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria
National authority	Financial Cooperation Directorate of the Turkish Ministry for EU Affairs	Director of Financial Cooperation Directorate

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

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

☐ the Managing authority	DG “Territorial Cooperation Management” at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria
☒ the Certifying authority	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

Table 20: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

(Reference: points (a)(ii) and (iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	<u>For the Republic of Bulgaria:</u> Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria	Minister of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria
	<u>For the Republic of Turkey:</u> Financial Cooperation Directorate of the Turkish Ministry for EU Affairs	Director of Financial Cooperation Directorate
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	<u>For the Republic of Bulgaria:</u> Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency at to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria	Executive Director of the Audit of the European Union Funds Executive Agency to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria
	<u>For the Republic of Turkey:</u> Representing group of auditors - the Board of Treasury Controllers in the Undersecretariat of Treasury	Head of the Board of Treasury Controllers in the Undersecretariat of Treasury

5.2 Joint monitoring committee

Table 21: Indicative list of Joint monitoring committee members

Name of authority/body and department or unit	Role in the programme	Contact details of the authority/body
EU Commission	Advisory	European Commission, Directorate Regional and Urban Policy
Managing authority	Decision	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria 17-19 Kiril and Methodii Str.1202 Sofia, Bulgaria Tel. +359 2 9405 487, Fax +359 2 9870

		737 www.mrrb.government.bg
National authority/NIPAC	Decision	Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Financial Cooperation Directorate <i>Mustafa Kemal Mahallesi, 2082, Cadde No: 4,</i> <i>06800 Bilkent, Ankara – Turkey</i> <i>Tel: +90 312 218 1662</i> <i>Fax: +90 312 218 14 89</i> cbcbgtr@ab.gov.tr
Regional authorities	Consultative	
Local authorities	Decision	
Competent Public Central administration Authorities	Decision/ Consultative	
Managing authorities of EU funded mainstream programmes in Bulgaria and operating structures of IPA sectoral programmes of Turkey	Consultative	
Social and economic partners	Decision	
Civil society organisations (environmental, equal opportunities, non-discrimination)	Decision	
Academic and scientific society	Decision	
EIB (optional)	Consultative	
Other (as agreed by the partner countries)	Consultative	certifying authority - “National Fund” Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Bulgaria <i>102 “G. S. Rakovski” Str., 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria</i> <i>tel: +359 2 9859 2781, +359 2 9859 2790</i> audit authority - Executive Agency “Audit of European Union Funds” to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria <i>4, Slavianska Str., 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria</i> <i>tel. +359 2 9859 5200; fax: +359 2 9859 5202</i>

5.3 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

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

The joint secretariat is a common structure that assists the managing authority, national authority and the Joint monitoring committee in carrying their functions, provides

information on the Programme to the potential beneficiaries and supports the beneficiaries in implementation of projects.

In accordance with Article 23 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the managing authority in cooperation with national authority shall set up the joint secretariat. Following the analysis of different scenarios, the Joint working group (JWG) for the Preparation of the Programme decided on its Second JWG meeting, held on 13 May 2014 in Ankara, Republic of Turkey, to maintain the Joint Secretariat at the same location in Haskovo, Republic of Bulgaria with a branch office located in Edirne, Republic of Turkey for the 2014-2020 programming period as it was the case during the 2007-2013 Bulgaria-Turkey Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, due to the following arguments:

- the experience of one entire programming period will allow to start the implementation of the new Programme as soon as possible, (quick launch of calls for proposals after the Programme's approval in order to ensure a high level of absorption),
- the Haskovo and Edirne offices are already existing administrative bodies with entirely functional management structures and with experience in programme management. This will ensure reduced operational costs such as staff training costs.
- the working procedures of the current JS were audited and can be easily updated according to the provisions of the new EU regulations and the lessons learned,

The costs of the tasks of the JS will be financed from the programme's Technical Assistance budget. The JS will have a staff fluent in English as well as in one of the official languages of the partner countries (Bulgarian or Turkish).

The branch office in Edirne will have as a main role to serve as local contact point for project beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries.

As the staff of the JS for Programme is already trained and experienced, it will take over additional responsibilities, according to each person's expertise for the 2014-2020 Bulgaria – Turkey IPA Cross Border Programme.

Recruitment of the new JS's staff (main and branch offices) shall be organised through a public and transparent procedure, ensuring balanced number of experts from the two countries by promoting equal opportunities among the candidates.

The staff selection procedure will be carried out by MA and/or NA in accordance with the relevant national decrees and/or regulations, and will consist of four phases: – (1) administrative compliance of submitted application and eligibility of the applicant, (2) assessment of submitted documentation, (3) written exam and (4) interview. The JS's costs will be covered by the budget of the PA 4 "Technical Assistance". The staff number and the job descriptions of the JS will be subject of approval by the JMC.

5.4 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

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

- **Programme's authorities**

The Programme institutional structure consists of the following bodies: the managing authority, the certifying authority, the national authority, the Joint monitoring committee, the audit authority, the joint secretariat and the first level control systems in Bulgaria and Turkey.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria designated the managing authority, the audit authority and the certifying authority with its Decision No 156 of 21 March 2014:

- Directorate General Territorial Cooperation Management in the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works for managing authority;
- The National Fund Directorate in the Ministry of Finance for certifying authority and body, responsible for receiving the funds from the European Commission;
- Audit of EU Funds Executive Agency to the Minister of Finance for audit authority.

The counterpart of the MA in charge of the Programme coordination in Turkey is the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Financial Cooperation Directorate, acting as national authority.

Each participating country designates national representatives in the Joint monitoring committee and establishes the First level control system, ensuring the legality and regularity of the expenditures declared by the beneficiaries participating in the operation on its territory.

Joint monitoring committee

In accordance with Article 38 of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 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 of the Programme by the European Commission.

The JMC shall be composed of representatives of managing authority, national authority, and the commission and the national IPA coordinator (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 and the audit authority 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 Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 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 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 Programme, in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The JMC shall examine and approve:

- any issues that affect the performance of the Programme;
- the methodology and criteria used for selection of operations;
- the selection of projects and the amount of programme's financial contribution to each operation
- the annual and final implementation reports;
- the evaluation plan for the 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;
- the communication strategy/plan for the Programme and any amendment of the strategy/plan;
- any proposal by the MA for any amendment to the 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 (MA) and a co-Chair (NA). The JMC meetings shall be chaired by the representative of the hosting country or MA. 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.

Managing authority

Directorate General "Territorial Cooperation Management" at Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria is designated to perform the functions of single managing authority under IPA II Cross-border Programme Bulgaria-Turkey.

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 Programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones);
- drawing up and, after approval by the JMC, 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 MA is responsible for:

- 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 Programme and that they comply with applicable Community and national rules (including state aid rules) for the whole of their implementation period;
- ensuring that the beneficiaries are provided with documents 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 beneficiaries have the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to the above point before approval of the operation;
- 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 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 following the relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area;
- determining the categories of intervention and the measures to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

As regards the financial management and control of the Programme, the MA is responsible for:

- ensuring verification 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 Programme and the conditions for support of the operation;
- making payments to the lead beneficiaries;
- 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 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013;
- drawing up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of Regulation (EU) No 966/2012.

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 competencies and responsibilities of the national authority are as follows:

- supporting the MA in the implementation of the Programme;
- ensuring the availability of the amounts from the national co-financing for the budget of the Technical Assistance priority;
- ensuring access to information for the MA and AA in order to fulfill their respective tasks;
- organizing a selection procedure and appointing assessors from Turkish side;
- participating in preparation of guidelines for applicants;
- supporting the MA in selection of operations;
- ensuring the compliance of the expenditures with Programme rules and Community rules and with the Programme's procedures, through an adequate control system;

- designating the controllers responsible for carrying out the first level control for the partners located in the Republic of Turkey;
- nominating the representatives of the Republic of Turkey in the JMC;
- ensuring an adequate audit trail for the system concerning the implementation of the Programme in the Republic of Turkey;
- preventing, detecting and correcting the irregularities committed by beneficiaries from the Republic of Turkey;
- informing the MA, during a period of 15 working days, about any irregularity discovered or presumed to have happened on the territory of the Republic of Turkey, concerning the Programme;
- ensuring the necessary funds in case of funds decommitment at Programme level, proportionally with the approved projects budget and performed activities by the Turkish beneficiaries
- 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 from the Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

Certifying authority

With Decision of the Council of Ministers the National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of Republic of Bulgaria has been designated as a certifying authority and Body, responsible for receiving funds from the European Commission under the IPA CBC Programmes along the external border of the EU for the period 2014-2020. In compliance with Article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the certifying authority is 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 MA;
- drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of Regulation (EU) No. 966/2012;
- 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 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 MA 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 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

Regulation (EU) No 966/2012;

- 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 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (via Article 37(3) of the IPA Implementing Regulation) 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.

Joint Secretariat

The JS is a common structure, guaranteeing the impartiality of the Programme implementation. The JS will have a two-fold function (according to Article 23(2) Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013): assisting the MA, NA and the JMC in carrying out their respective functions and providing relevant information on the Programme to the potential beneficiaries. The tasks of Joint Secretariat shall be the following:

General tasks:

- Managing, under MA's co-ordination, the implementation of the Programme, preparing the necessary materials for the implementation of the Programme/projects; performing on-the-spot visits; offering support and assistance for the project partners regarding the implementation of the activities and financial management;
- Collaborating with the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries in order to collect the necessary data and information in the revision process of the programming documents, elaboration of the reports, and other documents which are necessary to monitor the progress of the Programme;
- Collecting and processing the information received from the beneficiaries;

Administrative arrangements:

- Contributing to the manual of procedures of the Programme (approved by MA);
- Ensuring the proper training of the staff in order to ensure the correct implementation of the Programme;
- Fulfilling the task of secretariat for the JMC;

- Ensuring the secretariat of any other committees set up within the Programme;
- Organising, under MA's co-ordination and in collaboration with it, any other meetings, seminars, conferences, etc. related to the implementation of the Programme;
- Fulfilling in the deadlines any instruction given by the MA regarding the implementation of the Programme, instructions that become mandatory from the date of their written communication.

Launching of the call for proposals, evaluating, and selecting the operations:

- Participating, under MA's co-ordination, in the elaboration of project eligibility and evaluation criteria, in the elaboration of the Applicant's Guide as well as in the establishment of the calendar on the calls for proposals;
- Supporting the preparation and the development of the projects;
- Organising events related to the launching of the calls for proposals in the eligible area of the Programme; ensuring the publicity for the call for proposals; stimulating the partnerships in the eligible area;
- Managing the submission of the application forms; participating in the preparation of for the respective templates for the evaluation;
- Participating in the assessment process; Ensuring the notification of the beneficiaries on the results of the evaluation and selection process.

Contracting

- Participating in the preparation of subsidy contracts' templates;
- Preparing the subsidy contracts, gathering data from the beneficiaries, and submitting the contracts to MA for signing;
- Performing the pre-contracting on-the-spot visits for selected operations (where applicable);
- Participating in negotiation procedure of the selected projects (where applicable);
- Providing clarifications to the beneficiaries on their obligations stipulated in the subsidy contracts.

Financial management and audit

- Being the contact point for all the beneficiaries, receiving the documents related to the operations implementation and analysing them according to procedures;
- Notifying the MA of any potential irregularity within the respective deadlines;
- Undertaking irregularities' prevention, finding, and monitoring measures;
- Taking all the necessary measures to combat fraud;

- Providing any information or documents available to the MA regarding the financed projects, within the stipulated deadlines and facilitating the control and audit activities;
- Assisting MA in the observation and implementation of all the recommendation coming from the EC audit and from the audit authority, according to the deadlines established.

Programme and projects monitoring

- Monitoring the implementation of the operations, analysing and verifying the progress reports, the on-the-spot visits results, etc.;
- Drafting and submitting any other reports or documents requested by the MA;
- Collecting and updating the technical, financial, and statistics data at project level, ensuring the incorporation of these data into the electronic system.

Information and Publicity

- Implementing the relevant (for the JS) activities from the Communication Plan of the Programme;
- Supporting the MA in preparing and delivering the informational materials to the beneficiaries;
- Updating the information on the website of the Programme.

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

- **Programme management, implementation and control arrangements**

Selection of operations

The IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey shall support operations, which have direct cross-border impact, understood in terms of respecting the following conditions: joint development, joint staffing, joint implementation and joint financing. Cross-border projects under the Programme imply that project partners from two participating countries need to cooperate obligatory in joint development and joint implementation. In addition, they should choose one of the following partnership principles as well: joint staffing or joint financing.

In order to prevent double financing at the level of processing of project applications, in the preparation and adoption of the Guidelines for applicants, the members of the JMC as well as other social and economic partners and general public will be involved. The representatives of the mainstream programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria and IPA sectoral programmes in the Republic of Turkey in the JMC will ensure clear demarcation and complementarity of the envisaged eligible activities with the ones under the respective programmes.

The selection of the operations shall be made through calls for proposals and/or strategic projects upon decision of the JMC:

Calls for Proposals refer to the mechanism whereby a selection process is launched to choose candidates on a competitive basis. The potential beneficiaries will be invited to submit project proposals. Calls for proposals are publicly announced. In the Guidelines for Applicants and its annexes the information will be provided on the type of projects that will be considered for funding and on specific conditions to be met in each Call for Proposals. Only projects that are fully compliant with the selection and award criteria will be financed upon decision of the JMC.

Strategic projects shall address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships, and be based on a larger financial allocation. Strategic projects must be effective and efficient in order to match the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme's objectives and results. Strategic projects' results should be significant and long-lasting change or improvement on the whole or large parts of programme area. The basic principles for the eligibility of a strategic project could be the following: to address key specific objectives that can be achieved only through the involvement of large partnerships and /or of key stakeholders on the two sides of the border; to be based on a larger financial allocation, proportionate to the relevance of the objectives and results; to obtain lasting effects and catalyse further actions.

Geographical eligibility

In accordance with Article 39 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 447/214, 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 Programme and specified above. An important exception to this rule is the possibility to support operations outside the programme area within the limit of up to 20% of EU co-financing at programme level for activities implemented by beneficiaries from the eligible programme area ensuring that the conditions of the Article 44(2) of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 are satisfied.

Beneficiaries

In accordance with Article 40 (1) of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014, one of the potential beneficiaries shall be designated by the partners as a lead beneficiary. The lead beneficiary shall carry out the tasks specified in Article 40, namely:

- 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;
- assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire operation;

- 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;
- 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 IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey.

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 for project generation and preparation, including a partner search facility will be provided by JS.

Eligibility and selection criteria

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

Eligibility and administrative compliance 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, formal compliance of applicants with the criteria, etc.

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

The construction of all infrastructure projects envisaged under all priority axes are accompanied by the necessary risk assessments (project's vulnerability to disaster risks including longer-term expected effects from climate change). Risk-sensitive infrastructure should be promoted. The quality of the projects, as reflected in their compliance with the selection criteria, is very important in order to ensure that the Programme delivers concrete and visible outputs and results that tackle, in a cross-border and integrated manner, the challenges and needs affecting the programme area. Projects focusing on pure research (with no applicative output), including just exchanges of experience or not indicating the concrete and sustainable follow-up of "soft" activities (studies, surveys, etc.) will not be supported by the Programme.

Assessment

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

- Opening session
- Administrative compliance and eligibility check, and
- Technical/quality assessment.

Administrative compliance and eligibility check shall be carried out by a formally designated group of MA/NA/JS representatives.

Quality assessment shall be carried out by external assessors from Bulgaria and Turkey appointed by the MA/NA.

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 programme 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 equal number of assessors from the two countries will be assigned for the technical/ quality evaluation of the received projects 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 assistance where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for funding under the Programme is submitted by the beneficiary to the MA, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made by the beneficiary.

During the selection procedure under a definite call for proposals, measures to avoid double financing of the proposed for funding operations shall be carried out through:

- JMC members - representatives of different institutions and organisations in charge of managing EU and national level funded programmes/schemes /including relevant national operational programmes tackling Maritime Spatial Planning/ in the fields related to those financed by the Programme will ensure lack of overlapping of activities;

- Documentary check of overlapping of activities supported by other financial sources (national, EU, other);
- Performance of on the spot visits for investment projects which aim to check whether: (1) the object, subject to the proposed investment, really exists and is in a physical condition as described in the project proposal (no other investment activities have been performed during the assessment phase); and (2) the object, subject to the proposed investment, has already been implemented / partially implemented or is currently under implementation.

Contracting

Based on the JMC decision, the MA shall proceed with conducting the procedure for concluding subsidy contracts with the lead beneficiaries. The MA, NA and JS shall carry out the pre-contracting visits on the investments proposed for financing and shall organize 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.

Resolution of complaints

The procedures set in place for the resolution of complaints are differentiated according to the object of the complaint and will formally be regulated in the Programme Manual.

- *Complaints related to the assessment process:*

Project Lead Applicants will be informed in writing by the Chair of the Assessment working group on the results from the administrative compliance and eligibility check of their applications, as well as the results of the technical evaluation, including the reasons for rejection. Any complaint related to the assessment shall be submitted by the Lead Applicant to the the MA that, in collaboration with the NA and in accordance with the provisions of the Programme Manual, will examine case by case each complaint. Where appropriate, re-assessment of the project application will be initiated and final list of projects proposed for funding will be provided to the JMC. The latter will make the final decision for selection of projects to be financed under the respective call.

- *Complaints related to decisions made by the Programme structures/bodies during project implementation:*

Any complaints in relation to decisions made by the the Programme structures/bodies during project implementation shall be submitted by the project LB to the MA/NA/JS that will examine case by case and provide an answer (in collaboration with the JMC, if necessary), in accordance with the deadlines and provisions set in the Programme Manual. **Management and control system**

The management and control systems for the Programme shall be set up in accordance

with Articles 47 of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 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 **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".

Turkey sets up a decentralised control system. Standard rules and procedures for carrying out the control activities are defined in national FLC Manual and other relevant documents. The cost for FLC verification shall be covered by the programme budget under PA "Technical assistance".

Financial management

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

The managing authority shall make payments to the Lead Beneficiary in accordance with Article 132 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (the Lead Beneficiary is then responsible for transferring the IPA financing to its project partners). NA (in the case of Priority axis "Technical assistance") will make payments to the final beneficiaries of the IPA and the

corresponding Turkish national co-financing.

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 Article 72 (g) of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

The 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, NA 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 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 (EU) 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 and final reporting 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 annual implementation 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 (EU) 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

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

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 the operations or the Programme. Financial correction shall consist of cancelling all or part of the public contribution to an operation or to the Programme. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the MA 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 MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the partnering country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located (the NA in Turkey) shall reimburse the managing authority the amount unduly paid to that beneficiary. The task of the national authority as such, shall be specified in the Subsidy Contract to be concluded between the lead beneficiary and the managing authority. The MA 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 Programme. NA will be responsible for reporting procedures for irregularities and for the recovery of amounts unduly paid to the Lead beneficiaries/ beneficiaries located on the territory of the Republic of Turkey. NA shall reimburse to the MA the amounts corresponding to the EU co-financing, unduly paid to the Lead beneficiaries located on the territory of the Republic of Turkey.

In accordance with article 85 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 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 (when liability cannot be assigned to a specific programme partner region), the two partnering countries commit to recover the amount proportionally with the approved project budgets and performed activities by respectively 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.

In case of decommitment at programme level according with article 46 item 4 of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014, referring to articles 86 to 88 and 136 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the amounts shall be decommitted from the non-performing projects in accordance with the provisions set up in the subsidy contracts to be signed with the beneficiaries. The Participating Countries may also decide the decommitted amount to be ensured from the state budgets proportionally to the distribution of the funds between the partners from each country.

The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the partnering countries' obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

The apportionment of liabilities between the participating countries will be also set in the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding.

5.6 Use of the Euro (where applicable)

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

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

In accordance with Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, 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 monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission for the month during which the expenditures incurred, in accordance with Article 28 (a) of this Regulation.

5.7 Involvement of partners

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

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

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 Programme promotes the concept of a special form of partnership – cross border 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 20 March 2014.

The Situation analysis and SWOT were also consulted with the MA and NA 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 13 May 2014. During the same meeting the two thematic priorities as per Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 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 18 – 19 June 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, and indicative activities.

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

Over the period 20 – 30 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 7 July 2014 so to be further proceed for consultations with EC services.

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

The Final Draft IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey has been adopted by the Joint working group on 20th August 2014 during the last session held on in Sofia. Over the period 21 August –21 September 2014 the Final Draft IPA II CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey have been endorsed by the Councils of ministers of both partnering countries and have been proceed to European Commission for final approval. As soon as the CBC Programme Bulgaria-Turkey IPA II is approved by EC, the Joint monitoring committee will be established. The members of JMC will be nominated within the Joint working group. 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.

SECTION 6 HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

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

6.1 Sustainable development

Description of specific actions to take into account environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management, in the selection of operations.

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 the Programme 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 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 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: online²²).
- consider greater use of renewable energy

Appropriate management arrangements of the 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 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

²² Cf. EU COM (2013): The Habitats Directive. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/> (June, 2014)

screened throughout all stages of the programme implementation – both at programme and project level.

6.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Description of the specific actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the Programme and, in particular, in relation to access to funding, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination, and in particular, the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

In general, it is 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: online²³). This goes in line with the UN’s universal declaration of Human Rights.

It’s the 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 partnering 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,

²³ 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).

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 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.

6.3 Equality between men and women

Description of the contribution of the Programme to the promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the arrangements to ensure the integration of the gender perspective at programme and operation level.

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: 4-10²⁴).

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 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:

²⁴ 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)

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

ANNEXES (:

<i>Annex 1</i>	Ex-Ante Evaluation Report with executive summary
<i>Annex 2.1</i>	Confirmation of agreement in writing to the content of the cooperation programme on behalf of the Bulgarian side
<i>Annex 2.2</i>	Confirmation of agreement in writing to the content of the cooperation programme on behalf of the Turkish side
<i>Annex 3</i>	A map of the area, covered by the cooperation programme
<i>Annex 4</i>	Citizens' summary of the cooperation programme
<i>Annex 5.1</i>	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report
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<i>Annex 5.4</i>	Detailed information regarding SEA consultations in Turkey
<i>Annex 5.4.1</i>	Official statement, issued by the competent environmental authority in Turkey (in Turkish language)
<i>Annex 5.4.2</i>	Official statement, issued by the competent environmental authority in Turkey (unofficial translation in English language)
<i>Annex 5.4.3</i>	Comments received during the public participation meeting held on 8th January 2015 in Edirne, Turkey
<i>Annex 5.5</i>	Detailed information regarding SEA consultations in Bulgaria
<i>Annex 5.5.1</i>	Official statement, issued by the competent environmental authority in Bulgaria (in Bulgarian language)
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<i>Annex 12</i>	Comparative table – reflecting EC observations

Annex II

European Union contribution for the implementation of the cross-border cooperation programme "*Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria – Turkey 2014-2020*" under IPA II per year

Fund	2014	2015	2016 Indicative amount	2017 Indicative amount	2018 Indicative amount	2019 Indicative amount	2020 Indicative amount	Total
IPA II	0	1,824,824	2,605,964	5,984,786	4,829,724	4,926,318	5,024,844	25,196,460

Annex III - The co-financing rate for each priority axis applicable to **total eligible expenditure, including private and public expenditure**.

Priority axis	Basis for calculation of Union support	Union support (a)	National counterpart	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding	Co-financing rate	For information	
	(Total eligible cost)		(b) = (c) + (d))			(e) = (a) + (b)	(f) = (a)/(e) (2)		
				National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
<i>Priority axis 1 – "Environment"</i>	13,339,303	11,338,407	2,000,896	2,000,896	0	13,339,303	85.00%		
<i>Priority axis 2 – "Sustainable Tourism"</i>	13,339,303	11,338,407	2,000,896	2,000,896	0	13,339,303	85.00%		
<i>Priority axis 3 – "Technical Assistance"</i>	2,964,290	2,519,646	444,644	444,644	0	2,964,290	85.00%		
Total	29,642,896	25,196,460	4,446,436	4,446,436	0	29,642,896	85.00%		